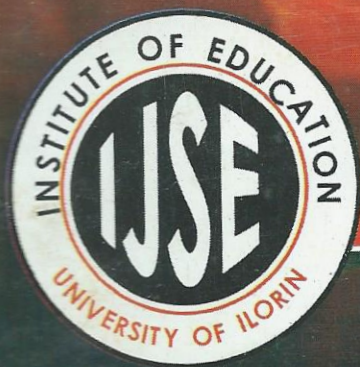
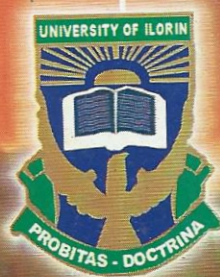


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MORAL EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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Abstract

There is no doubt the fact that Nigeria as a developing country is striving to join the league of communities of developed nations of the world both technologically and politically. All institutions in Nigeria (both private and public) are established with certain aims and objectives in most cases, to make individuals useful members of their respective societies. It is doubtful, however, if these aims and objectives form part of our educational focus today, and if they do, to what extent are they pursued? This is because our institutions of learning (especially the tertiary institutions) are beget with the nefarious activities of cultists and secret societies, resulting in brutal murder of students, lecturers, management staff and so on. The purpose of this paper therefore is to examine the need for the introduction of moral education as an antidote to the high rate of indiscipline on campuses in particular and our society in general, resulting in wastage of lives and properties.

What is moral Education

The New Encyclopedia Britannica emphasizes that morality has been in existence and it is as old as the society itself. This is to say that there is no society without its own moral values although this may vary from one society to another. While some students are familiar with moral education, (especially those from teacher training colleges), others who form the majority of the Nigerian populace do not border about moral values.

'Moral' means 'behaviour' 'Morality' therefore is the way we behave, such behaviour must be according to certain standard set by the society as regard what is good and acceptable as compared with what is bad and unacceptable. It is a total submission to the rules or principles of a standard type of behaviour recognised by the society. Morality therefore is the ability of individual to differentiate between what is good and what is bad and between what is right or wrong.

The word Education", on the other hand is from a Latin word "Educare" meaning "to lead out" or "to bring out" if this is so, then "moral Education" can be said to mean "to bring out the moral qualities in individuals to order to suppress the immoral behaviours in them. It can also be said to mean the process by which an individual is trained to behave in the expected way. If this is so, then religious training alone cannot impact moral education.

The Yoruba refer to Morality as GOOD CHARACTER (iwa Omoluabi/wapele) which, according to Abimboola, 1975; 400) may be difficult to have as an attribute, but without people who have it, the world will be a very difficult place to live in. The survival of the society mostly depends on the level at which morality is emphasized in our educational system since education and morality complement each other.

The need for moral education as a core subject in schools

The entire society is the sole agent of moral education. According to Fafunwa (1974), since the child cannot continuously be under the watchful eyes of the parents, brothers, sisters and so on, the entire society have a hand in the education of the child at one time or the other, while the child's home forms the foundation of the child's education, the school build on the foundation already laid by the home. Other agencies include the child's peer group, the news media and religious organizations.

It is quite unfortunate however that today, many of the so-called "educated Nigerians" are morally bankrupt. Stealing, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual malpractices, robbery, corruption, cultism and so on have become the order of the day.

It is not an overstatement that discipline in its general term of immorality has become a social vice in our society today and in various ways one can think of. This includes disloyalty, disrespect for elder and native laws, Cultism among students and so on.

It would appear that nearly all tribes in Nigeria have secret societies. In the past, the objectives of forming a secret society was to fight oppression, but such role has been reversed to brutal killing of students, lecturers, management staff, suspected opponents, political rivals and the like. For instance the Youba have Ogboni, Oro (Egungun). Their functions include traditional practice such as the selection or election of a person into position for rapid promotion or to be highly influential in the community, moral cleansing in the society, recovery of debts and protection of properties, prescription of laws, levies, fines etc.

Today, the high level of immorality in school and other public places led to the establishment of the National Ethical Re-orientation Committee by President Shehu Shagari of the Second Republic, also was the WAR AGAINST INDISCIPLINE launched by the Buhari/Idiagbon Military Administration aimed at bringing sanity into the Nigerian Social life.

To instill moral discipline in the citizenry in general and in our students in particular, MORAL EDUCATION needs to be taken as a CORE COURSE in our institutions of learning. It should not be seen as synonymous with religious studies rather as a means of training individuals how to behave well as it allows them to know the difference between THE GOOD and THE BAD, RIGHT and acceptable mode of behaviour in a social setting which moral education stands for. Hence, moral education produces good citizens and law-abiding individuals.

Writing on the aims and objectives of the Yoruba Traditional (indigenous) education, Awoniyi (1978:2) writes that

The philosophy of Yoruba education is embraced in the concept of "Omoluabi" The end-product of education is to make an individual an Omoluabi"

He goes further to say that "to be an Omoluabi is to be of good character in all its ramification" To the Yoruba, good character include respect for elders, societal rules and regulations, devotion to duty, readiness to assist the needy and the infirm, sympathy, courage, itching desire for the work and so on. In the same language, Fafunwa (1974:24) writes

In traditional Nigerian society, all parents want their children to be upright, honest, kind and helpful to others and will spare no pain to instill these qualities.

What this means invariably is that having good character is like having everything necessary in the world. Fafunwa also affirm that all Nigerian parents irrespective of their ethnic group prefer to remain childless than to have children who will bring shame and dishonour to the family. No wonder why the Yorubas say: "kaka ki n bi egbaa obun, ma kuku bi okan soso oga. To them, the number of teeth one has does not matter as long as it can chew meat; hence the number of children not withstanding, the most important is to have children who are morally good.

Traditional education is very severe on character training. This is because African societies in general attach great importance to character training.

In the Holy Bible, Psalm 22: 6 says "Teach your child the way he should go and when he is grown up, he shall not depart from it and he shall give you rest" The general belief was that when a child imbibes good character, he respects other people's right and develop sympathy and the right behaviour towards other beings. Apart from this, we can say the following about good moral values:

- (i) Good moral prevents undesirable behaviours such as the ones enumerated above (drug abuse, stealing, cultism, armed robbery etc.) in the citizenry.
- (ii) Good moral also help to properly observe good ethics and codes of conduct. Both the leaders and the led shall be conscientious and do their work as expected of them. Nwosu (1985) believes that moral education is to foster good moral conduct in the human society to promote the knowledge of moral value in individual.
- (iii) It promotes harmony and a sense of fair-play in human relations.
- (iv) It also strengthens the basis and serves as motivating factor for good behaviour as an essential foundation for social order in the society.
- (v) It is moral education that helps the individual to develop what he considers to be the right attitude as well as helping him to become a responsible individual of good character.
- (vi) Moral education builds up responsible citizens with the following characteristic: modesty, humility, consideration for other patience, steadfastness, truthfulness, and so on. For instance an adult with good moral education fulfils his promises and contracts, keeps all trusts, meets his engagements, and repays his debts.

It is disheartening however that after forth-five years of Nigeria's independence, moral decadence is still very high in all places (including 'holy places' such as the churches, the mosques etc.) many reasons can be suggested to have been responsible for this situation. For instance, according to Fafunwa (1974:81), at the introduction of Western education, it was erroneously assumed that the African Culture and Religion had in the words of Lord Lugard "no system of ethics and no principle of conduct" It is with this attitude in mind that they established their schools and more so the school curriculum (especially for the church schools) was aimed at the Bibles and the training of Evangelists. The existing curriculum was changed both in nature and purpose and according to Fafunwa, the ultimate reason for any form of education then was the advantage it brought to the faith. The typical man of learning was no longer the cultivated man of affairs but the educated clerk.

Obstacles

One begins to wonder why it has been so difficult, (if not totally impossible) for the government (past and present) to instill moral discipline in the citizenry? Everyday, we cry fowl of armed robbers, paid assassins, thuggery, cultism etc. here and there with the government talking bold steps towards eradicating these social vices within the entire Nigeria society, yet there seems to be no solution at sight.

Some reasons can be said to be responsible for this. We shall try to enumerate some of them.

(a) absence of effective sanction

Before the introduction of European culture and ways of living into Africa, there existed moral sanctions in form of laws, rules and regulations myths, taboos and so on, all to instill and ensure total display of moral behaviour by the citizenry.

For instance, among the Yorubas, there are such laws (though unwritten) obeyed by every members of the society, and in addition to the laws, there was the belief that the gods (divinities shall punish all moral lapses in the society. These laws guided the peoples' behaviour. Examples are many. For instance, it is forbidden for co-wives to engage in physical fighting, if this happened, the two of them had to pay the price.

There are some that teach hygiene and moral discipline. For example, it is forbidden to sit on the mortal to avoid the discharge of one's anus, a mortal being an instrument used for food processing. There are also rules guiding modes of eating, dressing, addressing, greetings, and so on. These moral sanctions were so successful that truth and justice prevailed in the various tribal communities. Today, such sanctions are no more in existence and this has made it possible for some individuals to get away with their immoral and scandalous behaviours such as fraud, misuse of public funds, arson, thuggery, cultism etc.

In the past, every member of the society join hands in the training of a child but today, a high percentage of our youths engage in cultism and thuggery. The general belief today is that financial stability and the amounts of connection one has determine what moral misbehaviour you can exhibit and go with. This belief undoubtedly has negative impact on moral education and moral consciousness of Nigerian students in our institutions of higher learning. No wonder most good citizens of this country believe that the thugs and cultists in our institutions have "God Fathers" and this account for why it has been difficult to fish out perpetrators of several bastard acts already perpetrated by this group of morally indisciplined citizens.

To make things worse, the students population in schools have made it very difficult to keep a closer watch on students' behaviour while some teachers also cannot act as good examples for the students to emulate.

(b) Tribalism and Political patronage

In Nigeria today, tribalism has been the order of the day. In all arms of government (local, state and national), political patronage has formed the basis for what you can get and what you cannot get. Recruitment into the civil service is not by merit, admission into schools is not based on merit, social injustice even such as inadequate distribution of social amenities, goods and services even with the use of the so-called "quota system" which has been described as being inimical to national survival, prevails in our society

This situation is what Mba (1980) frowns at when he writes that:

I don't think its for a Nigerian to suffer and sponsor one's self through a higher institution while his or her counterparts from other states have the government paying their fees. If we have to insist on this quota thing, or lowering the average cut-off point for particular states and raising it for other, then Nigeria is not one.

If our policy maker are morally inclined, they would have seen reason why things should be justifiably done. This system for instance allowed for admission of student who are not academically competent and when they get to school, they are frustrated and they end up joining gangs who terrorize staff, students and the entire community. This is to say that tribalism and political patronages are misleading Nigerians as well as neutralizing the effect of agents of moral education.

(c) **MATERIALISM**

While the traditional African education system was aimed at developing good moral values, the school education on the other hand emphasizes what Nduka (1983) refers to as INSTITUTIONALISED MATERIALISM. People go to school today in order to take up white-collar jobs after their schooling and to acquire wealth. Even at the school level, students' union leaders embezzle students' union funds, thus they live an extravagant kind of life. Our society in general today no longer appreciate the importance of the values of honesty, discipline, faithfulness, devotion to duty and other right attitudes for the survival of the society where mediocre are respected as long as they have money to throw about.

The absence of moral education make students join various bad groups on the campuses thus creating a state of insecurity for the immediate communities and the nation at large. Properties are callously destroyed, lectures and management staff are not spared.

(d) **PAMPERING**

It has been observed that some parent are in the habit of pampering their ward. Instead of making their children see reason why they should be hard working, they pampered them thus they become extravagant and eventually they join the notorious groups on their various campuses. We have heard of cases of students setting up their parents.

(E) **THE ECONOMY**

The state of the nation's poor economy also encourage moral laxity. Most citizens feel economically unsecured. The fear of not getting employed after their education account for why most students are not serious with their academic pursuit and thus become dropouts.

Awoniyi (1978:1) says:

No educational system stands apart from the Society which establishes it. It has purposes That must be achieved if that society is to Continue in the right direction.

He went further to say that education is meant to be embedded in the society drawing inspiration and nourishment from it, and in turn, contributing to societal opportunities for growth and renewal.

From the foregoing, we discover that the system of education the country is operating presently does not consider the society for which it was meant to serve.

On our streets today, a large number of graduates are roaming about jobless and virtually with nothing to show for their certificates. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has been given another name "Now Your Suffering Continues" such people in their desperate move to get themselves going, turn into hoodlum and terrorists. They become high - way robbers, hired assassins, and the likes.

It may be said that Churches and Mosques should have provided respite for such people, it is unfortunate that most of them neither go to mosque nor take time to pray at all. The situation in which they found themselves may not even allow them to believe in the efficacy of prayer or the existence of God.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of moral education at all levels of our education system is vital to the development of our entire society. The Holy Bible in Psalms 22 verse 6 says: "train a child the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it". The Yoruba also believe in this and the task of accomplishing it rests mainly on the mother. When a child imbibe good character, the entire society benefits.

In this paper, we have tried to make us understand what is meant by "MORALITY" we have also seen how the agencies of moral education, the home, the school, the peer groups, (and so on) can help to instill good moral values in the citizenry.

We have also highlighted the various way by which moral education can influence student in our various institutions and what we feel are the impediments to the introduction of sound moral education in our schools.

We want to emphasize here that it is high time the society placed less emphasis on material wealth in place of honour and moral value of the society.

The teaching of moral value should be a major concern of all education administrations and planners. This should be in line with the needs of our society. There is the need for moral integration on a national scale in order to come out with a set of trans-cultural, trans-religious and trans-ethnic moral values in which all member of the Nigerian society can contribute. This implies that our basic moral, cultural and religious values will be subjected to thorough examination and analysis. The home and the school should co-operate. It is necessary that the parent / Teacher's Association (PTA) of all schools are made functional in this line. They are to make suggestions as to how to solve problem of moral decadence in schools.

The objectives of moral education must be re-stated and the religious studies curriculum as they affect moral education must be restructured to include such aspects as fundamental moral principles and moral judgement.

Furthermore, moral values could be learnt through sports and games in terms of honesty, fairplay, perseverance, sense of responsibility and the likes.

The introduction of counselors in the school is a step in good direction, however it is worth noting that people employed as counselors must be trained and experienced in their own field. Through discussions, students are made to see reason why they should evolve good morals.

The teachers /lecturers have a lot of roles to play. The same goes for government officers and executives. Morality should be their watchword and they should display this at all times in their dealings with their students.

Mass media, in collaboration with the schools should organize programmes such as lectures, debates, symposium where people of integrity and unquestionable characters will be invited to deliver papers cent red on moral education.

Good behaviors should be rewarded by the teachers, parents and governments to serve as morale booster for other students. This could be in the areas of obedience to school rules and regulations while violation of such rules are equally to be punished.

All schools as a matter of compulsion must introduce moral education as a subject to be taken and passed at the ordinary level examinations and this should be a pre-condition for admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions. We would like to warn here however that this should not be on paper alone as it is the case with the adoption of three Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba). The various bodies in charge of education should take this seriously, as there seems to be no alternative to it

() The Yoruba say "Egbe buburu ba iwa rere je" meaning "A bad company spoils good character". The students' movements need strict monitoring both at home and in the school to ensure students don't join bad groups. We have no doubt that if these suggestions are followed to the letter, the level of moral decadence in our society will reduce drastically if not totally eradicated.

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