

EDUCATION AND MORALITY IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

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ABSTRACT

Moral education is an aspect of education that has been left in limbo since 21st century and it has been noted that part of the reason is that parents, churches, schools, and the society has always viewed the whole issue of our human morality as an unnecessary aspect of human development. Thus, this article is therefore, an attempt to reflect on the moral aspect of education in Nigeria, this was achieved by clarifying the concepts of education, morality, culture and multi-culture and went further to discuss about morality and education using Nigeria as a case study. The authors assert that in order to address the issue of moral education in Nigeria, there is the need to re-visit the seven objectives stated by Fafunwa 1974 which laid emphasis on moral and values related education, and this can be achieved through a rational reconstruction of our culture and education.

INTRODUCTION

Education involves a process by which individuals are brought out from the shackles of ignorance into the illuminating light of knowledge, reforming and equipping them for the challenges of human life and existence. In its formal application it is means the consciously planned systematic impartation or acquisition of knowledge, skill and values in a system called school. A good education consists in giving to the body and the soul all the beauty and all the perfection of which they are capable. The concept of education necessarily implies that some changes for the better must occur and as a functional part of a total society, its purpose is "the inculcation of knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes by means of institutions that have been created for this end". Its purpose is to equip the student to fulfill himself in the larger society, where greater opportunity prevails, rather than to perpetuate old inequalities and disparities. Thus, this paper is structured to examine the place of education and morality in Nigeria in the face of multicultural challenges and in order to achieve its aim, a conceptual analysis of such major concepts as "Education", "Morality" and "Multi-culture" is given to strengthen the discuss.

The Concept of Education

Education as a concept has not been easy to define by both the ancient and modern philosophers and educationalists. What many of them have rather been able to do, is to focus attention on the various aspects of education. Hence, there is no definition of education that has been so comprehensive enough to attract universal acceptability because it can take volumes of books to define the concept "education" without coming to a consensus. The reason is that there are as many definitions to education as there are many who think about it. Education can be defined from the informal, formal or non-formal points of views. From the informal Sense, education becomes a conscious or unconscious transmission of knowledge, skills, morals (culture) from one generation to another. This can be acquired anywhere, anytime, by anybody. Formally, education could be a conscious and systematic attempt made by the society (through the organized institutions) to teach skills, knowledge, values of the society to the child to enable him become better and function well in the society. It has duration, curriculum, specified teachers, and environment. Education also can be received from the non-formal sense, where mini formal orientations are applied. (Amaele, 2010).

However, for the purpose of clarification, we shall examine some definitions of education. When education is considered in the strict sense, one is thinking of what happens within the school. The etymological definition of education gave rise to two schools of thought. One school of thought holds that education comes from the Latin word "*educere*" which means to "*lead out*". This philosophical school holds that the learner has innate ideas which only need to be squeezed or pulled out and expanded. The second school of thought holds that education originated from the Latin word "*educare*" which means "to *mould*" or "to *make*". They believe that the child or learner's mind is a "*tabula rasa*". In other words, when a child is born, the mind is like a blank or erased slate on which to write. It is the sensation which comes from external objects that put impressions on the mind and gives it pieces of information and knowledge. (Amaele, 2017).

Education can be defined in sociological terms. An example is Cremin's definition. He says that education is a deliberate systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, values, attitude, skills and sensibilities. For Durkheim, "Education is the systematic socialization of the younger generation by which the latter learns religious and moral beliefs, feelings of nationality and collective opinions of all kinds". (Rusk, 1985).

Philosophical definition of education includes locating the teaching and learning activity necessarily given in a society. The word "education" can be considered either in a broad sense or a strict sense. When education is considered in the broad sense, it will include all those processes through which one acquires the experiences which enables him/her to gain new knowledge or argument the already existing knowledge. This definition includes the experience one gains both within and outside the school such as experience in the home, church or mosque, in the market or workshop.

Aim and Objectives of Education

The ultimate aim of education is the same for all men in all places and at all times. It is the intellectual formation of the individual with a balance attained within the spiritual, moral, and other aspects of human development. Any practice, be it social or religious or even moral will not be taken if it has no positive contributive value to the entire and holistic formation of the person. This is made possible through the various educational personnel and the contents of study.

The Concept of Morality

The term "Morality" covers a vast arena of human conduct that examines our interaction with ether human beings. Morality touches every aspect and every moment of our life. Our morality governs all of our contacts with members of our family, with our co-workers, with our church, and with all aspects of our government. Morality determines our attitude to politics, to war and peace, to our children, to our parents and to spiritual questions such as life after death.

When we discuss morality, we do not talk about an obtuse philosophical concept, we talk about the totality of our everyday existence. If we want to be effective in our interaction with other human beings, it behooves us to understand the concept of morality with all its nuances and implications. Morality concerns itself exclusively with interactions among human beings. The human concept of morality has been the subject of controversy and has provided fuel for many heated philosophical discourses during the entire range of human history.

Morality as a concept is the ability to establish differences between that ought to be done and what ought not to be done. This is related to conduct of individual's behaviors or attitudes. It deals with the goodness and badness of an action, character and disposition. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines morality as the principles of good behavior. Morality provides the rules by which people love each other, fight with each other in every conceivable way. From the able definitions, it is imperative to uphold that morality deals with human behavior to his fellow human beings. Such behavior may be acceptable

or unacceptable within the Society. It is expected that reasons must be given for any action taken by an individual in the Society. Morality, therefore, as a social phenomenon involves the evaluation of the consequences of our actions for others and their actions towards us.

Multi-Culture

Culture is a universal concept and experience. How do we define such an overwhelming aggregate of individual and collective life? It is the established pattern of behavior among a people. It is an all-embracing and heterogeneous concept that encompasses every aspect of a man's life and experiences. It is perceived as a way of life, or the totality of all human efforts and achievements in the struggle for survival in the midst of unfriendly and militant forces of nature. It is a collective and integrated whole, comprising everything about man's ideas, behaviors and products, or anything relating to his need as a social being. It includes everything that makes man what he is, as well as the heritage he possesses. It finds expression in his religion, language, philosophy, music, dance, drama, architecture, political organization, technology and so on. (Ajayi, 2005).

One of the earliest and by far the most popular anthropological definition of culture was given in 1871 by Edward Burnett Tylor. According to him "Culture or civilization, taken in its wild ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". By 1910, American anthropologists were using the concept to refer to distinctive groups of traits characterizing particular tribal or ethnic groups of societies. In the 1903s, Ruth Benedict discussed culture as a pattern of thinking and doing that runs through the activities of a people and distinguishes them from all other peoples. In later years, culture became a term used to describe the distinctive human mode of adapting to the environment as well as molding nature to conform to man's desires and goals, (Ibid). According to Wisler (1923), (NTI), the basic content of culture includes:

- a. Speech which includes languages and writing system.
- b. Material traits and food habits, shelter, transportation, dress, utensils, tools, occupations and industries.
- c. Art-carving, painting, drawing, music, dance.
- d. Mythology and scientific knowledge
- e. Religious practices-ritualistic forms, care of the dead
- f. Family and social practices-marriage, inheritance, social control, sports and games, method of reckoning relationships.
- g. Property-real and personal;
- h. Standards of value and exchange and trade
- i. Government, political and judicial forms
- j. Warfare.

Multi-cultural society is a concept that is used to describe the cultural diversities that exist in a particular society. A society that has more than one culture and ethnic group can be said to be a multicultural society. This is a society where a variety of diverse cultures coexist for common social, economic and political goal. The concept of multicultural society refers to a vision of a society, where people with different nationalities, languages, religions and ethnicities live and co-exist together. (Mendie, 2015).

Many countries around the world are culturally diverse, because in such countries they have diverse languages, belief systems (religious beliefs), and cultural practices, Nigeria is one example with the Annangas, Igbos, Yorubas, Hausas, Fulanis, Efiks, Ibibios, Tiv and many others. Some of these ethnic

groups apart from Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba belong to the minority in terms of equal representation and participation in national development. Diversity in sense manifests in the people's culture, language and religion. Different cultures have different days in which they celebrate the cultural heritage of their people. Furthermore, multiculturalism through diversity can manifest in the language, boundary and historical background of society that makes it different from any other society, thus it seeks for the recognition of minority cultures than assimilation, every other culture is important and has the right to be respected. (Ibid)

Education and Morality

Today's education is more in adverse situation than in the yester years. The stress and strain on our educational system is already being revealed in the contours of our educational terrain. The cascade of ideas daily making their overtures to be integrated into the educational ideology of Nigeria is alarming. Some of these ideas are unsuitable to our peculiar existential circumstance. Their application or absorption into our educational diet may produce negative and doleful circumstances in the end. The philosophy of the "end" justifying the "means" or the means justifying the end cannot be appropriate in this case. One must justify the other. The end must justify the means and the means the end. (Uduigwomen, & Ogbinaka, 1999). In a society where education is viewed as a means to an end and in which a low level of value is placed on the worth of education for its own sake or for the sake of character enrichment, both the student and the educational institution suffers.

Education is widely regarded as a moral enterprise. It presupposes ideas about the nature of knowledge and of what is valuable. It is that field of activity which seeks to expand the mind, to give direction, to promote awareness, to allow us "to see" things which the undereducated do not see. And as a functional part of a total society, its purpose is "the inculcation of knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes by means of institutions that have been created for this end". (Ibid). Its purpose is to equip the student to fulfill himself in the larger society, where greater opportunity prevails, rather than to perpetuate old inequalities and disparities.

Education and Morality in A Multi-Cultural Society: A Philosophical Appraisal of The Nigerian Society

Nigeria is a diversified country with different beautiful cultures and has been envied for its culture richness, its variety in cuisine and dish, her people's colorful apparel alongside their tasty traditions, dance, primitive societal structure, religion, just to mention a micro few. The ethnicity of Nigeria is so varied that there is no universal definition of a Nigeria beyond that of someone who lives within the borders of the country, Nigeria. About three hundred ethnic groups comprise the population of Nigeria. The three largest and most dominant ethnic groups are the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (pronounced ee-bo). Other smaller groups include the Fulani, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, and Edo. Prior to their conquest by Europeans, these ethnic groups had separate and independent histories. Their grouping together into a single entity known as Nigeria was a construct of their British colonizers, drawn to serve commercial interests, largely without regard for the territorial claims of the indigenous people. These various ethnic groups never considered themselves part of the same culture. This general lack of Nigerian nationalism coupled with an ever-changing and often ethnically biased national leadership, have led to severe internal ethnic conflicts and a civil war. Eight attempts at secession threatened national unity between 1914 and 1977. The epic "Biafra war" was the last of the secessionist movements within this period.

However, it must be established that in times past, the country (Nigeria) has suffered a heavy and long halt preventing her from making giant strides as a rich black nation ought to, a big thank you to the anchor called ethnicity. Every ethnic group wants to be recognized, as such, the scramble for

power has plunged the country into coups, civil wars and could be argued to have contributed to the event of insurgency. Nigeria party politics has been polluted by ethnic chauvinism. This problem is one of the major qualms confronting the progress of moral education in Nigeria, to the extent that ethnic sentiment has gradually crept in, to find a place in every facade of Nigerian educational activity. Ethnic sentiment has been one of the factors responsible for most of the inefficiencies and low productivity in Nigeria. (Nky & Otike-Odibi, 2014). At present, it is difficult to determine what is right from wrong or good from bad in Nigeria. There is neither the fear nor regard for parents, teachers, elders and leaders when cultist, kidnappers, robbers, fraudsters, rapists, murderers and other criminals are let loose and respected. Sometimes they are recommended and given leadership position at the local, state and national levels. Like wildfire, corruption has spread through every sector of the country and most Nigerians would unflinchingly agree that corruption begets the plethora of problems the country faces today. The menace of corruption in Nigeria is one that different government administrations have publicly recognized and tried to tackle against. Unfortunately, these administrations were unable to eradicate, or even significantly curb, corruption. As in other liberal democratic nations around the world, the diversified population of Nigeria raises new challenges for education. A first step towards living peacefully and having a productive and flourishing life in multicultural societies is to educate children to respect and benefit from the diversity within which they live. Plato in the *Republic*, proposed the kind of education that would help bring about a world in which man and society are moved as they are capable of moving towards the good, To Aristotle, happiness, the chief good of life is dependent upon a virtuous and well-ordered soul that can only come about as one develops habits of virtue that are shaped through the proper kind of education. (Ibid)

According to the educational philosopher John Dewey, sustainable growth in society can be attained in diversity. If a given community elects to reward only a small number of functions produced by a selected segment of the population, that society is to be condemned. In other words, Dewey believed that the key to survival is diversity, not homogeneity. (Dewey, 1992,1983). While he acknowledged individual differences and inequality in the physical and cognitive performances of various tasks, he also argued that a democratic community is primarily concerned with moral equality. From this perspective, the initial aim of education is to aid all to achieve their unique potential and to make their unique contribution to society. (Hora, 2016). Dewey goes to on declare that through creative inquiry the world can be transformed. According to Dewey, diversity provides alternatives, whereas isolationism reduces freedom because it reduces the capacity to think of alternative possible choices and actions. In this interpretation of freedom, creativity, dialogue and pluralistic democracy are optimal ways for sustaining growth in society. (Ibid). But how might moral education contribute to the development of these societies?

Writing on the *historical foundation of western and Nigerian education*, Ogbondah (2016) asserts that education is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or guarantee rational direction of the society and the aim of Nigerian education is to inculcate national consciousness and unity, values and attitudes for the survival of in the individual and the Nigerian society. (Ogbondah, 2016). To Fafunwa, education is the aggregate of all process by which a child or young adult develop the abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviours that are positive values to the society in which he lives. (Fafunwa, 1991). For him (Fafunwa), the cardinal aims of education include;

- a. To develop the child's latent physical skills
- b. To develop intellectual skills
- c. To indicate respect for elders and those in authority
- d. To develop the child's character
- e. To develop a sense of belongings, participate actively in family and community affairs

- f. To acquire specific vocational training and develop healthy attitudes to honest labour to understand, appreciate and promote cultural heritage of the community at large.

Education is much more than acquiring basic skills in language, mathematics and digital tools, despite the emphasis on basic skills explicitly expressed in the Knowledge Promotion curricula. In educational institutions ways of life, attitudes, values and norms are legitimized and conveyed to the upcoming generation. This is also stated in the national educational goals of Nigeria:

- a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- b. The inculcation of the right type of values and articles for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society
- c. The terming of the mind in the understanding of the word around and
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

The national policy on education naturally enough, contains normative phrases prescribing the direction in which the children are to be influenced. In these educational institutions, children of different gender, ethnicity, religion and social class meet for one purpose which is education. The schools are important arenas of socialization, where the term 'socialization' refers to the process by which a child develops into a unique individual at the same time, as he becomes part of the society and the culture. Since the influence of values and attitudes in the broadest sense represents a key element of the socialization that goes on within both the family and the school, the implicit assumption is that the set of values and attitudes that are instilled in the children is generally considered to apply for society. With the cooperation and understanding of the home, the education offered in the schools and training establishments opens doors to the world and the future, and gives pupils and apprentices historical and cultural insight and grounding. (Ibid)

An education that is inevitably influenced by different cultural factors, including religious and philosophical affiliations and related perceptions of reality, views of humanity, and values, irrespective of the background of the children gives rise to a challenge, because how is education supposed to socialize the children into the society and also influence them culturally, when the parents' wishes for their children are so diffuse due to their respective cultural and religious backgrounds? The solution lies in drawing a distinction between what types of differences can be tolerated by wider society and what should be clamped down on by means of argumentation and shrewdness and, if necessary, by forcible means. (Ibid)

The Way Forward

There is need to revisit the seven-point objectives stated by Fafunwa which lays much more emphasis on character and values related education, believing that when this aspect of man is made right, other aspects will be right. In other words, if the affective domain is not put right, it will be difficult to get the other domain right.

One way of modernizing, integrating and blending the seven-point objectives stated by Fafunwa with our current way of life is to apply a rational reconstruction of our Nigerian culture particularly our thinking, beliefs and practices. The application of rational reconstruction will help demonstrate some of our traditions, and to convince others that we to had a rich culture that we could be proud of (Omordu & Amaele, 2014). The application of rational reconstruction will help develop a well patterned curriculum based on the Nigerian view of who man is, the type of Society man should live in, the type of things to be values and help us to teach our youths to define themselves as Nigerians and to determine their essential characteristics as Nigerians and become conscious of the fact that they are Nigerians and live and act with that consciousness. Its application will also help

with the development of man and not materials, a man of good character, a man who develops his skills and knowledge to maximum capacity, so as to provide services to others first and himself last. (Ibid)

CONCLUSION

We should realize that even the best laws, policies and programs, though sanctioned by every citizen will be of no importance unless the youths are trained habitually in proper moral education. We need a type of moral education that will develop our potentials and at the same time enrich us with new stock of knowledge. This is the type that will cultivate a genuine value in us, that which will incite and sharpen our technical disposition. We need the moral education that will be textured in both national and development consciousness. To take this posture, this moral education must nurture and foster the spirit of patriotism, pride for our nation, loyalty and love for our country. Only a moral education with this texture can build our nation towards posterity. This is because if the person is well trained, the person will have the sky as the starting point when it comes to the possession of knowledge. When it comes to confronting challenges in life, the person will either win or resist surrendering to such situation.

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