Stemming the Tide of Corrupt Practices towards Attaining Educational Values in the Nigerian Society: The Role of Religious Education

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Abstract
The Nigerian nation is endowed with human capital and natural resources, but the economy keeps going down the drain. This is due to the prevalence of unemployment, ignorance, poverty, and so on. Corrupt practices and mismanagement of affairs of the country occasion all these. This has made many Nigerians beggars in their land and resulted in anti-social conduct such as kidnapping and cultism. Our educational system is not left out in this menace. The absence of a moral and ethical basis remains the main factor responsible for this malady. Against this backdrop, the paper seeks to examine the Role of Religious Education in Stemming the Tide of Corrupt Practices towards Attaining Educational Values. The study adopted a historical descriptive approach. They found out that corruption in education constitutes a major to the successful attainment of educational values. The Paper identified various corrupt practices prevalent in the school system. The study concluded that Religious Educational serves as a tool to re-awake Nigerians to truly reflect the values articulate in our educational system. Recommendations were given among which include the need to change the societal orientation and value system which seem to emphasize erroneous acts at all cost.

Keywords: Stemming, tide, corruption, practices, values

Introduction

No doubt that the Nigerian nation is blessed with both human and natural resources. Keji (2021) avers that Nigeria is tremendously endowed both in terms of human and physical resources which are almost unquantifiable. Even though the nation is endowed with human and natural resources, the country is faced with major problems, such as a lack of skilled labour, unemployment, poverty, and a poor healthcare system. This is a result of corrupt practices and the mismanagement of resources and affairs of the country. This scenario has led many Nigerians to be 'beggars' and has also fuelled anti-social behaviours among the populace, notably cultism, and kidnapping of people. There is no gainsaying the effects of these are being felt by all and sundry (Olujuwon, 2006).

The desire for material possessions and positions with corrupt tendencies had been revealed with the various probes of some sectors in Nigeria which include ranking government officials. Also, the quest to pass examinations at all costs due to emphasis laid on certificates rather than skills or lifelong learning has made students not imbibe honesty and integrity in schools (Odunayo and Olujuwon, 2010). We are living in a time when the quality of education has declined and this has negatively affected development in our nation. Remove the last d

Sadly, our educational system has not been able to attain its values because of the vices that manifest in various forms – corruption, dishonesty, greed, injustice, and selfishness, to mention but a few. The lack of morals and misbehavior of people.

Oyibo (2008) opines that the National Policy on Education among other things aimed at not only inculcating national consciousness, unity, and acquisition of appropriate intellectual and physical skills, abilities, and competence but also the acquisition of the right type of values desirable for promoting the socio-economic need and development of the nation. It is against this backdrop that the paper tries to examine how religious education can stem the tide of corrupt practices that will eventually translate into the attainment of educational values in Nigerian society.

The Concept of Values

There is no gainsaying that values occupy a central position in all human endeavours. They form the basis of social interaction in every society. Values are basic and important beliefs that guide attitudes or actions. They aid people to choose what is of prime importance to them. They describe the personal qualities we determine to embody our conduct. They provide general guidelines for behaviours. Personal values are personal beliefs about right and wrong which may not be considered moral. Some values stand the test of time, they are always good, such as honesty and kindness (Mintz, 2018).

Value can also be defined as desire, interest, goals, ideals, approvals/disapprovals preferences, and standards (Nduka, 2005). Also, values are standards used to determine whether the object is good or bad, right or wrong, indispensable or worthless.

Value may be pragmatic or absolute. According to Schofield in Odunayo and Olujuwon (2010), pragmatic values are those that an individual develops as a result of doing something in a particular situation. Absolute values are metaphysical values that are neither bound by the physical world as perceived through the sense nor by time and place. It can therefore be argued that value has to do with purposes, relationships, and moral codes of behaviour. Values

As Mkpa (1987) rightly said, values are the determinants in man that influence his choices in life and thus direct his behaviour. For example, African traditional education produces a person who should be honest, respectful, and cooperative, one who conforms to the social order of the day. Fafunwa (1974), opines that the seven cardinal goals of the African traditional education system emphasize hard work, respect for legitimate and human authority, public spiritedness attachment to the community and family, truthfulness, and honesty in all dealings. They also promote the cultural heritage of the community.

As a result of the decline in ethical values, there has been an undesirable shift from the positive moral and religious values that held society together in the past to vices that have completely torn it asunder. These vices include widespread corrupt practices, kidnapping, and acts such as human rituals, cultism in schools, blatant disregard for the rule of law, examination malpractices in schools, and various bombings that have claimed lives and properties thereby making governance uneasy.

Values and Education in Nigeria

Education is seen as the total of all the necessary processes by which an individual develops abilities, attitudes, and behaviour necessary for a worthwhile existence. This is the reason Peters (1967) observes that education involves the transmission of what is worthwhile or what a particular society values so highly that it finds it important to pass it on to each succeeding generation. The observation agreed with section 1, sub-section 8 of the National Policy on Education (2004 edition) which emphasizes that the quality of instruction at all levels should be oriented towards inculcating in learners the following values that will be beneficial to all. These are: Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual faith in man's ability to make rational decisions, moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations, Shared responsibility for the common good of the society, Promotion of the physical emotional, and psychological development of all children and acquisition of competences necessary for self-reliance. Education is also the method through which individuals are made functional members of their various societies. It is a process through which the young acquires knowledge realizes his potentials and uses it for self-actualization. It is a life-long learning process (Ocho, 2005).

It is clear from the above that this policy statement is in line with universally accepted goals of education, which emphasize the self-development of the learner and the promotion of the socio-political and economic well-being of the country. Educational values are the activities that are good useful and important from an educational point of view. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know it also means teaching them

to behave as they ought to. In essence, the ultimate aim of education is to attain a good life (Nikitia, 2024). It is imperative to ask at this point if the values articulated have been realized in Nigeria or what have the youth or education elites benefited from the values inculcated in schools. Can we say that society and the educational system have failed in their duties of inculcating the right types of values to its citizens by those who are implementers and formulators of educational policies? Those the society expected to be defenders of values are culprits. It is sad that people who are expected to be role models of moral uprightness, integrity, impeccable character, and custodians of the educational values of the country and aspirations have lost their own morality and cannot have the moral justification to challenge the behaviours.

Corruption in the Educational System

Corruption in education constitutes a major menace to the successful attainment of educational values. This was pointed out by Hallack and Poisson (2007) when they opined that corruption tends to reduce the resources available for education, especially for disadvantaged groups. It leads to deterioration of the quality of education and increases social inequalities. They define corruption as the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose effect is significant in the availability and quality of educational goals and services and as a consequence on access, quality, or equity in education. Opined

There are various types of corruption practices common in the school system in Nigeria. They include cultism, admission and certificate racketeering, academic fraud, and examination malpractices. Kanno (2004) buttresses this when he asserts that the quest for false protection and perpetual changed values further led to the formation of secret cult fraternities in secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. The various corrupt practices in the educational system are proofs of changes in core values in the Nigerian Society. This is supported by research carried out by Olujuwon (2001) in the areas of examination malpractices in schools. It was discovered that parents, examination officials, security agencies, teachers, principals, and students themselves are guilty of entrenching the culture of corruption which affects all in the society.

Corruption undermines public interest in selection and certification processes in schools. For example, the university matriculation Examination in Nigeria has been marred by irregularities, which made each University conduct a Post–UME Examination for candidates. Admission racketeering and favoritism in promotion can bring down the morale of staff and give room for the mediocre to gain admission and leave out the intelligent ones.

In a nutshell, corruption sends a wrong signal to our youths, that one can use crooked means to get the top.

Religious Education and the Attainment of Educational Values

Religious education is not simply a subject among many other subjects, but the foundation of the entire educational process. It places a strong emphasis on the belief associated with a particular being. It aims at fostering in growing persons a consciousness of God as a reality in human experience and a sense of personal relationship to him. According to Senefonte (2018), education and religion are closely related. Religion has been found to influence decision-making, self-esteem, academic performance, and other areas of education. Religion and education are considered human necessities. Religion and education have a complex relationship with religion influencing education and educational institutions playing a role in the production and reproduction of religion. It is a process of learning to live a moral life. Akande (2020) opines that religion and education have been for years closely connected. In Nigeria, religion and education are inseparable from each other. Each has existed to the benefit of the other. A study of the development of education cannot proceed without acknowledging the pioneering efforts of missionaries in formal education which has made the gates of higher learning nearer to the people. The greatest contribution of the missionaries in Nigeria was in the field of education. Christianity has performed various purposes in the development of Nigeria's education. It has made crucial contributions to the entire human person and social development of the person through the attitudes and capacities for love, forgiveness, overcoming prejudice, and sacrifice for the common good of man (Iwenofu, 2010). These character virtues become the shared values that control the Christian public interaction.

The first official pronouncement on the importance of religious education in the provision of sound education seemed to have been made in 1992. According to Igwe cited in Nwaomah (1998) the Phelps Stocks report on education in West, South, and Equatorial Africa recommended among other things that: "in all schools religious instruction was to be accorded a pride of place and regarded as fundamental to the development of sound education".

Religious education plays a prominent function in transmitting values, hence Eluu (2001) avers that it is an instrument for the development of spiritual, moral, and mental growth of people. In a nutshell, religious education inculcates in someone an understanding of the world and the interpersonal interaction between humans and God. The essence of

religious education lies in the fact that it is a stabilizing factor in someone's personality. It trains students morally and imparts in them the need to do well and be upright (Eluu, 2016). There are at least four major objectives of religious education in the school's curriculum:

1. To develop moral responsibility and sound ethical and moral behaviour.
2. To develop the student's capacity to discipline himself to work, study, and play constructively.
3. To develop a moral and ethical sense of values, goals, and processes of a free society and
4. To develop standards of personal character and ideas, that is to develop morally autonomous individuals who can make up their minds on matters of moral principles rather than being more consumers of moral dicta (Nwaomah, 1998).

As a result, one of the major functions of religious education is that of the moral development of the students. The adolescent period is an age of transition to young adulthood, the increasing immoral behaviour among this coupled with moral weakness rampant in several homes and this critical age thus requires adequate teaching and guidance on moral values.

This is buttressed by Omolayole (2002) when he observes that character is the crown and glory of life. It is the noblest possession of men constituting a rank in itself an estate in the general goodwill, dignifying every station and exalting every position in society. It exercises greater power than health and secures all the honor without the jealousies of fame. Akinpela in Ossai (2004) believes that character education is highly valuable in Nigeria since it will help to transmit socially acceptable values of the society. The role of schools in values education is not primarily to train students in commitment to values, mainly to educate students in values processes, including values, but mainly to educate students in value processes including value reasoning, value, inquiry, and decision making (Nwosu, 2004).

Religion and belief inform our values and are reflected in what we say and how we behave. Religious education provokes questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self, and the nature of reality, and issues of right and wrong. Christian religious education originated with the advent of the early Christian missionaries to Nigeria in 1940s (Okafor, 2012). The essence of the establishment of schools was literacy education as well as the inculcation of moral values in the children. Their concern was molding the character of the youths since they are future leaders. Thus, Agha (2004) opines that the children came to the mission school and got both secular and religious education concurrently and as a result became men and women of integrity. They contributed immensely to the moral development of Nigerians. The Christian missionaries reformed the

people's raw character through their religious teachings. The result was that the pre-war politicians, civil servants, businessmen, and women were not as corrupt and money-minded as we are today. It can be rightly asserted that the result of the religious education from the missionaries in the society was healthy and satisfactory. The people became aware of the importance of hard work as well as the fact that men are interrelated, anti-social, inter-co-operative, and have integrity to protect (Okafor, 2012).

Conclusion

It is a truism that Nigerians have drifted away from cherished core values and have embraced a new culture. Sadly, those who should be the embodiment of integrity in the education sector are the culprits themselves. It is therefore imperative to re-awaken Nigerians from individuals to the larger society to truly reflect the norms and values articulated in our Educational system. We need the type of education that prepares the learners not only for excellence but for moral responsibility. This enables the learners to give useful and calculated services to themselves, and the nation and of course live in the realization of the greater and greatest responsibility that would be required by God. Thus, in developing the intellects of the skills of learners, religious education must be given a prominent status in our educational curricula.

Suggestions

Having observed that religious education is desirable in the attainment of educational values in Nigeria society and it is important for the Government to give it prime consideration, the paper, therefore, recommends the following:

1. Religious education should be given a prominent position and regarded as crucial to the development of sound education.
2. There is an urgent need to change the societal orientation and value system which seem to place a premium on erroneous acts at all costs and by all means beliefs that are not only harmful but also counter-productive.
3. People of integrity should be placed at the helm of affairs in our educational system.
4. Religious education should be given a central point within the curriculum.

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