

## DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF YOUTH MORAL DECADENCE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

In his book, *Democracy and Education* (1916), John Dewey viewed education as a dynamic, lifelong process on the basis of which human society flourishes. Education, in Dewey's reckoning, is not just the acquisition of knowledge, or the means thereof; more importantly, education is a moral concept. It is a project of nation-building because it enables social cohesion and progress. Dewey's insights contrast sharply with the Nigerian policy persuasion, wherein education merely serves as means of acquiring paper qualification for paid employment. Since the late 1970s, the Nigerian public education system has undergone steady decline in quality. Today, moral degeneration and materialism among Nigerian youths have attained a climax. This is partly because the educational system tends to bifurcate education and practical moral living, thus disconnecting education from its social impact in most areas of national life. This paper explores these, and related, problems of Nigeria's educational system through the lens of Dewey's pragmatic approach to educational planning and management. The sources of data for this study were library and archival materials, as well as secondary (Internet) sources, which were subjected to critical content analysis. Dewey's work is particularly useful due to its emphasis on moral education, and because it is focused on learning by doing as an alternative to rote knowledge. It is participatory, and seamlessly addresses itself to the formal and informal dimensions of child education. After a century of this groundbreaking work, its time-tested lessons can ostensibly be used to address the ills of the ailing Nigerian basic education system.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Dewey, Moral Education, Nigeria, Social Development

### **Introduction**

*Any system of education which does not help man to have a healthy and sound body, an alert brain, and balanced and disciplined instinctive urge is both misconceived and dangerous.*

—Obafemi Awolowo (1968: 268)

This paper is an exposition of John Dewey's philosophy of education as panacea for addressing the moral issues confronting the Nigerian basic education system. It has often been assumed that the deluge of problems confronting the Nigerian education sector would readily dissolve once adequate funds are poured into the sector by government (Adeyemi, 2011; Nwachukwu, 2014). For decades, not only have successive governments consistently failed to earmark adequate fund for education (Iboma, 2018; Owasanoye, 2018), year after year even less fund has been allotted to education in the national budget; far less than the 26% benchmark recommended by UNESCO (Onifade, 2003; Adeyemi, 2011). This has undoubtedly taken its toll on the quality of education in Nigeria, and, more fundamentally, on the moral and intellectual qualities of graduates passing out of the system. However, even if one granted that funding of education was the exclusive responsibility of government, the problem of dwindling funding for education would be but only as a part of the problem. A more fundamental problem is the system operated across Nigeria's various levels of education (Emeh, Abang, Asuquo, Agba, and Ogaboh, 2011).

In Nigeria, education, at the levels of planning and implementation, is treated merely as a tool for the acquisition of paper certificate that entitles the holder to lucrative opportunities in the labour market, and as a tool for enhancement of social status. School curricula, particularly at the levels of primary and secondary education, have tended to consign moral education to the dustbin, and to create a disconnect between formal schooling and actual living, almost as if both had little or nothing to do with each other. Thus, even if a billion dollars were spent in education by a willing political class, there would be no discernible positive difference from what currently obtains in Nigeria, so long as defective curricula lie at the foundation of the system. On the other hand, a vision-driven and carefully implemented and monitored system certainly creates the basis for any funding effort to be able to make the required impact. Dewey's work is considered to be particularly useful for filling these gaps due to its emphasis on civil and moral education beyond mere academic excellence, and because it is participatory, and seamlessly addresses itself to the formal and informal aspects of child education. Education, in Dewey's reckoning, is not just the acquisition of knowledge, or the means thereof. More importantly, it is an indispensable ingredient for individual and social development, both of which would not be realised unless education is viewed, and approached, as a moral project on the basis of which social cohesion, prosperity and progress are possible.

### **Youth Crime and Moral Collapse in Nigeria**

Morality and moral issues have been so sidelined in the Nigerian education system that they mean next to nothing among most contemporary Nigerian youths of school age. As a result, many of these youths have evolved the culture of apathy and imperviousness to moral issues and moral concerns, expressing this through different patterns of immoral behaviour and disposition. Crime has become the norm and displaced the culture of moral excellence, rectitude and probity among the youth population. Moral decadence among contemporary Nigerian youths is, as Falade (2016:42) put it, "so pervasive that all sectors of the society have been affected, thereby, resulting in the slow pace of development."

The decadence has been manifested in many ways, ranging from excessive materialistic tendencies, to outright criminal activities of all shades and characters. Some of these crimes include examination malpractice, trickery, cultism, substance abuse and sale, prostitution, ritual murder, possession and distribution of illegal and substandard products or poisonous substances, arson, rape, and armed banditry. As indication that youth crime is rather escalating across Nigeria, the 'regular' Internet fraud, popularly known as *Yahoo-Yahoo*, has recently been radically upgraded to a more sinister *Yahoo-Plus*, involving all sorts of fetish and diabolic practices (Ezea, 2017; *The Independent*, September 30, 2017; Johnson, 2018). All these crimes have two things in common: they are committed for pecuniary, and other material gains; and they are perpetrated mainly by youths of the adolescent age bracket (Ojeme, 2017). Due to decades of unbridled official corruption in Nigeria, many youths have grown to admire as role models greedy politicians that loot the national treasury, and to deem hard work as a thing of derision.

Akuma and Muruwei (2014:224) reported that examination malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools is “an epidemic ... [which] has become perennial and institutionalized.” Due to so many years of unchecked misdemeanour, as well as connivance of the relevant authorities in aiding the menace, most students regard examination malpractice as normal and even expected, believing that it is almost impossible to pass examinations without cheating. Ige (2013:4) made an observation that touches on the genesis of youth criminality in Nigerian secondary schools:

What can be noticed in secondary schools these days are cases of indiscipline such as lateness to school, truancy, disobedience to teachers, beating of junior students, stealing, rape, extortion of money from junior students, wearing of assorted dresses apart from school uniform, smoking, drug abuse, drinking among students.

Similarly, Ezema, Ibiam and Otu (2017) examined Nigerian primary schools and found that moral instruction has low level of implementation, and that pupils' respect for their teachers is at the lowest ebb. This translates to rudeness and disobedience to constituted authority, which, together with the wrath of parents, make it difficult for the teachers to invoke the necessary disciplinary measures.

Gory stories of heinous youth crimes abound in Nigeria. In 2013, two secondary school boys in Lagos raped a girl and made a video of the crime as it unfolded (Onyelemelam, 2013). Committing a crime is one thing; but the audacity of making and releasing a video of the crime certainly speaks deafeningly about the degree of moral bankruptcy at play. In early May of 2017, a group of boys from Irete Grammar School in Falomo, Lagos, who had just ended their final examinations, attacked and attempted to rape their female counterparts from Falomo Senior High School (Falayi, 2017). They had sliced off the uniforms and underwears of the victims with scissors, and forced themselves on them, just before the swift and timely intervention of a concerned adult, who happened to come along. Curiously, it was learned that this incident was just a normal annual practice of the final-year students of some schools in the area. In Minna, Niger State, an eighteen-year-

old male secondary school leaver, Shamsu Abubakar, was apprehended by the police for disguising as a woman in order to fleece unsuspecting men (Mosadomi, 2018a). In another part of the same city, another teenage boy working as security man connived with an accomplice to kidnap the ten-year old son of his master for ₦ 150, 000 ransom; but they were promptly arrested at the point of collecting the ransom ((Mosadomi, 2018b). Late March, 2018, a fifteen-year-old secondary school boy carrying a locally-made pistol was arrested during school hours at Akenfa-Epie in Yenegoa, Bayelsa State, and paraded with others for attacking an NYSC lodge in the same city (Osahon, 2018).

Newspaper pages in Nigeria practically drip with human blood on a weekly basis. In the Abraka community of Delta State, a twelve-year old boy robbed and killed his landlady, in order to meet the criterion for cult initiation (*Vanguard Online*, June 23, 2017). In July, 2017, an army security post in Imo State turned up a human head carried by a fifteen-year-old girl named Iheoma Chidimma. Interrogation revealed that it was her second victim (*Daily Times*, September 14, 2017). In late July 2018, twenty-year old Mariam Abiola was halted in the Ilasamaja area of Lagos with two locally constructed revolver pistols, two live cartridges and nine pieces of 9mm live ammunition. Police interrogation revealed that she worked as assassin for a cult group (*Eiye Confraternity*) that operated in the area, and that she had already shot and killed many residents for a fee of ₦ 10,000 in each case (Odita, 2018). In early November of 2018, an ambitious nineteen-year-old named Sunday Owo killed and dismembered a boy of four years by the stream in his village in Ebonyi State. He threw the head and other unwanted body parts into a nearby river, and brought other fresh body parts—including a plastic bottle filled with the blood of his victim—as far as Onitsha in Anambra State for money rituals, before being accosted by the police (Chukindi, 2018; Ekpunobi, 2018). On 27 November, 2018, policemen on patrol along the Epe-Aja expressway in Lagos intercepted two teenage brothers as they were on their way to deliver the fresh head of the ten-year-old son of one of their neighbours to an older relative, for two hundred thousand naira (₦ 200,000) reward (Igbonwelundu, 2018). Falade (2016:42) summarised this problem as follows:

The reality in Nigeria today is that our nation is morally sick. From West to the East, and North to South, what we witness paints a sorry situation of how our customs, traditions and culture are fast eroding away.

It is important to note that these are only the reported crimes; we know about them because police action brought them to light. For each reported crime, there are more others out there, neatly tucked away from public knowledge, sometimes due to cultural factors, even when the crime is known (Ayodele and Aderinto, 2016). Crime statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicated that, in spite of all the sophisticated crime fighting technology, equipment and personnel, as well as the willpower demonstrated by the government, Lagos State had the highest percentage (almost 38%) of reported crimes for the year 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Perhaps, Lagos has a better crime reporting mechanism and culture, as well as a more safety-conscious public that would likely report crimes. However, this high percentage may also be considered significant because Lagos has the highest level of hi-tech

development in the country, by virtue of which it would not be unreasonable to suppose that it also has a corresponding increase in the rate of youth crime, youths being more prone to digital technology.

Crime is a normal sociological phenomenon of the human condition in the sense that no society is completely free from it (Macionis and Plummer, 2005; Macionis, 2008). However, when antisocial behaviour becomes a way of life among the youths of a nation, it cannot but be a source of worry to anyone with a modicum of moral sentiment (Longe, 2016). For good reason, it has been a source of concern to stakeholders, as a result of which so much has been said and written on the subject; for no amount of sophistry can overshadow the basic truism that the level of youth crime in a given place and time is a pointer to the moral standard of the future generation. As noted by Ogoma and Alaiyemola (2015:18):

Every society is faced with one problem or the other. However, the so-called societal problems, upon careful and final analysis, dissolve in moral problems. The social, economic, religious, political, cultural, technological and educational problems facing nations all over the world are essentially moral in nature and character.

When the line demarcating moral and immoral behaviour is eroding away in the consciousness of a teeming youth population due to excessive love of material things, such as money, pleasure and power, as is the case in Nigeria, then there is valid cause for trepidation, at least, for basic security of lives and property. While it is beyond argument that the family and community both play a pivotal role in the moral formation of children, it is equally necessary that the formal education to which they are exposed out there resonate with that of the home front in a consistent and continuous manner. If, as argued by theorists, education is a tool for integral human and social development (Igbokwe, 2015), then one of the ways to seek redress on the issue of moral decadence among the youths is to take a critical look at the Nigerian secondary education curriculum, as a case study, so as to re-inject enduring moral values into the system, starting from the lower rungs of the educational ladder. Most of the crimes are committed by youths who have passed through the educational institutions, or are still in the system. As Kingdom and Maekae (2013:312) noted, “[N]o nation rises above the level of its education.”

### **Dewey's Pragmatic Philosophy of Education**

There are three dimensions of Dewey's contribution to philosophy of education that are of immediate interest and relevance to this paper: 1) the proposal that learning be democratic or participatory; 2), his insistence that learning be pragmatic by producing discernibly positive results in individual self-development and social progress; and, 3), which is the most important, his conception of education as a moral project or enterprise. Dewey set off the discussion with preliminary emphasis on the necessity of education. Education, for him, is a necessity in both a positive and a negative sense. First, “Education ... is the means of [the] social continuity of life [due to] ... the primary ineluctable facts of the birth

and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group” (p.3). Not only does education make possible social cohesion, progress, and development, it is also the *only* means of preserving and transmitting all aspects of society's life—culture, art, religion, politics, morality, philosophy, and the like—to the future for all ages to come. In the absence of education, this continuity would not take place, resulting in literal degeneration and disintegration of humanity and society.

On the other hand, education is a necessity in the sense that it is both inevitable and natural. There is always a negative kind of education going on in the absence of a good one. Like natural selection, education moves on without stopping, whether or not care and time are taken to channel it appropriately. Even if educators and formators fail in their primary duties and responsibilities, negative education would rush in to occupy the brain where good education should have made its positive mark, as the brain is always in search of meaning. Hence, the question is not whether an individual is educated at all, but if the individual is 'painstakingly' educated in the right direction. This is why, for Dewey, good education is not negotiable, but a task that must be done; a matter of life and death. It demonstrates how dangerous and utterly misguided it is to assume—as in Nigeria—that lack of good and quality education simply translates to mere illiteracy, or lack of professional skills and of paper certificate and nothing more. Dewey believed it is much more serious than that. Without a good education system, therefore, a society is doomed from the start; for any society that does not place premium value on the education of its young citizens is, by definition, an extinct society.

The phenomenon of unwholesome education ought to be a source of concern to society as a whole, not just to the family of the individuals in question, because, as we have seen above, it is the society that suffers the crimes committed by its ill-educated members in the long-run. Dewey considered this to be critical as to recommend that even errant children have to be persuaded to become actively interested in education. He stopped short of encouraging the use of force or coercion to achieve this aim, for the fact that such an extreme position would be inconsistent with the democratic principles he always championed:

Deliberate effort and the taking of thoughtful pains are required. Beings who are born not only unaware of, but quite indifferent to, the aims and habits of the social group have to be rendered cognizant of them and actively interested. Education, and education alone, spans the gap. . . . Yet this renewal is not automatic. Unless pains are taken to see that genuine and thorough transmission takes place, the most civilized group will relapse into barbarism and then into savagery (pp.3-4).

A related perspective to the claim that education is a necessity is that excellent education is a right of the child, not a privilege. However, Dewey interjected, good education is not spontaneous; it does not happen by reflex or accident. Rather, it is a calculated and focused effort, just like any kind of project; which means that it must be well-planned out in detail, and not done like the half-hearted exercise that has been the Nigerian experience. If education must be done at all, it must be done right; half education is, in certain respects, even worse than no education at all. Good and appropriate education is achieved only if it is carefully planned and adroitly implemented. Since it is a matter of life and death with regard to society, the gains of “genuine and thorough” education would be worth every pain and exertion going into it.

Dewey noted that, as a moral project, education is essentially communicative for the sake of its transmission, in much the same way as the biological transmission of life:

Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger. Without this communication of ideals, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions, from those members of society who are passing out of the group life to those who are coming into it, social life could not survive. If the members who compose a society lived on continuously, they might educate the new-born members, but it would be a task directed by personal interest rather than social need. Now it is a work of necessity (pp.3-4).

Notice that he lists “feeling,” “ideals,” “expectations,” and “standards” as things to be imparted to the child. These are different words referring to moral sentiments and ethics, which means that Dewey's conception of education goes well beyond mere intellectualism and that, for him, morality and civility are the defining elements of good education. Just as Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, ii, 1) argued that the study of ethics derives meaning and worth only by leading to actual moral transformation, so Dewey persuaded—in keeping with his underlying notion of pragmatism—that the ultimate end of education is character and civility:

The most important problem of moral education in the school concerns the relationship of knowledge and conduct. For unless the learning which accrues in the regular course of study affects character, it is futile to conceive the moral end as the unifying and culminating end of education (p.418).

Emphasis placed on moral education is, in Dewey's reckoning, "a means of getting us away from an unduly scholastic and formal notion of education" (p.4). Clearly, genuine education is far from being exhausted by mere scholarly accomplishment. Rather, Dewey surprisingly assigned high degree of importance to informal education, arguing that formal education has so much to gain from the informal aspect, because the former has certain in-built advantages:

Schools are, indeed, ... only one means [of imparting knowledge], and, compared with other agencies, a relatively superior means. ... What accumulated knowledge exists in low grade societies is at least put into practice; it is transmuted into character; it exists with the depth of meaning that attaches to its coming within urgent daily interests. But in an advanced culture much which has to be learned is stored in symbols. It is far from translation into familiar acts and objects. Such material is relatively technical and superior. Taking the ordinary standard of reality as a measure, it is artificial (pp.4-5; 9-10).

Highlighting the differences between formal and informal education, Dewey seemed to suggest that formal education should be structured after informal education's natural tendency to being concretely tied to society's day-to-day life and practical experience. This implies that domestic training and practical social experience are fundamental to formal, technical education, in Dewey's view. However, Dewey actually advocated a seamless interplay between the formal and informal aspects of children's upbringing, so that the richness of natural social integration that abounds in the informal life may be brought to bear on the formal setting:

Hence one of the weightiest problems with which the philosophy of education has to cope is the method of keeping a proper balance between the informal and the formal, the incidental and the intentional, modes of education. When the acquiring of information and of technical intellectual skill do not influence the formation of a social disposition, ordinary vital experience fails to gain in meaning, while schooling, in so far, creates only "sharps" in learning—that is, egoistic specialists (p.10).

According to Dewey, the increasing complexity of society in terms of structure and resources has led to a corresponding increase in the need of formal or intentional teaching and learning, engendering a bifurcation between the experience gained in more direct informal education and what is acquired in formal schooling. "This danger was never greater than at the present time, on account of the rapid growth in the last few centuries of knowledge and technical modes of skill" (p.11). To avoid this danger, school learning

should form a continuum with the informal aspect of children's education and become a seamless whole with it. Dewey then submits as follows:

In the first place, the school must itself be a community life in all which that implies. ... The learning in school should be continuous with that out of school. There should be a free interplay between the two. This is possible only when there are numerous points of contact between the social interests of the one and of the other (p.416).

Dewey fell back on the notion of pragmatism—akin to the 'use' theory of meaning in the Philosophy of Language—to demonstrate that learning is entirely dependent on the ability to link what is taught in the classroom to practical effect or experience in real life. What is formally explained to a child in the classroom setting should not be mentally separated from what the external environment suggests, but should be consonant with it. He averred that:

[A] child gets the idea of, say, a hat by using it as other persons do; by covering the head with it, giving it to others to wear, having it put on by others when going out, etc. ... In short, the sound h-a-t gains meaning in precisely the same way that the thing "hat" gains it, by being used in a given way. And they acquire the same meaning with the child which they have with the adult because they are used in a common experience by both (pp.17; 18).

Dewey criticized a certain false psychology unduly dominating the philosophy of education in his day, according to which a person learns by merely having the qualities of things impressed upon her mind, with the senses as the gateway. On the contrary, Dewey contended that: "it is the characteristic use to which the thing is put, because of its specific qualities, which supplies the meaning with which it is identified" (p.35). This idea of use arises from the common experience of members of a society. Take the language of a given community, for example. Language consists of sounds which are mutually intelligible to individual members of the community. Dewey supposed that this is enough proof that meaning depends upon the connection language has with the community's "shared experience" (p.18). In learning, it does not suffice merely to have ideas communicated through the use of language. Seeing and practicing achieve much more by reinforcing the initial communication. To this effect, he summarized as follows:

We conclude, accordingly, that the use of language to convey and acquire ideas is an extension and refinement of the principle that things gain meaning by being used in a shared experience or joint action; in no sense does it contravene that principle. When words do not enter as factors into a shared situation, either overtly or

imaginatively, they operate as pure physical stimuli, not as having a meaning or intellectual value (p.19).

Dewey then settled in for the democratic aspect of the educational project. Good education, he stated, is also purpose-driven and result-oriented. Learners must be guided as a social group in a harmonious manner that enables them to freely work towards this purpose which is already clearly articulated and stipulated in the curriculum:

Giving and taking of orders modifies action and results, but does not of itself effect a sharing of purposes, a communication of interests. ... A man can be prevented from breaking into other persons' houses by shutting him up, but shutting him up may not alter his disposition to commit burglary. When we confuse a physical with an educative result, we always lose the chance of enlisting the person's own participating disposition in getting the result desired, and thereby of developing within him an intrinsic and persisting direction in the right way (pp.6, 32).

Educational direction and guidance demand that learning be participatory and democratic, rather than dictatorial; only in this way may the whole 'man' be truly transformed and internalise the values therein, as made obvious by the immediate learning environment. Also, not only does good education forestall any potential challenges to be posed by crime, the quality of training received by the young generation of today directly determines the quality of the society when the young people of today eventually grow up to take the place of current generation of adults. To this end, Dewey painted the following picture in portrayal of this observation:

In directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future in determining that of the young. Since the young at a given time will at some later date compose the society of that period, the latter's nature will largely turn upon the direction children's activities were given at an earlier period. This cumulative movement of action toward a later result is what is meant by growth (p.49).

Resources presently spent in building a good educational system more than compensates for, and are, in fact, rather insignificant to, the resources wasted in the control of crime and the social security in the future. Today's education of the human mind is the panacea to tomorrow's stress of crime fighting and control, and even that of disease. It may not eliminate crime totally, but it will certainly whittle it down considerably.

Learning is essentially communicative and, therefore, a two-way engagement. Thus, formal education should be socially oriented, not torn apart from the social circumstances of any given place and time. In fact, because capacity for social cohesion is already a form

of moral disposition and practice, a formal educational system that successfully inculcates the social aspect of life naturally existing in society is already successful, morally speaking:

*All education which develops power to share effectively in social life is moral.* It forms a character which not only does the particular deed socially necessary but one which is interested in that continuous readjustment which is essential to growth. Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest (p.418; added emphasis).

Not only must the exercise be open and flexible, it must be voluntary and participatory. If the learner is free to contribute his or her quota to the learning process by raising questions and observations, then it can be reasonably expected that the entire project of teaching will readily meet its set purpose. But if all that is involved is rote transfer of information from teacher to learners, then initiative—and learning itself—would be severely compromised. In the formal classroom setting, the teacher certainly reserves the control of his class, but must endeavour to provide enough room for critical thinking and creativity. The teacher is not a 'master' or a 'lord' over the learners as assumed in the Nigerian system; rather, with them, the teacher is a partner in the learning process. A learning environment ought to be designed as an interaction between a teacher and students, and among the learners as well, in a give-and-take fashion. The teacher presents arguments in the class session, to which the students respond in various ways by giving their own opinions with reasons, as they review the issues under consideration. Dewey thought that this democratic ingredient helps to mold the young into mature and responsible adults who can face life with the boldness and determination it requires. In fact, the ability to have in place such a social arrangement is already educative in itself:

All communication is like art. It may fairly be said, therefore, that any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it. Only when it becomes cast in a mold and runs in a routine way does it lose its educative power (p.7).

Even this democratic philosophy is not an end in itself; it is merely a means to a loftier purpose, which is, guiding the young to attain appreciation of the importance of working towards a common social goal, which is nation-building and social progress. This should never be forced, but each child should freely realise the virtue of mutual respect, tolerance, and social co-existence; that society only makes true progress when individual members contribute their quotas to achieve social harmony. In this connection, Dewey proffered some practical steps to be taken:

Setting up conditions which stimulate certain visible and tangible ways of acting is the first step. Making the individual a sharer or partner in the associated activity so that he feels its success as his success, its failure as his failure, is the completing step. As soon as he is possessed by the emotional attitude of the group, he will be alert to recognize the special ends at which it aims and the means employed to secure success. His beliefs and ideas, in other words, will take a form similar to those of others in the group (pp.16-17).

Thus, for Dewey, education is an act of nation-building itself. All the foregoing considerations are especially true of many contemporary societies, such as England, the United States, and Nigeria, which are composed of a combination of peoples of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This calls for education that furnishes children with capability for homogenous and balanced living. “Only in this way can the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted” (p.25).

Words like fostering, nurturing, and cultivating, are sometimes used in reference to the education process. These words, Dewey said, show that good education implies attention to the *conditions* of growth. Other words like rearing, raising, and bringing up, express the extent of ground or level which education aims to cover. Yet another set of words, such as shaping, forming, and molding is used when we have the outcome of the process in mind. If education etymologically derives from Latin *ducere* ('to lead'), then it demands that the educator take the lead so the learners can follow. For the educational project to be worthwhile, therefore, it must be “used to produce a result” (p.40). It must take the pragmatic turn by producing the necessary, useful, concrete moral result that facilitates co-existence of people as citizens of an egalitarian society. Dewey encapsulates this in a final passage:

There is an old saying to the effect that it is not enough for a man to be good; he must be good for something. The something for which a man must be good is capacity to live as a social member so that what he gets from living with others balances with what he contributes. What he gets and gives as a human being, a being with desires, emotions, and ideas, is not external possessions, but a widening and deepening of conscious life—a more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings (p.417).

### **Teaching Morality or Teaching Morally?**

A debate in the past decade has focused on whether teachers should simply hand out moral instructions to their pupils, so that, like professionals in other fields of endeavour, they simply abide by the relevant ethical codes in the course of discharging their duties and

responsibilities; or whether teachers should internalise certain moral standards and bring them to bear on both their personal lives and the manner in which their professional duties are dispensed (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, and Sanger, 2009). On the one hand, it is argued that morality often blends into the religious and cultural circumstances of a given society; whereas the school is, as Dewey noted above, an amalgam of students of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, for which reason it would be unfair to impose the moral standards of one society on children coming from different backgrounds. The teacher is not a moral reformer per se, or a religious instructor. Rather, as a professional, the teacher's primary duty is the impartation of knowledge in a formal classroom setting; knowledge which has nothing to do with morality in most cases. Moreover, a teacher is not necessarily qualified to speak authoritatively on moral matters, for which she should not be penalised, as long as she demonstrates competence in leading her class appropriately and adequately. More so, morality and moral opinions are a matter of personal taste. Here, the presumption seems to be that inculcation of moral values, while certainly part of the concern of the school system, is more properly the duty of the family and society from which children originate. But the school is more appropriately meant to equip children with the necessary professional competence and skills they need to excel in their chosen fields of endeavour. This persuasion is, perhaps, coloured by the secular and amoral inclination of contemporary social thought (Cordero, 1974).

On the other hand, it is maintained that nobody can give what they do not have. A teacher who is not morally sound in mind and body cannot be expected to produce morally sound students. As primary role model of the children outside of the home, the teacher unavoidably exerts some influence on her class and, therefore, should first imbibe the moral principles she teaches (*Weissbourd*, 2003). Further, the class can only take its teacher's moral lessons seriously when it sees her actually make concerted effort to practice what she preaches. This impresses the class and moves it to realise that morality is a serious matter since even the teacher is practising it; that the teacher is not just pontificating or dictating to them, and that what they are taught is practicable. This principle is a time-tested one in religious belief and practice.

There is a tacit distinction between teaching morally and teaching morality. According to Fenstermacher et al. (2009:8):

To teach morally is to teach in a manner that accords with notions of what is good or right. That is, to conduct oneself in a way that has moral value. To teach morality is to convey to another that which is good or right. In the first instance, the teacher is being a good or righteous person; in the second instance, the teacher is providing to another person the means for becoming a good or righteous person.

But this distinction works only in so far as theoretical conceptualisation is concerned. In practice, things are auspiciously different. Teaching morally and teaching morality, though conceptually distinct, are actually two halves of the same entity. In line with

Dewey's thinking above, a teacher, in the classroom context, is more than an instructor who merely tells the class what to do, and may, herself, not necessarily know how to do same. It is not just a truism that no one can give what they do not have. Before you hand an object over to another person, you must first have that object in your possession. By extension, teaching is most effective only when the teacher is able to convince her class that the instructions being given out are practicable. This is possible only to the extent that the teacher is not just talking the walk, but is actually demonstrating it by walking the talk herself. Whatever is merely talked about remains at a theoretical level of consideration. But putting things in practice inspires one's audience to attempt it by subjecting it to the acid test of personal experience. At bottom, it breaks the boredom that goes with merely sitting it out in class and listening to the teacher, just because the curriculum requires 75% class attendance from students.

Even in purely non-moral situations, it is hard to imagine a teacher who simply reads out a mathematical lesson from a book and is neither able to demonstrate it on the board with a few practical examples, nor able to help the children attempt solving similar problems on their own. What qualifies a person as a teacher is tightly linked to the ability to do both. On the other hand, a certain degree of professionalism is necessary; a teacher is not a religious preacher or reformer, who is primarily interested in winning converts. Professionalism enables the teacher to knowledgeably separate morality from religion. Morality is the ability to appreciate what is right and do it when the occasion arises; but religion is a private relationship between humans and the divine. Morality is needed in nearly all circumstances of human social existence; religion can help to uphold and strengthen morality, but in itself, it is restricted to those who espouse it.

Moreover, in a typical classroom setting, as in many other occasions of interpersonal communication, a teacher communicates more than the subject matter of instruction. Sometimes, much more is said through the *manner* in which it is said; and, at other times, what is not voiced out speaks even louder than what is actually said. For this reason, the audience sees a speaker inside-out. They read the speaker like a book that is opened before the public. If a discrepancy ensues between what the teacher communicates verbally and actual experience of the students, no one would be under illusion that something is wrong somewhere. All these facts demonstrate that teaching goes beyond handing down of instructions to students, and therefore, must be exemplary and participatory.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

A harsh economic climate, coupled with deep-seated and unbridled materialism, has led many Nigerian youths to resort to all sorts of horrendous anti-social behaviours, with the sole aim of making money. Society and religion have failed to provide leadership, because they, too, are embroiled in materialism and opulence (Odozor and Akintona, 2017:21). To make matters worse, basic education, which is an important tool that could be used to address this deficit, has curricula in which moral education is virtually nonexistent. It is replaced with social studies, which merely teaches children the constituent tribes and geopolitical constitution of Nigeria (Adesina, 2013; Megbo and Saka, 2015). Dewey's result-oriented and morality-based philosophy of education has

been used to cast this problem into a sharper relief.

Although there is scholarly controversy about what morality essentially consists in, certain core elements of standard morality are still discernible across most human social groups. There are, for instance, commitment to not killing or causing harm to others; prohibition of stealing, extortion, lying, and cheating; commitment to treating others fairly, promise keeping and helping those in need (**Hand**, 2017). These are examples of the standards of common morality on which the stability and survival of society depends. Accordingly, moral formation involves getting children to understand and appreciate why morality is important; cultivating in them the intentions, feelings, and habits of subscribing to these basic standards of morality; and giving them moral guidance, for example, by modeling, rewarding and praising good moral conduct whenever and wherever it occurs, while punishing and reprimanding bad behaviour. This helps children to regulate themselves behaviorally, and react appropriately to moral situations. Another important aspect is to engage pupils in discussing and reflecting on moral issues and their justifications, so that through a gentle steering, they learn what morality is, what it is for, and why it demands the things it does (**Hand**, 2017). Rather than be indoctrinated, school children should be guided to explore different ethically interesting matters in an open-ended way, so that they can develop their own informed, considered views. This process is not as easy as it sounds; but it is not impossible either. Albeit, the end purpose it would achieve certainly far outweighs the trouble to be taken, and makes it worth the while of all stakeholders in the education sector.

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