

AXIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF JUDEO-CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

The plethora of social ills bedevilling every human society the world over is a sure sign that all is not well. The rich nations as well as the poor economies suffer varying degree of social and even political upheavals. Nigeria as a human society has had her fair share of moral depravities. This is evidenced in rampant examinations malpractices, bribery, examination sorting, robberies, and assassinations even of high profile people. The challenges of these social and moral degradations being witnessed and reported are strong indicators of the rapid downward slide on the scale of moral standards. The rate at which these corrupting influences spread is alarming due mainly to the advent of the internet and mass media which are available in every nook and cranny of even low per capital income economies of the world. The home, school, religious, corporate organizations and state actors are the culprits. Parents, care givers and the general public have failed to adopt or partially implemented axiological foundations of the Judeo-Christian model of education. The thrust of this paper is that this ugly trend may be arrested if the Nigerian educational system will as a matter of urgency reinvent the wheels of her education policy thrust. The bulk stops on the desk of educational management and policy experts of this great nation. They have to do the needful and try to salvage the gory state of affairs.

Introduction

Education is the process which facilitate [knowledge](#) and [skills](#) acquisition or the [learning](#) of [values](#), [beliefs](#), [habits](#) and any [experience](#) that has a formative effect on the way people think, feel and act may be considered educational. The methodology of teaching is called [pedagogy](#).

A [right to education](#) has been recognized by most state actors of the world. Suffice it to say that at the global level, Article 13 of the [United Nations'](#) 1966 [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) recognizes a universal right to education.

According to Makinde (2006) “if you think education is expensive, try ignorance” (P. 5). The goal of this very important sector of modern civilization is to produce quality leadership in

every strata of human society to make this world a better place for all. This aim of education has been largely unrealized going by the plethora of moral and ethical crisis bedeviling our world in contemporary times.

Nigeria has had her fair share of these moral and ethical depravities being witnessed globally. There have been several attempts to ameliorate the ills associated with such moral decline in the educational sector and the society at large. Ogunji (2009) posits that the 2004 National Policy on Education contains some moral education goals woven around the national aims of education even at the tertiary level. However, it is sad to note as captured by Ehioghae (2010) the Nigerian society is experiencing twitching due to distressing events particularly in the educational sector. Towing that same line of argument Ajala (2002) opines that the moral decline in the Nigerian society is second in gravity to, and perhaps equal to the threat of nuclear war. At this point, the question why has previous change management policy options failed to ameliorate the disease condition of the Nigerian educational sector is important. This paper queries failure to adopt or partially implemented Judeo-Christian axiological foundations. This paper has offered suggestions on how the situation may be corrected.

Judeo-Christian axiological foundations of education

The world has and may continue to experience decay which began as soon as man disobeyed the divine injunction and eat of the fruit he had been commanded to avoid. The first devastating consequence of his action was his loss of Abel at the hands of his other son Cain who killed his brother due to his bad change management control of his emotions. That scenario set the stage for a constant peeling down of morality and ethical standards in all ramifications.

In Philosophy the theory of value or axiology is that field which seeks to answer questions on what is of value and ethical issues. Value as a concept refers to those phenomena which are desired, appreciated, wanted, needed or cherished. Values are usually viewed from two perspectives. The first perception is on the consequent material gain to be derived, while the second is on the intrinsic usefulness or worthlessness of the object under consideration. Personal values are those values which can be appreciated only by an individual. In this category of personal or individual values are aesthetic and intellectual values. The pleasure, enjoyment or interest is personal because no person can do it for any other person partly because it varies from person to person. The social dimensions of value are those which concern other members of the society on the social and moral grounds. At this level of social dimension,

social and moral implications of choices will be beneficial or detrimental to everyone in the environment.

The theory of value generally concerns itself with ethics and aesthetics. Axiological ethical foundations struggle with issues concerning moral character. Aesthetics studies the concept of beauty and evaluates its subjectivity or objectivity. Aesthetics provide the foundations for imaginative creativity.

The philosophy of the theory of value is an important aspect of educational foundation because it deals with issues relating to objectives of education, aims of education or maintaining discipline are all value related concerns in education. Aims of education set the direction for all educational activities. It is an important tool in measuring the educative process outcome. The efficiency of school administration is a function of the aims of education. Ogunji (2009) said that:

What campus life should be in an institution, what should constitute the curriculum, and administrative policies are all guided by axiological leanings. Axiological foundations of education therefore, places the demand on teachers, and educators to carefully help the learner to appreciate, respect and act in morally right ways and in excellent standards of human behavior. This is also, why education is concerned with the nurturing and refinement of the educated. While the intellect of the learner is developed, the social values are expected to be simultaneously developed. This is also why moral education or character education must be fundamental in the curriculum at every level. (P. 44).

It is the duty of educational institutions to develop the change management capabilities of her citizens. The schools must be able to develop the moral character of its citizens as well as the change management skills required to produce sustainable development of the society at large.

Schools education as conceived by the early missionaries is that which promote ethical character. Character formation in an ever changing world and the inculcation of skills that help students adopt and adapt to the changing landscape to produce sustainable development in all ramification is true education. This will make a man of good character and useful to the world. Fafunwa (1977) argued that education in Africa must emphasize social responsibility, humility, honesty as well as other spiritual and moral character development. This in a nut shell is the aim of the Judeo-Christian educational policy thrust of spiritual, character and vocational development.

According Amanze (2008) the Jewish tradition states that Abraham found favor in the sight of Yahweh not due to any special quality of his. The religion he established is called Judaism

which was handed down from generation to generation as commanded by Yahweh. Beginning with the patriarchs of Israel followed by the prophets and the priests to the time of Jesus in the Roman Empire, Jewish youths were taught character development. This educational tradition is based on the understanding that the church must be totally involved with all aspects of a man's life, be it temporal or eternal.

During the era of the prophets of Israel the culture of axiological foundation was strictly adhered to. Jesus the founder of Christianity was not left out as numerous examples abound in scriptures where in synagogue temples axiological principles were taught by him. The era of the church fathers closely followed where we have schools set up to pursue axiological education of young people. This is captured by Ogueijiofor (2017) who wrote that:

the predilection for school evangelism speaks very well of the abiding attention of the Catholic Church to the education of the young, for the youth are the life wire of the past, the destiny of the present and the hope of the future. The whole structure of world university education today is one huge legacy of the Catholic Church which started the earliest universities in Salamncar, in Paris and Bologna. Today for example the Heads of universities are named Vice Chancellors. This has direct reference to the Chancellor of Catholic Cathedrals who gave the authority to teach (*licencia docendi*) to the lectures who were engaged in the then Cathedral Schools, which later metamorphosed into universities. Because the Chancellors were too busy to pay day to day attention to the Cathedral Schools, they appointed deputies who did the work for them. That is how heads of universities came to be known as Vice Chancellors. (P. 2).

Christians as a special people base their theology of education on the fact that the main purpose of all human beings is to love and serve God and all mankind. Therefore, the premise of all true Christian education has been set forth in the divine words of scriptures which say's you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. Due to this divine statement, all educational instructions and learning should be directed towards helping every child or student to achieve this set goal. White (1991) argued that:

True education means more than pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come. (P. 157).

This type of education according to Amanze (2006) should be provided by parents at the home front. The efforts of parents are to be complimented in school by teachers who have the fear of God. The Church is the last hope of all humanity because all around humanity grapple with spiritual forces in high places. The church must be at the fore front in the fight against spiritual

forces in high places by inculcating on society sound moral and character foundations. This type of leaning which has far reaching implications can best be taught by precepts and examples so that the students would make the connection between theory and practice. The Church being an agent of education must set the pace on how her adherents can live here on earth while looking forward to a life without end in eternal bliss. Suffice it to say that all educational study has their origins in the scriptures and therefore the bible is an indispensable textbook in the curriculum of Judeo-Christian education and should be for all educational philosophies.

It is clear from the foregoing that character reformation is a priority in any educational system. The Nigerian educational system cannot be an exception to this rule. In addition, the National Policy on Education (NPE) communiqué has character education as its core objectives. We shall at this juncture attempt to identify those hindrances to high moral character formation in the Nigerian education system.

Hindrances to the axiological foundation of the Judeo-Christian educational system

Change management is the degree to which the quality of an item increases or improves or on the other hand decreases and deteriorates over time. In the world everywhere changes are a phenomenon that are said to be a constant. In other words we should not expect things to remain same all the time. This notion of a static world is an aberration to nature. However, what should be expected is adaptation to the changes that nature throws at us in a positive way to bring about sustainable development. The Nigerian educational environment has not adapted positively to the trends and this is why corruption and all other vices being experienced today are with us. The Nigerian educational environment has failed to adapt and implement axiological foundations of the Judeo-Christian educational system.

The Nigerian educational environment is saturated with schools that lack axiological foundation. Even a superficial look at the philosophy and mission statement of particularly higher educational institutions will show that character building thrust is conspicuously absent. It seems that in the Nigerian educational environment the emphasis is on intellectual development without a corresponding moral and spiritual dimension of education. The philosophy and mission statement is a reflection of the quality of the administrative structure available. The implication of an administrative leadership structure that is lacking in axiological focus, means that the planning process as well as the implementation of the broad based moral requirement for the Nigerian society as captured in the Nigerian Policy on Education (NPE) 2004 will be only partially implemented if not all together absent.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the lack of axiological thrust which emphasizes moral character thrust will not only produce corrupt leadership but will also undermine the axiological foundation which the 2004 Nigerian Policy on Education document aims at inculcating to the Nigerian society at large.

There is the damage to psychological mindset of the Nigerian student which is occasioned by a deliberate exclusion of God from the minds of the youths of the nation. Axiological foundations of the Judeo-Christian education are centered on the deity of the Jewish Yahweh the Ex Nihilo creator whom alone is the standard for morality and right living both here and in the hereafter. Therefore, if the knowledge of the creator is intentionally left out in the educational teaching process of the Nigerian educational environment based on the premise that Nigeria and indeed the global university system is structured on secularism, the results would be moral decline. The argument that the church is the place where theology should be done is the standard answer given to this situation is inadequate. The theories of secularism are diametrically opposed to God. Some may argue that theology is field of study in the university and to that extend God has not been excluded from the university. It is sad to note that theology in the university does not build faith but destroy it because the hermeneutical process is an inappropriate biblical study process. According to Linneman (1990) who posits that though religious groups operate on campuses, the point is that there is no place for God in the thinking and behavior of members of campus life. The plethora of philosophies and theories that shape the thinking on campus are those that are based on godless framework.

According to Greg (2000) who opines that the academia is the nucleus and haven of secularist. The history of educational institutions reveals that enlightenment and humanism had great influence over the schools' development. The author stated further that during the age of enlightenment truth is subjective and not absolute as the bible state about itself. Secularist and humanist worldviews are encouraging above the word of God. The implications of this are that the word of God is irrelevant to intellectualism and therefore the word of God is not a valid source of epistemology. According to Ogunji (2009) matters of faith which is belief in God was relegated to the background as an unverifiable paradoxical realm of absurdities and contradictions. Ehighae (2009) said that religion is the foundations on which morality can be built. The fear of God is the cornerstone of moral education which set the pace for man's aim for spiritual and moral progress rather than material achievements.

The school environment is another issue which does not encourage moral character development. It's normal to find choice hotels, high class restaurants where beer and other alcoholic drinks are sold surrounds nearly all particularly higher institutions. This tradition is gradually extending to the post primary schools in Nigeria. The activity that takes place in those areas is contrary to moral and character developments. Those vices such as armed robbery, abortion, examination sorting and we can go on to generate a very long list of anti-social attitudes which can be picked up in those places. The lack of axiological foundations is responsible for the rising cult activities on Nigerian University campuses.

Morally bankrupt teachers are another reason why there is a downward slide on the moral standards on our school environment and by extension the society at large. As stated above axiological foundations are better learned by emulation. This means that the teacher whose life style is diametrically opposed to what he teaches in class will not help to reduce the moral decadence among the citizenry. Adetunji (2009) writing about the influence of teachers said that "character formation of the student is the responsibility of every teacher and, can be accomplished normally through exemplary character" (P. 46). Sadly, this exemplary life in good character by practitioners of the pedagogical process and school administrators is grossly lacking in particularly tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

According to Myers (1995) who observed that the student learns not only by conditioning but by observation and imitation of behaviors of others. This position was reiterated by Palma (1992) who argued thus:

Observational learning in which one observes or imitates others is known to be crucial in character formation. The behaviors of teachers are imitated by their students. When teachers at every level, but emphasis here is on tertiary education, engage in sexual harassment examination malpractice, certificate racketeering, asking for undue favor from students, lateness and absenteeism from class, cultism and immoral acts, their students will definitely not be better than they are. (P. 25).

According to Taku (1996) who defined curriculum as all learning content, experiences and resources that are purposely selected, organized and implemented by school in pursuit of its peculiar mandate as a distinct institution of learning for human development. Therefore, it is expected that character building components should be embedded in the content of school curriculum.

According to Olajire (2003) who wrote on the state of the Nigerian education and curriculum said that education at the tertiary level is geared towards intellectual development at the detriment of other dimensions of human development. Since secularism exerts great influence on modern global education curriculum. It is not surprising that there is gross lack in character development content in the curriculum of schools. The resultant effect of the failure on the part of school administrators is that the student is equipped intellectually while the axiological aspect of education which concerns the heart and ultimately the character is inadvertently destroyed perhaps beyond redemption.

According to Hassan (2003) who argued that the achievement of character development is a burden that leadership must give full support to as no lofty aim, goal or objectives can be actualized without very responsible leadership. According to Middlehurst (1995) who opined that leadership is associated with vision and strategies to analyze anomalies with the capacity to stimulate progressive change management solutions. There is little doubt that any leadership that is lacking in moral uprightness will plunge its followers into deep darkness. The conclusion to be drawn here is that school administration must exhibit very high moral standards if their students are to positively influence the society. The situation where leadership at the highest echelon of tertiary institutions has been found culpable in acts which borders on highhandedness corrupt practices is very unfortunate. According to Ujomu (2001) who posits that many Vice Chancellors have been found to divert university funds to their personal or other unofficial bank accounts as well as other acts of injustice will certainly not help to build moral character in students.

Finally, this paper wishes to high light the dangers of the internet to the development of axiological foundations of the Judeo-Christian education in our societies. This paper does not completely say that the advent of the internet is altogether a bad omen to the world. Suffice it to say that information which would never have found its way into the custody of minors from the society are now at the disposal of those who should have no business interacting with such information that could be potentially dangerous to the wellbeing of such minors.

The way forward

We have identified very real challenges to entrenching sound moral character development in our educational environment. Even a superficial assessment of the situation will reveal that

corruption, bribery, immorality, examination malpractices and cultism to mention but a few. We shall at this juncture proffer the following solutions not in order of priorities.

The first approach to arresting and reversing the moral crisis in this country should begin with the tertiary institutions which are responsible for producing man power at the highest level of the Nigerian society. To this end school curriculum should have well-articulated character formation content. Moral education must therefore be made a distinct and compulsory academic course which will be both taught and practiced. As we have established morality is learned, therefore the school must create systematic module to inculcate this all important virtue.

The second solution this paper recommends is that all government agencies that are responsible for youth development in Nigeria and all other agencies such as non-governmental organizations whose purview fall within this category of youth empowerment and development should be actively involved in this fight to salvage the citizenry from the claws of moral decadence ravaging all areas of our national life.

The third solution should be a concerted effort aimed at re-orientating the populace through the re-introduction of national merit awards and the recognition of personalities who have demonstrated very high moral disposition in the society. This will help the younger generation to appreciate the virtue of honesty and hard work as opposed to the easy get rich quick syndrome.

The fourth solution this paper wishes to highlight is that parents and caregivers should as a matter of urgency be made to see that the transformed individual will eventually lead to a transformed society. The saying that charity begins at home is a saying that most parents and caregivers have failed to appreciate.

The fifth and final point this paper would discuss has been extensively conversed by nearly every religion. Morality that is not anchored on God the creator must fail. Therefore churches, Mosques and Shrines of traditional religious adherents should join the vanguard in advocating for change management options that will be dependent on the deities.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that axiological foundations as espoused by the Judeo-Christian educational thrust is grossly lacking in the Nigerian educational system. There is therefore the urgent need to adopt change management options which should include but not limited to:-

- (1) creating academic environment that enhances moral character development,
- (2) school mission statement should be axiological in perspective,
- (3) there is urgent need for a reordering of leadership priorities in our school character development,
- (4) there is urgent need for synergy to arrest and reverse the trend of moral decadence by all members of society and lastly
- (5) religious schools must try to gain back their place of prominence in moral education by opening more school to cope with the ever growing population. This year alone over one million seven hundred thousand have applied for university admission therefore schools have a vital role to play in arresting and reversing the degradation being experienced in our societies today.

The above five-point agenda advocated are to be implemented with absolute honesty and sincerity of purpose for it to be effective. The absence of patriotic drive in the nation is main culprit of lack of national integration in Nigeria. Therefore, our humble submission in this treatise is that leadership at all level of educational management policy, politicians and the organized private sector must as a matter of urgency brace up to its responsibilities for the desired results to be achieved.

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