Re-engineering Educational Values in Nigeria by Mitigating Moral Decadence among the Youths

[1]IKPA, Augustine Ikechukwu (Ph.D.) & [2]BETHEL-EKE, Ogechinyere Adaugo (Ph.D.)

[1]Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt | ikpaikechukwu@gmail.com
[2]Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo Port Harcourt, P.M.B 5080 | ogededem@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The study explored the re-engineering of educational values in Nigeria by mitigating moral decadence among the youths. A day hardly ever pass without some media reports of ethno-religion conflicts, examination leakages, student unrest, secret cults, sexual abuse, certificate forgery, drug abuse and other cases of indiscipline across the country. Observations reveal that the youths are bad today, not only because of the negative societal influence but also because some homes have failed in their primary roles of inculcating socio-cultural values to the affected youths. This paper observes that moral regeneration of the Nigerian youths is not to be hinged solely and wholly on formal pedagogy. Traditional African people taught their young ones to be morally upright by devising effective and pragmatic ways of impacting certain ideals and virtues in them in order to mold them for leadership position of nation building in future. This discourse employs moral, social, cultural and theological springboards for the exposition through the use of secondary data. The paper recommended the reawakening of campaign on African traditional cultural values orientation and the encouragement of positive attitudes and values with the view of revamping the youths and the society from moral debility.*

Keywords*: Re-engineering, Educational Values, Moral Decadence, Nigeria.*

Introduction

If there is any topical issue that is rampant and dominates our everyday intellectual excursion and discussion or creating waves daily in the media, it is the problem of moral decadence among the youths. In fact, the problem, which initially was gradual in bites has now, attained the level that can best be described as the incurable cancer disease, the tentacles of which have spread into the nooks and crannies of the country. At times one is at a loss where to begin to recount the numerous hills that have corroded our great and noble country through the youths (Njoku, 2015). Do we begin from drug abuse, drug trafficking, robbery, social crimes, sexual permissiveness of child trafficking? What of the high level of material pursuit? It is for these reasons that this writes up has set out to take

a critical look at the paramount problem confronting youths in our society today which is calling for intellectual debarkation and exposition that of "moral decadence".

Nigeria is a nation endowed with both human and material resources; yet still underdeveloped. One may ask what could be responsible for the backwardness of the nation. Studies have shown that the major problem of Nigeria is corruption in both low and high places. Corruption is manifested in secondary schools in form of moral laxity or decadence. Categorically, Nigeria's moral values have degenerated to the lowest ebb (Odey, 2013). Immorality has taken a dangerous dimension in our society today; no wonder the president Mohammed Buhari declared Nigeria a corrupt nation. Corrupt practice is more prevalent among the youths especially in secondary school levels. It is obvious that the state of Nigerian youths in terms of morality is hopeless and frustrating. Odeh (2013) noted that the rate at which immoral behaviours are practiced is overwhelming. Many young boys and girls are roaming about looking for one crime or the other they would commit. Majority of our youths are wayward, disobedient, disrespectful and ever ready to derail. Many of them are ready to kidnap, kill or maim people in order to survive the hard economy. Misham (2007) observed that the youths are pushed by the exploitative and uncarpeted socio-economic system of the society. The young in the bid to resist and revolt against the oppressive system results to myriads of deviant behaviours such as disobedience to constituted authority and as a result of that, they riot, vandalize and even maim other students as a way of showcasing their feelings. Some even work as political thugs, terrorists or bodyguards while females engage in prostitution and other social vices.

Moral decadence is a social problem because it affects the entire nation. No wonder every community is making serious attempt to check its growth. It is a situation whereby someone passes from a state of goodness to a lower state by losing qualities, which are considered normal, ethical and desirable. However, going contrary to the norms of the state and the natural law and order. Okwueze (2013) observed that a society that does not checkmate the growth of immoral practices would definitely end in disaster. Moral decadence involves any act or behaviour which violates the norms and codes of the society. It is an abnormality involving basic conflict with the society's value system. It could be better described as an aggressive behaviour which defiles the established values in a given society. Rogers (2013) viewed moral decadence as non-compliance through their parental upbringing, peer or societal influence. Parents that involves in anti-social behaviour stands chances of transferring such attitudes to their children, some out of guilty conscience do not have the moral power to instill discipline hence they practice indiscipline.

Moral decadence is also caused by Satanism (Oladipo, 2009). Under this category are cultic activities in higher institutions and within the society. It is believed that cultists are engaged in, or forced by environmental or emotional factors to engage in, various ritualistic and deadly activities that are not in agreement with modern social order. Under Satanism is also cannibalism, that is reported to be practiced in some Nigerian societies. There have been many reports in the media to this effect. Money rituals which also demand human sacrifice are part of the satanic aspect of moral decadence. There are various reports of missing people, and many suspects have been arrested in connection with this. Many Nigerians have also taken mammon worship to a satanic level, in that they

can go to any length to achieve their material intentions. Under satanic influence is also assassination, which now seems to be a socio – political culture of Nigeria.

It is on record that many Nigerians have been assassinated, particularly for political, ethnic or tribal reasons. Under hedonism are a variety of moral vices that harbour moral decadence. The hedonists, with highly epicurean tendencies, are generally in pursuit of pleasurable or material gains (Saheed, 2013). The implication of this is that any method, good or bad, is employed to get their satisfaction. Though, not all hedonists are criminals, they are generally found to be armed robbers, smugglers, pirates, rapists, sex maniacs, drunkards, pornographers, kidnappers, and drug pushers (Omordu, & Amaele, 2014). Militancy is another problem caused by overall societal moral decadence among the militants. Their activities are disastrously destabilizing protest against what they revolt against. Unlike the criminals, there is an intentional vandalism of public or private infrastructure which they see as part of their oppressors' machinery

Most Nigerian youths engage in anti-social behaviour due to the family upbringing, some are from broken homes or defective homes that can rarely satisfy children's basic needs let alone parental affection. Researches carried out by Njoku (2015) have proven that family instability is a major cause of moral decadence among Nigerian youths. For instance if parents fail in their responsibility to show affection, guidance and proper discipline, the children are likely to derail morally; it implies that indiscipline should be tackled by the family. When parents over look ill acts of their children at home or they are incapable of inflicting suitable punishment whenever the children err, it is then an inevitable fact that they would grow wilder. Low moral standard and hypocrisy of the elder generation gives room for the youths to get themselves involved in moral decadence when youths find out that the older generation is somewhat hypocritical, in that they pretend to inculcate set of moral norms but vigorously pursues the opposites (Saheed, 2013). As a result, they tend to join in the camouflage way of life.

Generally, youth-hood is expected to commence immediately and simultaneously with puberty stage, at this stage both male and female are considered as an adolescent. Biologically, this period begins between the ages of eleven to fourteen years in female and commences perhaps by fourteen years among the males. The stage brought with it various change on both sexes. Hence, any habit acquired at this stage has great influence on the person's concern, because whatever becomes one habit, turn to one's personality to be portrayed through his or her life time. Meaning that those traits are very difficult to eliminate either by the parent or the person himself.

Far from the family, the school also plays a major role in moral upbringing of a child. School is meant to be a training ground for children but in most cases the reverse is the case. Teachers who are supposed to be the trainers, directors, guardians and character moulders are already morally corrupt. According to Wokocha (1991) some of them exhibit some sort of anti-social behaviours, children who sees their teachers as role models upholds every behaviour of the teacher as ideal. This agrees with Anzene (2014) who said that where children are not properly taught how to spend their leisure hours profitably, the children are prone to misuse it. This calls for the need of recreational facilities and activities which can occupy children's time so that they would not be bored as well as pushed to exploring areas that may hurt the society. Given the above background, it

became incumbent of the researcher to explore moral decadence in Nigeria educational system with reference to its causes and possible solutions.

Types of Moral Decadence

i.   Sexual misconduct
ii.   Indecent dressing
iii.   Truancy
iv.   Drug abuse
v.   Robbery/stealing
vi.   Examination malpractice
vii.   Gross disobedient to constitutional authorities
viii.   Involvement in clandestine activities
ix.   Vandalization of school property

Causes of Moral Decadence

i. The consequence of our past.

Many views abound as to what the causes of the problems are; some believed that it is the consequence of our past. According to the sage philosopher especially the civil war of 1967-1970. Others attribute it to the government take-over of schools as well as the lackadaisical attitudes of the parents towards the upbringing of their wards, hence, the adage "Charity begins at home". To others, it may be connected with the proliferation of Churches. Whatever the case may be however, no one's opinion could be done away with for all the above causes had contributed to the growth and even increasing wave of moral regeneration of decadence.

ii.   **Taking- over of the Schools by the government:**

However, the civil war and the government take-over of schools are to be the major factors that paved way for moral degeneration in our society. The war rendered so many people homeless and poor. Lots and lots of undreamed ideas became realistic as only the fittest can survive. Some women were given to prostitution, many were given to harm rubbery while others resorted to other clandestine activities. At the end of the war, people were back to their trade, school site out then the situation and changed drastically. Students had turned brutes, disrespectful, incorrigible, and disobedient youths. Anarchy began to reign. The take-over of school by the government suited the various teachers who were ready to sacrifice their teaching profession for private business. The school then started to decay for want of care (Enu & Esu, 2011).

iii. Religious and lack of effective moral instruction:

One other problem, I observe and believe, that contributed negatively and worsened the situation, and which I want all reasonable persons to note, is the missing linking between religion and modern education. I mean liberal and moderate religions. We must abhor any form of fanaticism and extremism in world religions. Religious and effective moral instructions were the thrown to the wind. I wonder which society would try without a sound moral foundation. The ever-increasing wave of mushroom churches does not help either since the new churches are business oriented. The much needed morality is not guaranteed. The Gospel has turned into rich offering which brings more blessing and not what good must I do to be saved. Everything is titled "Prosperity".

iv.   Non-nonchalant attitude of the parents:

The large chunk of irresponsible parents we have today are clearly responsible for the moral decadence that are common with the children and teenagers allover the world. Every parents you meet talks about the good old days when children were brought up with sound moral and ethical sanctity. Why is it that parents who are privileged to have received such quality upbringing in times past are the ones bringing up useless, irresponsible, and morally decadent children with little or no regard to societal norms and values? There is something seriously wrong and parents should take the blame for these shameful and troubling failures. It is an irony! The truth is that parents have abdicated their primary responsibility of building up their homes and families in pursuit of wealth, riches, material things, career, pleasure and fun. And has developed all manner of excuses to justify their negligence of this noble duty. All to the detriment of the children who are now growing into monsters and deviant social misfit. What an awful experience! The family that serves as the first grand of learning as also witnessed the upsurge of the reign of the maid, since today the mother is in Kano on business and the husband is in Hong-Kong for a trip. The children are hence poorly cared for, the love for children has now turned into love of money, and "the love of money is the source of all evils" (1 Tim.6:10). The worst scenario is that his parents can no longer control children, Some people said that, it was due to poverty in the society. What? I beg to disagree. Call it societal moral decadence and indiscipline, then I will agree with you. Our society and nation at large is at a great risk if we fail now to fight this social menace of social, and especially, cyber crimes.

v.   Arrogance of our present youths:

Another cause is the arrogance of our youths not to become useful to themselves and the society at large. Most of our youths are indolent – so lazy that they are no longer ready to work before becoming rich. The information and computer age has been wrongly applied and appreciated by our youths. We now swim in the dirty and virus-infested water of "Yahoo, Yahoo Boys and Girls!"

vi.   Pangs of vision less leadership:

The bad examples being demonstrated by our holders of positions of authority in our country, to say the least, does not help matters at all, it has negative multiplier effects on our society. Their extravagant lifestyles have corrupted, not only the youths, but the whole society at large.

Our society is so infested with corruption virus to the extent that a 16 year-old boy knows how to dupe innocent foreigners on the internet and make thousands of dollars. The matured 'toddler' buys expensive cars and live like a don!

Solution to the problem of the moral decadence among the youth.

1. **The need for censoring of the contents of what is being transmitted in the airwaves:**

The digital revolution, that is, the internet age, has turned the world into a global village and we are now in for another trouble; though the invention of internet is not a bad idea after all, but all depend on the use to which it is so directed. Therefore, the need for censoring of the contents of what is being transmitted in the airwaves. The Information

and Communications Technology (ICT) companies must be monitored and controlled by enabling laws.

2. Schools and parents must double their roles:

Schools and parents must double their roles in giving and making closed-door monitoring of what their wards are exposed to. This is necessary in order to prevent the youths from being exposed to salacious materials and imitating crimes they watch in films, among other insidious items.

The most profitable investment a society can possess is a crop of discipline and God fearing future leaders. This becomes a reality through proper attention, which creates an enabling environment for the children to learn and to unlearn the good things and various vices respectively in the society. This concern for the youngsters is to be carried out through proper direction and guidance, and even charities to them when the need arises. The focus must not only be on their wrongdoing but also to encourage their good deeds. They become obstinate if castigate and their goodness never appreciated.

Nevertheless, one becomes a bad mentor if one desired to catch fish for them always rather than teaching them to catch fish. They should be taught to do things themselves having showed them the way. The attitude of some children as consumers and never producers retards their growth in all ramification of life. The elderly people are obliged to create the awareness among the youths of the great potentials in them that can brought to reality as their contribution to the societal growth, which must be accorded with suitable recognition for better and improved performance in the nearest future (Kayode & Adeyinka, 2009). However, the stable of the youths today is the by-product of our society. It is an indisputable fact that the attitude the youth put up today is not innate but acquired. No thanks to the spirit of consumerism in our world, this is being encouraged by materialism. The mass involvement of the youth in vices is as a result of the societal projection of negativity at the expense of positive thinking or approach to things.

The onus now lies on the parents. I wish to remind all parents that they are obliged to pay proper attention to their children by given them the required guidance, direction and support children are God's gift to parents and will be accountable to God as to how those gifts are being directed.

Many parents have failed in their duties because they pursue wealth thereby not creating time to attend to their children. Every family should examine itself to see how it has contributed to the vices in the society today and rectify it. If every family can courageously look inward to sanitize itself the youngsters will be probed of their vices and virtues planted. Each family must be concerned about the way of life of every member of family. In as much as the parents are expected to lead, they must show good examples that can be emulated to live a life of deception makes the children live unfulfilled life.

3. Our governments must stand on their toes and religious bodies must be up and doing.

It may be some sacrifices are inescapable, great commitments must be made, new orientations must be developed, fresh ideas must be invented, directed at and added to combat crimes – serious or lesser ones. Our governments must stand on their toes and religious bodies must be up and doing. Education, being the bedrock of a nation must be overhauled, more and enough time and money must be pumped into this strategic sector.

Conclusion

The stable of the youths today is the by-product of our society. It is an indisputable fact that the attitude the youth put up today is not innate but acquired. No thanks to the spirit of consumerism in our world, this is being encouraged by materialism. The mass involvement of the youth in vices is as a result of the societal projection of negativity at the expense of positive thinking or approach to things. However, the study identified the various types of moral decadence, causes and possible solutions. However, teachers and parents were presented as major causes of moral decay among secondary school youths hence, the study highlighted ways teachers and parents could enhance good morals and reduce or eliminate immorality among school youths. It is concluded that if teachers and parents put in more effort in readdressing the ugly trend, Nigeria in no distant time would be corruption free.

Recommendation

The study recommended as follows:

1. Reawakening of campaign on African traditional cultural values orientation and the encouragement of positive attitudes and values with the view of revamping the youths and the society from moral debility.
2. Young people should be made to understand the importance of the virtue of staying abstinent from sex until marriage and staying faithful to one's spouse in marriage.
3. There should be good orientation and re-orientation programmes for students on the danger of immoral behaviour.
4. Parents should devote more time in observation, correction and instilling discipline appropriately as a way of shaping and reshaping behaviours of children at home.
5. There should be adequate counselling service to encourage students to have faith in God and work hard to face every challenges of life.

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