

MORAL EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR NATIONAL PEACE**Kingsley Nsirim (Ph.D)¹ & Emmanuel Mgbomo (Ph.D)²**

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Abstract

This study investigates how moral education can help in ensuring peace in Nigeria. Moral education is an important aspect of education because it helps to rid the society of some menace. One major problem of Nigeria is the absence of a functional programme of moral education in our educational system. Immorality in Nigeria is in the increase as the Nigerian educational system could not instill the required moral values in the citizens. This situation has led to corruption, arson, murder, dishonesty, etc. The researchers contend that despite all these vices, there is still hope for a better Nigeria if Nigerian scholars and political leaders are charged to use their positions to encourage the provision of sound moral education programmes in the educational system. This way peace could be ensured and acts that could engender corruption, misunderstanding, violence and wars would be discouraged drastically.

Keywords: Education, Morality, Moral Education and Peace.

Introduction

Nigeria since her ascendance to independence status in 1960, has been struggling through the instrument of education to equip her citizens with the intellectual, the physical and manual manipulative, and the interpersonal and relational skills in order to engender remarkable improvement in their general wellbeing and societal development. Nigerian educational system like many other educational systems is aimed at producing educated persons who are versatile in the cognitive (intellectual), psychomotor (manipulative) and affective (moral) training and pursuit (Nsirim 2006). The educational system in fact is intended to be a comprehensive one. To a large extent, Nigerian Educational System has over the years, succeeded in producing a good number of Nigerians who are proactive in the cognitive and psychomotor domains. But sadly enough, this educational system has not

succeeded significantly in the affective (moral) domain. It has apparently failed to inculcate the required moral values in many Nigerians. This has led to a lot of vices among Nigerians, including corruption, pen robbery, armed robbery, falsehood, abuse of powers, greed and so on.

As a matter of fact, because of this grave moral decay in the country, various organs and institutions are not able to function effectively. The economy of the nation, besides other systems (such as political, social and religious) has become endangered or failed. The result of this situation is that life in the country is difficult, insecure and unpleasant. Indeed, this awful situation needs to be reversed. And, of course, this can be acknowledged through moral regeneration. This is necessary because the greatest impediment to the development of Nigeria today is the moral decay that has pervaded all spheres of life in the country. (Nsirim, 2006). This paper

therefore focuses on the moral aspect of Nigerian education as a tool for achieving national peace and development. For a purposeful discussion, this paper undertakes to discuss such concepts as education, morality, moral education and peace that are germane to this discourse. Besides, this paper will locate where the problem with Nigeria actually lies, and finally points the way forward.

Conceptual Clarification: Education

The moment the word 'education' is mentioned, what comes to mind is where and how a person or a group of persons acquires meaningful experiences to make a worthwhile living in life. These experiences can be acquired from the formal, informal and non-formal setting. Education is pursued by man, and as noted by white, it has to do with whole being and the whole period of existence possible to man. It involves the harmony of the physical, the mental and spiritual powers (Anzaki, 2020). This definition touches many areas and stretches beyond the immediate existence; it identifies the whole aspects of man's being: physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. It takes cognizance of the period which education lasts, that is the whole period of man's existence here on earth and hereafter.

Education in the concrete sense encompasses the aspects of learning in which knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits are inculcated into people, through various means like storytelling, teaching, etc. It provides one with the necessary knowledge that fortifies him in putting to use the knowledge already acquired in rendering service for the benefit of the society (Fiddo, 2015). Nevertheless, education is provided under the guidance of an instructor or a teacher. This being the case education which

also encompasses values, habits and needs to be inculcated into the learners under the supervision of another person is not just about the delivery of information but also about the ability of the guidance to inculcate outstanding features like habits and values since this also goes a long way in educating the student (Fiddo, 2015).

This is in line with R. S. Peters' view that education is the all-round development of a person, physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually (Peters, 1996). In his *Ethics and Education*, he describes the educating process as the intentional transmission of something worthwhile in a morally acceptable manner and thus elaborates this in his three criteria of education which indicates that education:

- ❖ Implies the transmission of what is worthwhile in those who become committed to it;
- ❖ Must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspectives, which are not inert;
- ❖ Education at least rules out some procedures or transmission, on the grounds that they lack willingness and voluntaries on the part of the learner

Peters criteria above can be interpreted as follows:

- i. That education is not the mere transmission of disjointed information.
- ii. That what must be passed on to the learner in terms of skills, knowledge, values must be viewed and approved to be worthwhile on the society which includes those transmitting it and receiving it.
- iii. Education must involve the full and active participation of the learner leading to knowledge and

understanding, as well as, the development of critical thinking.

It is likely that it is on the above interpretations that Amaele (2010) opined that education should make the learner to develop the right sense of judgement and to accept the responsibility of his actions. From the views of R. S. Peters about education and the interpretations thereof, a working definition of education as offered by Amaku (2010) is adopted here for the purposes of this discussion. And this is: Education is a process of transmitting worthwhile knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of a community from one generation to another in order to make the members of that community to conform to the norms of the society.

Morality and Moral Education

Ordinarily, one would expect that the meaning of morality will, at least, be the same everywhere since we all share basic human attributes. But it needs be noted that there is a plurality of meanings as regard what morality is. The variation in meanings has led to the ideas of moral subjectivism and relativism. Philosophers of different epochs have diverse views with respect to what morality is all about. Aristotle holds that happiness is the goal of life and the standard of morality. The Epicureans opine that pleasure is the standard of moral judgement. For them, the end justifies the means. Jeremy Betham, one of the founding fathers of utilitarianism gave a broader meaning to this moral position by asserting that for a thing to be considered morally good, it must give the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people (Nyodee, 2014).

But what is Morality?

Etymologically, morality comes from the Latin word “moralis” meaning “custom or way of life” (Barclay, 2014). In a way,

morality is a sense of what is right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, just and unjust in human behaviour. Then, the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines morality as the principle of good behaviour. Also, in the same positive view, Akinpelu avers that morality is a social phenomenon whose aim is to secure a smooth and harmonious social relationship among human beings through fair and just consideration of the interests of all in the relationship. And then, Aristotle acknowledging the importance of morality among human beings contends that man must live in society unless he is either a beast or spirit. This therefore, invariably meant that human beings must interact among themselves as they live together in peace and harmony. Arguing further Aristotle posits that what guarantees this peace and harmony in the human society is the existence and application of code of action. And it is this code of action that is simply referred to as ‘morality’ which is the principle of right and wrong action (Onwuka, 2013).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that morality has to do with the principles of right and wrong behaviour. These principles therefore constitute a guide to human conduct, indicating certain kinds of actions and certain kinds of behaviour which should be avoided or adopted. Their functions are to protect and foster certain values, namely; the fundamental human values, such as respect for human life as the highest value on earth, the value of justice, the value of honesty, fidelity, human freedom and all the fundamental human rights (Idahosa, 20??). Morality in human conduct in the society stipulates the dos and don’ts in human action. Thus, the nature of morality is that it is binding on everybody in the society. That is why any society without some moral guides/codes is likely to be in disarray because morality by its very nature helps in

controlling the behaviour of man so that he can co-exist harmoniously with others in society.

Morality is tied to education; it is because of this that education is widely regarded as a moral enterprise. In fact, education involves such activities that seek to expand the mind, to give direction, to promote awareness, to allow us “to see” things which the under-educated do not see (Kneller, 1971). As a functional part of a society, its purpose is the inculcation of knowledge, values, skills and attitudes by means of instructions that have been created for this end. Thus, in practical terms, “man is neither concerned with knowledge for its own sake, nor with the production for immediate needs, but with living a distinctively human life of virtue and perfection” (Nwala, 1980). As such, the practice of education that is intended to give people moral direction or guidance is known as moral education. Put succinctly moral education is that education geared towards teaching people the principles of right and wrong behaviour. It is that form of education that is directed at encouraging the desirable and acceptable set of behavioural patterns and promoting the standards and values of a given society. Put conversely, moral education is aimed at discouraging negative and undesirable attitudes inherent in the same society (Osaat, Ekwe, 2012). And as an important aspect of education, moral education concerned itself mainly with the affective domain of the learning. It deals with the upbringing of the child to make the best decisions in life. These decisions could bring about positive transformation to the individual, the family, the local, the national and international communities. Moral education has to do with helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually lead good lives and at the same time become productive, and

contributing members of their communities. It is about character molding, positive attitudinal changes, dedication to duty, honesty, hardworking, perseverance, love, patience, truthfulness, etc. It is the form of education that shuns and discourages examination malpractice, indecent appearances, cultism, bribery and corruption, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, thuggery, brutality and other vices that have entrenched themselves in the contemporary society and schools (Ibekwe, 2015).

Moral inculcation and training is important and essential at the different stages of development of children; hence morality cannot be detached from education. Education devoid of morality can survive individuals in their different vocations but does not contribute towards the survival of the society. Education needs morality for the proper functioning of the individuals and consequently for the overall smoothness of the society. Thus, education and moral values cannot be treated in isolation (Akinsanya, 2015). Any education that fails to consciously inculcate the required moral values into the products is not worth its salt. Afterall, education implies worthwhileness. And so, what is worthwhile in any society should be anchored in its moral values. The degree of goodness and badness may vary from society to society but every society knows what is good and should be upheld, and what is bad, and should be avoided. To be educated therefore, implies bearing and upholding acceptable standards of behaviour and comportment which give meaning to existence (Amaele, 2015).

The Concept of Peace

In ethics or morality, the word ‘peace’ is used to characterize human relationships and attitudes or to determine an individual’s frame of mind, often qualified of inner peace. Peace also denotes the contrary of war which

is most frequently defined as a resort to armed struggle and hostilities in the laws of nations (Janasz, S., Kishore, S.). The BBC Oxford Advanced Dictionary of current English also defines or notes that peace is a situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence. It is a state of being calm and quiet. It is also a state of living in friendship with somebody without war. (Okonkwo, 2011).

Okonkwo also notes that peace can be understood in two major ways.

- i. In the negative narrow sense (i.e. reducing peace to absence or lack of war).
- ii. In the positive wider sense (i.e. absence or lack of war or violence often enriched by further demands and quarantees which make peace constructive, just and democratic).

Also, George Kaitholil says “peace is the presence of love”. Peace can mean tranquility, the state of being undisturbed, wellbeing of daily existence, harmony with oneself, one’s brothers and sisters, one’s world and one’s God. He also notes that peace is not merely the absence of war, but includes security, self-assurance, freedom from fear and undue restraint. He explains further that peace is concord of brotherhood and friendship, mutual confidence, being in good relationship with all. For him peace is healing the wounds of hurt feelings, of hatred and therefore peace is communion. This trend of thought underscores the fact that peace is a universal necessity and as such should characterize and permeate every aspect of our existence. Finally, Chukwu, (2011) opines that peace must be built on a foundation of truth, justice and love.

The trouble with Nigeria: where lies the Problem?

Today in the eyes of the world, Nigeria has become a morally decadent

society, a cesspool of crime and corruption, contorted entity, a benighted nation of criminals, hustlers and desperados. Many have said that Nigeria is dancing on the brink of collapse and that she is also on the verge of destruction. There are a lot of negative practices that work against our aspirations and chances of becoming a progressive and viable country. Such unwholesome actions as bribery and corruption, drug abuse among others continue to hold sway in Nigeria, and with the passage of everyday continue to worsen. And evidently the Nigerian youths who are supposed to be the biggest asset for the future development of the country are the worst culprits. In fact, this is against the universally acknowledged belief that meaningful and positive fundamental change across cultural setting are usually engineered, fostered or shaped by the generations of youths in a society (Idahosa, 2013).

This situation in Nigeria has been ascribed to many factors. Indeed, one of the major factors that has been pinned down as being responsible for the decadent situation in the country is the lack of a functional moral education. The youths constitute a large army of those who are deficit in moral education. This is so because a good number of Nigerian youths do not seem to show any ample dose of evidence of moral education received at school. They display little or no virtues in their actions. They engage in many unholy and immoral activities quite often, and so, constitute themselves into nuisance to society.

However, many of these youths give all sorts of reasons for their criminal and unwholesome acts. Some claim they go into crime to make ends meet. Others say they resort to vices because they are marginalized by very selfish elders and leaders at the helm of affairs in their communities. That the elders sideline them whenever any benefits accrue to the communities and that in order

to get the attention of these leaders to allow them partake and get their share, they resort to taking on elders headlong. These confrontations often result in the vices and unwholesome acts by the youths. Much as we have tried to trace the causes of underdevelopment of the youths who naturally should be the future leaders of this country, there are other factors that are contributing to this problem and the near absence of peace experienced in Nigeria. These factors include the following:

Tribalism: Nigeria is blessed with many ethnic groups which according to many should have been usefully organized as a potent tool of social integration that should enhance and foster national development. Rather than using this endowment to work for the progress of the country, Nigeria have employed tribal sentiments to perpetuate acts that are inimical to the peace and progress of the country. For instance, in many organizations and government circles tribal feelings have prevented the very qualified and professional individuals from being offered opportunities and employment. Instead, same mediocre persons are engaged. And this has always impacted negatively to the development and advancement of the country. With this, social injustice as well as mediocrity has been enthroned in Nigeria. This is a far cry from what obtains in advanced countries like America where individual sees himself first as an American before another considerations either ethnic or state affiliation.

Unjustified Vainness: Nigerians have been charged with living a flamboyant, ostentatious and false life. Our leaders go about living an imaginary and fairy land, and feelings as contented about their pseudo-achievements with little or no effort to move the country to a better level. This obviously is in contrast with the attitude of leaders in

countries of the world that have made real advancement in development. Such leaders have always been known to exhibit sober reflective and self-examining attitude searching for more opportunities to improve more on the welfare of their subjects and the progress of their countries.

Weak-willed Leadership: Another problem of Nigeria is the issue of weak leadership. Chinua Achebe (1983), noted this problem when he pointed to failure of leadership as obvious trouble with Nigeria. Achebe summarized this failure of leadership which is couched in the following points: (i) the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility (ii) the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership (iii) the lack of concern for the welfare of the citizenry (iv) the unwillingness on the part of the leaders to comply with the spirit and letters of the law (v) lack of political will to maintain their stand (vi) placing no value on the lives of the citizens of this country.

In fact, our leaders are very good in amassing wealth for themselves at the expense of providing quality and purposeful leadership. They should not ever be called leaders as they have become to us financial scavengers and economic drain pipes.

Un-patriotism: Patriotism is not just the profession of ones love to one's country. It goes beyond this to the performance of unselfish duties to one's country. In fact, a good number of Nigerians have been found to exhibit a very high level of un-patriotism in their services and duties to the country. Moral rectitude to support the performance of patriotic acts is lacking.

Moreover, state structures that support and enhance the carrying out of patriotic duties are not also in place. At least people can effectively perform their patriotic duties when the state organizes its structures

in such a way that the citizens can enjoy peace and justice.

Corruption: Corruption, among other vices, has been adjudged a very serious bane in the development and progress of Nigeria. It has not only reached an alarming rate but has also degenerated to a highly critical stage. It is apparently difficult to keep the average Nigerians entrusted with responsibilities without corruption. Corruption is often found among individuals in the corridor of power, especially among the high-ranking officers. Corrupt leaders now have a field day in Nigeria as they have become untouchable. Even monumental acts of corruption by these leaders are not punished. Evil is now endorsed. Today in Nigeria, federal properties are being sold to individuals (politicians), airports are flooded with more private jets than commercial planes, huge chunks of national funds are sunk into security, when even a moron knows that the poor have nothing to secure; rather these political gladiators are only securing their lives and accumulated wealth. Nigerians appear to be one of the most dishonest people under the sun; it is said that Nigeria cannot do without corruption.

Moral Education: A Tool for National Peace

It should be clear to any discerning Nigerian that the problem being experienced in Nigeria, have in one way or the other, been rooted in her bankrupt moral foundation. Any effort to revive Nigeria or retrieve her from the said vices that have messed her up will be a short-listed attempt if not an outright futile one if the problem is not tackled from its roots. This being the case, how do we save Nigeria from becoming a national tragedy. All hope is not lost because there is always a way out of every problem. Moreover, moral issues are not natural disasters as earthquake that do not need human intervention. Today,

the consequences of moral failure as well as moral decadence in Nigeria stare us very gravely in the face. Therefore, there is more than an urgent need to attend to these worrisome issues and experiences. Of course, the answers to these issues does not lie outside us. We do not need to import the solutions to these problems from elsewhere. The remedies lie in consciously and deliberately giving a moral education a central place in the educational processes and programmes in the country, whether in the formal or informal settings.

It is the patient, conscious and deliberate inculcation of moral behaviours and attitude in the citizens that can help to produce honest, just, accommodating, generous, caring and brotherly dispositions in the citizens. Moral practice should be encouraged at all times. In fact, it should be made a way of life for Nigerians. Moral education can be rendered at school, at home and even in places of work by tutors, elders and parents. It is best taught by example, practicing what is right and just in the presence of people, and more especially among children. it should not be seen as the responsibility of specialists and skilled trainers. Parents especially should be very serious and attentive towards the requirements of moral education of their children. childhood is the receptive period which impacts the overall development of an individual's personality. Parents should therefore be alert and careful about what their children are learning and from what source. They need be scrutinizing about the peer and friends their offspring might have, and take time out to make them understand what's right and wrong. Children are the foundation of any society, and the potential leaders of nations. Therefore, teachers as influencers of life styles must be careful of the moral training and basic qualities they should inculcate into the children. this is because

such quality of life will eventually affect the fortune of the country as a whole.

Moral education ought to be a must foundation study in schools and universities. Consequently, Plato (1970) in the laws asserts that; “if you control the way children play and the same children always the same game under the same rules and in the same conditions, and get pleasure from the same toys, you’ll find that the conversation of adult life too are left in peace”. Moral education of course is not only limited to youths. Adults must also be involved in moral regeneration, because for moral education to have the desired impact, the entire behavioural pattern of the society must conform to acceptable norms. A situation where the actions and lifestyles of adults are not seen to conform to the acceptable or desirable behavioural pattern in the society, puts a question mark in the moral pursuit in a society. This of course, would hardly encourage the youths to accept the moral training they are given in schools. The whole exercise would amount to contradiction. The adults especially, the political class needs this moral regeneration or retraining so that they do not continue to frustrate the Nigerian economy. If they exhibit enough evidence of this moral regeneration, the youths would be very disposed to their behaviour as a standard and try to emulate them (Osaat, 2012). It is hoped that by incorporating or rather giving moral education an intensive and enduring attention in schools (i.e. all levels of education) cases of drug abuse, diverse forms of crimes and emotional disorders among youths and adolescents would be greatly reduced if not eliminated.

In fact, the Association for supervision and curriculum Development, a national organisation concerned with curriculum and the improvement of teaching procedures developed a blue print for this effort. They compiled report outlining ways

to help better the current situation. They recommended more moral education in public school curricula; the development of clear guidelines for teachers so they can understand how to be character educators; the creation of a societal and cultural atmosphere that supports moral behaviour by having parents, schools, religious organizations, the media and all members of society working together to establish a positive environment. In addition, they advocated the incorporation of critical thinking and decision-making skills in moral education, and also suggested the use of regular assessments of the moral ambiance of schools. They also noted that new and positive behavioural patterns should be learned and adopted.

Moral education can be positively undertaken in Nigeria with the expected results, if some measures are consciously pursued. The measures are recommended as follows:

1. In a multicultural and religious country like Nigeria, moral education should be taught outside religion or culture. It should be taught through rational discourses and through the exemplary life of teachers and those who hold help positions of authority in our society.
2. Just as there is adequate punishment for offenders, there should also be adequate reward for those who excel both in character and intellectual achievement.
3. Moral education should encourage moral reflection. This could be achieved through reading, research, essay writing, discussion, debate, folktales, proverbs, wise sayings, relevant history of the country, the biographies of some outstanding Nigerians as well as those of international personalities.

4. Certificates issued by our institutions of learning should reflect a true and comprehensive process of education which must promote the three domains (cognitive, psychomotor and affective) of human life.
5. The task of moral education within and outside the school environment should be a collective one. Everyone, irrespective of status should be a full partaker in the crusade within and outside the school environment.
6. Programmes that could produce the kind of attributes and positive value traits of creativity, determination, self confidence that are needed for actualization of great potentials should be supported.
7. Proper and adequate attention should be given to our children as they grow into youthful age in order to prevent them from falling into the temptation of immorality.
8. Government should be proactive in their plans towards the basic needs of the citizens. Such as the provision of steady power supply, food, employment opportunities, good health and care services, roads, pipe borne water and free and compulsory education.
9. The seven point objectives stated by Fafunwa which lays much emphasis on character and values related education should be emphasized and encouraged in Nigeria.

Conclusion

If moral education in Nigeria is profitably executed and positive behavioural traits begin to manifest in an enduring manner, peace will certainly take its place in Nigeria. Peace is inherently one of man's greatest desire in society, yet it is very elusive because of some weaknesses or frailties that

man in society exhibit. Such weakness includes greed, intolerance, jealousy, anger, pride and such negative traits. These negative attributes in man naturally lead to misunderstanding, hatred, violence and war which are antithetic to peace. However, when the negative attributes in man are tamed through effective moral education, positive attitudes and virtues begin to show among humans interacting in with society. Such virtues as truthfulness, honesty, hard work, dedication to duty, patriotism, love, kindness, patience, justice and fair-play, obedience, forgiveness, tolerance and what individuals should cultivate to enthrone peace and progress in any given society. And so, for Nigeria to embark on a sound moral education, the virtues mentioned above should serve as topics in the curriculum specification of the study and instruction. Moreover, those assigned to execute the programme in a formal school setting should be adequately encouraged and remunerated.

Also, the youths that are put through this programme should be given adequate attention and closely monitored for effective results. The youths should be 'caught young' so that while they grow into adults the virtues should be powerfully ingrained in them and manifest in their interpersonal relationship with people. Also, everyone especially our scholars and our political leaders should use their positions to encourage these virtues, and also discourage those tendencies that are inimical to the cultivation of moral uprightness. With these efforts peace and progress would take the centre stage in the country, Nigeria.

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