

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN VALUE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The teaching of Christian religious knowledge is intended to lead the students to develop a critical mind and to imbibe the basic Christian religious tenets, hence there is need to transmit acceptable moral standards and to inculcate spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations in the society. In order to sustain sound human society, the survival of value education becomes imperative because of the nostalgia of the past, disappointment of the present and hope for the future generation. This paper therefore discussed extensively the concept of values education, objectives of values education, the role of religion in inculcating values, challenges of values education, relationship between religious instruction and values education. The paper was concluded by suggesting ways forward for a better society.*

KEYWORDS: Religion, Teacher, Value Education.

INTRODUCTION

Education, (religious education) inclusive, is not subject to a single definition, for it varies with time and place, (Obilom, 1989:38). Education can generally be thought of as the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of a society. It is a societal instrument for the expansion of human culture, which may be formal, non-formal and informal. Some people regard education as information giving, some regard it as a preparation for life, while others regard it as a process which provides the children with knowledge, skills and values that a society believes to be necessary.

However, Nyerere (1988) sees education as a tool for social development as well as a tool for social change. In other words, if a community or a nation desires to bring about a new social order, a new thinking, a new philosophy, a new orientation, then the vehicle for such a change is education.

Education in essence, involves the upbringing, training and instruction of children according to acceptable standards of the society. It is therefore the process of learning and of preparing an individual, from birth and all through his life through encouragements and participation, for happy and useful membership of the society in which he lives and helps to advance its good value system.

In essence, the survival of value education becomes imperative because of the nostalgia of the past, disappointment of the present and hope for the future generation. Value education includes all kinds of activities in the schools in which students learn or develop values and morality which are pertinent for the society (Taylor, 2006). Value is the major determinant of accepted behaviour and guiding principle for interaction in all human societies (Olyai, 2005). It is the extent to which a behaviour conforms to the value system of the people that determines the acceptability of such behaviour.

Religion as a concept is a universal phenomenon, and man having been created by God and in God's own image became religious from origin; hence Eluu (2006) opined that there is a divine essence in man which he tries to actualize in his daily commerce with the world and that the universally recognized institution for the actualization of such divine essence is religion.

This paper is significant because of the colossal loss of genuine values, the incessant religious riots and bigotry our country experiences today and the need to foster harmonious living among the citizens, who had out of quest for materialism, political power, ignorance and prejudices been using religion to achieve their selfish desires (Eluu, 2006).

Meaning of Values Education

Values are the guiding principles for accepted behaviour in the society (Osaat, 2011). He also explained that the extent to which behaviour conforms to the value system of the people determines the acceptability or rejection of such behaviour. The values and attitudes we live by affect how we relate with other people. They cannot be separated from cognitive and understanding and these two terms relate to the affective dimension of human behaviours. Values are used as standard gauge to determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong.

Value education generally moulds the character of the people leading them to know and appreciate things that are worthy and good. Aggarwal (2007) on the same vein stated that value system is elaborate and embraces all aspect of moral principles in human development passed on from one generation to another through indigenous education system. He observed that value education is all about character moulding, positive attitudinal changes, dedication to duty, honesty, hard-working, trustworthy, patience and truthfulness. Therefore it abhors all forms of negative practices like examination malpractice, corruption, sexual abuse, bribery, cultism, terrorism, drug abuse amongst others.

Robb (1998) is of the opinion that value education is an activity during which people are assisted by appropriately qualified adults, in schools, homes, clubs and religious and other youth organizations to make explicit those values underlying their own attitudes to assess the effectiveness of those values for their and others long term well-being and to reflect on and acquire other values which are more effective for short and long term-being. There are two main approaches to values education, some see it as inculcating or transmitting a set of values which often come from societal or religious rules or cultural ethics. The approaches are through explicit and implicit values. According to Mondal (2008) explicit values education is associated with those different pedagogies, methods or programmes that teachers or educators use in order to create learning experiences for students when it comes to value questions, while implicit covers those aspects of the educational experience resulting in value influence learning, which can be related to the concept of hidden curriculum. However, Raths, Harmin and Simon (1979) in Nwabuisi (2000) outlined two methods of inculcating values. These are democratic and traditional approaches the details of which will not be discussed in this work.

Objectives of Values Education

The following objectives have been set to guide the teaching of values education:

1. To create attitudes and improvement towards sustainable lifestyle.

2. To improve the integral growth of human beings.
3. To increase awareness about our national history, national integration, community development and environment, constitutional right and our cultural heritage.
4. To create and develop awareness about the values and their significance and role.
5. To know about various living and non-living organisms and their interaction with the environment.

Based on the above objectives of values education, religious teacher's professional development is paramount to give creative moral inspirations and guidance to the youth and this will enhance their understanding and application of values education.

The Role of Religion in Inculcating Values

Religions and Christian religion in particular plays a significant role in inculcating values, hence Eluu (2001) sees Christian religion as an instrument for the development of spiritual, moral and mental growth of the pupils or students. In essence Christian religious knowledge impart in children an understanding of the universe and the interpersonal relationship between human beings and the supreme being. The importance of Christian religion in inculcating value is found in the claim of personal and spiritual knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, the son of God. It is a stabilizing factor in the individual personality. Christian religious knowledge trains the students morally and instills in them the desire to do good and be virtuous. This is also the trust of value education.

Obilom (1989:15), while affirming the aims and objectives of Christian religious knowledge, states that the aim of teaching Christian religious knowledge is "to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens". That through guidance and supervision of their conduct, the children are encouraged to develop a right attitude towards life, their environment, inter-personal relationships and community living. This is in agreement with the stated objectives of values education, hence the teaching of Christian religious knowledge in schools which gives impetus to values education leads pupils to raise fundamentals questions relating to life and existence. For example, who is God? Do God exist? Where is God? Why am I here? What is going to be my end? What am I supposed to do? Etc (Eluu, 2010:127). The transmission of acceptable moral standards and values education in the society cannot be over emphasized, hence through the teaching of these subjects, children are encouraged to express their faith and to develop their talents and thus prepare themselves for useful living in society (FRN, 2004).

Challenges of Values Education

The followings constitute challenges to values education.

1. **Corruption:** This constitute great obstacle in the development of any society. In Nigeria, corruption has become quite endemic in all facets of life and all fabrics of society and every citizen is aware of this. Hence, adult and children live with it even in their families, worship places, in schools, in neighbourhood, in military and paramilitary formations including the police. President Buhari's order to probe the arms deals of the military is a test case.
2. **Poor parenting:** This days, most parents are now more interested in making money than in the welfare of their children, hence children are left to take care of themselves

or by care-givers who in most cases would not inculcate the right attitudes and values but rather initiate them into occults or devilish spirits.

3. **Insecurity:** General insecurity is now the order of the day in our communities and country at large because of the falling levels of values education in our nation. No more attachment is given to sanctity of human life, people are killed and maimed everyday in our society and this is against the biblical injunction that “thou should not kill”. Of course this principle under lie the tenets of all religions practiced in Nigeria. Activities of the insurgents, militants, kidnappers and armed rubbers destabilize and this challenged the value attached to human life and respect for higher authority.
4. More emphasis is today being placed on the teaching of religious and moral instructions in Nigerian primary schools in order to inculcate certain desirable values in children at a tender age as spelt out in the national policy on education. This is good enough, but there is still the non inclusion of values education in the national policy on education.
5. Teacher’s inability to create awareness and give proper orientation on values education is still a matter of concern to our national development.

Relationship between Religious Instruction and Values Education

Obvious relationship exists between religious instruction and values education. Both introduce learners to religious and values instructional requirements of the society to which they live. They aimed at character training and inculcate acceptable ways of behaviour and knowledge of God to the learner. Instructions are presented carefully and systematically to learners in order to arouse their interest and sharpens their religious and values insights (Eluu, 2010).

However, certain dissimilarities could be noticed between religious and values education. It would be noticed that religious instruction stresses a belief in a supernatural being while values education delve into the worth of self, fellow man and the affairs of the society. Religious instructions emphasize the worship of a supernatural being while values education stresses practice of good behaviours. Thus values education is the major determinant of accepted behaviour and guiding principle for interaction in all human societies (Olyai, 2005).

Religious instruction promotes morality, while values education hinges on some aspects of religion that promotes welfare in society. However, both religious instruction and values education are meant to create a good and harmonious society where all citizens irrespective of race, tribe, religion, social or economic status should peacefully co-exist.

Way Forward

In as much as it may be an uphill task to completely wipe out immoral behaviours in our society, the following steps must be taken to reduce them to the barest minimum:

1. Values stands as light house giving direction to all who want to reach the right place in terms of human and national development and thus should be upheld.
2. Government must, as a matter of urgency embark upon a “National Ethical Reorientation” in the fashion of Nigeria’s second Republic model. A committee

should be set up other than the effort of EFCC/ICPC to ensure its success and to correct the ills of our society.

3. We should create and sustain a moral environment in the country which will discourage all forms of evil behaviours among the Nigerian people, hence the current campaign against corruption by the Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari is already yielding dividends as reported in the Saturday July 9, 2016 Vanguard, that “Treasury looters are now regretting”.
4. Both the youth, and adults alike should through enlightenment campaign, know about why people behave the way they do.
5. The government needs to strengthen religious education which had helped to stabilize the society in the past.
6. Values should be the guiding principles of the life, which facilitates the all round development of a person.
7. In addition, values education should be incorporated in the national policy while inculcation of desirable values in the pupils is essential for meeting the crises of character, and
8. Giving and receiving of bribes by government officials must be discouraged.

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