

CHAPTER 34

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MORAL AND VALUES EDUCATION (MVE) TO SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION (SNE)

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Introduction

Education as a concept remains a tool for human development. It has been defined severally by different scholars from different viewpoints but one thing about it is that it emits light which helps to dispel darkness in the lives of individuals. It helps in creating and developing worthwhile values in the lives of people, making them better, matured, enlightened and developed in the process. Thus, wherever and whenever education is mentioned, what comes to mind are the people who are its beneficiaries; whether rich or poor, residing in urban or rural areas, having special needs or not, etc.

Renowned scholars such as Okoh (2003), Osaat (2006a) and Elechi (2015) have stated that education is etymologically derived from two Latin words (a) *educare*; which means to “bring out” and applied by educationists such as Socrates, Plato and Rousseau; as well as (b) *educare*; which means “to mould” and used by philosophers such as Aristotle, Locke and Pestalozzi. Consequently, education in Nigeria has been encapsulated in the nation’s philosophy of education as well as its objectives which are expected to cover all aspects of learning. Thus, Nigeria's Philosophy of Education is considered in four objectives which the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (2014) states as: to inculcate national consciousness and unity; to inculcate the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

In like manner, moral and values education (considered in singular form), being an aspect of education, teaches strong morals and worthwhile values through schools for learners’ development. It can be valued as a process that assists members of a given society to learn the elements and virtues of good living (Osaat, 2006b). In the view of Bebebiafia (2003:88), moral and values education is, “the type of education which inculcates in the pupils the right type of values and attitudes necessary for coping with ever increasing moral problems brought about by increasing societal, political, economic and technological changes”. Through moral and values education, instructions for quality living through human character development, with special emphasis on right and wrong as well as the rules and



acceptable standards of human behavior are passed to learners. Hence, worthwhile values are taught to students in order to develop a positive attitude, strong moral character, objective and reasoning, development of mind and the autonomous spirit so that they will be useful in the society.

Values are standards, norms or criteria for judging the worth of anything; on the one hand to be good, worthwhile or desirable; and on the other hand, to be bad, worthless, despicable or somewhere in between them (Escobar & Albarran, 2014). They are considered as beliefs since all beliefs have cognitive, affective and behavioral components as well as psychomotor components; hence, values encapsulate the reasons and motives for human actions. They are also viewed as the measures of what the society expects of its members. This connotes that values are welcomed norms and standards in a social system which give meaning and direction to an attitude. Thus, the value system of a society comes from the environment and how the individuals make use of the environment. Such a value system if presented can be transferred to the coming generations (Okoli, 2011).

Likewise, values may imply interests, desires, ideals, goals, approvals/disapprovals, standards and preferences. In view of these, Rokeach in Nduka (2004), defined value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence”. While mode of conduct may connote how individuals act (e.g., honesty / dishonesty and truth/falsehood), end-state of existence refers to things such as knowledge/ignorance, beauty/ugliness and pleasure/pain. Thus, the value of knowledge ought to be preferable to its opposite which is ignorance in human societies; a fact which moral and values education preaches. Other worthwhile values are respect for people; chastity, dignity of labour, patriotism, justice, fairness and hospitality. They also include courage, self-reliance, embracing one’s culture such as language, folklore, art, music, song, dance and drama (Okoh, 2012).

Education is open for everyone and not reserved for a privileged few. This is the reason most governments of different nations are taking it seriously. It is the same in Nigeria where successive governments; particularly the last administration under President Goodluck Jonathan extended education even to children of migrant fishermen, nomadic pastoralists, migrant farmers, hunters, almajiris, etc. who were out of school due to their lifestyles and means of livelihood. Also, emphasis is being placed on individuals with special needs on how to educate them. The aim is to ensure that everyone has equal access to school and no one is left out (Osaat, 2007; Oroka, 2009).

Thus, according to the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) (2015), Special Needs Education (*SNE*) is the form of education prepared for people with various types of exceptionalities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental retardation (which may be intellectual disability or intellectual developmental disability), physical and health impairment, behavioral disorders, communication and speech impairment and learning disabilities. Others are multiple disabilities,



at risk children, autism, albinism as well as the gifted and talented among others. Such education is prepared for these categories of individuals based on their sensitivities and receptions towards education (Ibekwe, 2015).

The vision of Special Needs Education (SNE) is, “to maximize human potentials of persons with special needs and nurture their intelligence, notwithstanding social, economic, political, religious, language and other circumstances’ (FME, 2015:9). Likewise, its mission is to facilitate the inclusion of people with special needs, provide equal opportunity, equity as well as access in a hitch free environment. Consequently, its objectives as stipulated by FME (2015) are to take care of total service delivery of the physical, mental and emotional disabilities of the Nigerian child, irrespective of setting (school, home and hospital); to provide adequate and qualitative education for all persons with special needs in all aspects of national developmental endeavors; and to ensure that all persons with special needs develop at a pace commensurate with their abilities and to contribute to the nation's socio economic and technological development. Also, its philosophy are: to identify the dignity and worth of the human person and to utilize the residual strength to overcome the weakness; to enable the Nigerian child acquire appropriate skills for global competitiveness in the world of ICT.; to develop the child into a sound, effective and productive citizen; to ensure full inclusion of the individual into the community; and to provide equal access to educational and other service opportunity for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels and also those outside the formal school system (FME, 2015:10).

Thus, in bridging the philosophy of SNE with Nigeria’s national goals, there has to be a yearning for self-realization and better human relationship. Also, there should be the desire for effective citizenship, individual and national efficiency, national consciousness and national unity among others. One of the ways to actualize this is to apply the teachings of moral and values education (MVE) to special needs education (SNE). It is vital to note the place of the child and character in this discourse.

Every child is a gift from God and they are very important as they are expected to succeed the adults in their later years; especially when properly nurtured. Accordingly, the child is the best discovery a country should make despite the numerous innovations and discoveries the ever-changing world has witnessed such as the printing press, compass, paper money, steam-engine, telegraph, telephone, science and technology, electronic age and globalization. Eventually, the child is the only architect who coordinates them. This shows that the child becomes the potential generation to be discovered by any powerful nation for further development, discoveries and of course for sustainability when and where possible (Osaat, 2006b).

In canvassing the place of the child, Glenn (1900:176-178), in Tiles (1992), being the state superintendent of public instruction of Georgia, presented at the annual meeting of the National Education Association an inspirational paper, what *Manner of Child shall this be?* He declared in the paper thus:



If I were asked what is to be accounted the great discover of this century, I would pass by all the splendid achievements that men have wrought in wood and stone and iron and brass. I would not go to the volume that catalogs the printing press, the loom, the steam engine, the steamship, wireless telegraphy, the telephone and the phonograph. I would not go among the stars and point to either one of the planets that have been added to our solar system. I would not call for the Roentgen ray that promises to revolutionize the study of the human brain as well as the human body. I would pass over all the labour saving machines and devise by which the work of the world has been marvelously multiplied. Above and beyond all these, the index finger of the world's progress, in the march of time, would point unerringly to the little child as the one great discovery of the century now speeding to its close.

This connotes that the greatest achievement of any time by any nation is the discovery of a child. Such a child should be the reconstruction of the intellectual atmosphere. The effective nurturing of the child implies the creation of a successful or transformed generation. This is why many nations invest heavily in the education of the child. Unfortunately, the present Nigeria generation has been a generation of youth restiveness and moral decadence, of social, political and economic instability, wanton destruction, sporadic ethnic and religious violence, insurgency, tribal youth militias and a lot more. It is also a generation where many youths grow up with criminal minds with growing interest in cult activities as well as examination mal-practice as the dominant means of achieving success in educational institutions. These negative tendencies / vices do not help to build a nation; rather, the nation is threatened and weakened just like what is being experienced today. Also, the minds of many of our youths have been morally corrupt/polluted. What is needed now is proper orientation of the Nigerian child so that his perception and philosophy about life is properly constructed.

In addition to the above facts, Moral and Values Education deals with character development. The analysis of character shows that it is a normative concept in all ramifications. Roper (1999:53) considered character as "the sum of known predictable mental characteristics of an individual, particularly his conduct". A good character is associated with morally relevant conduct or refraining from certain conducts or words. It involves action or activation of value knowledge. Individuals can discuss good and bad character in the same way right and wrong actions are discussed. Generally, good or bad character is seen to be observable in a person's conduct. Thus, value becomes one of the foundations of character. A good character in this way is valuable and desirable.

Furthermore, character is a complex set of relatively persistent qualities of an individual and normally has a positive connotation when used in discussions of moral education. In view of this, moral education becomes one of the major ways



of modeling human character and an agent for values orientation; hence it's vital in Moral and Values Education. Character formation shows how a particular character is acquired by an individual, which becomes part of the behavior the individual subconsciously exhibits. Hence, character is gradually developed in an individual which becomes a constant action. When this formation is made up of acceptable habits, one can talk of good character; when it is an unacceptable habit, it is considered a bad character. Aristotle thus, sees good character as the life of right conduct, right conduct in relation to oneself (Okoh, 212).

It is equally maintained that good character comprises knowing the good, desiring the good and doing the good – habits of the mind, habits of the heart and habits of action. Some fundamental attributes related to a good character are respect for the right of others, regard for the law of the land and concern for the common good, fidelity among others. These elements of good character are essential virtues for leading a moral life and moral values; thus, the proper character formation gives moral values which together with a good value system, are the elements contained in moral and values education. In this light, moral education is not only essential for character formation but also for character reformation and transformation (Osaat, 2006b). In view of the expressed facts, subsequent sections will consider contributions of Moral and Values Education to Special Needs Education, challenges, implications, conclusion and suggestions.

Contributions of Moral and Values Education (MVE) to Special Needs Education (SNE)

The Morally Autonomous Individual

Autonomy is etymologically derived from two words – *auto* which connotes self and *nomos* which implies a kind of norm or rule. It thus, literally means self-rule. In this direction, Iheoma (1995) asserted that autonomy is self-directed activities as well as recognition of norms or principles which direct the autonomous activity. Autonomy can be considered self-governance, which is the ability to set and determine laws that will guide an individual's actions while being free from external enactments. It also means the freedom to act based on self-imposed rules out of one's own free will; in view of one's society and the ability to be independently minded in all things.

According to Uyanga and Aminigo (2020:1):

Autonomy is the highest stage of moral development which endows an individual with an awareness of the process involved in choice making. It is a stage of complex achievement involving an integrated disposition of the will, of reason, of self-knowledge, of feeling, of choice and of judgment. It is a stage characterized by law deriving from the self-borne out of an understanding of the basic rules of morality and moral codes of conduct in the society. It is a stage of moral consciousness which promotes good



companionship and guides the interactions of men in the society. Autonomy implies the ability and determination to regulate one's life by rules which one has accepted for one's self...

Consequently, a morally autonomous individual is one who is conscious of himself and his environment, the way he acts and does things, the way he relates with people and how he values life. Such an individual has the power to distinguish between what is good and what is evil and go for the former. He is not moved or dictated by any one; rather, he takes/makes decisions for himself which he believes is right, fair and just. In view of this, Dearden in Iheoma (195:71) listed the following characteristics to be exhibited by morally autonomous individuals: (i) Wondering and asking what the justifications for various things which would be quite natural to take for granted; (ii) Refusing agreement or compliance with what others put to him when it seems critically unacceptable; (iii) Defining what he really wants or what is really in his interest, as distinct from what may be conventionally so regarded; (iv) Conceiving of goals, policies and plans of his own independent of any pressure to do so from others; (v) Freely choosing among alternatives; (vi) Forming his own opinion on a variety of topics that interest him; and (vii) Governing his actions and attitudes in the light of his own thinking and judgment. Moral autonomy makes individuals to be morally healthy and conscious at all times. It is a crucial component of moral and values education which is expected to be inculcated in special needs education students during teaching and learning periods.

Character Development/Formation

Nigerian children at all levels and home backgrounds should be made to become men and women of character. The good character would promote and enable the children to live, realize their destiny and with the adults jointly build a stable, united, strong and peaceful home and nation (Osaat, 2006b). In this vein, Idowu (1962:153-154) averred that:

However happy a person's destiny may be, if he has no character, it is lack of character that will ruin his destiny. Gentle character is which enables the rope of life to stay unbroken in one's hand... it is good character that is a man's guard.

It is therefore very important that the training of the real child requires a vital aspect of philosophy of education / education; that is, moral and values education (MVE).

Moral and values education helps in the character moulding and values identification in the child. It can be considered separately but to be used as a single component here. Moral and values education is the promotion of discipline, provision of adequate care, inculcation of social norms, moral, economic, political and intellectual values, spirit of inquiry and creativity, learning of good habits and developing a sense of cooperation and team spirit. The teachers teaching this



subject focus on the learner's character formation and values' identification (Bebibiafai, 2003). The ability to identify various forms of values is developed in the end.

Identification and Utilization of Moral Values

In this generation of youth restiveness and moral decadence, of social, political and economic instability, wanton destruction, uncontrolled ethnic and religious violence, insurgency, tribal youth militias, growing interest in cult activities among others, what one needs is the reconstruction of intellectual atmosphere and effective upbringing of the child for the creation of a successful or transformed generation of society (Osaat, 2006b; Nduka, 1979).

Emphasis at this point must be placed on the importance of value inquiry, decision making and reasoning of value orientation for effective character formation (Osaat, 2006b). In this vein, Osaat (2007) and Bourne and Eissenberg (1978) call for creation of capacities for critical and reflective thinking through teaching the child. They further emphasized that moral education's contributions to special needs education are numerous. Thus, *MVE* as an aspect of study fosters on the *SNE* learners the following objectives: (1) To develop the ability to identify values and ideas for moral judgment; (2) to develop the ability to identify fundamental principles and rules for moral actions; (3) to develop moral principles for judging actions and adopt norms; (4) to develop a good knowledge of assessment, to accept and do what is/are morally right; (5) to develop the ability to intellectually, criticize a belief system, virtues and values /value system; (6) to develop the ability to personal moral autonomy and self-control; and (7) to develop the ability for personal decision-making and reflective and creative thinking and (8) to develop the ability for the understanding of freedom and how it can be applied without stepping on toes.

Knowledge to Guide Human Actions

Osaat (1999, 2006b) averred that moral education must help in the inculcation of moral behaviors into the child/learner as *SNE* is given to the child. He equally maintains that such morally educated child/learner must show some fundamental characteristics: (1) He must be committed to achieving moral values; (2) He must be able to identify which moral values are desirable; (3) He must understand the feelings of others or have the knowledge of human's feelings; (4) He must have situational, social and skillful knowledge; and (5) He must have developed sense of cooperation at all times.

Therefore, moral and values education will empower learners with the right knowledge needed to guide their actions in the society and their interactions with their fellow men. They will equally be able to understand other people's feelings when dealing with them which bring better understanding and harmony. Also, morally autonomous persons seek the good of every member of the society and will stand up for what is right irrespective of the immediate benefits.



Very importantly, morally autonomous individuals will stand against the ills of corruption, indiscipline, election malpractice, examination malpractice and disrespect for the dignity of human life. He must decide to be disciplined, hardworking and patriotic citizens for the good of the society. For these reasons and others not discussed Moral and Values Education becomes imperative in Special Needs Education of the child and the society.

Challenges on Special Needs Education

A major challenge *SNE* education is facing in Nigeria presently is in the appropriate implementation of its policies across the federation. Also, its practices are not fully consistent with current global best practices (Eskay, Eskay & Uma, 2012; Obi, 2007). For instance, there are insufficient laboratories in special needs classrooms across the country and available ones are not technology driven. The cognitive domain for children with special needs is not properly addressed; particularly for those who are gifted, creative and talented as well as others with intellectual deficits or learning disabilities. The gifted education programme in Nigeria is run like that of a normal regular school i.e. techniques and strategies such as curriculum compacting, enrichment, bibliotherapy among others which enhance gifted education are not being fully practiced (FME, 2015).

Again, there are inadequate philosophers of education to be deployed for proper handling of the blend of these two disciplines. Perhaps, it has never occurred to any one that this kind of interdisciplinary collaboration could yield excellent products of human capitals.

Another observation is that despite the government's pronouncement of integration and inclusiveness for *SNE*, more separate schools for it are being built across the country (Obi, 2017). Similarly, facilities and materials for classroom activities which promote learning are grossly insufficient in most of the schools. Also, it has been observed that emphasis on rehabilitation is not mentioned or fully addressed in *SNE* schools across the country (Ogunkunle, 2007); which is geared towards making the beneficiaries self-reliant and assist the gifted children to record technological breakthroughs in their endeavors.

Some factors responsible for these lapses as observed by Eskay, Eskay and Uma (2012) are due to inadequate funding, cultural beliefs, negative perceptions, teacher qualification/inadequacy and the non-existence of legal mandates. It is also noticed that continuous negative perceptions of learners with disabilities makes accountability difficult to attain. It is worse when federal, state and local responsibilities are poorly handled.

Implications of Moral and Values Education for Special Needs Education

The Moral and Values Education is expected to drum the essence of fairness, justice, accountability and equity in the appropriation/handling of *Special Needs Education* in societies (Yitzhak, 2001). This aspect of education spells out the responsibilities of all stakeholders (government, school administrators, teachers, caregivers, parents, etc. in *SNE* and the need to implement them religiously. It will



equally assist in building the overall character/conduct of the learners. These will help to make *SNE* function to its optimum for the welfare of the Nigerian children and for our collective development and advancement.

Also, Moral and Values Education will guide the learners to imbibe the norms and positive cultural benefits of the society. The child at the end of education can differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong and make right decisions appropriate to his/her level. Also, he/she can identify values and he can also utilize these values. Moreover, the child becomes autonomous in taking actions without undue influence of the bad ones around him/her. He/she grows up to become an adult that can influence his immediate environment and the larger society positively. The child, if properly taught will not only be able to identify primary values such as moral, intellectual, socio-political, economic and spiritual values but also be able to utilize them appropriately. The child will also tenaciously work for the promotion of values such as respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals; faith in man's ability to make rational decisions; moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations; and respect for the dignity of labour. The child will understand value as what is worthwhile not only to the individual but also to the society and hence be able to match valuables with desirables which are very important in decision making.

Conclusion

The teaching of moral and values education in special needs schools will be of immense benefits to the children and Nigeria in general. In a period where worthwhile values such as truth-telling, industry, honesty, chastity, kindness, unity, charity, fairness/justice among others are fast eroding in our societies and being replaced with worthless vices such as kidnapping, rape, drug and human trafficking, cybercrimes, ritualism, cultism, killings, corruption, embezzlement, etc; the application of *MVE* will help to stem the tide and create/orient a new positive way of thinking which can help the individuals; especially our youths to be useful to themselves; hence, rebuild and develop our already decaying society. The subject/course will also help education stakeholders (ministry of education, school administrators, teachers, alumni, parents, etc) to understand their roles in *SNE* and act accordingly, based on fairness and transparency. In the end, our children will benefit due to proper character formation, skills development and a more positive perception about life.

Suggestions

Moral and Values Education should be appropriately and adequately spelt-out in *SNE* curriculum. Thus, children should, from the elementary level, master core values such as respect to elders, truth-telling, industry, fairness/justice, accountability, charity, cooperation, and respect to authorities, adherence to rule of law and be able to say no to corruption /corrupt tendencies among others.



Also, students should see themselves as agents of positive change in the society and should do their best for both personal and societal gains. Very essentially, teachers with special knowledge in philosophy of education (or axiology) should be trained and engaged in SNE due to their expertise in order to properly articulate and inculcate the virtues of moral and values education into the students.

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