

# **MORALITY AND EDUCATION: THE PRECURSOR FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The focus of the work is to analyze the relationship between morality and education, and its implications for social reconstruction. In order to achieve this, qualitative research method was adopted which involves a philosophical analytic technique used to analyze the data collated through secondary sources. It was discovered that education enlightens one to distinguish the 'good' from the 'bad' clearly, for his/her benefit first, and then that of the society. Thus, morality is embedded in education both in principle and practice. If society is to experience reconstruction, citizens should embrace cognitive restructuring, to expel all negative thinking patterns that frustrate individual and social development.

**Key words:** Education, morality, society, reconstruction

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every human society, no matter its historical circumstances of existence, has its own unique and peculiar ways of transferring morals, skills, knowledge, and values to its future generation. This does not in any way imply that, any educated person is a moral person. It simply means that morality can be acquired in the process education. However, education is not the ultimate source of morality. Man is a moral creature, conscious of what is good and bad (Daramola, 2015). Education is not the same as morality. Yet, education and morality are so related that one cannot be considered without the other. Therefore, education in whatever fashion cannot be treated in the society without making reference to morality. Education enlightens one to be in an advantageous position, to recognize and even distinguish 'good' from 'bad'. The core of education tends to build the personality of an individual, to make one good, useful and beneficial to him/herself first, then to the society.

Unfortunately, the link between morality and education is not very pronounced in our faulty educational system in Nigeria. The study opines that our contemporary society needs reconstruction, and if nothing is done urgently, it may collapse beyond repair. Nevertheless, social reconstruction remains a mirage if the mental structure of Nigerians does not change. Of course, the physical reconstruction of the society is the by-product of the constructed minds of the people in that particular society. It is on this background that prompted the study “education and morality: the precursor for social reconstruction”.

## **RE-CONSTRUCTIONIST VIEWS OF SOCIETY AND EDUCATION**

The re-constructionist views the future as part of the present, contending that if we speculate on what the future might be like and then take these future possibilities into account in planning the present, the future becomes a force and takes on genuine reality. This view holds that there are ends higher than and beyond the mere process of living in a given society at a given time. The premise on which the re-constructionist bases his assertions is that civilization now faces the possibility of self-destruction. Education must therefore lead men to a profound change in their

minds so that the enormous technological power at our disposal may be used to create rather than destroy. Hence, deducing from this view point, the curricular should contain only those areas of study that are capable of transforming the human mind so that he can transform his society. It is therefore, the human mind that the curriculum should be focused upon and in terms of value character or the conservation of age long heritages (Ezewu et al., 1982).

However, the re-constructionist maintains that our civilization has reached a point when we direct our technological advancement to self-annihilation. For Thomas Hobbes reconstruction is the state of perpetual war all against all. Contrary to this point, John Lock argues that the structure men found themselves in is a peaceful state, men decide to reconstruct it because it cannot meet all their needs. The result of this decision is the formation of an organized society under a civil government through a social construct (Uduigwomen, 1995). Man needs therefore a different or his mind should be reconstructed so that he can gainfully direct the technological advances. For this, the re-constructionists emphasized character building to be what should be pursued by our schools and vigorously too. No wonder John Dewy says education is the reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience (Uhie, 2015). We need to reconstruct our experiences as bases for re-organizing the society. If societies can stop destroying themselves, world peace could be attained and a kind of world democratic state could be expected (Ezewu et al., 1982).

### **TRADITIONAL EDUCATION IS ROOTED IN MORALITY**

Originally traditional education in Nigeria is rooted in the moral principles that control the social order. The indigenous Nigerian education is organized at the family level, the serious ties existing between the different family units renders the educational system a community affair. This is further strengthened by the fact that African education is rooted in the overall belief and traditions of the land. It is in this respect that the indigenous system of education in Nigeria is training for participation throughout one's life in the community into which one is born. It is a training of allegiance, mutual interest and interdependence on one another, the content of which is the community's values, beliefs, traditions and the vocations that have been cherished and practiced over the years.

The indigenous education in Nigeria, like in other parts in Africa, is to bring up children who should have respect for the ancestors, the elders of the community, appreciate and pursue societal values and keep strictly to the societal norms. To themselves, they should be people who can support themselves when they are of age and be able to show kindness and appreciation to their parents and the elders of the community for providing the education which equipped them to participate effectively as members of the community. Consequently, indigenous education system in Nigeria could be seen as a tribal conditioning, a pilgrimage in routine observation but stirs up the innermost feelings and loyalties of those submitted into it bringing individuals together through understanding and compassion (Ezewu et al., 1982).

### **WESTERN INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION AND MORALITY**

African educational practices had for a long time been relegated to the background by the impact of colonialism. The consequences of which were that African ways of life and values were misinterpreted out of deliberate bias by westerners. It had been thought erroneously, even by some Western educated Nigerians that there was nothing like education before the coming of missionaries to Nigeria, yet it is known that Africans, Nigerians not exempted transmitted their cultural heritage and sustained themselves from one generation to another before now. Even now, African education is not dead. It goes side by side with Western education (Ezewu et al., 1982).

Western education contributed immensely to the success of the Christian enterprise and in some ways, to the practical execution of the colonial program. In pre-colonial Africa, there were no schools in the sense of separate institutions set aside solely to undertake the education of young people (Aguwa, 1987). The Christian mission established primary and secondary schools.

The missionaries at that time noticed and exploited this keen interest in education among the Africa people. One of the early missionaries had said, "If we go from town to town talking about God we know from experience that much of our effort brings no result. But no one is opposed to a school". Shortly, the initiative rested with the natives. The missionary accounts have explained that, the impact of school on paganism cannot be overstated. The whole town became interested because it was their school built by their labour and engaged in training their children. The fathers never begged the people to take the school please, they just pointed out that it was a wonderful favour to have one and that if people wanted it, they would have to build and support it, and if they refused, they would be laughed at by other towns for their backwardness. Despite the fact that Africans responded positively and actively to school education, it was observed to be a common defect of the mission educational policy that it did not truly reflect the interest in education as such. The central motive for educating the native people was to prepare the much needed manpower. According to Jordan (1948) that:

The gradual opening up of the hinterland to the administration of law and the opportunity of commerce meant that a considerable amount of office work in Government departments, and in the trading posts of commercial firms called for a large number of educated natives. The medical and the judicial as well as the army, police and prison departments needed Africans with knowledge of English.

At the initial stage many people were reluctant to send their children to the mission school for fear of their children opposing their traditional religion. At the same time some other people had no alternative because the changing environment demanded that to be at the right place in future one must directly or indirectly follow the white men and their activities (Chibundu, 2007).

The colonial lords were looked upon by the colonized African as the enemy, who gave inferior status to his person and his civilization, and distorted his true image and his personality in movies, literature, and television. Colonial existence was consequently "untrue existence" (Wright, 1993).

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND MORALITY**

From time memorial, there exist an intimate relationship between education and morality to the point that virtually all the definitions of education one can find moral aspects in each. However, the questions that arose when considering the issues of education are: Is education good or bad for man? Should the society expect good or bad from education? Who is the teacher? What are the benefits of the skills and abilities acquired through education? These critical inquiries among other things, suggest that that the moral aspects of education are always questioned. When we conquer these questions, then personal and social reconstruction becomes a reality.

Peters R. S. (as quoted by Ezewu, 1982) asserts that education as basically initiation; that is, initiation into the values of society and the young ones are from time to time initiated into these values. This implies that initiation is a continuous process from birth to death. It promotes the values and adjustability of people in the changing society. In addition, Jeffrey M. V. (as quoted by Ezewu, 1982) opines that education is the community's means of nurturing personal growth. In other words, education, according to this view is each community's method of preparing its members for the community life. Education is the process by which an individual born into a human society, learns the way of life, which include knowledge, skills and values of the society, at

home, community and schools, so that he can function effectively as a member of the given society. Milton (as quoted by Ezewu, 1982) said “I call, therefore, a complete and generous education that fits man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously...” That education should prepare the individual to perform justly and skillfully in the society. Education trains people to be just and objective in their dealings with others, irrespective of their diverse religions, ethnic and regional affiliations.

Education produces sound character; by respecting father, mother, obedience and live an orderly life (Ezewu et al., 1982). The fruits of education manifest first in the good and admirable character that individual's exhibit at home and secondly, in the society. To support this view, Plato maintains that education is that training which is given by suitable to first instincts of virtue in children when pleasure and pain are rightly implanted in rational souls. He sees education purely as a means of character development (Ezewu et al., 1982). This implies that the behaviour of people is an evidence of the degree of education they acquired. The degree of educational expositions and dispositions definitely affects their character, in the relationship with others and the society.

True education is directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his final end and the good of the society to which he belongs and in the duties of which he will, as an adult, have a share (Flannery, 2004). Education prepares and equips people in achieving their dreams and aspirations in life. It enlightens people towards their human rights, and the need to vigorously express their distinctiveness and dignity ascribed to them by God. However, Pius XI (1939) asserts that education should be suitable to the particular destiny of the individuals. That implies that, due education is crucial for human development, but the content should be prepared accordingly to suite the different careers people aspire to pursue respectively in the society.

## FORCES THAT IGNITE SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

1. **Discontent:** Discontent is a feeling of being unhappy and dissatisfied with the situation you are in. When people begin to be dissatisfied with their life style, social status, and economic condition. The discontent about a system of government has been known to produce individual and societal anomie. The individual experiencing anomie feels socially isolated and anxious. As such in a larger societal context, generally accepted beliefs and standards of conduct are weakened or disappear (New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998).

Discontent is one of the major forces that ignite social reconstruction mentality. Although, discontent usually manifest in diverse manners depending on the system of governance in a particular country. In the democratic system, citizens have the right to freedom of speech, through which they express their discontentment. On the other, military system of governance, citizens are usually dictated what they are expected to do or not to do. In this dispensation, discontent may be expressed through isolation, resistance and even through dispositions.

2. **Poverty and deprivation:** It should not be necessary for one to have knowledge of statistics before one knows that many Nigerians are living in poverty and deprivation. This is another factor that ignites social re-construction. When there are high rates of unemployment, underemployment, inflation and lopsided distribution of wealth poverty is inevitable. The advantage of one becomes the disadvantage of the other. Then, some people would be deprived of the common wealth. Deprivation leads to poverty. As such individuals suffering from the fracas of poverty may at a point react against the established order. Kaunda (1974) therefore, maintains that, they have not will rise against the haves whether the haves like it or not (p. 20). Hence, the immediate and pragmatic need for social reconstruction is to promote equal distribution of common wealth and opportunities for the underprivileged in the society. According to Greinacher, (1973) the concern must be to assist the individual person less well off than his fellows, and under privileged group, and to eliminate altogether situations in which one

man can lord it over another.

3. **Psychological satisfaction:** The satisfaction gained from participation in a group seems particularly important, especially for people who lack significant attachment in their daily lives. People are generally satisfied to belong to a group that shares a common outlook on society. The need to belong in such group to satisfy their taste for the sense of belonging. Unfortunately the psychological satisfaction of people remains a mirage especially in our society that discriminates her citizens' base on social class, status, and social strata. Against this background, a lot of people are psychologically dissatisfied and displaced. This mentality is not only destructive but also ignites the desire for social reconstruction.

### **COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING, SOCIAL CLASS AND RECONSTRUCTION**

The cognitive structure, thinking patterns or the mind sets of people is critical aspect as long as social reconstruction is concern. Cognitive restructuring in this context means mental restructuring. It implies that at a point people may experience mental distortion due to complex social issues. The cost of living is very expensive, for a significant numbers of people are poor. Nevertheless, the deprivations of welfare breeds depression, anxiety, and relationship problems (especially between the rich and the poor), which are conditions that expresses mental distortions. Cognitive distortions are located in the individual experience or physical wellbeing of the mental ill person. People sometimes experience a cognitive distortion that is the thought pattern that creates a distorted view of reality. Examples of cognitive distortions can include; black and white thinking, catastrophizing, overgeneralization, and personalization (Stanborough, 2023).

Moreover, cognitive distortion is not distributed randomly across the social classes. According to Roger Gomme (1996) (as quoted by Stanborough, 2023), for nearly every kind of mental illness, poorer people are afflicted more than richer people, more often, more seriously and for longer. Coming from another angle, fryer (1995) (as quoted by Stanborough, 2023) reviewed the evidence for the relationship between employment patterns and mental health and concluded that unemployment has a direct effect on the unemployed person's health, and also on that of their family. Children's school performance deteriorates, for example, and they are more likely to exhibit mental health problems. People in low-paid and insecure employment similarly demonstrate high levels of mental illness.

Cognitive restructuring refers to the techniques that help people notice and change their negative thinking patterns. Cognitive restructuring techniques deconstruct unhelpful thoughts and rebuild them in a more balanced and accurate way. Most people experience negative thought patterns from time to time, but sometimes these patterns become so entrenched that they interfere with relationships, achievements, and even wellbeing. Many mental health conditions are: depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, substance use disorders, personal disorders, relationship problems, and self-defeating behaviour (Stanborough, 2023).

Cognitive restructuring offers an opportunity to notice these maladaptive thoughts as they occur. You can then practice reframing them in more accurate and helpful ways. The theory is that if you can change how you look at specific events or circumstances, you may be able to change the feelings you have and actions you take. The techniques are: self-monitoring, questioning your assumptions, gathering evidence, and performing a cost-benefit analysis. In self-monitoring techniques, to change an unproductive thought pattern, you have to be able to identify the error you are making. Cognitive restructuring depends on your ability to notice the thoughts that spark negative feelings and states of mind. Questioning your assumptions involves learning to question your thoughts and assumptions, especially those that seem to get in the way of living a productive life. In gathering evidence, you may decide to keep track of the events that trigger a

response, including who you were with and what you were doing. Cognitive distortions are biased and inaccurate, but they can also be deeply embedded. Dislodging and replacing them requires evidence about how rational they are. The last technique is performing a cost-benefit analysis; this is the strategy of considering the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining a certain cognitive distortion (Stanborough, 2023).

However, cognitive restructuring is crucial for social reconstruction. For social reconstruction can only be implemented by human beings. These human beings must be mentally healthy, to execute the business of reconstruction and repositioning the society for the benefit of humanity. The social class of the people also matters in social reconstruction. If the society is made up of the poor and the ignorant, then social reconstruction may be a mirage. For the poor and ignorant are bankrupt of critical ideas and resources to rebuild the social fabric. The people in this class are shielded from the light that can help them distinguish the wrong from the good. As such education enlightens people and it is crucial to social reconstruction.

### THE CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

1. **Hard work:** Everybody wants social reconstruction, especially considering our economic conditions of today, but not everybody understands and accepts the basic requirements for social reconstruction. Nigeria, as a developing country, we need to put more hours in work. It is not normal for a young country to start with such a short working week. The normal thing is to begin with long working hours and decrease them as the country becomes more and more prosperous. One cannot estimate the amounts of energies of the millions of men in the villages and thousands of women in towns are at present wasted in gossips, dancing and drinking, are a great treasure which could contribute more towards the social reconstruction than anything we could get from rich nations.
2. **Intelligence:** The second condition for social reconstruction is intelligence. Unintelligent hard work would not bring the same good results as the two combined. Knowing your time and season, knowing the steps to apply in any given situation, knowing the tool to use for efficient work output, all these things shows the use of knowledge and intelligence. And all of them combine with hard work to produce more and better results. Intelligence is the by-product of knowledge, knowledge increases through education, and the kind of knowledge by which we conquer nature and use it to our own advantage. All societies have the ability to develop, but not all of them reach their fulfillment of an accomplished growth (Nyerere, 1974).

### SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MORAL EDUCATION

The act of educating people to acquire moral virtue in order to build or rebuild their lives and the society at large is known as moral education. Nevertheless, the experiences of life gave room to the misconception of the term 'moral education' to sexual relationship. It is an error to think that moral education is limited to the area of sexual relationship. Morality is concerned with all relationship between people in the human society and it constitutes moral confusion of our times.

Moral education is a universal concept, even though the meaning and applications remains relative to each society. What is acceptable in some cultural settings are under questioning in other places. In examining morality the non-material aspect of culture need to be emphasized which is rooted in attitudinal values. It is universally accepted that negative attitudes, characters and behaviours are condemned in the homes, schools, religious houses and the society. Values like honesty, loyalty, patriotism, faithfulness, obedience, respect, truthfulness, love, unity, cooperation, and so on need to be properly taught and stressed in the school and society. These are essential for personal and social development. In the contrary, pupils need to be taught to abstain

in totality from prostitution, raping, homosexual, lesbianism, smoking, terrorism, kidnapping and so forth.

However, moral values have no relevance except in terms of real life. It is after all through actual conduct that moral character is developed. Though laid down general principles of conduct can be applied deductively. It is only through experience of real and relevant situations that children can learn their application. The inductive process is a greater value, for it starts with experience and from analysis of specific moral actions builds up general principles. The sources of such moral situations are many and varied, ranging far beyond real life and actual experiences. Folklores and legend, fable and proverb, parable and allegory, drama and role playing, all may be used as vehicles for moral learning. Such experiences involve the shaping of attitudes and the development of moral skills. It is not the reason alone that motivates action but emotion and moral attitudes too (Daramola, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Western education was not the original form of education in Nigeria. The advent of Western education was motivated either to advance foreign religion or colonial administrative structure within Nigeria, contrary to the ideal of education which is to build and empower one first such that he/she can positively contribute to building social structures. However, the derogatory state of our contemporary society intrinsically calls for social reconstruction. Moreover, for any society to experience reconstruction, her citizens need not to only pursue the 'good' enshrined in education but also to avail themselves towards cognitive restructuring both in principle and in practice. This will definitely lead to productivity and new discoveries virtually in all human endeavours

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