

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND THOSE OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

One of the major reasons for teaching religious and moral values is to offer learners the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their personal growth and nation building. This can be achieved when young people are given the required religious and moral training based on the needs and aspirations of a country. The study therefore examined the relationship between National Educational goals and those of Religious and Moral Education (RME) and whether this affects the teaching of religion and morality in Ghanaian Basic schools. It was established that concepts, skills, principles, attitudes and values were taught in line with the existing relationship. The discussion revealed that national education goals form bedrock from which Religious and Moral Education goals are carved. The national goals are reduced to subject goals by RME specialists or experts. Religious and Moral Education goals must be relevant and related to well planned national education goals. It was established that when Religious and moral education lessons are well taught they should be able to prepare individuals to fit into the society by equipping them with the kinds of knowledge, skills, values and attitude needed for effective living. Religious and Moral Education concepts should also enable people play effective roles in their societies by contributing to make constructive changes in the way of life of people.

Introduction

In any educational system, be it formal or informal, decisions must be taken on what and how students will learn in order to fulfill the need for which the system was established. On the basis of these decisions, learning resources are produced to help students realize the objectives of education. These decisions also become framework upon which institutional structures are built on. Thus, whatever people will do or think in these institutions must necessarily conform to the basic principle upon which they were established. In a centralized educational system, like Ghana, goals are formally stated by government or legislative acts in cognizance with the needs, aspirations and problems of the nation. The needs of a nation may be religious, moral, social, economic or political (Kudadjie, 1995:45). The Religious and Moral Education programme covers the basic principles of sound religious, moral and traditional values cherished in Ghana. On the Ghanaian scene for example, our religious and moral needs include total commitment to society, honesty, patriotism, obedience to authority, religious tolerance, self

control, cleanliness and having cordial relationship with other people. Our social needs also include good drinking water, adequate provision of shelter, adequate medical care and total employment of the youth. Political needs also include stable and good governance, freedom of all types, and liberty and justice. The aspirations involve high technology, viable economy and self-sufficient food supply. The problems include bribery and corruption, dishonesty, unfaithfulness and unpatriotic (Wood, 1997:42). The needs, aspirations and problems form the bedrock upon which any serious nation formulates its goals and strive to achieve them. Afrifa, a member of Ghana's military Presidential Commission said (1969:9) in an address to the First Parliament of the Second Republic of Ghana, in the context of a passionate call for national reconstruction, that: It is being both realistic and revolutionary to acknowledge that there is a relation between morality and national development and to accept the challenge for social behaviour that it implies. Thus the formulation of goals must invariably be consistent with the value system of the society and in its educational tradition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between National Educational goals (NEGs) and those of Religious and Moral Education (RME). It was to find out whether National Educational goals (NEGs) affect the teaching of religion and morality in Ghanaian basic schools. Specifically, it was to help discover whether there is difference between National Educational goals (NEGs) and those of Religious and Moral Education (RME).

The Concept of Educational Goals

Educational goals are political decisions that provide orientation for educational planning. Educational goals or purposes refer to educational intentions or outcomes and are usually stated in broad terms. According to Adentwi (2005), goals or aims are broad general statements that communicate long range purposes or intentions of education. They are supposed to give general direction or orientation to education in an entire country. Educational goals serve as basis for making decisions on how school life should be organized and of what should be taught in the schools. They give meaning to human activity and help to avoid frustration and waste of resources. The task of curriculum developers then, is to translate the general educational goals of the system into specific curriculum objectives of what should be taught, and for the production of the materials for learning. They also need to make decisions concerning the organization of the educational programme in the school. The insights gained from the implications of the general educational goals and on systematic data collected will enable them choose subjects that will be taught in schools. Based on this assumption, subject specialist will formulate subject goals within the domains of national goals. It is as a result of this that Tamakloe (1992: 125) made the following pronouncement; We need programmes in education which will develop in our children critical appraisal of national issues.

National Educational Goals

National educational goals are special aims which are meant to fulfill national aspirations and solve national, political and social problems through education. Such aims are long term and because

they are broad, they provide complete opportunity for formulating short-term varied goals. Educational institutional goals, subject area goals and instructional objectives can be derived from the broad national educational aims. However, one of the major difficulties in the curriculum process is the reduction of national educational aims to particular (short-term) objectives. Wheeler (1983:31) suggests that a three-step process is needed for reducing national educational aims (which he calls ultimate goals) for use in the classroom. According to him, ultimate goals must be stated, mediate goals derived, and finally proximate goals set up so that specific objectives can be planned at the classroom level. The ultimate goals are the expected end-products of an educational programme carried out over time. They are the kinds of behaviour that the educator hopes students will exhibit as a result of the education they have received. They are statements of desirable acts, feelings, attitudes and knowledge, integrated in a pattern and exhibited in appropriate situation. Mediate goals are the patterns of the expected behaviour at given stages over the educational period. Thus they are statements of intended behaviours in classes of situations at given stages. Proximate goals are subject area goals. They are usually found documented in syllabuses. They provide direction for the selection and organization of content and learning experiences. Specific objectives are goals we set when teaching a subject. They seek to pinpoint exactly what the learner is expected to be able to do after going through the teaching-learning process. Such objectives relate to the philosophy of education or educational aims of the society concerned. They are usually stated in specific and measurable terms.

The 1972 Dzobo committee under the chairmanship of Rev. Dr. N.K. Dzobo was set up by the Commissioners for Education, Culture and Sport on June 2, 1972, with a membership of 22. It is on this basis that the committee formulated four main national educational goals. These are:

• The need to develop the nation's potential

This means among other things, the building of new industries and the development of agriculture and commerce. To be able to achieve these goals, there is the need for the development and fullest use of both high grade and intermediate manpower. Nkrumah (1957), the first President of the Republic of Ghana is purported to have stated that the survival of Ghana

as an independent nation was contingent on her achieving a jet-propelled rate of economic development. According to him, the indices which are used to measure the development of a nation include the types of buildings and high ways, forms of transportation and communication systems, the number of high –technology industries, kinds of energy in use, forms of entertainment and information and communications technology. It is on record that religion and devout religious personalities made significant contributions to insights and discoveries in the 17th and 18th centuries which enabled science to make the great strides that have laid the foundations for much of modern science, technology and development. Woods (1997:42) writes that:

Certain values are indispensable to an industrializing society. A country may be endowed with gold, diamond and bauxite, manganese, cocoa and timber.

It may also boast of trained manpower "who excel in various positions all over the world". But if the work ethic of values and attitudes, the country is deficient in the right types of values and attitudes, the situation can be likened to the genie of Aladdin's lamb released to roam without his wise master very much like eleven, skilful footballers who do not have what it takes to win (focus, organization and mental toughness.)

Wood referred to Ghana's grand development plan Vision 2020, in which it is planned that by the year 2020, Ghana would attain the status of a middle-income country, and he warns (1997:41) that:

without a work force which is focused, hardworking, punctual organized and disciplined, reaching the status of a middle-income country by the year 2020 will remain an ideal.

The need for the development of national consciousness and unity, and the need to develop political awareness and maturity among all sections of the society.

The individual members must be morally mature if the society in which they live is to develop and progress. In fact the moral maturity of the individual members of a society is a condition-sine-qua-non for the development of that society. It is simply an

illusion to talk of development in any society whose members lack moral maturity and social responsibility, for moral laxity and irresponsibility on the part of the members of any society is an obstacle, the greatest obstacle to the development of that society. For instance, "How can there be development in any society in which public funds are diverted into private and selfish ends by the unscrupulous and irresponsible members?;

Can the economy of any society develop if its members lack a sense of duty, the right attitude to work, a sense of moral obligation and social accountability?"

Kudajie (1995: 70) laments that:

a basically corrupt and immoral society will not prosper, even if the Atlantic Ocean, and the Volta River, and all our waters turned into precious gold and diamonds. We cannot defy the moral laws upon which the world was founded. We can only be true great and prosperous when we are as morally good and as we academically and technically efficient.

The need to develop and modernize our traditions and culture.

In the spheres of health care, psychological therapy, morality and spiritual development, African Traditional Religion has contributed its share of human development. It probably would have contributed significantly to scientific and technological development if it had been given the opportunity. In traditional African society, claims abound that some people walk through flames without being hurt. Others allegedly use concoctions, which protect them from being cut or harmed by knives and cutlasses and gunshots. Leaves are said to be used to attract or ward off lightning. It has been claimed that remote objects are used to lock up other objects. These claims could be investigated and the laws of nature behind them discovered and applied for scientific development. Such research could lead to discoveries that would enhance medical science, the development of military accoutrements, and electronics.

The need for the development of a new Ghanaian who will be healthy in mind, in body and in spirit.

Religion can contribute to national development by first developing the human factor. It cannot be denied that religion is relevant and can have profound influence on development. Unfortunately, its influence is often ignored or, at best, taken for granted. Throughout human history, the quest for God has inspired the art, poetry, music literature and morality that have enriched human civilizations; and it still does. (Dzobo, N.K. (1972). MOE, Ghana: Report of the Education Adversary Committee on the Proposed New Structure and Content of Education).

A critical look at the national aims stated above shows that the educational aims of a country are intimately linked up with its problems, needs, requirements and aspirations.

Religious and Moral Education Goals

Religious and Moral Education (RME) deals with the development of the person in relationship to self-awareness, relationship with others, and the understanding of different beliefs, values and practices. The subject also aims at developing the thinking skills which will enable individuals to make up their own minds on religious and moral issues. Through learning about morality it is expected that students will be able to reflect on and respond to what they experience in life. The subject attempts to prepare individuals to fit into society by equipping them with the kind of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for effective living within the society and for making constructive changes in the way of life of society. The Religious and Moral Education (RME) curriculum is one that seeks to shape the religious and moral lives of people as well as provide knowledge and skills that are needed for nation building. Halstead (1995:25) summarizes the goals of religious and moral education as follows:

1. aiding the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the individual,
2. increasing understanding of the society of which the individual is a part; and
3. transmitting knowledge (spiritual, moral, intellectual, artistic among others) into other people. This confirms that the goals of religious and moral education are derived from the national educational goals.

In the 2000 edition of the Basic Education syllabus, the goals of the Religious and Moral Education programme are stated as follows:

- To help students develop an understanding and tolerance of other people's faiths.
- To help students understand the differences between good and bad behaviours.
- To help students to develop an awareness of their creator and the purpose of their very existence; and
- To help students to become good and useful citizens of this country; capable of maintaining peace, understanding and order in their lives and in the lives of their families (MOE/GES, 2000).

A first major aim of the Basic Education Religious and Moral Education programme is to develop in students an understanding and tolerance of other people's faiths. According to Risinger (1993) and Wilson (1993), the current public disputes that arise among nations and people require an understanding of religion's force in human life. They acknowledge the utilitarian power of religious education in sustaining society's moral standards and conclude that religion is for many years, a source of solace and for a new means of redemption. A research work carried out by Fleischacker (1999) has also revealed that the issue of sensitivity to other ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, sex, and deformities of people can be affected through study of appropriate religious and moral values.

A second major goal of the Religious and Moral Education programme is to help students understand the differences between good and bad behaviours so that they can make rightful choices in life. Attitudes and good morals are dispositions, virtues and character traits of a people that are essential to human existence, without them, life would not be pleasant. The Religious and Moral Education curricula try to improve on the religious and moral lives of students by teaching them a process for identifying the sources of their values, analyzing and clarifying their values, and justifying their values. According to Anti and Anum (2003), Religious and Moral Education is concerned with more than the intellectual development of students.

Individuals also have feelings, sympathies, and attitudes. RME programmes deal with the constant values, attitudes and beliefs that motivate and control people's behaviour. Kudajie (1995:31) has argued that the study of religious and moral values is a forward step towards the building of a healthy and morally sound nation. According to him, when people learn about religious and moral values they become better equipped and well groomed to make healthy moral choices. In support, Hoose (2000) has said that moral claims will forever exist with us and for that matter it is required of each individual person to do what is right and also make better moral judgments of others.

Religious devotion makes one hunger and thirst after righteousness. There is something beautiful, something serene about such transformed people. They have divine power that empowers them to take decisions and act freely, responsibly and spontaneously not so much because laws or regulations stipulate such acts, but because it is their second nature as liberated persons, to do the right and avoid what is wrong. Thus religion has tremendous socializing influence, and can make valuable contribution to the development of a nation. Religious and moral educators provide a lot of moral teaching, all emphasizing a life of love, righteousness, justice, kindness and so forth. This role of religion, even if it is indirect and seemingly remote, can keep a nation on the right path as it seeks to attain development.

Development of an awareness of one's creator and the purpose of his very existence is another goal in the study of Religious and Moral Education. The Basic RME programme has been designed to help develop in students an awareness of their creator and the purpose of their very existence. Anti and Anum (2003:169) have echoed that the aim of teaching Religion in the schools is not simply to present any sacred book as a record of historical events but to bring learners into an encounter with their creator. When people have truly encountered God, they gain a new insight into the way things are; their outlook on life changes for the better; their life is ennobled; their conscience is sharpened; a fundamental change in the disposition of their heart occurs; and their sensitivity to abhor evil is heightened. Such persons have the capacity to tell right from wrong; their one great desire is to be good, and they are irresistibly urged to do the right and avoid the wrong. If they default morally, their conscience gives them no rest until they repent and

change their ways.

The last and final goal of the Religious and Moral Education programme is to help students become good and useful citizens of this country; capable of maintaining peace, understanding and order in their lives and in the lives of their families. Religious and Moral Education is intended to provide a type of education that can train decision-makers who would use democratic foundations to earn their dream of the good life. RME aims at helping students to carry out their responsibilities as members of a social group. This means that there is the need for the teaching of values which are considered ethical guidelines of society. The teaching of these values becomes the responsibility of the schools and other stakeholders in order that it will promote moral virtues which will eventually help to reduce immoral practices among the youth. Ghana's former President Rawlings, then Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) saw from the very onset of his revolution and acknowledged (1988:38) that:

Today, the struggle is for economic emancipation, it is a struggle for a closely-knit national unity, devoid of the shameful and haunting shadows of divisionalism. Today, it is a struggle for the restoration of the principles of integrity and morality in our national life.

National Educational Goals and Religious and Moral Education

The Religious and Moral Education curriculum is a great collection of ideas and tools without which students are ill-equipped for private and public life in a fast-changing world. "When students are empowered by a skilful teacher with the facts, ideas, skills, values, question and dispositions that compose the Religious and Moral Education curriculum, their judgments are dramatically improved" (Loukes, 1961: 5). Thus students are in a better position to help solve community problems, reason morally, appreciate diversity, cultivate civic life, protect the environment, and with deep understanding, empathize with the hopes, dreams and struggles of people everywhere. According to Wheeler (1983) one of the major difficulties of the curriculum process is the transition from general aims to the particular objectives of the classroom. Wheeler proposed a three-step process of

translating general aims to classroom objectives. According to him, Ultimate goals must be stated, mediate goals derived, and proximate goals set up, so that specific objectives can be planned at the classroom level. This problem is not different from the task of reducing national educational goals to subject goals. Any school subject cannot stand isolated without reference to the national framework of education. Rather, it must be an integral part of other subjects so that they cumulatively contribute to the realization of national goals of education. The goals of Religious and Moral Education are, therefore, derived from the national goals of education.

The first national educational goal stipulates that there is the need to develop the country's natural resources to the fullest use through the opening up of more industries and the improvement of agriculture and commerce. The expansion of these sectors requires high qualified manpower to man them for the purpose of maximizing profit. This brings to focus knowledge of all sorts: religion, morality, history, culture, social life, civic education and the humanities. Fortunately, Religious and Moral Education as an integrated subject derives or introduces students to the modes of thinking and enquiry in the humanities. It is envisaged that students will acquire knowledge and skills from these disciplines through the study of Religious and Moral Education that are necessary for the development of the economy.

The need for the development of a new Ghanaian who will be healthy in mind, in body and in spirit is another concern of our educational goal. The Ghanaian society has been a slow moving society. This is because the required manpower to propel the country is woefully inadequate. It is clear that, people continue to spend huge sums of foreign exchange in paying for the service of expatriate consultants. This is an indication that the country does not have enough consultants to man the economy. In this connection, it is the hope of religious and moral educators that as students understand the Ghanaian society better, and are able to look at society with a critical and constructive minds; this society will be forced to develop a better and faster moving culture that will propel the nation to greater heights. To reiterate, religious and moral education seeks to prepare individuals to fit into the society by equipping them with the kinds of knowledge, skills, values and attitude needed for

effective living within the society and for making constructive changes in the way of life of society. This is congruent with the national education goal. The third national education goal is the need for the development of national consciousness and unity, and the need to develop political awareness and maturity among all sections of the society. This goal emphasizes the respect for one another, taking responsibility for oneself and the good of the community, and fulfilling one's obligations to others and the natural environment. It also entails developing a reasoned loyalty to the nation and a feeling of kinship to human beings everywhere. Furthermore, the goal addresses the issue of commitment to public values of the society and ability to deal effectively with value conflicts that arise when making decisions that concern people. If there is any subject that seeks to fulfill this goal, then it is religious and moral education. The concerned citizen has an awareness of his or her rights and responsibilities in a democracy, a sense of social consciousness, and a well-grounded framework for deciding what is right and what is wrong and for acting on decisions. Additionally the concerned citizen has learnt how to identify and analyze issues and to suspend judgment concerning alternative beliefs, attitudes, values, customs and cultures. This attitude of a concerned citizen that RME seeks to produce ensures well being and peaceful co-existence in the society. This is in consonance with the national education goal that seeks to promote political awareness and unity. The modernization of a tradition arises as a result of technological evolution and interdependence. The world is regarded as a global village; that is, what happens in one part of the world will invariably affect the other. It, therefore, stand to reason that for a country to move with other parts of the world it needs to revise its way of life (culture) to suit the majority of the people of the world. Again, society continues to change due to new discoveries and innovations, Ghana alone cannot stand aside hence there is the need to prepare students who can move even faster than these changes. The goals of religious and moral education are, therefore, directly derived from the national goals of education.

Conclusion:

National educational goals have effects on the kinds of religious and moral values to be offered to learners. Religious and Moral Education goals are formulated on the basis of the needs, aspiration and

problems of the nation. For, schools are set up by the nation (or state) to prepare students to become useful to themselves and to the society at large. The structures and activities of the school must orient itself towards societal needs. Anything short of this will lead to the production of students who cannot fit into the society. Religious and Moral Education curriculum experts, therefore, derive educational goals from the needs, aspirations and problems of the society. If contemporary Ghana is to experience real development, then religious and moral educators must aim at the development of people and appropriate value systems. Even though economic development is very important, it must not be pursued to the neglect of other facets of a society's development, like the spiritual, moral, artistic cultural and civic education. If teachers do not maintain a high level of moral integrity and work ethics among the youth, society cannot realize any appreciable measure of social or economic development. Moral maturity, social responsibility and self-control on the part of the individual members of a society are indispensable to the development of that society. Many development projects have not materialized simply because of the poor and corrupt human factor. Lack of serious ethical, social and political commitment, sensitivity, and probity can affect the youth negatively.

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

Based on the review of the relationship between national educational goals and those of religious and moral education, critical implications are derived to guide policy and practice in Ghana.

- Religious and Moral Education lessons should aim at inculcating into pupils the sense of tolerance and understanding which then can lead to peaceful co-existence and social harmony. Thus religious, moral and social differences should not lead to hatred and fanaticism among teachers and students. Instead, they should aim at developing good and useful citizens who will be capable of maintaining peace and order in their lives and in the society

- Religious and Moral educators should make public and national policy makers aware of the close link between religion, morality and development.

- Topics that are taught should be those that would help learners to distinguish between right and wrong in the society. Such lessons should emphasize a life of love, righteousness, justice, kindness, self-control, patriotism, honesty, responsibility, and commitment.

- Religious and Moral Education lessons should aim at helping children to realize the truth about their maker. Such lessons should aid the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the individual.

- Religious and Moral Education programmes should increase learners' understanding of the society of which they are a part. Teachers should aim at transmitting knowledge which is worthwhile.

- Religious and Moral Education lessons should develop students' capacity to think analytically in order that they would be creative. Such lessons should assist students to constantly be in search of something new.

- Religious and Moral educators should make constructive criticisms of national development policies and plans. They can organize decision-making fora where they profoundly influence national policies for the holistic development of our Ghana.

- Religious and Moral educators can also prepare well informed, well thought-out alternative development policies and plans based on positive religious values.

- Pupils and students should be encouraged to take religious and moral lessons more seriously.

- Religious and Moral Education programmes must be geared towards the realization of the goals of the type of education which is preferred in Ghana.

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