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TOWARDS MAKING EDUCATION THE BEST LEGACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Myriads of social vices such as corruption, money laundering, flagrant disregard for the rule of law, indiscipline, dishonesty, examination malpractices, rape, prostitution, child trafficking, terrorism, armed robbery and other nefarious activities that beset the country, Nigeria have been directly linked to the neglect of civic and moral education as subjects taught in schools. Besides, the high rate of unemployment is seen as a corollary of inadequate skillful training in schools. In response to these problems, Nigerian government re-introduced civic and moral education to stem the tide of moral decadence and dwindling national consciousness. Secondary educational system was also adjusted to encompass diversified curriculum that integrates academic subjects with technical and vocational subjects aimed at empowering individuals for self-employment. Despite the laudable government's initiatives, the aforementioned social maladies linger. This paper therefore explores the nature of moral, civic, and vocational/technical education in Nigeria in order to find the missing link in the applications of these subjects in schools. The research discovers that moral instruction is faith and religious-based and so lacks the requisite moral content to raise moral consciousness of learners. Again, the teaching of civics is limited to secondary schools and thus is not far-reaching. Besides, vocational/technical subjects have not been fully and effectively implemented in schools. The paper therefore recommends a value-based moral instruction for effective moral development of learners as well as effective implementation of vocational/technical subjects to make students employable and self-reliant after graduation. It also suggests that civil education should be extended to universities, homes and mass media in order to have far-reaching impacts on Nigerians.

KEY WORDS: education, civic education, technical education, vocational education, morality, moral instruction, human values

1. INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, money laundering, disrespect for the rule of law, insurgency, armed robbery, rape, prostitution, child trafficking, and other heinous social vices that bedevil Nigeria have been largely attributed to the neglect of civic education and moral instruction/education as subjects taught in schools. Besides, the high rate of unemployment is seen as a corollary of inadequate skillful training in schools that would enable the youth fit into few available jobs or become self-employed.

In response to the clarion call for our educational system to be overhauled, Nigerian government over time has re-introduced civic and moral education to tackle the problem of dwindling national consciousness and raise the standards of

morality respectively. Secondary educational system was also adjusted in 1982 to encompass diversified curriculum that integrates academic subjects with technical and vocational subjects aimed at empowering individuals for self-employment. Despite the laudable government's initiatives, the aforementioned social maladies linger. There is social disharmony, indiscipline, flagrant disregard for laws, moral decadence and an annual increase of unemployed youths.

These problems raise the questions: Why is it that the introduction of civic, moral and vocational education in Nigeria's schools has not achieved its desired goal? What is the missing link in the application of these subjects in Nigeria's schools? How do we make effective the slogan that education is the best legacy any nation can bequeath to its

citizenry? How do we improve moral instruction in Nigeria's schools to respond effectively to fast decline in moral standards of the society?

2. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of civic education, technical and vocational education, as well as moral instruction in order to find the missing link in their applications in schools. It seeks to demonstrate that moral education grounded in human values and effective implementation of the curriculum are guarantees for more peaceful, stable, and less-incriminated society, thereby making education the best legacy in Nigeria.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data are sourced from textbooks, journal articles and internet sources. The method of conceptual analysis is used in presenting the data. Analysis of the meaning of education enables us to appreciate the considerable importance of civic, moral and vocational/technical education to the development of all round individuals. The method also enables us to examine the nature of civic education, technical and vocational education, as well as moral instruction so as to find the missing link in their applications in schools.

4. RESULTS

Meaning of Education

Education can be defined as a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and habit through instruction or study. For Okolo (1989, p. 16), it is "a transmission of knowledge, worth-while skills, values, beliefs, etc of a culture. Supporting this view, Bieter, (2005, p. 19) conceives education as "all activities by which a human group transmits to its descendants a body of knowledge and skills and a moral code which enable the group to subsist." Therefore, education seeks to impart knowledge and skills to individuals in the quest of transforming them to worthy citizens in character and learning.

Education is universally acclaimed as the best legacy any nation can bequeath to its citizens. This assertion is premised on the belief that education should be all round: It should be designed for the development of the child's physical, intellectual, psychological, moral and spiritual nature. Thus, education should enable individuals to develop their potentials and realize themselves as worthy human beings. It stands to reason that the incorporation of civic, technical, vocational and moral education in the school curriculum is indispensable for all round development of individuals.

On Civic Education

The introduction of civic education in secondary schools as subject is meant to teach students the virtues of good citizenships, particularly the values of obedience, humility and submission to constituted authority. Civic education is designed to help students learn how to become active, informed and responsible citizens. It is believed that through the subject, sound moral values would be inculcated in the youth. In order to groom good and responsible

leaders, a high premium must be placed on civic education in schools and the subject must be fully and effectively implemented.

Beyond this, civic education should not end in secondary schools. There is need to extend it to universities, homes, and mass media. This is because the rampant social vices Nigeria is currently faced with are mainly perpetrated by the youth, especially graduates, and corrupt leaders. TV and radio programmes on civic education should be introduced to educate the youth and leaders on the values, culture and traditions of different ethnic groups and the need to be more tolerance, appreciating and tolerating other people, their religion and culture. This will encourage them to abhor and eschew violence and play politics without bitterness. Parents/guardians should assist in teaching their children about individual rights, the limit of such rights, as well as duties and responsibilities of good citizens. They should be encouraged their children/wards to imbibe and practise the virtues of integrity and good neighbourliness.

On Vocational and Technical Education

The incorporation of vocational and technical subjects in secondary educational systems is an attempt to match the ideals and challenges of changing economic and social structure of modern society. It is believed that through vocational and technical education, students would be able to acquire practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge that would empower them for job creation and wealth generation.

At the junior secondary level, pre-vocational subjects like Business Studies, Computer Science, Introductory Technology, Home Economics, Technical Drawing and Practical Agriculture are incorporated in the curriculum. At the senior secondary level, there are vocational subjects such as Commerce, Agriculture, Home Management, Technical Drawing, Clothing and Textile, Food and Nutrition, Principles of Accounts, and so on. When students are exposed to these subjects, they would be able to make intelligent career choices as well as intelligent consumption patterns.

However, it is observed that the necessary skills students should acquire from such subjects are not adequately given due to poor implementation of the curriculum. Government has already introduced the subjects in the curriculum. A curriculum is a vehicle through which education is attained. It goes to show that in order for technical and vocational education to be fully implemented in schools, the curriculum should be fully and effectively implemented. The teaching method used in implementing the curriculum should be predominantly practical.

On Moral Instruction/Education

Etymologically, morality is derived from the Latin word 'mores' which means manners or morals. It concerns conduct, character, behaviour or actions measured as being right or wrong, good or bad, just

or unjust. In a broad term, morality is a system of social principles and norms that guide or are intended to guide the conduct of people in a society. Morality reflects the actual behaviour of a social community, expressing what members ought to do or avoid in their interpersonal relations.

Moral Instruction is a subject that concerns with how we ought to live in a society: What we ought to do to achieve what is good and what we ought not to do to avoid what is evil both actual and potential. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (6th edition) explains that moral instruction is an intellectual means of presenting moral values to learners or an art of developing moral autonomy in a child through a systematic breeding of the mind.

Buttressing this point, Njoku (2017) views moral instruction as values and norms systematically selected and presented to learners to enable them function effectively in a society. It is designed to inculcate good moral values in the lives of learners and develop their moral character so as to build a strong and crime-free society. In the light of this, Njoku notes that moral instruction is aimed at assisting in the development of compassionate and fair-minded individuals who are able to make positive contributions to their society.

Regrettably, moral instruction being offered in Nigeria's primary and secondary schools today is religious in character. It is religious and faith-based rather than value-based. It focuses on conducting religious rites and services, while little or no attention is paid to raising the moral consciousness of learners. It has become an avenue for deepening and consolidating the understanding of catechism and doctrines as well as propagating religious dogma. However, religion and morality are not the same. "Morality is not dependent on religion nor is it based on religion" (Omeregbe, 1993, p. 8). It is not necessary for one to be religious in order to be moral. Many people profess no religious beliefs but they have a sense of morality and live a life of high moral standards (Omeregbe, 1993).

Religion alone is insufficient to fortify learners with wholesome standards of morality. This is true particularly because it does not allow for choice when individual are in conflicting situations or moral dilemmas. For instance, Christian religion is based on Ten Commandments or God's Laws which all Christians are expected to obey in all circumstances and at all costs. In other words, the commandments eliminate choice. Thus, individuals will be morally handicapped to make informed moral decisions when they are faced with moral ambiguities of life.

An alarming increase in social vices such as corruption, greed, money laundering, dishonesty, indecency, rape, prostitution, child trafficking, terrorism, armed robbery and other violent crimes therefore calls for improvement to moral instruction as a subject. A value-based moral instruction will nurture the development of right virtues and values

like honesty, fairness, tolerance, respect, harmony, self-discipline, hard-work, responsibility, kindness, cooperation, compassion, and so on. Educating for character and good moral values is essential for building an open and just society that promotes democratic values which drive socio-economic development. Hence, moral education should be grounded in human values.

On Education in Human Values

Education has two aspects Education: The first aspect has to do with worldly education, which is sometimes referred to as 'book knowledge'. The second aspect is related to human values. In this sense, education etymologically comes from the Latin word 'educare' which means "to bring out that (human values) which is within." The second aspect shows that education serves as a route not only to intellectual development, but also to the moral and spiritual development of individuals.

Unfortunately, western education we pursue today is centred on intellectual and scientific knowledge, while moral education is put at the back burner. Consequently, educational institutions keep churning out graduates that are morally bankrupt, despite the claim on their certificates that they are worthy in character and in learning. Virtues are acquired through moral and intellectual knowledge. Thus, both moral and intellectual knowledge are *sine-qua-non* for authentic self-fulfilment. To restore moral order in Nigerian society, there is need to ground moral instruction in five human values.

The five human values are love, truth, peace, right conduct, and non-violence. These human values are inherent in every person but need to be nurtured and developed to subdue and erase undue sentiments, emotions, anxiety and worries. In teaching these values, pupils/students learn that love is not mere emotion but involves sacrifice, service, sharing, kindness, tolerance, selflessness, patience, patriotism, acceptance, forgiveness, sympathy, empathy, humanness, generosity, gentleness, consideration, and compassion. They understand truth through sub-values such as honesty, integrity, self-awareness, self-reflection, discernment, justice, fearlessness, determination, purity and quest for knowledge.

They achieve peace by developing and internalizing the virtue of humility, self-acceptance, self-respect, self-confidence, patience, optimism, self-discipline, self-control, happiness, contentment, calmness, reflection, harmony, discipline, focus, dignity and understanding. They learn that right conduct or action encompasses courage, forbearance, respect for all, perseverance, punctuality, resourcefulness, responsibility, initiative, efficiency and good manners. They also learn that non-violence is not "harming anything living and/or non-living in thought, word or deed. Non-violence encompasses cooperation, respect for diversity, ecological balance and the unity of life" (Kaliannan and Chandran, 2010, p. 805). It includes appreciation of cultures

and religions of others, brotherhood, forgiveness, concern for others and environment, compassion, forbearance, perseverance, fairness, equality, harmony and solidarity.

The five human values are inter-related and inseparable. All other values disappear if one value vanishes. For instance, when there is no love, right conduct disappears and the individual becomes egocentric. Without love, there will be no peace. When there is no peace, truth disappears. When love, right conduct, peace and truth vanish, then there will be violence (Kaliannan and Chandran, 2010). In other words, a person who possesses these four values will not act with violence be it physical, psychological, or verbal. Non-violence is thus the culmination of all other values (Majmudar, 2002).

The incorporation of these pillars of ethics in the moral instruction to serve as a basis for teaching and learning morals will promote virtue and raise the moral and spiritual standing of mankind. This will go a long way towards producing men of character with high academic excellence. Accordingly, teaching these values will help to impart, reinforce, and inspire noble ideals, attitudes and unity of thought, word and deed. It will also build self-confidence, self-reliance, self-discipline, and promote effective communication and social skills that will ensure harmonious living at homes, in the community, nation and the world at large.

Parents/guardians also have roles to play in fostering the development of human values. The family unit serves as a training ground for children to develop cooperation, sharing, compassion, respect, harmony, understanding, tolerance, discipline, obedience and other cherished values. Children learn moral values not only by instruction, but also by observation and imitation. They tend to internalize moral values and have the strong disposition to do the good when teachers and parents/guardians are committed to practising the values through illustration and example rather than in a prescriptive way.

5. SUGGESTIONS

In schools, moral instruction should be centred on five human values and other moral imperatives that promote the noble values of justice, fairness, integrity, tolerance, obedience, respect, compassion, sacrifice, kindness, cooperation, diligence, selflessness, harmony, dialogue and so on. Beyond this, teachers should blend intellectual knowledge with human values by devising means to raise the moral consciousness of pupils/students during lessons. Besides, TV and radio programmes on civic education should be introduced to educate the youth and leaders on the values, culture and traditions of different ethnic groups and the need to be more tolerance, appreciating and tolerating other people, their religion and culture.

It is worthy of note that knowledge of good does not automatically follow by doing the good. The rational mind must be convinced of the need to

imbibe and practise virtues if virtues must be lived. Hence, parents/guardians, teachers and leaders should live an exemplary life worthy of emulation. Action speaks louder than words. If they are morally bankrupt and exhibit moral laxity in their lives and in discharging their duties, children and the youth tend to see moral values as being impracticable. However, if they are morally upright, children and the youth would consider moral and other family values as virtues to be lived. Hence, teachers and parents/guardians should personify the values and ideals they implant in children. Leaders should restore people's trust and confidence in them by bridging credibility gap. They should desist from all forms of corruption and injustice and stop paying lip service to campaign against social vices or treating the perpetrators with kid gloves.

Government should strive to improve the socio-economic problems by investing massively in education and creating an enabling environment for job creation and employment. There is need to improve the overall educational infrastructure in terms of adequate and improved libraries, laboratories, workshops and other learning facilities, as well as employing adequate qualified and capable teachers. Again, it cannot be rightly gainsaid that the poor implementation of educational policies as enshrined in the school curriculum is adversely affecting the individuals and society at large. For the curriculum to be implemented effectively, the Primary and Secondary Education Board should periodically visit schools unexpectedly to inspect and know the extent to which the curriculum is enforced. To ensure compliance with the educational policies, sanctions should be imposed on schools that fail to comply with the regulations.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that the institutionalization of high moral ethical standards in Nigeria through value-based moral instruction is a panacea to myriads of social vices plaguing the nation. Proper orientation of children should start from different homes. Parents should see the family as a nursery of discipline since charity begins at home. They should spent time with their children to groom them morally, spiritually, culturally and socially.

It also stated that priority should be given to civic education and the course should be introduced in universities. Sustained TV and radio programmes on civic education are also recommended. The study equally puts a premium on technical and vocational related subjects that enable students to be vocationally skilled and self-reliant. Thus, moral instruction grounded in five human values as well as civic and vocational/technical education afford students the opportunity of acquiring skills, knowledge and characters essential for purposeful citizenship, self and national development. It is hoped that the commitment of all education stakeholders to providing qualitative and quantitative

education will go a long way towards producing future leaders who are more attuned and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people.

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