

Curriculum For Morality Among Youth In The Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Human society, once characterized by moral values, is experiencing declining ideals because morality is gradually eroding it. The challenge of nurturing moral values among contemporary youth is increasing alarmingly. This challenge necessitates a comprehensive curriculum that emphasises the development of moral character beyond traditional learning in schools. To this end, this paper explores a curriculum for morality that meets the unique needs and challenges of contemporary society by discussing the foundation for morality in contemporary society. The paper examined evolving moral landscapes resulting from the impact of technological advancements and global interconnectedness. Furthermore, prominent moral issues among contemporary youth are explored. The paper affirms the need for a curriculum encompassing responsible citizenship, understanding, and ethical decision-making in a society with diverse moral problems. Therefore, the paper proposes a curriculum integrating varied foundational principles of morality with contextual applications. It emphasizes the significance of experiential and meaningful learning that shapes human behaviour, cultivation of moral values and critical thinking skills crucial to navigating contemporary complexities of human lives, thereby leading to more impartial and harmonious human relationships in societies.

Keywords: Curriculum, Morality, Youth, Contemporary Society

Introduction

Contemporary society presents unique challenges that require an intentional approach to moral education, especially among the younger generation of this age.

The onslaught of information through the

effect of rapid technological advancements, the ever-increasing global interconnectedness and changes in cultural values and shifts necessitate a curriculum that adapts to the moral issues in contemporary society. As youth, who are in the prime of

their lives, navigate through the complex nature of contemporary society, it becomes imperative to develop a curriculum that addresses the moral issues facing them. By addressing these issues through curricular provisions, youth can be empowered to navigate this life's ethical challenges and dilemmas; thereby contributing their quota in developing a more just society in contemporary era. Therefore, this paper is titled Curriculum for Morality among Youth in Contemporary Society. The objective of the paper is to explore the major components required for crafting curriculum for morality among youth in the contemporary society. This is achieved by examining foundation for morality in the contemporary society, evolving moral landscapes in contemporary society, prominent moral issues facing contemporary youth and curriculum aimed at morality for youth. In the context of this paper, curriculum is all learning opportunities provided by a school for its learners within a given period and while morality is taken as principles that govern human behaviour and relationships in the society, youth is conceived as individuals from teen-age to the younger adult stage of human life.

Foundation for Morality in the Contemporary Society

The concept of morality has long been a subject of inquiry. It is a fundamental aspect of human nature which serves as principles that govern behaviour of human beings and social relationships. Morality serves as the foundation for the development of human societies, actions and interactions of people within societies. It is significant in shaping individuals' values, principles and behaviours and also influences personal development, relationships and contributions to society. It serves as a guide in the decision-making process of human beings and plays a crucial role in the holistic development of human beings. It significantly contributes to the socialization process which promotes right living and sanity in the society. Gert (2025) opined that morality is a code of conduct that is endorsed by an individual or a group, and that meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions, including the condition of being rational. Morality covers practices and activities considered right and wrong, the rules governing them and the values embedded within the practices and activities. Kupperman (2021:3) stated that morality can be viewed from two lenses – the lens of an

individual with ethical demands from oneself and the lens of ethical demands from other individuals within the societies. Therefore, morality has dual perspectives which are personal ethical standards and self-expectations which can be viewed as internal morality and societal expectations, norms and demands, which can be viewed as external morality. While the foundation of morality is multifaceted, and there exists other basis to morality in contemporary society like cultural norms and social influences, philosophical theories, and secular ethics, the emphasis this paper asserted, focused on the role of religion, from the Christian perspective, as a foundation for morality in contemporary society. The emphasis on the role of religion as a foundation for morality in contemporary society is significant in this paper because across various cultures and civilizations in the world, religious traditions have shaped moral values, influencing the behaviours of individuals and their interactions in societies. Historically, religion has played a substantial role in shaping moral values, providing a framework for understanding right and wrong. By implication, it is the cornerstone of moral guidance which helps individuals

understand right and wrong. Furthermore, religion has not only played a significant role in shaping moral values and principles, providing a foundation for personal ethics, it is also pivotal to societal ethics. In essence, it is largely believed that moral principles are derived from divine commands and religions through religious teachings and religious leaders who provide moral guidance for ethical decision-making.

Pink (2007:5) explained that that the two indispensable issues about human life and especially, the Christian life, is the acquisition of clear knowledge of one's duty and the careful observation or practice of the duty in a manner that is corresponding to the acquired knowledge. The Ten Commandments, which God used to lay foundation for morality among the Israelites, give a clear instruction and knowledge about man's duty and God's expectation from man to observe them dutifully. O'Reggio (2010) practically applied the Ten Commandments to human life by summarizing the Commandments into the following principles as principle of first priority and love, submission to divine sovereignty, respect and honour for the sacred, divine rest, respect and honour for lawful authority, sacredness of

human life, purity and promise keeping, generosity and giving, personal integrity and truth telling, and contentment and attitude of gratitude. In essence, the Ten Commandments is a divine instruction to have reverence for God and to develop good human relationship with others (Barnette 1961:19).

The teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament of the Bible popularly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount also portrays ethical message for all individuals (Matthew 5-7). Welch (2016) asserted that “no religious text has influenced the world more than as the New Testament’s Sermon on the Mount.” The assertion reveals the significance of the Sermon in shaping and affirming an identity; the identity of a Christian. It should be noted that the teaching is multi-dimensional; however, it poses a challenge to an individual to examine his or her commitment to the Lord and relationship with others (Wells 2003:5). Consequently, the teaching emphasizes what should be the goal of every individual in character and behaviour which has not ended with the generations past, but also emphasizes role of religion as a foundation for morality in contemporary society, stressing the need for compassion,

forgiveness, empathy, kindness towards others, and accountability; recognizing the consequences of one’s moral actions, thereby inspiring or encouraging personal transformation to adopt moral values and principles, and promoting a sense of community and shared morality.

Evolving Moral Landscapes in the Contemporary Society

The dynamics of the pre-modern society has greatly changed from the dynamics of the contemporary society. The contemporary society is marked by changes in social norms and diverse cultural influences which have contributed to contemporary moral landscapes. While there are many key drivers of moral landscapes in contemporary society, this paper considered rapid technological advancements and globalization as key drivers.

Rapid Technological Advancements: A major landmark which differentiate contemporary society from pre-modern era is technology. It is “what creates our world and our very way of being.” It is observed to have impacted human life and activities in diverse ways and is believed to have come to stay with lots of benefits and influences on man and his activities (Arthur 2009:9-10).

Technological advancements have influenced and transformed human civilization, and have had great impacts on industries, economies and societies. Historically, technology dates back to the era of industrial revolution with the adoption of mechanization and mass production. The use of computer, internet and mobile technologies enabled global connectivity, also sparked digital revolution in the history of technology. In essence, technology has greatly advanced contemporary society. However, with the many benefits of technology and its advancements, it is raising complex moral questions with many unresolved challenges.

The notion that technology drives societal change and moral values is a reality that cannot be overlooked. Hence, there is need to ensure its utilization for the common good. Oyinlade (2024:2) identified erosion of traditional values among youth as a major influence of technological advancements on the moral landscapes in contemporary society. The rise in the use of social media in contemporary society has led to undermine communal values and moral education which once fostered communal relationships, especially in Africa. Moral ambiguity and

dependence on technology are other influences of technological advancements in contemporary society. While moral ambiguity emphasizes the spread of misinformation that challenges the discernment of truth from falsehood, dependence on technology among youth can lower critical thinking skills leading to mental laziness.

Globalization: Globalization is a both complex and multifaceted. It is a phenomenon that has transformed economies of the world and human societies. It emphasizes the increasing interconnectedness of human societies and cultures through technology (Wolf 2004:10). Globalization has transformed the world into a global village where people, culture, goods, services and ideas are exchanged across borders without much difficulty.

Global Journals (2020) revealed that globalization has significantly influenced the moral fabric of youth in contemporary society. Among these influences are increased exposure to diverse perspectives and substance abuse. Exposure to diverse perspectives is significant for human growth and development through broadening of understanding on various issues of life,

critical thinking and innovation. However, while exposure to diverse perspectives and cultures aids growth, and can be enriching, it can also lead to moral ambiguity and confusion among youth. Substance abuse on the other hand is the misuse of substances (such as drugs) with negative physical or mental health consequences. Substance abuse as the evolving moral issue from globalization includes normalization of substance use because of increased accessibility among contemporary youth.

Prominent Moral Issues Facing Youth in Contemporary Society

Contemporary society has unfolded with a number of challenges including a number of moral issues for contemporary youth. When discussing these issues, much emphasis is often given to morality in the digital space, the quest for social justice, integrity and honesty, responsibility and accountability, discovery of personal identity and respect for human dignity among many others. However, this paper will only focus on two of these moral issues: morality in the digital place and human dignity.

Morality in the Digital Space: In the contemporary society, the life of human beings is progressively becoming intertwined

with technological advancement which is one characteristic of present-day society. Consequently, issues relating to digital ethics have gained prominence and elicited ongoing discussions. One of such issues is cyberbullying and the effects it has on its victims. Cyberbullying, as described by Akrim and Sulasmi (2020:324), is the act of using electronic communication gadgets to harass, threaten and intimidate an individual or a group of persons. Reading through the pages of Nigerian national dailies, it is evident that youths are confronted with the challenge of cyberbullying, either by being the offender or the victim of cyberbullying.

As established in research by Ademiluyi, Li and Park (2022), cyberbullying, though different from the traditional bullying of individuals, has numerous effects on the victims. These effects range from psychological to emotional and even physical consequences on the personal development of the individual and being bullying on the digital space, it becomes extremely difficult for the victim(s) to escape the harassment or intimidation.

Respect for Human Dignity: An ethical discipline which emphasizes human worth is human dignity. It is an aspect of human life

that serve as foundational principle for drafting the constitution of several nations of the world (O'Mahony 2012). Human dignity is the inherent worth and value of every human being, deserving of respect, kindness, and compassion. By implication, every human being, regardless of gender, race and age, and regardless of circumstances, has inherent worth and value, and deserves respect for the choices they make which they are also to be held accountable for it (Gen. 1:26-27). Thus, human dignity is significant for fostering respect for oneself and others. It encourages empathy and compassion, and it is fundamental to human rights and social justice.

Respect for human dignity is essential for building strong, positive human relationships and promoting overall well-being. It prides itself in many principles and practices which are inclusive of listening attentively to others' perspectives and experiences, the use of respectful language in human relationships and exhibiting compassion towards others. With the embrace of the principles and practices of respect for human dignity, a just society can be developed.

However, reverse is the case in contemporary society. There is the lack of respect for

human dignity. The research carried out by Orji and Onyenemerem (2020:27) established that the policies and cultures put in place by the Nigerian government have hampered rights and dignity of persons; thus, engendering lack of respect for human dignity; a moral issue in contemporary society. While there are different classifications of factors responsible for the protection of or lack of respect for human dignity including economic factors, social factors, cultural and religious factors, ethnic factors and technological factors; discrimination, inequality, violations of human rights, prejudice, power imbalances and cultural insensitivity among others are considered significant factors in contemporary society (Lassen 2017).

Curriculum Aimed at Morality for Youth

Curriculum is all learning opportunities a school provides for its learners at a given time. It is not a static document but continuously evolve to meet individual and societal needs and changes. While there are different models of designing curriculum to meet human and societal needs, the design of curriculum for morality among contemporary youth should be patterned after problem-centred design of curriculum. As noted by

Moronkola, Akinsola, Abe and Onuka (2019:103-104), the problem-centred design addresses the problem of individual and social problems of living with its much emphasis on group welfare. Therefore, curriculum for morality among contemporary youth should be designed to emphasize the promotion of responsible use of social media among youth, and engagement of youth on the moral dimensions of personal choices.

Responsible Use of Social Media: Social media is a term given to wide range of internet-based services which enables users from different localities to partake in online exchanges among online communities. The different social media applications include collaborative projects, (micro)blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (Taprial & Kanwar 2012:6). It is instructive to state that contemporary youth utilize various social media platforms for communication and needed guidance as to its use, without causing harm to other human beings. Hence, the need for promoting responsible use of social media among contemporary youth through digital literacy and responsible online behaviour.

The curriculum contents for digital literacy and responsible online behaviour which should be contextually applied by contemporary youth in friendships and family relationships, community engagement and demonstrating moral values in professional settings, should encompass creating awareness among youth to understand the permanence of their online actions, being respectful and considerate in their interactions as they engage and participate in online communities, critically assessing all online information and balancing social media use with real-life activities and fact-checking of information and ideas before sharing, and the need to report offensive contents.

Youth Engagement on Moral Dimensions of Personal Choices: Choice or decision-making is a daily essentiality. Moral dimensions of personal choices are considered the ethical considerations and principles that guide decision-making and actions of an individual. It is crucial for individual's development and society's well-being. As opined by Li and Grueneisen (2024:4-6), moral dimensions of personal choices are is one of the three reasons for

taking actions and is concerned about fair and right treatment of others in the society.

The necessity for youth engagement on moral dimensions of personal choices is enormous. It is significant for helping contemporary youth to understand the moral implications of personal choices, how it shapes their values and principles in life, and helps to recognize the impact of such choices on others and the society at large. The nature of the curriculum for engaging youth on moral dimensions of personal choices, which should be contextually applied in open conversations and mentorship programmes, should encompass the exploration of moral frameworks and principles, considerations of consequences of actions and addressing issues such as equality and fairness. Furthermore, the necessity of engaging youth on the moral dimensions of personal choices cannot be disregarded. It helps in aligning their choices with personal values and principles, considering the impact of the choice on other human beings and the society, balancing personal freedom with responsibility for their actions, reflecting on potential outcomes of decisions made and navigating complex circumstances with moral implications.

Conclusion

Though the contemporary youth is faced with numerous challenges with different moral issues and dilemmas. Addressing these issues through curricular provisions such as enlightenment on the responsible use of social media and balancing their identity with societal expectations, can empower youth to integrate morality into the various aspects of life, become compassionate and responsible individuals, and be positive contributors to the society, as they navigate different moral issues towards the development and realization of a more just and inclusive society.

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