

**IFE JOURNAL OF THEORY AND
RESEARCH IN EDUCATION**

ISSN: 0794-6754

IJOTRE

**Journal of the Institute of Education
Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile – Ife.**

**Bi-Annual
Vol. 25, No. 2, 2024**

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IFE JOURNAL OF THEORY AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATION
(IJOTRE)

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MORAL REGENERATION AND REORIENTATION IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

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Abstract

This paper delves into the critical issue of moral decay and its profound impact on Nigerian society, specifically focusing on the realm of basic education, by highlighting the significance of education in societal development and emphasizing the need for a solid moral foundation within the educational system. The paper argues about the pervasive erosion of moral values across various aspects of Nigerian society, which raises concerns about the decline in ethical standards and its repercussions, showing how Universal Basic Education (UBE) holds a pivotal role in revitalizing values, ideals, and orientations to restore stability. It underlines the interconnectedness of education and morality, emphasizing that the two are inseparable components of human development. National Policy on Education and its emphasis on character building, ethical values, and societal responsibilities were examined, while the role of family, religion, and social media in shaping moral perspectives were also discussed. Furthermore, the paper probes into the adverse effects of moral degeneration on learning outcomes at the basic education level, and posits that moral regeneration and reorientation should be integrated into the curriculum to facilitate a holistic approach to character development. There is also the need for active involvement of stakeholders such as government, religious leaders, parents, and educators in the integration of moral education across subjects. The paper underscores the importance of moral education as a tool to counter corruption and promote positive societal change. The paper concludes by stressing the urgency of prioritizing moral regeneration and reorientation within Nigerian basic education to cultivate a morally conscious and responsible citizenry.

Keywords: Moral, Regeneration, Reorientation, Basic education, Stakeholders.

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in the development of human society. It is seen as the bedrock of every society. A good education or system is therefore one that is based on sound moral principles. Since education is an instrument of social engineering, a good education must keep revitalizing itself through moral regeneration and reorientation in meeting the needs and yearning of the people.

The continuous dwindling in moral values with its pervasive effects on all the facets of society has continued to raise concern on the imperative for moral regeneration and reorientation, that is why the role of Universal Basic Education is fundamental in reinvigorating the right values, ideals and orientation with all the

stakeholders playing their part towards maintaining stability. Because it is often said that education without morality is like tea without sugar, whereas some people drink tea without sugar, the survival of the society does not allow education without morality. The two are inextricably linked.

To be educated implies not only standards of performance which the initiates have been taught but also standards of behaviour and comportment that give meaning to their very existence. Morality is therefore an indispensable ingredient of human life. However, we can see that moral degeneration or decay is increasing at an alarming rate across the globe with Nigeria having its large share which has not only subdued our value belief system but increased deterioration therein with adverse effects on our education and other sectors.

The texture of social life of contemporary Nigerian Society is riddled with family disorientation, absence of right acceptable societal values, divorce, marital infidelity, and child abuse which have led to the escalation of other crimes such as; ritual killings, child kidnapping, armed robbery and rape because the critical core moral values for peaceful coexistence are seriously lacking with brazen of bribery and corruption becoming the order of the day.

No wonder Ugwu (2002) opined that “the Nigerian society is in a state of moral, social, political, economic, legal and educational decay”. The brazen display of immoral behaviors in society today is a clear indication of the high level of moral degradation in our society.

National Policy on Education and Moral Value

Nigerian education is designed as a process of inculcating values to equip the learner to live a life, a kind of life that is satisfying to the individual in accordance with the cherished values and ideals of society. It is seen as an important instrument of change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society.

Every Nigerian child who passes through the basic level of education is expected to exhibit some traits based on what value they might have been exposed to, for them to survive in the world of work (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014). The National Policy on Education expressed concern about the essential values and an increasing cynicism in the society, advocating for an educational system that is, a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values at all levels of education.

However, it is important to note that education and society are inseparable because the society equips individuals with the right values that are transmitted from each generation of young people to another with the existing beliefs, norms and values of their culture (Schafer, 2000). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was established to lay a solid foundation that will prepare the Nigerian child to be functional for life and raise children who are true, honest, good models and people who will not sell their conscience.

Thus, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) in recognition of the importance of character building in the broad educational goals of its citizens, incorporated character training through the National Policy on Education (FGN,

2014) which states the broad educational goals to include:

- a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around,
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical, and social abilities and competence to achieve these goals.

The National Policy on Education prescribes that the quality of instruction should include basic values that are needed to be exposed to its recipients :

- i. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual,
- ii. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions,
- iii. Moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations,
- iv. Shared responsibility for the common good of the society,
- iv. Respect for the dignity of labour,
- v. Promotion of emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

With this policy, it is expected that every learner who has gone through the nine years of basic education should have acquired appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills; as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for a life-long learning.

No wonder Obanya (2000) described basic education as that level, type and form of learning needed to build firm roots for literacy and numeracy, to inculcate basic life skills and more importantly, to consolidate the skills of learning how to learn. While learning outcomes are changes in behaviour. Changes in behaviour as a result of the behaviour of the overall learning which includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. But the question is has our basic education been able to achieve this feat?

Sociological View on Morality for System Stability

Human beings as social animals live not in isolation but are regulated by conventional norms and values prescribed and said to be acceptable for peaceful coexistence. It is important for cordiality that the norms and values as codified in the value belief system of the society be internalized and exhibited by all towards achieving stability within the system. Non-adherence to the codified moral values reflected in the lifestyles poses a threat to the survival and stability of the system resulting in multifaceted challenges facing the society.

That is why Durkheim views morality as a 'social fact' realised and enforced only through the transcendence of society and its attendant ideas, beliefs and sentiments (Hearn, 1997). For Durkheim, individuals fulfill the social roles and concomitant moral obligations placed upon them as members of collectives. Durkheim's work laid important sociological grounds for the study of morality. His approach to morality as socially derived and a necessary binding force for togetherness became the dominant sociological paradigm.

Social Factors Responsible for Moral Degeneration in Nigeria

Moral degeneration is a universal phenomenon which is negatively affecting many societies, including Nigeria. The Nigerian society just like many is confronted with serious moral crises as it affects the family, education, religion and other facets of the society. Sociologists have x-rayed some of the social factors responsible for moral degeneration across the globe with a special interest in the educational sector. Moral breakdowns which are evident in social ills such as; lack of discipline, thuggery, violence, stealing and robbery, promiscuity, corruption, high crime rate and the like have not only eroded our value belief system but again affirm that our society is not self-functioning and regulating as expected. Some of the social factors responsible for moral degeneration in our society are not limited to these as the list is endless but it becomes existential, we take a cursory look at some of them which are:

Decline in Parenting Quality and Entrenching Right Values in the Family

The family is critical towards achieving stability and effective functioning of the social system. It is a fundamental and indispensable cell of all human societies. The family is crucial and germane to the well-being of the society due to the functions performed in inculcating the right values. Diagnosis of the society has shown that the failure of the family through its leadership in teaching the right values, ideals and norms is having resultant effects on the larger society as the family is the micro and a reflection of the society. It very essential that family as the social basic unit of the society instill the right norms and value in its offspring for quality co-existence without impeding the essence of the social system and the role assigned to each component unit that makes up the system.

Social Media Influence and Rise in Science and Technology

Information dissemination is key to the quality of morality in the society. It is unarguable that media and the content of information disseminated today lack substance of promoting the right values of discipline, hardworking, honesty, integrity, and in all patriotism among the audience. In recent time in Nigeria, the ills of the internet and social medial have been brought to the fore by several murder cases that made headlines in the national media where mostly ladies were lured to love affairs, sex, and eventuality through uncensored friendship made online.

Similarly, the world has witnessed a giant increase in science and technology. Science and technology have contributed a lot towards making lives better and worth living with the world becoming a global village. This has been responsible for the transmission of values and cultures across the world with loss in some value belief systems. However, the rise in science and technology has negatively influenced human morality, especially in Nigeria. Despite other positive uses of the internet in areas of research and communication, negative and immoral practices are also learnt from the internet. For example, many pornographic sites abound on the internet. A lot of Nigerian adolescents visit these sites which glorify sex and sexual activities. Like the internet, increased access to electronic gadgets like televisions, compact discs,

digital video discs and mobile phones, have also contributed to the cause of immoral behaviours among Nigerians today. Through these media, most learners have learnt and embraced cultism, gangsterism, drug abuse, prostitution and violence.

Increased Bud for Materialism

Nigeria as a country is no longer driven by values and standard moral that uphold our culture and beliefs but derive more pleasure in the amount of wealth and material things in possession. In the quest of acquiring these, the values and moral become immaterial and needless which today is responsible for many of the social vices such ritual killings, banditry, kidnapping and others. Cybercrime and gambling are now job for the youths as they are no longer believe in passing through the right channel with trusting the process. The urge for quick money syndrome has not only destroyed and eaten deep into the fabric of the nation but have shown the high deficit of moral value in our society.

Poverty

The high rate of poverty in the society owing to lack of social justice and the need for survival of the people has been responsible for the washing away of the moral values which is responsible for the many social vices in society. Numerous literatures have established the fact that people become poor due to oppression and injustice brought about by unjust social structures, while Scott (2000) posited that the poor are deprived of the opportunity of having access to food, clothing and shelter. He maintained that the poor constitute a group of powerless people who are socially and politically oppressed. O' Donovan (2002) said that poverty is responsible for the high rate of crime in the urban cities. Poverty is one of the major causes of stealing, prostitution, drug addiction, armed robbery, militancy, kidnapping and crisis in the society.

The Collapse of Discipline in School System

The school as a mirror of the society must uphold the right values of the society. Discipline is very essential and key to achieving a good educational system. Discipline implies self-control, willingness to learn and function in an acceptable and ordered manner. Thus, an atmosphere of discipline is characterized by sense of duty and responsibility, and of self-control and loyalty. Formal teaching and learning as well as any other form of serious socialization requires such an atmosphere. Indiscipline in the area of administration, supervision and control manifests in the following forms: lateness to school, teacher absenteeism, poor hygiene in the school, strained relationship and lack of professional commitment to duty.

Moral Degeneration and Learning Outcomes at the Basic Education Level

Learning outcomes can be interpreted as key factors in the school system. Mumin (2022) decried the decline and eventual disappearance of the educational spirit. Studies have shown cases that demonstrate how the educational spirit is in

danger or dying out. For instance, fights among learners that end in deaths are on the rise. Additional incidents include, persistent school bullying, a child killing his parents, a rise in dropout rates, and an increase in sexual offences against children or other kids. Drugs have gradually invaded the educational system, friendships amongst friends are becoming less tolerant and cooperative, and students' feeling of nationalism is waning. At the same time, student learning outcomes tend to drop (Mumin, 2022). These explained the rate at which moral degeneration among learners in basic education affects learning outcomes in modern Nigerian society.

The learner with good morals would intend to be more serious with studies, while the one who has experienced moral degeneration intends to handle learning activities with levity.

Furthermore, morals are very decisive for one's success and learning achievement because morals can encourage or motivate someone to always be creative in creating new things, promote independence or not depend on others, and encourage optimism about what is done. Based on careful consideration, enabling a dynamic attitude or positive thinking towards all problems promotes an active nature in responding to the surrounding circumstances and encourages patience and trustworthiness.

So, morality can create mental or psychological stability for a person who always has a spirit of achievement and not be affected by various problems (Mustopa, 2018). In essence that moral degeneration would lead to low learning outcomes because the learner is not motivated to learn especially at the basic education level where the will power of learners is weak as a result of the formative stage.

Moral Regeneration and Reorientation and the Role of Stakeholders

The concept of re-orientation denote repositioning the national values to meet the societal needs, while, regeneration means the natural process of replacing or restoring damaged situation. It is a strategy and means of returning the worth of education to its standard. This can consciously develop through the nine basic education system where the tender minds are moulded for the well being of the society (Arnold, 1999). In this regard, the image of the society can only be redeemed if all hands are back to the basics of formal teaching and learning process at our basic level of education where most of the ill practices can be addressed. Because the most important skill a child needs to be taught is how to relate well with other people in the environment. There are certain basic values or moral orientations which center on universal human issues that can only be addressed at the basic level of education. Many a time, behaviours which children consider to be normal for themselves and their peers, are seen to be abnormal by their parents, teachers, and elders in the society (Omoegun 2004). Hence, the basic institutions (family, education and religion) are established to lead children, adolescents and youths towards the things the society values. As such, values and morals are often times passed on to the younger generations through the process of socialization and quality education.

Moral reorientation and regeneration in our basic education therefore is a call for reassessment of the worth of the society. To reposition and bring back that which has gone off-course in the educational system and the society as a whole. Therefore, a periodic evaluation of our educational system is needed to keep the system on track. Its adoption in Nigerian schools beginning at the basic level of education is to place a check on what value of education is being practiced to meet the worth of the learner and society.

In order to raise the moral tone of our learners and society and promote the practice of these values, the following should be put in places:

1. Governments, traditional rulers, political and religious leaders, teachers, businessmen and other professionals should provide moral leadership not only by their words but more especially by our actions.
2. The family is the foundation of all sound moral education. Children are most influenced by the training they receive at home. Therefore, there is the need for parents to be alive to their responsibilities. Furthermore, to sensitise parents to their responsibility for moral education, relevant Ministries and MDAs like UBEC should continue to mount public enlightenment programmes to foster co-operation between the home and the school.
3. Religious education has an important and crucial role to play in an effective moral education programme. Accordingly, all institutions involved in teacher education should mount relevant programmes for effective religious and moral education.
4. A programme for relevant moral education should be drawn up for our basic education programme. The proposed programme should aim at inculcating moral values identified for our society.
5. Urgent action should be taken to stem the tide of pornographic material with which the country is being inundated. In particular the law enforcement agencies should enforce the obscenity laws.
6. Relevant arms of the Federal Government e.g. The Federal Ministry of Education, NERDC, UBEC etc. in conjunction with State Ministries of Education be charged to draw up programmes of instruction and evaluation of relevant moral education for our basic Education. This should be different from Social Studies and Civic Education, but basically on moral instruction. The proposed programme should include all the moral values identified for our society.

This ideal of 'Moral Education' means a conscious effort to transmit into learners' values, attitudes, ideals and habits cherished in a society. The aim is to include into learners, these values, so that they behave in accordance with the acceptable standard of conduct in their societies. As a matter of fact, the epithet 'moral' only accentuates the fact that the education meant is that which is expected to improve only the moral conduct of the learners. Therefore, when we talk of moral education in Nigerian Basic Schools, we mean conscious effort to transmit to students, values and habits that are valued in Nigerian society.

We should realise that moral regeneration means more than teaching of values and ideals during particular periods on the school time table. In the words of Nduka and Iheoma (1983:19):

Moral education involves not only the teaching, learning and other processes whereby values, rules, principles, ideals. Habits and attitudes are inculcated but also the taking of adequate educational steps supplemented with appropriate institutional arrangements to promote moral growth along the development continuum

It is therefore very apt at this stage of society that good approach to moral education should be adopted in Nigerian basic education. However, it should be emphasized that all that is needed for the moral development of basic education learners should not be expected to be taught only during moral education periods. Morals should be taught through different subjects in the school curriculum.

For instance, in Sports and Games, the spirit of sportsmanship which is emphasized involves the cultivation of values of steadfastness in pursuing good causes, fair play, friendliness and truthfulness, when we are engaged in competition with others. In Agriculture and craft, the value of industriousness should be instilled; in Mathematics, the attitudes of working for the right answer using right method, honesty and perseverance can be taught. In Health Education, the habit of cleanliness, which is said to be next to Godliness can be inculcated. Name any subject in the school curriculum and you could enumerate the values that are embedded if well taught by committed teachers.

In other words, every school curriculum contains set values expected to be transmitted to the younger generation. Values taught in school need to reflect the larger values of the society that surround the school. Where appropriate, the opinions of community members can be solicited. It is the educational system that does the transmission of which the basic education becomes the basis. A re-orientation of values occurs when teachers at the education at this level acquire intellectual competence, emotional stability, unquestionable moral standard as well as their commitment to the need of national development in their pupils, making national character reorientation an integral part of the basic education curriculum in order to help the teacher to internalize values that will be developed in the children, building enduring foundation for personal, enduring human value resources for character transformation, entrepreneurship with job creation.

Conclusion

In a way to conclude this paper, it is important to re-emphasize that, moral regeneration and reorientation in our basic education suggests there is a drastic fall in morals. Hence, the value of basic education that was known and recognised in the country is not what it is today. It is imperative to find solutions to the fallen standards and societal values in Nigeria. The proper time to fix back our education at all levels in Nigeria is now and it must begin with the basic education programme, which could serve as an impetus for poverty eradication among the citizens and

instill in them moral consciousness and individual development. Furthermore, the observed increase in the standard of education development does not just happen to any nation, it requires carefully and conscious efforts that are planned and implemented through a deliberate concert of the people and the government as a whole.

Recommendations

Nigeria needs to take morality more seriously and push the acceptance of same to the children. Teachers should frequently be trained along side recent global development and the re-introduction of the worth of the Nigeria educational system at the basic level, the mentality of individuals, communities and entire society should be re-oriented with the right values and morals. Hence, moral regeneration and reorientation should be taught at home, worship places, schools and cultural/social gatherings.

In consideration of this, there is much need for a moral regeneration approach that can enable students interact, see at a glance the similarities in the teachings of the societal institutions on the values and morals cherished in the society. If any society really wants to reduce corruption to the barest minimum, the right step to take is to make sound moral regeneration and reorientation a top priority in the basic schools, giving it the same prominence like mathematics and English language. We as a people should not downplay moral education in our school curriculum. So moral regeneration and reorientation should be designed through moral education for all levels of education in the country, starting with the basic education. When moral education is taught, it can lead to a significant reduction in the incidence of corruption and other social vices that are widely believed to have engulfed the nation and affecting her development and given the endemic effects that this will have on the basic learners, it is very crucial that we catch them young, and as sociologists we believe that for any change to have a long-lasting effect on the society, you throw the change to the school.

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