

EXPLORING CICERO'S CONCEPT OF MORAL EDUCATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explores Cicero's concept of moral education as a veritable tool for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Cicero, a Roman philosopher at a point corruption and moral decay were prevalent in Rome just like in Nigeria presently, proposed moral education for young individuals as a way to arrest and change the trend of life. Cicero's moral education is based on four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, courage and temperance). For Cicero, moral education is an attempt to instill in young people by the humanist educators (teachers), those virtues he considers as sources of moral rectitude for ethical and moral reasoning. Each level of education is very important because learners at various levels need to be properly guided not only for skills acquisition but with regard to their moral development so as to enable them as a matter of duty, contribute meaningfully to sustainable national development. However, it is believed that educational institutions have done little or nothing concerning moral development of learners through religious studies, civic education etc. This assumption is made based on the rate of moral decay among individuals in Nigeria both young and old. The resultant effects are economic, sociopolitical and religious problems which have not provided the needed environment for sustainable development. Thus, the call for education embellished with Cicero's ideas on moral education at all levels to engender the right environment where sustainable development can be attained. Also, seminars on Cicero's concept of moral education are to be regularly organized to encourage teachers to mediate appropriate moral values to their learners.

Introduction

Every society has a responsibility of educating her citizens in order to advance the cause of national development. To meet this responsibility, education is expected to be formulated to reflect the intended developmental goals of the society. Also, the educational system should be properly funded and well articulated policies should as well be put in place. The above condition is necessary because in the domains of education is perceived

inherent efficacy needed for developing and patterning individuals in a way that will bring about some desirable changes in them (Abiogu, 2013). These desirable changes when achieved will benefit the individual and the society at large with regards to development. Thus, the nature and success of every society depends on the type and content of education which is fashioned and given to her citizens. This is a fact because education is considered to possess the potentialities of shaping the destiny of any society.

The above idea is in line with the observation of Enemuoh (2002), that education is man's greatest instrument for pursuing national development. Validating the view of the above author, Abiogu (2013) considered education as an essential ingredient for national development as the evidence of social values for peaceful co-existence are not lacking in the field of education. However, the author believed that education that will foster national development must be the type capable of equipping learners with lifelong skills and is properly garnished to reflect moral education among other things. Moral education is a lasting legacy of Marcus Tullius Cicero. At this point, reason therefore demands that we should pause for a while and acquaint ourselves with the thrust of the operative concept 'Cicero's moral education'.

Cicero's Moral Education: what is it?

Moral education is an advocacy canvassed by most philosophers of antiquity, but the loudest voice among them is Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero was a lawyer, writer, statesman and a philosopher. He was born on the 3rd of January in 106 BC into a lower aristocratic family in Rome. Cicero was well educated in his childhood. Although he had a distinguished political career, he is best known as Rome's greatest orator and as a man of letters. Cicero's social life was often characterized by ethics and morality which had significant influence on his philosophical writings. Some fruits of his prolific writings include among others; *de republica* (on the republic), *de legibus* (on laws), *de oratore* (the theory and practice of education) and the moral education of the youth.

Cicero's moral education is a call to help individuals, especially at young age, acquire sound moral virtues. This informed Cicero's argument as sustained in Nkokelonye (2005) that, education without a morally upright life is a loss to humanity. To this end, Cicero as reported by Mbaji (2012) maintained that young people could develop with the aid of a proper education which among other things involves moral education. Cicero considers moral education as an attempt to instill in young individuals by the humanist educators, those virtues he considers as sources of moral rectitude for ethical and moral reasoning (Mbaji, 2012). He believes that human beings are born

for moral improvement and uprightness. Thus, his concept of moral education was anchored on four cardinal virtues considered by him as sources of moral rectitude. The four cardinal virtues include; prudence (wisdom), justice (an organized society), courage (a noble and invincible spirit) and temperance (orderliness and moderation).

The first among the four virtues is Prudence (wisdom). As reported by Castellano (2011), Cicero considers prudence as the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it. The prudent man looks where he is going and not the circumstances around him. Prudence being considered the right reason in action, Hambrose (2014) noted that it should not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. The author refers to prudence as the *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues). This is because it is believed to guide the other virtues by setting rules and measures. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of the conscience so that the individual determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. Also, with the help of this virtue, one applies moral principles to particular cases without error, overcoming doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid. Prudence when instilled in individuals will be a guide. Cicero believes prudence would direct and guide the conscience and judgments of individuals in their choices of actions as well as their modes of conduct.

The second Virtue (Justice) as sustained in Gales (2005) is regarded by Cicero as the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give ones due to God and neighbours with respect. Justice towards men disposes one to respect the rights of one another and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct towards his neighbour. He is impartial to the poor or defer to the great. Justice is the constant purpose which gives every man his due on the foundation that no one should suffer wrongly. Justice is considered as the crowning of all the virtues. Any individual who possesses this virtue is expected to treat his fellow man fairly, promoting the welfare of the general public from the lowest strand of the society.

Cicero associates the third virtue (courage) with greatness of spirit. Reporting Cicero's views, Castellano (2011) stated that courage is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. The author further asserts that courage strengthens an individual's resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. In the same line of thought, Gray (2014) upheld that the virtue of courage enables

one to conquer fear, even the fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. This is because the author believes that courage possesses the ability to dispose one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. He further states that a courageous individual desires those things fit for a noble soul, being indifferent to money. Thus, the implied rationale is that when an individual is indifferent to something, he is not subject to it. Cicero states that courage is not mere boldness, rather it is an act guided by wisdom to decide when a sacrifice is necessary for the common good, being ready to face death rather than renounce justice.

The fourth virtue as outlined by Cicero is Temperance. According to Castellano (2011), Temperance in the views of Cicero is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honourable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion. It embraces considerateness and self-control, giving a sort of polish to life, subjection of passions and moderations. On the other hand, Temperance presupposes orderliness and is essentially linked to moral rectitude, for what is right is proper and what is proper is right. The exercise of temperance shows a sort of reverence towards other people or showing considerations to others.

Observingly, Cicero demonstrates some inter-relatedness among the four cardinal virtues: temperance, courage, justice and prudence when he submits that "temperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; Courage is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; Justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; Prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it". Cicero further stressed that attempts ought to be made to have these cardinal virtues instilled in the youths on whose shoulders the society's development rests. This is because he believes that young individuals could develop and improve with the effort and assistance of proper education garnished with moral education. The call for moral education of young individuals by Cicero is in a bid to save them from some dangers of life and at the same time save them for some of its noble aspects.

Cicero believes that there is a particular period of time in the life of any individual during which he is vulnerable, a time the individual is deciding on the calling in life and the type of individual he will become. At this time, Cicero considers the individual incapable of making the best choices without the help and influence of a more experienced voice. The individual is expected to be assisted to acquire those moral virtues that will aid him live a good life that ensures social harmony as well as become a productive member of a

socially cohesive community. So, any society that is poised to producing individuals with sound moral values for national development, should give serious consideration to moral education in their curriculum development and formation to be taught with the help of humanist educators (teachers), who would ensure proper transmission of these values. This therefore indicates the influence of the educational institutions in instilling moral virtues to their learners.

Educational institutions and moral education: how far?

There are various educational institutions in Nigeria which are organized in various levels; primary secondary and tertiary. Each level is a very important one because it presents opportunity for learners as young people to be properly guided not only for skill acquisition but with regard to their moral development. According to the Federal government of Nigeria (2004), primary education is the first children receive after they have left kindergarten. It has six years duration with the aim of preparing the child for secondary education. The average age of entrance and graduation is 4-9 years. Secondary education is received after successful completion of primary education and before the tertiary education. It has six years duration given in two stages; a junior secondary school stage (also known as upper basic education) and a senior secondary school stage, having three years duration respectively. The broad goal of secondary school education in Nigeria is to prepare the individual for useful living within the society in order to contribute to the development of the society and for tertiary education. The average age of entrance into secondary school according to Eubanks and Eubanks (2000) is 10-11 years and the expected year of graduation is 17-19 years. The tertiary education is received after successful completion of secondary education. There are various tertiary institutions in Nigeria which include; universities, polytechnics, colleges of educations among others.

Regrettably, in the recent times there seem to be great decline in the moral consciousness and dispositions of young individuals in Nigeria. This has given serious concern to all the stakeholders in the educational development of these young ones. Presently in Nigeria, cult activities have been extended from the tertiary institutions to other levels of education as well as to various villages and towns hosting these schools. There are incessant cases of social vices engaged in by young people. In fact, it is now common news of how young people kill and extort their mates in the name of cultism, give bribes to their teachers and engage in other examination malpractices to pass exams. Also, students break into their teachers' and principals' offices to steal question papers, answer booklets, alter their results, steal money and

other valuables. Full blown cases of the above social ills are the myriads of problems that have engulfed Nigeria such as; terrorism, kidnapping, militancy, bribery, corruption among others and these problems have promoted disharmony and disunity among various regions or groups in Nigeria as well as created unfriendly environment for peaceful political and successful socioeconomic activities for national development.

The above and many other problems not mentioned are considered to be precipitated by the downturn in the moral standing of individuals in Nigeria. This moral degradation and the attendant social problems have become very worrisome and detrimental to achieving sustainable national development in Nigeria. This is because the youthful stage is the most active stage in the life of any individual and the workforce of the young people is unarguably the major driving force of any economy and state. Any country whose workforce is characterized by a youthful population involved in social vices will amount to an erroneous, erratic, vain and corruption-ridden society eluded of development. It now becomes a matter of utmost concern to the government, school managements, parents, teachers and every well meaning citizen of Nigeria to take serious actions. However, some measures have been taken over the years to curb the immoral trend among Nigerians especially the young people. Such measures taken previously include; attachments of security personnel to schools, suspension, expulsion and imprisonment of some students who perpetrate these immoral acts, introduction of subjects like religious studies, social studies and civic education where learners are exposed to religious and cultural values. But none of these measures has however brought a durable or lasting solution to the moral problems. This therefore served as 'impetus agitat' (motivating factor) for this study which explores Cicero's moral education as a possible solution for the moral downturn among Nigerian youths who should be the precipitators of sustainable development.

Cicero's moral education as precipitator of sustainable development

Sustainable development as a social construct is often used by various scholars. As envisioned by Ugoh (2008), sustainable development entails the ability to meet up with the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future generation. In the same vein, Osuji (2004) considered sustainable development as an approach that combines the development needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of the future while also maintaining ecological integrity. The above definitions imply that the needs of both the present and future generations have to be met without jeopardizing the ability of either of the generations to meet its own needs at any given time. To ensure the above

therefore, education of any country should be poised to equip its beneficiaries (citizens) with the necessary skills to meet the needs of the present generation (development). However, this should be done without in any way disregarding the ethical or moral lives of the learners which seem to have posed great problem to a country like Nigeria.

Addressing ethical challenges of a country through education is considered as key to sustainable development. With this knowledge, the Nigerian policy makers have set the national educational goals to be; the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society among others (FGN, 2004-2). The above imply that education should be able not only to produce individuals with appropriate skills but individuals with sound moral values in which case anything less becomes a deficiency on the part of the individual and a failure on the part of the education system. This once again brings us to Cicero's submission that 'education without a morally upright life is a loss to humanity'. So, in the domain of education should be found, vital ingredients that are capable of modeling characters that can promote peaceful social order (Abiogu, 2013). Thus, relevant education that is properly garnished with moral education is believed to be able to open doors to lots of benefits like poverty alleviation, equity, justice and sustainable development among others (Maclean 2008).

Consequently, the importance of sound moral education as proposed by Cicero cannot be over emphasized because, as a fundamental human right education is a key to the general welfare of mankind. It can help entrench safer, healthier, more prosperous world, while contributing at the same time to social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance in a multiethnic and multireligious country like Nigeria. The role of education over time, varies from one country to another especially with respect to a country's needs in a given time and circumstance. However, the constant expectation of various countries from education among many other things is to achieve sustainable national development. Nigeria as a developing country is no exception as it has over the years made various efforts to harness her development through education as well as ensure its sustenance.

Thus, education for sustainable development is a lifelong process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific, social literacy and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions and most importantly the moral rectitude for interpersonal relationships which can be achieved through the

incorporation of moral education based on Cicero's postulates. Cicero's moral education is expected to equip the individual with the moral virtues that will properly guide their actions after they must have acquired the necessary skills that education affords. This therefore calls for conscientious efforts by the relevant authorities to ensure that individuals receive education that is properly rooted in moral education as Cicero canvassed so that actions of individuals in Nigeria will be guided by moral virtues (Prudence, Justice, Courage and Temperance). Prudence will direct and guide the conscience and judgments of individuals (leaders and the led) in their choices of actions; justice will enable them to give their due to God and neighbours with respect so as to promote the welfare of the general public; courage will enable them to act wisely especially when a sacrifice is needed for the common good and temperance will help to moderate their attractions to material things to avoid pursuit of material things at the expense of one another and the future of the society. When these are achieved, sustainable development will be ensured and guaranteed.

Conclusion

Change in behaviours of learners which impacts positively on the society is considered as an indication that education is successful. Moral education as proposed by Cicero is the type to be embraced by all and as well incorporated into any society's educational system. This is because Cicero's moral education has the potency of bringing about desired positive changes in learners by instilling in them the right type of moral values for moral rectitude. However, educational need is unique with each country because of every country's peculiar circumstances, aspirations and challenges. Therefore, a country like Nigeria that is bedeviled by all manner of recurrent social ills perpetrated at all levels by most of its own citizens should in fact as a matter of urgency have a rethink with regards to the nature and form of education in Nigeria. Some very important questions regarding the role education plays, should play or is playing should be properly addressed.

Education of course should equip learners with the necessary skills to ensure self and national development but not without the right type of moral values. So, education that must ensure sustainable development should be poised to take very good care of the moral aspects of the learners through moral education. This makes it paramount that education should be built on the following five pillars; educating the individual to learn to know and learn to do (the knowledge and skill aspects of education), learn to transform oneself, learn to live together and learn to transform the society (the moral cum socio/developmental aspects of education).

Recommendations

Following the exploration and analysis above, the following recommendations are put forward;

- a. Moral education based on Cicero's postulates should be adopted at all levels of education as compulsory course/subject to expose learners to moral virtues.
- b. Seminars/workshops should be organized for all teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions from time to time on Cicero's concept of moral education for them to be better poised to mediate appropriate moral values to their learners.
- c. As a way of reinforcement, well behaved students and teachers should be recognized regularly.
- d. Various religious groups and families should be encouraged to buckle up in inculcating moral values to children as a complementary role to that of the teachers.

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