

**PARENTAL MORAL ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN: AN
EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF 1 SAM 2: 12-36; 1 KINGS 15:9-24,
22:41-50 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Education and the cultivation of assessment parameters strictly lie within the ambit or scope of the stakeholders namely parents, teachers, administrators (Government) the public and the learners. Therefore, there has to be complimentary resounding assessment of all these groups to realize a full-fledged educated individual that is useful to himself and the society in general. However, the moral assessment of the children has been down-played nowadays by parents who ought to be the first teachers, thus, leading to moral decadence, youth restiveness, cultism, arrogant behaviour, examination malpractice, disrespect for elders and people in authority. Using historic, descriptive and moral analysis, this paper re-echoes' the parental moral irresponsibility of Eli, a biblical parent, and the resultant suffering of the entire family and nation of Israel. The paper also presents the moral assessment of King Asa which consequently positively impacted on the nation of Israel. This paper recommends that, parents should backup their moral assessment with action, because their failure becomes the failure of the family and nation. Our educational rulers (administrators) should take a cue from Asa while the children should strive to emulate their parents in positive ways.

Keywords: Parent(s), Moral assessment, Children, Exegetical analysis, Implications, Educational development.

Introduction

Education is a key factor in national development. It prepares the most vital natural resource - the human capital (Alozie, 2005). Okonjo, C. in Alozie (2005:57), noting the relationship between education and human resources in national development, states that "...no nation in the world of today has been able to accumulate material wealth and improve the quality of life of its citizen and become an industrious and advanced nation without giving its citizens... schooling and skill training". However, beyond all these, the most fundamental substratum on which national development is predicated on is moral

education. This involves helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them to individually live good lives. (< a bref = >, 2014). Omeregbe (1990) underscores this inextricable relationship between the importance of moral substance and the overall development of an individual by stating that, “Moral development on the part of the citizens is therefore a *condition-sine-qua-non* for the development of any nation.”

Other than the assessment of the psychomotor and the cognitive, the affective or behavioural development of the growing child must be prioritized. This lies strictly within the scope of educational stakeholders namely parents, teachers, administration, the general public and the learners. The fundamental stage of this assessment process, however, begins with parents through a certain code of behaviour that is anchored on parental commands and traditional rules which the child needs to accept. Durkheim in Devine (2006:2) affirms that, “the child must come to feel himself what there is a rule which determines that he should abide by it willingly. In other words, he must sense the moral authority in the rule, which renders it worthily of respect.”

However, there has been this lack of moralistic guidelines and assessment on the part of some parents in the home. Devine (2006) notes that, “Children, unfortunately by their very receptiveness to adult or peer notions of behavioural norms, are also the most susceptible to behavioural abnormalities.” This implies that children have not undergone the process of moral education and cannot always work out for themselves what is wrong and what is right, or the reason it is wrong or right, if it is not immediately obvious from the parents. This paper attempts an analysis of how this deficiency has occurred and at the same time encourage the cultivation of assessment among parents in order to complete the effective educational assessment in Nigeria and beyond through an exegetical analysis of 1 Sam. 2:12-36, 1 Kings 15:9-24, 22:41-50 and its implication for the development of educational assessment in Nigeria in particular and Africa by extension.

Definition of Key Terms

Parental

Parental is used as relating to a parent- a person's father or mother. A father or mother is one who takes cares of his/her child/children and others in the household (Dona-Ezenne, Yanda, Levi, Sa'ad, 2017). This is parenthood as associated with the education and the assessment of the child in any given situation (Gordon, 1998).

Moral Assessment

The adjective “moral” refers to the principle of right and wrong in behaviour especially for teaching acceptable behaviour. Moral assessment, therefore, can be seen as moral evaluation, moral judgement, or moral evaluation of the merits of actions and behaviour of individuals, organisations and people (Turaki, 1997).

Children

Generally, a child can be used to mean either an offspring or someone who has not reached full economic and jural status as an adult in a society (Gordon, 1998).

Exegetical Analysis

Exegesis refers to an exposition or explanation of a text, especially a religious one. Exegetical therefore is an adjective of or relating to exegesis (Hornby, 2006).

Implication

An implication is a possible effect or result of an action or a decision. It may mean something that is suggested or indirectly stated (Hornby, 2006). The studies about parental irresponsibility and responsibility of Eli and Asa respectively will by implication help in the development and maintenance of acceptable ways of morally assessing children in order to aid the growth of the Nigerian nation educationally and otherwise.

Education Development

Educational development in epistemological understanding is the process of raising the standard of education such that it impacts positively on the quality of living expected in a society. Jekayinka and Kolawole (2010) define educational development as “the change that has taken place in the policy and practice of education... the growth of educational institutions, the growth in the enrolment and numbers of schools and students at various levels of education, the growth in the number of teachers and other supporting staff, changes in curriculum and improvements in the methods and resources for teaching.”

Modes through which Parents Assess and Evaluate their Children

The parents as the first teachers of the children; they measure and assess the educational growth of their children in many ways. These assessments may be generally classified as the cognitive, the psychomotor and the affective. Specifically, these are some of the ways through which parents assess their children:

- i. **Observation of formative character:** The parents are the character builders of the children, usually by presenting an example of good behaviour. When children carry out socially acceptable actions which they copied from their parents, a pass mark is given to them. Additionally, parents also assess the moral worth of their children through the reports as observed by members of the kin group and beyond (Dzurgba, 2007).

- ii. **Periodic giving of tasks in domestic, farming, craftsmanship, hunting and fishing as well as environmental duties:** The moral import can equally be found in all these areas as the child learns to do exactly what was directed by the father or mother and reports to them. Where certain tasks are not done satisfactorily, the parent corrects and instructs further on improvement. Here, the whole society becomes the school and the whole environment, the classroom where teaching and learning, supervision, and practicals were carried out. Dzurgba (2007) specifically mentions that, “All individual and group activities constitute lectures, tutorials and practicals”.
- iii. **Moral discipline:** Moral discipline is not the exclusive reserve of the parents alone. In the family, the older children are given the authority and power to teach the younger ones and discipline them when they misbehave.
- iv. **Display of wisdom and knowledge acquired:** The expected outcome of any learning process is change in behaviour as a result of the many experiences gotten. Where therefore a child grows up and contributes on discussions and decisions to familial, societal and community development, such a child is seen to have learnt from his/her experiences (Dzurgba, 2007).
- v. **Tests and trials:** This means putting the child's behaviour, wisdom and understanding to an examination of his or her ability to perform. It equally means the process of testing the ability, equality or performance of an individual, especially before a final decision is made about the person. The implications of the above methods of assessing the child in the home is that they provide the stepping ground for the children to develop further when the school system begins to build on the foundation already laid by the home. The family therefore becomes a microcosm of the wider society, (the macrocosm).

Importance of Educational Assessment and Evaluation

The following items can be seen as the primary importance of assessment and evaluation:-

- ✓ It determines the relative effectiveness of the programme in terms of children's behavioural output;
- ✓ It aids in making reliable decisions about educational planning;
- ✓ It identifies the children's growth or lack of growth in acquiring desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes and societal values;
- ✓ It ascertains the worth of time, energy and resources invested in a programme or in teaching in early childhood education;
- ✓ It motivates children to learn more as they discover their progress or lack of progress in given tasks;

- ✓ It encourages students to develop a sense of discipline and systematic study habits;
- ✓ It acquaints parent or guardian with their children performance (Ukwuije in Orji, 2017).

From the foregoing therefore, educational assessment becomes an all-important process in teaching and learning. Nonetheless, the moral assessment which forms the substratum on which other assessment can be based has remained relegated to the background. In this regard, Dzurgba (2017) states that:

To worsen the situation, some parents insist that their beloved children must learn nothing else, but to read and write and they must not be disciplined in school because money and property at home have replaced theoretical knowledge, practical skills, good character, integrity, fresh initiatives, hard work, creativity, innovation, deep-insight and sound judgement.

What then is the place of morality and its assessment in educational development?

Moral Assessment: Meaning and Approaches to Moral Education

Moral assessment is said to be moral evaluation and judgement of the moral merits of actions and behaviours of individuals, organizations and people. Ayantayo (2009) states that, "Moral evaluation assessment is appraisal of people's conformity or non-conformity, adherence or otherwise to moral rules or standards." In other words, moral evaluation of human conduct entails a careful analysis of moral values, goals, purpose, moral claims and aspirations underlying human thought and actions (Niebuhr in Ayantayo, 2009).

Some of the approaches of moral education include, the pistic approach which is concerned with assessing human actions using Godly laws or norms, the causality approach which has to do with 'cause' and 'effect', and the social approach which is concerned with conformity to societal standard or values to which the children are expected to abide. In addition, the rational approach has to do with conformity to moral beliefs which people hold about how they and other men ought to live; what they should and should not do. Ultimately, there is the language approach which assesses the moral language of the child. The correct usage of language is what teachers and parents expect from children.. The otherwise is condemned in totality. When children are rebuked or praised for using proper language, they become conscious of this and try to use language properly. Having laid the foundation regarding the many approaches to moral assessment, subsequent sections will focus on the exegetical analysis.

An Exegetical Analysis of 1Samuel 2:12-36; 1Kings 15:9-24; 22:41-50

Biblical ethics or morality like most ethical foundation lies on the ethic of virtue – conformity to a standard of right; and morality; a particular moral excellence and a

beneficial or commendable quality. This is based on the understanding that virtuous acts are an essential ingredient for the development and happiness of the self, society and wellbeing of all.

In 1Sam 2:12-36, there is the account of Eli who was a priest in Israel. When he became old his two sons- Hophni and Phineas succeeded him as priests. Unfortunately, they were wayward children who had no regard for God. They were greedy, corrupt and treated the offering of the Lord with contempt. They took the meat of sacrifice raw instead of allowing it to boil which was the commandment. They took bribes and perverted justice. They also lay with the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

All these immoral acts contravened the morality, doctrine, and theology of Jewish life, probably because Eli, the parent, did not back up his rebuke with concrete action (an evaluative process). The children refused to repent and return to the path of righteousness. After initially warning Eli, God eventually decided to punish the entire family for Hophni and Phineas' sins. On learning about the impending punishment, Eli merely said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him". The repercussions for these sins were quite grave and occurred in short order; the two sons died at the war front, the soldiers were slaughtered beyond belief (about thirty thousand soldiers were killed that day); on hearing about this slaughter and the capture of the Ark of God, Eli died instantly. In addition, Phineas' pregnant wife, also on hearing this bad news, prematurely delivered a baby boy who she named "Ichabod" meaning "the glory has departed from Israel". She herself died after childbirth.

Two lessons can be learnt here; first, the failure of parents to discharge their duties as moral trainers (teachers) of their children may result in the downfall and shame of the family. Second, the failure of children to heed parental instructions may lead to self-destruction. In the case of Eli, condoning the wrong and honouring his sons more than God meant not paying attention to the welfare of his children. Putting God and his law first would have brought him long life and blessings (Exo. 20:12; Deut. 5:16).

In 1Kings 15:9-24; 22:41-50, there is the story of King Asa of Judah and his son Jehoshaphat who succeeded him. Asa's life was well lived because he maintained a good relationship with God and was committed to the Lord all through his life. Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord just as his father David had done. He expelled shrine prostitutes and idols. He stood against his ancestors and grandmother Maacah to fight sin in the land. He repaired and beautified the temple of the Lord. In the same vein, Jehoshaphat succeeded his father Asa and followed his father's footsteps or lifestyle in everything. He lived a life that pleased God. He made peace with Israel. This can simply be captured in the moral dictum of "Like father, like son". The pride and joy of any parent is to produce godly offspring. Asa and his son Jehoshaphat illustrate this point.

Implications for the Educational Development in Nigeria

Moral education can be described as helping the children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good and productive lives while contributing to the development of their communities. The parents who are the first moral educators therefore have the huge responsibility of bringing up their children to contribute to the social cohesion of their communities. This is one reason why parents develop high moral assessment to evaluate their children's learning process. Moral training therefore is indispensable in parent-child relationship because in the communal atmosphere of the traditional family, parents of children who behave in approved ways are approved as successful while parents whose children misbehave are shamed and advised to "put their house in order" (Ayantayo, 2011). The two opposing views as stated from the foregoing have their implications for the Nigeria educational system, as either of the two has its consequence either positively or negatively on the nation.

The present state of affairs in Nigeria appears gloomy. This relates to Eli's lack of parental moral assessment and discipline that put the family and nation of Israel in jeopardy. As noted earlier, "the family is as fundamental that the quality of life within it, is regarded as an indicia of the social status of the whole society" (Osuman, 1999). Umedum (2003) acknowledges the value of traditional morality and the drifting away of such moral education when he states that,

Traditionally, schools provide a good complimentary moral education to that of the home. Unfortunately, the forceful takeover of schools by the government after the civil war killed moral education in schools. Sadly too, the excessive quest for material possession does not afford parents enough time to offer moral instruction to their children. The ultimate consequence of this is the deprivation from the youth of this invaluable moral rearmament needed in today's violent world.

The existence of the western school system which could have complimented the traditional family moral system has, instead, contributed in uprooting the traditional moral values of the family. A summary of this gloomy picture can be found in the submissions of Oji (1982) that,

Surely, the incidence of Nigerian ethical decay is perhaps our best known social malady, both in the country and outside it, and has consistently evoked acrimonious discussions among all class of Nigeria population... usually with a sermonizing charge to citizen to do better. The pulpits throughout the nation will bear vocal witness to the preaching of our religious leaders, remedy us of the biblical and Quranic prescriptions for sin, in which the Nigeria society seem helplessly submerged.

On the other hand, is the hopeful and the good attitude of king Asa and his son, Jehoshaphat, who provided good moral teaching and ethical assessment that will stand to help the Nigeria society and its educational development. A case worth mentioning here is

that of Farrah Gray, who despite growing up on the sidewalk in a poor household in Chicago, USA, -a high profile gangster environment- defied the odds to become one of America's biggest assets of all time. This was possible because his grandmother saw to it that he (Farrah Gray) learnt lessons concerning the advantages of integrity, honesty, sincerity, hard work, patience, and resilience. Nwodo in Akwaki and Fidelis (2015) asserts that for the society to be rid of the malady of corruption and bad leadership, the value system needs to be revisited. The approach therefore is a bottom-top approach beginning with the family level since the family is to society what cells are to an organism.

In Nigeria, there is “a Jehoshaphat” that has come to moral ethics and assessment. Obidike in Akwaki and Fedelis (2015) has shown the emulative approach of the mother where one Mr. Salami Lateef Ibrahim, an employee of Nigeria Aviation Handling Company (NAHCO) found 25,000 pound and 5,000 Euros amounting to ₦7.3 million in a wallet forgotten in a KLM passenger plane, and returned it to its owner through the company administrators. Asked why he preferred to return the money than keep for himself, Ibrahim said, his mother told him during childhood not to take away anything that is not his. This is good parental moral teaching and assessment.

Traditional religious moral education begins in the home, but reaches a fuller and effective degree in formal instruction at school and church (Oji, 1982) or mosque. The beneficial impact of character and attitudes which through religious upbringing has for society cannot be over-emphasized. The need for Godly moral education is therefore derived from the beneficial impact upon society, which love of God and obedience to his laws can bestow upon up the members. A qualitative educational and moral programme for Nigeria organized in accordance with the constitution has to be God-centred, not only because our constitution itself accepts God as an integral part thereof, but because the benefit of restoring God to the lives of future generations make it the society's only real hope as a people firmly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God as declared categorically in the preamble of our present Constitution (Oji, 1982).

Conclusion

This paper, in the search for the cultivation of educational assessment literacy among parents and indeed the family, brought into focus the indispensability of moral education and its assessment as an effective way of improving educational development in Nigeria. For objective analysis, the negative and positive impacts of moral assessment were highlighted in the examples of Eli and Asa representing the bad and the good respectively. The ultimate aim is to restructure the nation's character moulding process in favour of heavy emphasis on honest hard work, functional fulfillment and ethical rectitude, beginning with the parents. If properly done, this will go a long way towards stabilizing educational development and the growth of the nation in all ramifications.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations about parental moral teaching and assessment are made: :-

- i. Parents should back up their moral teaching with moral action by punishing, scolding and employing other corrective measures with love and the mindset of growing the children towards Godly standards.
- ii. Educational rulers (administrators) should take a cue from king Asa of Judah who ruled his people with the fear of God. It should be known that taking bribes, exploitation of the sexual capacities of female employees and students like the sons of Eli will certainly bring doom to a nation. The perversion of national ideologies and educational laws will not go unpunished.
- iii. Children that emulate the positive moral behaviour of their parents will surely succeed and shall be rewarded by God. The fathers and mothers should therefore work collaboratively in moral teaching and assessments of their children to run complete the moral circuit. Where the father hardly has time, the mother can complement his efforts and vice versa.
- iv. Nigerian school systems have always assumed that the children have already begun the moral educational process forgetting that, some parents have failed woefully in their duties. The school administrators should work hard in rebuilding the moral process, since this will either guarantee success as a nation or our failure.
- v. The government through her sensitization agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should provide adequate avenues that would create moral awareness of rights and wrongs and their implications for national development. Films and other audio-visual approaches can be of immense benefit.
- vi. Families should establish round-table-discussions and bible study for the promotion of discipline, morality and family cohesion among its members. Similarly, the Muslim faithfuls should encourage or improve their *Ta'adhib* (Islamic moral education) or Islamic circle, after their *Fajr* or *Subh* prayer in the morning to realize this moral objective.
- vii. Traditionally, it is the duty of the parents to provide moral education and discipline to family members. This has to be done without hesitation to develop moral teaching and assessment.

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