THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

How Can Education Transform Society: The Nigerian Phenomenon?

Dr. Jabaar Saheed Olanrewaju
Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Northwest University, Kano, Nigeria

Abstract:
This paper examines the sociological and philosophical issue of the relationship between education and society. It adopts conceptual, analytical and prescriptive methods to identify some weaknesses that need to be overcome in Nigerian education for it to adequately serve as an instrument for national transformation and development as envisaged in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. For any national transformation agenda to work, moral education of the citizens cannot be left to chance. Therefore, an integrative approach to moral education is suggested for formal education levels. This is to be complemented with modeling and behaviourists approach in the larger society. While education may not be expected to transform the society in a drastic manner because it is part and parcel of the society it seeks to transform, all hands must be on deck to reposition it to produce moral human beings who can positively impact on their society

1. Introduction
Human societies have always had problems and people have always sought solutions to such problems. The education sector has always been one of the first points of call to seek headways to social ills. As such, it has always been the preoccupation of educational thinkers to set goals for education in order to use education to 'create' the kind of human beings required to transform society. It is a trite fact that Nigeria as a country, in spite of her abundant human and material resources, is facing develop-deficit is almost all aspects of her national life. This development deficit manifests in poverty, insecurity, corruption, unemployment, lack of productivity and all forms negative attributes. The country is underachieving and it is not where it is supposed to be in the comity of nations. There is, therefore, the need for national transformation. What is it to transform a society? Who is to undertake this transformation? How realistic are the current efforts to transform the Nigerian society? Why has abundance and preponderance of material resources not profited Nigeria and its people? Why has Nigerian greatness remained at the level of rhetoric? Can education transform a society? If it can, what type of education is required to transform a diverse country like Nigeria? These are some of the questions that would be addressed in this paper. The method that would be adopted will be conceptual, analytic, and prescriptive.

2. Conceptualizing Transformation
To transform something is to change or alter its form or appearance usually for the better. Transformation can be physical when we talk of changes that can easily be seen and felt. For example, development in infrastructures like transport systems, power supply, housing systems and the like are physical facilities that are *sine qua non* to healthy living in any society. Physical transformation is dependent on the extent man has been able to manipulate the natural environment and natural resources like coal, forest, and minerals to build houses, factories, and provide infrastructures such as electricity, communication technology that make life better. Transformation can also be biological. Development of organisms from egg stage to maturity involves biochemical processes which lead to the organism being able to perform activities it hitherto not able to perform before the transformation. Transformation is usually associated with positive changes but it can however be negative when what is required to be put into a process to yield the desire result is not put in place in the right quality or quantity.
Individuals are transformed physically through biological processes like nutrition, physical exercises, and their interactions with their environment. However, the most significant way to transform human beings is through education. Education equips its recipients with knowledge with knowledge, understanding and a way of viewing the world which transform them to a state that is better than what they would be without it. Transformation can also be social when talking about the improvements that have taken place in the realm of the way of life of a people, their social etiquettes, their modes of dressing, food types and the like. It is individuals who have been positively transformed who can transform the society. It is from this perspective that it can conveniently be argued that education can transform a society. On the other hand, when one considers the fact that all the players in the education sector are also parts and parcel of the larger society, one can only be cautiously optimistic of using education as an instrument of transforming the larger society. If the larger society is corrupt, it is very unlikely that the education sector will be very different from the larger society.
Transformation is a constant process. Nothing is static; everything is constantly changing either for better or for worse. As such, a society cannot be static. That Nigerians are always quick to remember with nostalgia the good old days in terms of the economy, education, and social relationships is a pointer to the fact that there has been a transformation in the negative sense in the Nigerian

society. It is like a cell being infected by a cancer – causing virus thereby making it to undergo a change for the worse in terms of health and well-being. This cancer causing virus in the case of Nigerian society is corruption of people's moral. There is a compelling need to halt this moral degeneration before any other effort towards national transformation can be worthwhile.

3. Efforts towards Transformation of the Nigerian Society

On paper, the present administration in Nigeria has laid out a transformation agenda launched in the year 2011 with a view to delivering projects and programmes to make life better for Nigerians. The agenda aims at sound economic management, provision of infrastructure, diversification of the economy, blocking of loopholes in the system and increasing non-oil revenues. The administration also floats the SURE- P programme to provide mass transport, to construct and maintain roads and to provide employment for Nigerian youths. But how far have these lofty ideas translated to better life for Nigerians? One does not need extra - ordinary intelligence to know that life is not rosy for Nigerians and the country is suffering from acute development deficit. According to World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim at the IMF/World Bank Spring meeting and as reported by Omoh Gabriel, Nigeria is one of the top five countries that have the largest number of poor people in the world. Nigeria ranked third in the world while India ranked number one with 33 percent of the world poor, China is ranked second with 13 percent of the world poor followed by Nigeria where seven percent of the world poor people live. According to 2014 report of Legatum Institute, a UK based research organization that documents annual prosperity indicators around the world, Nigeria despite its ₦510 billion economies failed to make the list of Africa's top 10 most prosperous countries. Nigeria was said to have fallen to 27 in Africa in 2014, nose-diving 22 places from its ranking in 2011. This state of affairs can hardly be attributed to death of resources or absence of policy but it has to do with mismanagement of the nation's resources by the leaders and lethargy on the part of the led to hold leaders accountable. It ultimately boils down to low moral quality of the citizens.

The above is a pointer to the fact that the transformation agenda of the government still remains at the level of wishes and if wishes were horses, beggars will ride. Why is the government finding it so difficult to implement its lofty policies? Why is it that ideas that worked elsewhere often fail in Nigeria? The simple fact is that the moral quality of both the leaders and the led is very low. The pervasively corrupt social environment constitutes a stumbling block to prosperity and wellbeing of the land and its people. In situations like this, it is logical to look in the direction of education to re orientate the people and inculcate in them values that are required to enable them become the sort of human beings who can positively transform the society. If it is true that the education sector is responsible for the manpower production of any nation, education cannot be totally exonerated when there is moral laxity in the society. Accepted that there are other social institutions like the family and religions which are charged or expected to serve as guides to human conduct in a society, education has a key role to play because every society relies on education for its renewal and rejuvenation. Educational institutions are meant to be avenues where worthwhile habits and values required to live responsibly are reinforced with a greater level of systematization. The Nigerian government, like many other governments in the world, therefore has adopted education as an instrument for effective national development and has stipulated that education shall continue to be highly rated in national development plans (National Policy Education:2004). It is also stipulated in the (NPE) that the quality of instruction at all levels should be oriented towards inculcating values and spiritual principles in inter – personal and human relations. There is the need to go beyond this rhetoric by taking concrete steps towards making education an instrument of transforming Nigerians to 'adequate' human beings who subscribe to higher values of honesty, integrity, responsibility, patriotism and therefore can impact on their society positively.

 Since humans are required to implement any policy, nothing concrete can be achieved until conscious efforts are made to educate Nigerians, both young and old, morally. Although the government and the people of Nigeria recognizes the significance of moral education of the citizens and players in the education industry are often tasked and constantly being reminded of halting the current deterioration of moral values, nothing concrete is on ground to put forth a coherent moral education in the country apart from the statement made in the national policy on education. Moral education cannot be left to chance as it is being done at the moment without grave consequences. Before Nigeria can be transformed, Nigerians must first be transformed through sound education from being self-centered to being public - spirited, from being cruel to being kind and considerate to one another.

4. What is it to be Moral?

According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the term *moral* is an adjective used to describe something which is concerned with the principles of right or wrong conduct or behaviour. The word moral is the root word from which morality is derived. Morality itself is derived from the Latin word *moralitas* which means manner, character, proper behaviour and the like. Hence, to be moral is to adhere to the principles of good behaviour. It is to be of good conduct. As observed by Omoregie, moral issues are related to man by virtue of his rational and social nature. The social nature of man necessitates the desire to live and interact with other people. Man needs others and can hardly live totally independently of other human beings as he needs others to overcome and make up for his weaknesses. It is on this basis that society is formed. Societies are formed in order to overcome individual inabilities and enhance ability to achieve common goals (Ekanola: 1999).

This interdependence calls for interaction and social relationships. There is therefore, the need to device social mechanisms that can promote harmonious social relationship among members of a society. The principles that guide human relationships and that helps to facilitate peaceful and harmonious relationships among men in society is called morality.

The rational nature of man makes him accountable and culpable for his actions. A lunatic, for example, would not be culpable because he has lost rationality which makes him to be human. Hence, both social and rational nature of man makes him a moral being, a being that can be held accountable for his actions. An issue or action becomes a moral one when its consequences or outcome imparts on the lives of others in society. For example, a man's choice of breakfast menu would not constitute a moral problem but whether he or she performs his or her duty as a school teacher or not would be a moral issue because the options that

are open to him or her will invariably touch the lives of other people. The social and rational nature of man enable him to understand that life is best lived in a community, and a community life is peaceful and harmonious when its members respect the life and interest of others, when they keep agreements and when they are kind and not cruel to one another.

A moral person, therefore, would be one who holds and exhibits high and strong principles for proper conduct. He or she works with others to ensure peace and development of his society.   He abstains from anything that can create social problems and or serve as impediment for societal development. Hence, a society would only develop when a considerable number of its members are moral and hold strong moral principles. It is, therefore, expedient that societies have a plan for moral education of their citizens. It is perhaps from this perspective that Malaysian government launched the National Integrity Plan in the year 2004 with a view to promoting the virtue of integrity so that it becomes the norm culture of their society. This effort seems to be worthwhile considering the successes being recorded by Malaysia in all fields of human endeavour in recent times.

5. How Can We Do Moral Education?

As shown above, before Nigeria can be transformed in the real sense of the word, conscious efforts need to be made towards moral education of the citizens. Moral education is a process of helping an individual to have a proper sense of what is right and what is wrong is social relationships. It is the process of developing in people, disposition to do what is right. In Aristotle's view, ethics should not be concerned with mere abstract knowledge but about the ability of individuals to choose to do what is right because they possess the character which makes them to be disposed to act rightly in any given situations. Aristotle further contends that moral education is supposed to be the primary purpose of the political community. Governments at all level should have programme geared towards uplift of the moral consciousness of their people and developing their sense of moral responsibility. This can take forms such as:

Formal approach

Informal approach

Non-formal approach

5.1. Formal Approach

This is usually done is formal school setting at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Moral education can be done formally in many ways. It can be through religious approach whereby major religions are taught as subjects in schools. This is the most common approach in many societies, Nigeria inclusive. Some contend that to raise the moral life a people, we should teach them religion more than we are doing now. Religious practices and teachings have, however, not proved to the effective in raising the moral consciousness of the people especially in the Nigerian situation.   The fact that it is not all that is religious that is moral, can make engagement in immoral acts such as favouritism, nepotism, embezzlement, hatred and the like to be justified on religious and ethnic grounds.

Aside, the multi-religious nature of the country makes it problematic to accommodate all religious in schools. As such, some religions are invariably being marginalized and so their adherents not carried along effectively and sometimes lead to crisis in schools. Therefore, religious approaches have not been efficacious in improving the moral life of Nigerians. As observed by Oluponna, conversion of Nigerians to Christianity and Islam and an increase in public professions of spirituality seem not to have succeeded in structuring public life and citizens' obligations to their community. Hence, there is the need to find a more all inclusive approaches to educate not only the youths but the entire populace in morality. Moral education in the real sense of the word should appeal to man's social and rational nature. It should rely on rationality as the basis of its validity and this is major difference between religion and morality.

 Moral education can also be done in schools by teaching specific values and virtues as topics in a moral education class. For example, honesty, integrity, patriotism, responsibility and the like can be taught as topics in civic education or moral education. For this method to work effectively there is need to adequately prepare teachers to teach the subject. One weakness of this approach is the danger of teaching these values as absolutes without considering situations when any of these values can be held by another value. For example, a value like honesty can be held by another value like compassion to save the life of an innocent. In such an instance or context, honesty may not be a virtue. Moral education should therefore be able reasoning about the right course of action in specific situations and being a sort of person who is of worthy character.

 Another method of moral education through formal approach is value clarification. This involves raising moral issues and discussing real or hypothetical cases on which learners are allowed to freely make contributions. The teacher uses learners responses to know their level of moral development and then help them to develop to the next higher level. Values clarification has the strength of not teaching any particular values as absolutes but it needs to provide the learners a moral compass for it to be effective. In other words, it should lead to learners realizing what is right from what is wrong.

 This writer would advocate an integrative approach to moral education. It involves integration of moral values to the entire components of the school curriculum, that is, programmes of learning, programmers of activities and programmers of guidance. This is illustrated in the figure below.
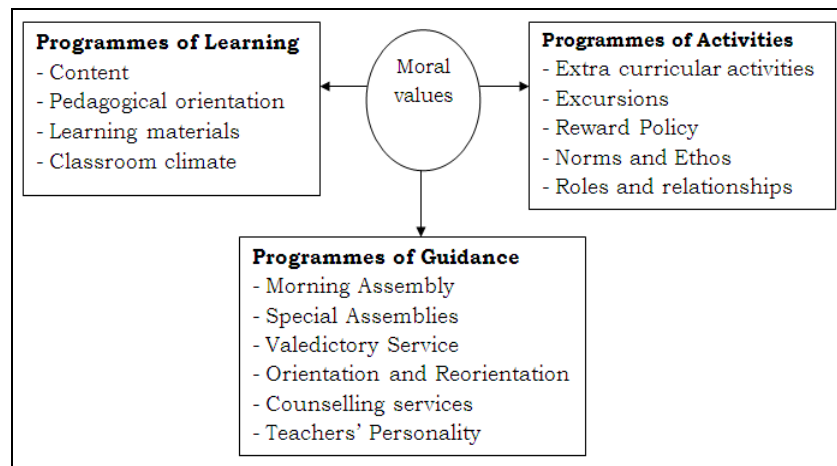
Figure 1

As regards programmes of learning, schools subjects can be used to foster moral growth of learners when teachers bring out the moral dimension of their subjects. All school subjects can be used to achieve this when appropriate methods are used. The moral dimension refers to the implication of what is being taught in natural sciences, social sciences, and arts for the wellbeing of humanity. Apart from the cognitive significance of school subjects, teachers should always bear in mind that it should also inculcated in the learners some basic social skills. These subjects should be taught to foster intelligent and humane   behaviour in learners. Teachers need not stop at the cognitive level but should use their subjects to touch learners' affective life. However, for this approach to be effective, teachers need to be properly trained and retrained to discharge the responsibility.

Programmers of activities and programmes of guidance are usually outside the scope of programme of learning. They are also called the hidden curriculum. They are veritable avenues towards dealing with issues that have to do with attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour. The various activities that take place within the school and how the school is administered can send strong moral signals to the learners. For example, faithfulness to the school time scheduling of activities can send strong moral message to the learners. A school where the school time-table is flouted at will or where teachers come for their classes late or stay longer than necessary is not likely to produce individuals who would have strong sense of commitment to rules and order.

5.2. Informal Approach

To transform a society, all including the young and the old must be transformed. Therefore, moral education should not be left to formal school system. As such, the media, political leadership and all the institutions of society must work together to effect the positive transformation. Informal approach to moral education of citizen would take the forms of:

- Modeling
- Behaviorists approach

Modeling is a setting good exemplary example by leaders at all levels. Nigerian leaders have failed to positively transform Nigeria because they have failed to lead by example. Leadership here is not all about the political leaders but also leaders at all level: parents, vice chancellors, rectors, provosts, principals, headmasters, chief executive officers, head of departments, captains of industries and the like. The way to get out of our present predicament is to make sure that only creditable and competent individuals who have what it takes to lead emerge as leaders at all levels. To borrow Achebe's words in his "*Trouble with Nigeria*", ''Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be''.

A good instance of a leader who drastically transformed his nation is Lee Kaun Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore between 1959 and 1990. He amazingly led the transformation of the country from a third world country to a first world country within three and half decades. He gave an account of the transformation in his book "From Third World to First: The Singapore Story". As a prelude to a dramatic effort towards greening and beautification of Singapore, he first worked on the attitude and behaviour of his people. He rid them of negative attitudes of littering, noise nuisance, rudeness and he got them, through exemplary leadership, into being considerate and courteous. This shows that transformation of a nation does not start with physical transformation but with transforming people's habits, attitudes and behaviours. Today, Singapore does not only have world class infrastructure, but also a people who uphold high moral standards.

Another important way to informally impact the psyche of the masses is the behaviourist approach of creating a conducive environment for people to behave morally. Behaviorism is based on the notion that behaviours are acquired through conditioning and conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment. In other words, our responses to our social environment shape our behaviour. Most Nigerians are corrupt because it is possible to be corrupt and not be caught and if caught, one can get away with it especially those who have the patronage of and connections with powers that be. When the rule of law prevails and institutions of society are working, offenders are apprehended and punished adequately according to the law, then the masses sense of right and wrong (morality) would be enhanced and there would be less incidences of immoral activities. Nigerians are not more corrupt or criminal - minded than other human beings in other parts of the globe. The present moral decadence is a function of the kind of social environment the citizens create for themselves through their acts of commission and omission. Most humans remain at the conventional level of moral development at which they define morality as acting in accordance with what

society defines as right. A society defines an action as appropriate when it reinforces by reward and defines other actions as inappropriate when it sanctions the doer of the action. This plays a critical role in moral development of the people whether young or old. Until our laws are judiciously enforced and culprit punished, corruption and other criminal action will continue to reign and transforming Nigeria will remain a dream.

Non - Formal approaches to moral education can include organisation of workshops, conferences, seminars, staff development programmes to enlighten members of the public on the dangers and grave consequences of immoral behaviours on the society. This should not only to be done by the government but also by civil societies. Adult education should not just teach literacy skills but serve as an avenue for value re - orientation of the masses.

6. Conclusion

Transformation of Nigeria will continue to be a mirage until conscious efforts are made towards moral education of the citizens. This can be done formally through moral education in institutions of learning and informally through modeling, good leadership and creating conducive social environment for citizen's moral growth. Non - formal approaches should also be used to disseminate useful information to the public on the need to live a moral life. This would be a more holistic and all inclusive way towards halting the current moral degeneration in the land. It is, however, logical to be cautiously optimistic about the potency of education especially formal education to drastically transform the society, because it is part and parcel of the society. But all hand must be on deck to ensure that it is positioned properly to produce adequate human beings for other sectors of the economy for any national transformation agenda can be successful.

7. References

1.   Chinua Achebe (1983) An image of Africa and The Trouble with Nigeria. England: Penguin Books. Page 31.
2.   Clayton, E. (2005) Aristotle's Politics. Retrieved 2nd March, 2013 from www.rep.utm.edu/ancientcentralphilosophy
3.   Ekanola, A.B. (1999) Ethics and Society. Fadahunsi, A. (Ed). Philosophy and Society. Ibadan: Hope Publications. Page 47.
4.   Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education. 4th Edition. Abuja: NERDC.Page 1
5.   Legatum Institute Foundation (2014) Prosperity Index. Retrieved from www.prosperity.com/2014/pdf/publication on the 4th December, 2014
6.   Oluponna, J.K(2011) Nigeria Must Rethink its Values and Philosophies. Lecture Delivered at the Second Foundation Day of Caleb University, Imota. The Nigerian Educatiion Times No.34. Jan – Feb. Page.2
7.   Omoh Gabriel (2014) Nigeria Third On World Poverty Index-World Bank. Vanguard Friday, April 11, 2014.Page 13
8.   Omoregbe, J. (1993). Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Approach. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited Page 150.
9.   Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2014). Morality Stanford University. Retrieved 24th March,2013 from http://plato.stanford.edu//morality.