



# Education and Morality in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Society

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## Abstract

Education is a social system consciously, conscientiously consistently and systematically set to produce the quality manpower expected to take their rightful places in the society. This social system or human development project in some cases runs from birth to adulthood, as it takes care of every aspect of the individual's Life. The three major departments which every sound education system covers in the individual's Life are the cognitive, the Affective and the Psycho motor domains. This otherwise refers to the mental, moral and physical development of the person. This paper X- rays the place of education in dealing with the moral challenges of persons in a multi-cultural and multi-Religious society like Nigeria. The paper applies a philosophical approach as it deals with the analysis of some key concepts that inform the topic such as: education, morality, multi-cultural and multi-Religious society. The study reveals the diverse moral challenges in complex societies which reduces morality to the level of subjectivity. This then paralyses the general understanding of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done within an inter-cultural and inter religious setting. Therefore the study strongly recommends, among other measures, a general overhaul of the nation School system, and the application of the rational moral principles as the way forward to multi-cultural and multi-Religious moral sentiments already in existence.

**Keywords:** Education, morality, multi-cultural, multi-religious, society.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary societies are highly infected with diverse negative behaviours, attitudes, characters and actions. While there are daily increase of institutions of learning established from the pre-primary to the tertiary levels and the more than equal school enrolment of pupils and student at all levels of learning, the daily reports of vices in the society seem not justify the fact that education has any strong moral bearings on its products. The Nigeria case is much more worrisome, given the fact that a lot of wickedness exhibited today is championed by men and women, youths inclusive who have passed through one level of our institution of learning or the other.

From the process of evolving into leadership positions at all levels, to the governance itself and to the governed, there are cases of self imposition, self interest as against public interest, leading to the unfair treatment of political opponents, character assassination, killing, kidnapping, bribing, corruption, among others. These greed infested behaviours are not only limited to the executive arms of government alone, but very obvious at the Legislative and judicial arms of government. In the case of the legislatures, we are informed that as much as one hundred and fifty billion Naira is carved out of the nation's budget annually and emptied into the purse of our national assembly. The judiciary has also lost its integrity as some of the judgments read in the recent times do not suggest an institution of integrity. The tertiary institutions in Nigeria is branched with a lot of sad stories where some lecturers abandoned their duties as character molders and human builders to mean and unethical behaviours of demanding from students in cash or in kind or both to pass courses. The scenario raises a lot of moral questions on the personalities that inform the reformation of the education institutions. What is reported at the tertiary level of about the teachers' moral credibility, cut across other levels; such as the primary and post-primary.

Unfortunately, the products at the various levels of the school system; call it primary, secondary or tertiary appear to be more polluted than their teachers. Much more interest is shown in grabbing high scores than in learning since it could be possible, sometimes in cash or kind or both. The Spirit of hard work, dedication, honesty, integrity and such positive virtues are disregarded, sometimes due to diverse cultural and religious interpretation which informed their earlier lives and backgrounds, coupled with the contemporary predicaments.

The tragedy is that the society is filled up with school products that are not actually educated or highly developed, morality wise. These people turn out to occupy political, economic, social, religious positions in the society. Some of them indeed turn out to become teachers, at various levels of our school systems. The prostitutes, the armed robbers, the kidnappers, the political thugs and god fathers, the cultists and others who even fuel the Boko-Haram cases could be products of our education system. They are also products of the diverse cultural and religious entities of the wider society. This paper is set to examine the place of education in reshaping the moral integrity of Nigerians in the face of the multi-cultural and multi-religious challenges. Hence, the analysis of such major concept as "Education", "morality", "multi-cultural" and "multi-religious" society would strengthen the discuss.

## **CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

### **The Concept of Education**

"Education" is a process, deliberately planned and systematically executed to produce the "educated". Every education system has the basic aim of producing the right persons for the society. What then is the "right person" or "the educated" depends on the type of society. Ezewu (1983:78) argues that "Educational aims direct the educative process". He defended the above argument with reference to few historical citations starting from the Greeks. According to Him, the two major states of Greece that emerged in 450 BC were Spartans and Athens. Each of them differed in their education systems determined by their differing aims. For the Spartans the fear of the reprisal attack from the Helots (neighbour) who were more populated than

them made them to adopt an aim of education which was the production of “audacious and military men”. To achieve such aim the state directed the entire educative process by:

- Limiting individual’s natural wants, desires and passions
- Subordinating the individual’s will to the will of the state to the extent that the state owned the child both in body and soul:
- Compulsorily making every free citizen of the state a soldier.

In contrast to the Spartans, the Athenians were democratic in nature and believed more of intrinsic values rather than extrinsic. Hence they set the aim of their education on:

- The development of sound moral conduct
- The development of sound physical body and
- The development of intellectual competence (Ezewu, pp. 78-79)

The two contrasting features proved the point that the education aims and processes can vary depending on what the society needs. It is a social institution to produce the type of individuals that can fit into the needs of such society. This opinion does not, however, nullify the strong view that the individual unique potentials should not be unnecessarily compromised. This underscores the marriage of the two etymological concept of education “Educare” and “educere”.

The concept education is derived from the Greek root word “educare” and “educere”. Educare views education as a process of building, forming or molding the individual to the acceptable standard and needs of the society. Education in this perspective is sociological loaded. It favours the social interest even when the unique individual potentials may be compromised. Whereas, the other root word “educere” views education as the process of leading, guiding, and encouraging the individual to develop his inbuilt potentials for his interest and for the interest of the society. This approach to the concept “education” is humanistic as it takes due cognizance of the individual child’s unique potentials (Hirst & Peters, 1970; Amaele, 2010).

The issue, however, is that education, irrespective of the society, the age and race must be set on the standard that would explore the genuine inborn qualities of the individual without undermining the genuine needs of the society. The individual potentials must be addressed through procedures, methods, techniques and adequate personnel and environment. The education of the individual citizens must be adequate, qualitative and standard so as to produce the right calibre of people who would direct the diverse sectors of the society.

In light of the above Peters (1966), Frankena (1978), Akinpelu (1981) and Amaele (2010) agree that education:

- Implies the transmission of what is with white to those who are committed to it.
- Must involve knowledge and understanding as well as some kind of cognition, which are not inert
- At least rules out some procedures of transmission on the ground that they lack willingness and witness on the part of the learner (Amaele, 2010, p. 54)

## **The Concept of Morality**

Morality is a philosophical concept which falls under the wider or broad branch known as Axiology. It does not have a very easy definition because different schools of thought hold different views of morality and moral values. For instance, one of the earliest moral philosopher Aristotle (a realist) viewed morality as a disposition whereby man is pronounced good by the fact that he is good in himself and functions in a good way. Morality here is identified with goodness, which is not only pronounced but also observed.

Morality, indeed, is a concept that deals with the principles concerning what is right or wrong and what is good and bad. But the problem is who actually determines the right and the wrong or the good and bad, and how it is determined. The issue here is that what seems to be “right” in society “A” might be frowned at in society “B” and Verse-Versa. In Nigeria, for instance, where there is multi-cultural and multi-religious existence, while the Islamic and traditional faith allows polygamy in marriage, the Christian Faith emphasizes on monogamy.

Stressing on the concept morality Schofield (1972) states that the term morals implies “behaviour”, and the adjectives “moral” or “Immoral” suggests behaviour which is accepted and unaccepted. According to him since norms or standard are established by society, there is a link between all three concepts of: value judgment, values and morals. The argument is that when a society establishes its standard of good and bad behaviour, such society is making a value- judgment, because it is saying that some forms of behaviours are more socially acceptable than others. This implies that the ability to understand and to identify with the available value judgments of a society is morality.

The views of Nduka (1983) and Amaele (2010) are not too far away from the above. The two uphold morality as behaviour in accordance with certain standards of what is right and good to be done and what is wrong and evil to be rejected by the members of the society. Omoregbe (1993) perceives morality as a means to an end. According to him actions that are intended to bring good result for those concerned are moral actions and should be encouraged while those intended to bring about bad result are immoral and should be discouraged. In this argument, to perform an action is to use the action as a means to an end, as an instrument used for the attainment of certain objective (s). Hence, if the end aimed at evil, the action as a whole is evil, notwithstanding if the means employed is good, since it is believed that a good means cannot justify an evil end. The definition and the illustration above, however, suggest that morality could be defined, further as the concerns for action that could be defended as good or rejected as evil by rational man. The word rational man is purposeful for action taken; good or bad must be defended, individually or collectively. This further warns that actions performed under unfounded religious extremism, biased and unsound mind, could be dangerous, especially in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

## **Multi-cultural**

Culture is commonly refers to as people’s way of life. This expression has deeper interpretation, since the process of life entails all facts of human activities. The Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary, International Students Edition defines culture as “the customs and beliefs, arts, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group”. Biesanz in Okujagu (2003, p. 38) affirm that culture is:

Configuration of learned and shared pattern of things, ideas, emotions, and actions, which arise out of language communication within a social group and that helps individual to adapt to his physical environment. In general, culture is the learned portion of human behaviour, their ways of feeling, thinking and doing things.

Indeed, culture is made up of members of the society, their work, their way of living, relationship network, their attitude to life, the focus of groups’ loyalties and discipline, as well as the way they perceive the world. This no doubt, explains why Taylor (1871) cited by Okujagu (2003) remains a serious reference point. He posits that culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture, therefore, is society in action. Every society has its own culture which is unique to it. The basic functions of culture world over include that it provides means of communication either through language or symbols, makes possible regularity of behavior or response that can be anticipated, provides methods of training young ones into the group ways of thinking and acting. It also provides knowledge and skills necessary for meeting our basic needs of food,

clothing and shelter as well as provides a means of identification with self and others in similar category and background.

The concept of multi-cultural society comes where different groups of people, each with its own unique cultural exposure come together to life and interact among themselves. In situations like this, each sub-cultural group identify themselves as belonging to a particular society, in which case these appear to be cultural relativism or cultural subjectivism. Each of the major cities in Nigeria, such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kano, Kaduna, Ibadan, Onitsha, Abuja, among others are clear examples of multi-cultural societies. Nigeria as a nation is typical example of a multi-cultural society, keeping together over two hundred different sub-cultural groups or nations as one. The major diverse cultural societies in Nigeria include the Ibos, Yorubas, Hausas, Fulanis, Effik, Nupe, Ijaw, among others.

### **Multi-Religious Society**

Religion as a concept has also been subjected to diverse definitions and interpretations. The concept mean different things to different people. To the reductionists for instance, religion is whatever anybody believes in very strongly. According to them anybody has his or her own religion based on whatever he or she believes. In the reductionist view, if a person believes strongly in science, or in humanism, or in making money or in Maxims, that becomes his own religion (Amaele, 2010, p. 13)

The word religion cannot be taken too common to the point of the reductionists. However, the term “religion” essentially suggests a relationship, a link established between tow “person” (the human and the super-human), believed to exist. It is something which unites man with a supernatural being (force), believed to exist and worshipped by man. Omoregbe (1993, p. 3) projects religion, essentially, as “a bi-polar phenomenon”. According to him, on one side is man (the religious man) and on the other side is the transcendent being (the deity he believes and worships). Bouquet cited in Amaele (2010, p. 89) agree that religion “is a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply – God.”

Religion is part of the cultural life of people. They believe and practice system of the people is built into the life of members from generation to generation. Because many different people beliefs in different things and even there are sameness in the belief system among societies, cultural diversities inform divers practice system. A macro society that is made up of sub-cultural (micro) societies surely will experience religious diversities, hence, a multi-religious society. In such a macro society, if reason and wisdom do not prevail there could be anarchy. This is one major challenge of a typical multi-religious Nigeria’s society is grappling with. Nigeria is not only a multi-cultural society; a country hosting together all over two hundred sub-ethnic or cultural groups, but also a multi-religious country. Apart from other countless splinter religious manifestations in Nigeria, there are the major trios of traditional religion, Islamic Religion and Christian religion, each of these claim supremacy in its major domain and sometimes tries to super impose itself on the others. This situation is worsened when gaps are created in these religions for religious militants and extremists. The Boko Haram incidence (terrorism) in Nigeria today is a clear example.

### **The Relationship between Religion and Morality**

The studies so far have revealed that every society is embodied with its cultural and religious practices. These practices affect and influence the moral standard of the people. In a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, like Nigeria, it becomes difficult to determine which religion(s) should form the cure moral principles of the people. This is so critical because every religion has its unique moral code(s).

There is a view expressed by some Scholars, equating religion with morality. According to them, religion and morality are inseparable. This argument maintains that there can be no morality without religion. To them, every good man, even though he has no identified religion (an atheist), is necessarily a religious man, for if he were not religious, he would not have been good, because there can be no morality without

religion. Nzerem in Nduka (1983), for instance, contends that morality cannot exist without religion, stressing that the two are inseparable.

Opposed to the early view, Kosemani (1990) cautions that religion should be treated as a private institution and morality treated on public principles. But on the argument as to whether there could be morality without religion, both Nduka and Akinpelu (1983) maintain that morality is quite distinct from religion, positing that morality is logically independent of religion. Adewole (1990) favours the position of Nduka and Akinpelu, stating that there is no relationship between religion and morality. He warns that moral programmes should owe nothing from religion. One can observe that religion though is important, if properly handled for the moral development of its members, through its moral code(s), but cannot simply be equated to morality. Every religion has its moral codes, this implies that religion needs morality, but morality may or may not necessarily need religion. Morality could be practiced through religious perspective, philosophical perspective or humanistic perspective. The benchmark on the arguments so far is that the type of society could determine the type of moral principles. A society that is consciously tied to a religion could be guided by the moral code of that religion. But of the society is secular in nature or is multi-religious, such a society may have some moral crisis, since it would be difficult to hold to a particular religion's moral code. In such a situation reasons should prevail.

Aniagwu (1983) is a strong contender of this view, arguing that both religious and secular approaches to morality are appropriate in their distinct environments or circumstances. He argues that it will be wrong to teach morality through religion in a secular or multi-cultural society, as it will also be wrong to teach secular morality in a religiously tied society. In other words, Aniagwu holds that morality should be approached differently in an open society from a closed or religious society. What then can education do to address the issue of morality in a multi-cultural and multi-religious Nation of Nigeria?

### **Education and Morality in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Society**

Nigeria, a nation of nations, is presently at the peak of moral crisis. If the moral ailment of the nation is diagnosed medically it has reached its chronic stage, only to be saved by a stronger interventionist force. No doubt Nigeria is both a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. With a population of about hundred and sixty million people, cutting across diverse religious and cultural groups, the nation is in serious search for a strongly, united well focused, unbiased, systematic, comprehensive moral re-engineering force. This of course falls in the sure of a comprehensive quality and standard education system.

At present, it is difficult to determine what is right from wrong or good from bad in Nigeria. Morality and even religion have become privatized that everybody be he or she a leader or a follower, thinks what he or she is doing is the best. But morality and religion is so personalized that even the parents practice their different from their little children. Family standard has become history. The same is applicable to the various communities. There is neither the fear nor regard for elders, leaders when the ancestors, gods or God as 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.

The various institutions in the country, ranging from the government to the private have their respective ugly tales. Corruption has been given feathers to fly over and above genuine practices in our institutions of learning: lower, middle or higher. Handwork is rather encouraged or maintained in most cases. Sexual gratification, sorting, examination malpractice, cultism, alcoholism are some negative features of our institutions. The political seems has become an eyesore. People use diverse wicked instrument to snatch power from people, with eye on the nation's wealth not the fate of the common people. Greed and sexiness become their mandate.

The economy siphoned, most at times to enrich foreign country. Poverty and suffering triumphs in a country supposed to be an economic empire of Africa and the world. The various religious groups have not proved otherwise, since even the religious morality some of them profess is not consistently followed in most cases. The greed and other moral lapses experienced in other institutions in the country are also identified in

the nation's diverse religious entities. The rampant killing of Innocent citizens of this country, which also form part of the happening in the global community, in the name of religion cannot be depended under any religious morality.

The truth is that one of the nation's greatest challenges is a shift to sound, quality and sustainable moral education. Although, the present education system has been badly injured, there is the urgent need to heal it for it to heal the nation. Education is the best option any society can use to inculcate the right of values, especially moral values. The early Greek Philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle laid credence to this view. To Socrates, the ultimate desire for knowledge is for man to live morally upright in life. He (Socrates) taught virtues and also practiced it till death (Amaele, 2010, p.1)

Plato, in his book "The Republic", cited by Amaele (2010) argues that moral standards are unchangeable and those laws that are approved must not change. He emphasizes that moral training (education) should begin from the primary or even pre-primary stages of education.

Aristotle, also makes moral education a central feature in his Philosophy, arguing that education is demonstrated as a practical wisdom which, according to him is the moral insight of a virtuous man. Aristotle argues that a man is said to be morally virtuous only he understands the principles which guides his actions and why he should obey such principles (Amaele, 2010). Studies have revealed that there is a strong relationship between qualify education and sound morality. Waiting on traditional education Fafunwa (1974) listed out seven cardinal aims as:

- To develop the learners physical skill
- To develop the child's character
- To indicate respect for elders and those in authority
- To develop intellectual skills
- To acquire specific vocational terming and develop healthy attitudes to honest labour
- To develop a sense of belongings participate actively in family and community affairs: and

To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community as a whole.

From the above cardinal aims, it is obvious to affirm that moral and it related values occupy the most central position in traditional education. The Islamic and Christian education systems in Nigeria also emphasize on "morality" in their own perspectives. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) in Nigeria is not silent in the inculcation of moral values, among its products. Section 1(7) of the 2004 edition of policy document states:

The national educational goals which derive from the philosophy are therefore:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- The inculcation of the right type of values and articles for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society:
- The terming of the mind in the understanding of the word around: and
- 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.

Sub-section 8 of the cited policy goes further to emphasis that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented toward inculcating the following value:

- Respect for the writer and dignity of the individual
- Faith in mans ability to make national decisions
- Moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations

- Shared responsibility for the common good of society
- Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all Children and
- Acquisition of competences necessary for self reliance.

A detailed evaluation of the above outlines reveals that morality, especially “national morality” is adequately addressed, at least, at the set objective levels, cutting across the various stages from primary to the tertiary. The question then is “has Nigeria education adequately responded to the set goals, especially as it relates to morality? It is difficult to say yes, but easy to say no. Recently, the Dean of the Church of Nigeria, Anglican communion, His Grace, Archbishop Ignatius O. C Kattety while thanking Nigeria for their release from the hand of his kidnappers, having spent nine days in their hands, regretted that some of the kidnappers are graduates and students of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. This is just one of the numerous other expressions of immoral behaviours recorded daily in Nigeria, against Nigerians who are products of the various levels of the education system.

Education can only give the nation what the nation gives to it. The six months industrial action embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) between July-December 2013 and the “I don’t care” attitude approach shown by the government and eminent Nigerians, to it, is a clear indication that there is a wide gap between the set objectives and the attitudes to achieve the said objectives. That alone raises enough moral questions on the society. If Nigerian education should achieve the much desired moral standard, the entire system and people of Nigeria need a general and realistic over-hauling.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Morality is an essential ingredient and indeed a vital aspect of education, because the society expects high moral integrity from the educated person. But our study has revealed that the moral credentials of so many Nigerians who have passed through some levels of the nation education system have greatly fallen. This revelation contrasts with the set objectives of Nigeria education which place high premium on moral and other values.

Nigeria, no doubt, is a multi-cultural and multi-religious society which by nature is inbuilt with diverse moral principles. Unfortunately, a lot of immoral practices and other abnormal behaviours executed under religious disguise do not, sincerely, reflect the truth of such religious manifestations. Sometimes sentiments and biases manifest from the undeveloped religious mind and graduate to create major crisis beyond the shores of the immediate cultural environment, as it extends to the diverse parts of the country. The complex nature of the nation, culturally and religiously, suggests that a multi-cultural and multi-religious approach should apply and thus, a highly equipped, funded, supervised, qualitative and comprehensive education system is advocated for the nation in this research. Hence, the following recommendations are made as way forward:

- Rational Moral Education should be adapted from the senior secondary to the tertiary education levels. Accordingly, the curriculum of the school system should be reviewed to actualize the required theoretical and practical framework of genuine moral values in the society.
- Moral Education should equally be made compulsory in all teacher education programmes. Similarly, the graduating teacher should be required to hold two certificates on graduation: academic and moral (character). The certificate of moral or character development should be renewed every five years. Such certificates could be withdrawn from any teacher who is caught in any serious immoral behaviour such as rape, compulsory demand of cash or sex for unmerited scores, among others. There should be regular refresher courses for teacher on the proper update of their moral, mental and physical development. The reports gathered in these courses and that of class performance should form relevant points for the teachers’ promotion.



- The three tiers of government should make education the first on the list of their priority projects. The UNESCO benchmark of 26% of the nation's annual budget for education should be put into practice in Nigeria. The reason is that adequate funding of the education system will produce quality manpower that will transform the life of the people: reduce expenditure in security and threat of life, reduce hiring of foreign manpower to reduce unemployment in the country. It will also reduce some expenditure on foreign universities, medical treatment abroad and selfish leadership.
- There should be a more co-ordinated approach to the supervision of the various school management, staff and students/pupils in line with the expected outcome of quality service and output in the system. This has to be done through internal and external mechanisms. Accordingly, adequate and necessary rewards and punishment measures should be put in place to encourage virtues and discourage vices among staff and students/pupils.
- There should be effective and functional interaction between the school and the parents at the various school levels. This will help to check some excesses of the school or home that negatively affect the student's/child's life.

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