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NEED FOR CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN CHILD: A CHALLENGE TO SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria diverse religion and the government taking away of some schools from churches has done more harm than good. The increase of immoral behaviours among Nigerian youth has posed a lot of hazards to the youths themselves, parents, the teachers and the society in general. The religious men and women that were thus far seen as the fountain of moral up-bringing and upkeep are not left out in this alarming rate of immorality that has besieged the entire nation. In the face of all these immoral behaviours and its attendant consequences, it becomes clear that development is disfigured heavily by these noxious attitudes due to the neglect and/or skeletal teaching of this essential tool for national development. This emaciated teaching of Religious education is among the causes of moral debauchery prime among Nigerian students which has transcended to the larger society. This moral dissipation has resulted to lack of respect for elders and constituted authority, teenage pregnancy, violence, suicide, indolence, reckless killings, armed robbery, insurgence and so on. In the light of the above expressions, this paper tries to diagnose the teaching of ethics and morality education for sustainable development in Nigerian educational system in respect of the concept of ethics and morality, types of ethics, causes of moral degradation, duties of the parents and teachers in imparting morality and ethics to the Nigerian students as well as the challenges facing the teaching of this an all essential subject that stands to cushion the effect of sustainable development in the nation Nigeria.

Key words: *Christian Religious Knowledge, Teachers Duties, Parental Duties and challenges facing teaching of Christian Religion Knowledge.*

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Introduction

A society can be judged by what it does for its children. There is no denying that children hold the key to everyone's future, and how you grow and inspire them goes a long way in making this world a better place. In fact, it is the desire to provide the best to children that drives the world around. What you teach your child today will influence not only their future but this world's future.

It is in the light of the above that frantic efforts must be put in place properly by government and individuals to provide congenial environment essentially for the holistic development of the child to make them useful and productive instruments of societal development in the twenty first century.

Christian Religion Knowledge

Christian religious education recognizes the usage of a culturally responsive pedagogy in forming young people in faith. According to Dallavis (2011), this approach acknowledges the intersection of culturally responsive pedagogy and environmental contexts. Dallavis argues that theories of culturally responsive pedagogy explore "how religion, a dimension of student culture that has largely been overlooked in the literature surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy, can inflect cultural competence as a key component of culturally responsive pedagogy." This approach resonates with Jesus' catechetical approach. Jesus' model begins with what is known and proceeds to divine revelation, and then comes back to practical implications. Jesus used parables, stories and daily life experiences to teach us about the life of God in the Spirit and how we ought to live our daily lives. In the light of this, one can argue along with Groome (1999, pp. 14-25) in Azuakor (2019) that the purpose of Christian religious education is (a) to work for the Reign of God, (b) to foster lived Christian faith, (c) to promote the wholeness of human freedom that is fullness of life for all, and to work toward the transformation of our being. This paper acknowledges two differing approaches to moral education in school systems, namely, the moral construction approach and the handed down approach. The moral construction approach favored by Piaget and Kohlberg believe that learners can derive morality by social interaction and principled reasoning in a classroom. On the other hand, the handed down approach championed by behaviorists, Freud and educator-philosopher Nel Noddings argue that principles of morality should be actively passed on

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from elders to the younger ones including teachers in a classroom setting (Bergin & Bergin, 2015, pp.398 - 401), a trajectory that is acquiescent with Nigeria's cultural context. Against this background, this paper considers the contributions of the educational techniques, principles, and methods of two renowned religious educationists: Thomas H. Groome and Jane Regan, with the aim of adapting such principles for Nigerian schools.

National policy on Religion Education

When Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in September, 1998 ten years after, "in 2008 the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed and introduced the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in schools by realigning all extant Primary and Junior Secondary School Curricula to meet the key targets of the UBE program" (Igbokwe, 2015, p.31). To further address new academic innovations and make the curriculum much more relevant and practical the 9-year BEC was revised in 2012 with its implementation to commence in September, 2014. In the course of the implementation in stages, the new curriculum raised dust over the place of religion, particularly, the Christians accusing NERDC of a grand design to Islamize the country with the new curriculum. The fear of the Islamization of Nigeria via school curriculum is widespread. There has been much ado in Nigerian media and warnings from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) that Christian Religious Studies has been deliberately eliminated from the new curriculum. CAN president, Dr Samson Ayokunle argues that "whereas CRK [Christian Religious Knowledge], according to the new curriculum, would no longer exist as a subject in schools but rather as themes in civic education, Islamic/Arabic Studies/French subjects on the other hand, have been introduced in the new curriculum" (Zaimov, 2017). This claim led the Incorporated Trustees of Kingdom Human Rights Foundation International to sue Vice President Yemi Osibanjo (who was acting president at the time of the announcement), the Minister of Education, Adamu Adamu, and the Federal Ministry of Education alleging a sinister plan to cause inter-religious crisis in the country (Nnochiri, 2017). The federal government denies the allegations saying that it wants to reduce students' workload and keep their studies in line with international standards. Given the above scenario,

critics are questioning the relevancy of religious education in public schools in a secular state like Nigeria. Some argue that religion is dividing rather healing the wounds of discord in the country: that the two major religions of Islam and Christianity have evolved creeds that exploit the ignorance and fear of the weak and vulnerable, instead of upholding the truth that would liberate the masses. This paper argues that the relevancy of religion to the creation of values in Nigeria has already been studied (Oguejioffor, 2016), and that the controversial curriculum has also been reverted to the old style, leaving both Islamic and Christian religions to be taught as legitimate subjects that will entrench nationalistic values. This paper, however, states that their curricula should be restructured to be more practical in orientation. Effective religious pedagogic approaches emerge as pragmatic and contextual responses to students' diverse capabilities in a classroom, with the purpose of making religious literacy learning accessible and relevant to their lives (Lytra, Gregory & Ilankuberan, 2016). This paper focusing on CRK explores ways of making Christian religious education much more practical to Nigerian students. The paper reviews the state of Christian religious studies in Nigeria, considers approaches to Christian religious education, and then prioritizes learners' experiences with the aim of adapting them to Christian religious education in Nigerian schools. As a way of forming students in Christian practical knowledge, moral responsibility, and social skills; this paper proposes a curriculum design, and how to assess and evaluate students for optimal attainment of learning outcomes.

Lack of Christian Religion Knowledge and Moral Degradation in the Society

Causes of moral decadence among the students are enormous. Many attributed it to the fault of the teachers while many others put the blame on the parents, yet others on the government. Chikwe & Ekechukwu (2009) in Uwaezuoke (2020) outlined some of the causes to include;

a) Rebellion against parental authoritarian styles.
b) Adult loose living and loose talk in the society which provide bad role models.
c) Corroded moral values in the larger society.
d) Frustration from broken homes.
e) Mass unemployment
f) Get-rich-quick syndrome
g) Influence of advanced technology


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Continuing, kilton, (2017) added some other causes to include

1. Lack of parental control, permissiveness and over indulgence of children.
2. No teaching, coaching and counselling by the appropriate authority, children learn themselves and from friends and peers.
3. Parents lack of time for their kids due to busy schedules.
4. Influence of modern technology which was provided by the parents themselves without monitoring or sifting the ones the kids would watch in relation to their age.
5. Human being by nature is greedy. The desires to attain or be reckon with in the society without much hard work.

Apparently, ethics and morality are meant to be taught at home which the first agent of socialization is. It is the duty of the parents and other elders in the neighbourhood to participate in the training of the children ways of greeting, respect for elders, other principles like honesty, trust, charity, sympathy, love, obedience etc. All of these the child is expected to learn at home before attaining school age. Suffice it to say state that this modern time when all parents are working class or engaged in one trade or the other due to the economic crunch that bedevilled the Nigerian nation, it is no longer news that parents hardly had time for their kids as they send them to day care centres at a very tender age, from where they start school. Invariably, parents no longer have time for their children all in the name of making ends meet. Those who do not have money for care-giver centres employ the services of nannies and other domestic workers. Experience has shown that these domestic staff do more harm than good.

Duties of Teachers in Teaching Moral Education in Schools

It is a known truth that teachers are weighed down with lots of academic work and other allied jobs that make teaching learning outcomes worthwhile but that should not mean that their duty should not be extended to the teaching of moral and ethics (Mellisa, 2019) if given the time for that in the school itinerary. Students' moral deterioration has reached the level of having the teaching as a subject not just as skeletal as it appears in some subjects like civic and religious education. Even when moral and ethics are cued in some subjects like Civic education, Religious knowledge,

etc. the teachers teach the theoretical aspect without much emphasis on the practical aspect. In which case the worse immorally behaved student could make an excellent result in those subjects (Uwaezuoke, 2020).

Teachers have the major responsibilities to ensure that children are taught ethics and morals especially this time when they stay more with the kids than the parents but with maximum support from the parents. In fact, teachers and parents are expected to exhibit symbiotic function in the teaching of these virtues. No party can effectively do it in isolation. In support of the above affirmation, Kolberg's theory promulgated that moral development starts early in life and continuous in stages from childhood, adolescence and adulthood periods (Wilber, 2019). In all of these stages, there are educational implications which the teacher is expected to adhere to in assisting the child in moral development namely;

1. The teachers should ensure that they define in an explicit manner the classroom rules, inspire and recompense the law-abiding ones while offenders are denied gratitude.
2. Promote team work by allowing the pupils work together in class activities.
3. Create more opportunities for group work like assignments, projects or even games since they are aware that good behaviour attracts reward while bad behaviours fetches punishment.
4. Establish a democratic classroom setting in which case, the students are part of decision making syndicate that formulate classroom rules and regulations as well as the disciplinary measures for defaulters

In his own submission, Otedola (2018) enunciated the following as the duties of the teachers in teaching moral education;

- Teachers aid the students to comprehend moral principles and ethical behaviours.
- Should be role models as student copy their behaviours.
- Teachers should ensure that the child is exposed to the appropriate social experience that will develop good moral in the child,
- Apply reward by praising or gift a desirable behaviour while punishment to repel deviant behaviour.

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In attestation with the above pronouncement, Paul (2019) identified the teachers' role in moral upbringing to include;

- Honesty; teachers should assist their students to be honest, not to indulge in examination irregularities or even copy assignments from others, not to tell lies against their teachers and fellow class mates.
- Enthusiasm or avidity for learning: teachers could help students develop interest and zeal to learn by motivating and encouraging them.
- Ambition and hard work; teachers should discourage lazy students while reward should be used to promote hard work. Names of hard working student could be pasted on the class bill board on weekly or monthly bases.
- Curiosity and asking questions: the Socratic Method should be adopted to help students ask questions and try to answer them. Children by nature are inquisitive, they are curious about many things around them and therefore tend to ask questions. They should be patient in dealing with them at this time.
- Being responsible; the teacher should be punctual by always being in school on time and encourage students to do the same. Give them responsibilities like being prompt in writing and submitting assignment and appointment of prefects.
- Etiquette and Manners; simple ethics like obtaining permission before going out, avoiding noise making and random movement. Being polite, exhibition of gratification etc. are also imparted.
- Self-esteem; good manners, grooming and personal hygiene should be the guiding principles. This is because all of these lead to self-esteem and confidence.
- Co-operation with others; here class discussion and group project are of great importance.
- Being kind and helpful; students should encouraged showing kindness to their teachers and class mates. This achieved through assisting to clean the board and assisting one another while in the class.
- Being public minded; this is a civic responsibility every students must learn like arranging chairs for school

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events. Keeping their environments clean.

Evidently, the thrust of the matter is that teachers has the major responsibilities to teach moral education in Nigerian schools because the children are brought to school early enough starting from crèche to post primary education. Seemingly, they spend more hours a day with teachers more than their parents. This is not to exempt parents not to play their parts. Parents should be aware that these are their wards who will one day be the custodian of all the wealth they have accumulated (Uwaezuoke 2020).

The Parental Responsibilities in the teaching of moral behaviours to their Children

Parents are the first contact a child meets in life. The home provides the first scenario for child's learning experience and personality development. It is at home that the child learns how to relate with other children. The basic social behaviours are learnt at home before the child proceeds to formal schooling. They are from demented and most proximate members that are influential in the life of the child. It is the duty of parents to nurture the child physically, spiritually, morally and otherwise. The influence of parents in the life of any child cannot be over-emphasized: starting from the mother who gives the child nourishment even from the womb to the stage of independence; and the father with the mother who instil discipline and stability into the life of the child.

Furthermore, parental responsibility would be considered in a deeper and penetrating would be considered in a more deeper and penetrating manner. The parents are channels through which children are brought into the world. In view of this very fact, the child depends substantially on parents especially during the elementary stages of life for survival. Thus, parents are expected to provide the most needed comfort, warmth and care for the child until independence. In other words, emotional and social needs of the child should be provided to children by parents without much stress. These needs must not be compromised because of its serious implication on the child.

Quality and adequate provision of basic as well as functional education should be provided by parents. Materials and adequate supervision should be given to the child with a view to making him/her academically sound or successful in life. Similarly, Parents should ensure and provide proper nutritional needs of the child adequate supervision should be given to the child with a view to making

him/her academically sound or successful in life. Similarly, parents should ensure and provide proper nutritional needs of the child. Adequate and balanced diets should be given to the child/ward for complete physical growth as well as facilitating proper functioning of the system for productive purposes.

Despite provision of food and other essentials needed in the upbringing of the child, the home expected to do the following;

a) Parents are expected to be role models. Be honest, if you want them to be honest. Teach by examples.
b) Teach them morals such as loyalty, respect, patience, kindness, gratitude, self-reliance etc. this helps in good personality development and curtail the possibility of going astray.
c) Tell them stories with moral lessons. In the good old days parents used folk tales to teach morals.
d) In dealing with them show them politeness, be considerate and respectful to them too.
e) As they watch movies or other interesting programmes, reason with them on what is happening so as to broaden their mental reasoning.
f) Give them more attention and time by answering their inquisitive questions.
g) Encourage team work among them and others (Sehgal, n.d).

Perceptibly, parents should be on the know that their children are the greatest investment they can make and ensure that all that they have accumulated over the years are not squandered in a short while when they are no more and as such should ensure they collaborate with the teachers to impact on their wards moral and ethics all these money cannot buy (Uwazuruike, 2020).

Challenges facing the teaching of morals in Nigerian Educational system.

a. Incessant parental attack and hostility to teachers due to one disciplinary measure taken to enforce moral and ethics to their wards.
b. Many parents in an attempt to portray affluence insult the teachers before the children making it possible for the kids to underrate the teachers and even disobey them due to the parental backing.
c. Cases abound where many teachers face court litigation for a legitimate

duty the teacher is performing as an 'in loco parentis'.

d. Some of the teachers have equally met their untimely death in the hands daredevil parents.
e. With fear of not wanting to plunge oneself into trouble, teachers are being sceptical and soft in enforcing these essential traits in the students which is gradually eluding the school system.
f. Moral and ethics education is not a subject on its own but are embedded in some other subjects and are handled on a peripheral level.
g. When the children's needs are not adequately provided, they may likely seek an unhealthy way of satisfying their needs which is counter-productive.

The implication is that the children's moral behaviour deteriorates as they lack directives, lack trust and confidence in their parents, teachers, and religious leaders. The fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom is totally absent in their entire life, hence behave outrageously to the extent that they continue to wreak havoc thus constitute impending danger to their parents, teachers and other members of the public. They are available for hire to perform some obnoxious duties such as assassins, political thugs, arsons and all manner of evils. Meanwhile, these are fully fledged work force that if well rehabilitated would contributed to the national growth and development thus sustainable development.

Summary and conclusion

Christian Religion Knowledge is the key to moral life, Parents and Teachers must find a way to inculcate morals and ethics into children. A child could be likened to an investment, asset or gift in the society. The nature and quality of dividends it yields depends among others, on the ability of parents and the community to provide quality care and proper support for his well-being or welfare.

Education as the panacea for social, cultural, economic and political changes should be satisfactorily provided to the beneficiaries failing which it boomerangs adversely on the society. When adequately provided, it broadens the students' horizon through improvement of sanitation, personal hygiene and income. Teaching of ethics and morality education entails character building necessary to produce an all-round educated individual who not only useful to himself but partake in the development that withstands the test of

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time in the society where he lives. When the focus of education is just to teach the content of the curriculum at the expense of moral development one cannot be astonished at the preponderating circumstances of nefarious act of immorality to the youth themselves, their parents, teachers and the larger society which to a great extent poses a stumbling block to the attainment of sustainable development needed to compete globally in this technological advancement.

Recommendations

Based on the above elucidations, the following suggestions were propounded;

1. There should be public awareness on the parenting responsibilities as television programmes, seminars, symposium, PTA meetings etc.
2. Parents should deem it fit to teach their children sex education instead of allowing their peers and social media devices to do that in a crude manner.
3. Parents should be aware that most of the things children say or do are what they copied from them and a result should be good role models.
4. Parents should allow their children participate in the family meeting and avoid too much high handedness or authoritarian. This enables your children to be close to you and share sensitive issues.
5. Parents should as a matter of importance provide their children's essential needs and alternative ways of satisfying their needs. Starving them of essential necessity could cause some damages.
6. Revival of religion and moral instructions in schools is very crucial. The religious bodies should also be helpful during services.
7. Guidance and counselling services in schools should be reinvigorated.
8. Children should not be given too much freedom in accessing the internet, television programmes and the social media. It is good to sift the media to expose the kids to.
9. Creating employment opportunities to school leavers so as to enjoin others to see the result of hard work and follow suit.
10. Parents should see their parental job and that of the teachers as having a symbiotic function and as such assist and support the teachers to inculcate ethics and morals to their children instead of dampening their efforts.

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