

**ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN NIGERIA THROUGH QUALITY  
RELIGIOUS/MORAL EDUCATION BY TACKLING ISSUES AND  
CONSTRAINT OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

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**ABSTRACT**

Leadership is relationship, between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow (Adeiza, 2012). Today it has been recognized that the best asset and source of competitive advantage organizations possess is its people, their skills, attitudes, competences and knowledge. Accordingly leadership and management can only achieve effectiveness if this valuable asset (human resource) is given the right attention and lead with the best skills and compassion; this is eluding the Nigerian leadership structure and therefore senses as the major constraint to poverty alleviation hi Nigeria. This paper examines how quality religious education can assist the nation's growth and development through poverty alleviation by an effective leadership. Solve of the recommendations offered include imbibing positive attitudes in the leadership and the followers who are the leaders to be, above all quality religious education in the education system as a stepping stone to preparing leaders for the nation to effectively steer the mantle of poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Religious/moral education, Leadership, Nigeria.

**INTRODUCTION**

Development is a concept defined differently by scholars. Aderonke and Okesola (2008) described it as the extent to which a nation is able to overcome her complex socioeconomic, political and cultural issues to ensure progressive change in the quality of life of all citizens. It is a continuous improvement of material and human resource of nation in order to maximize and manipulate the physical environment for the benefit of the generality of its citizens including the future generation, development should be sustainable, that means it must keep on going (Chikanle 2008), National developed consideration can be sustainable if it takes into consideration all the faces that makes up a nation with its human, resources at the peak as it is the key to national development. In order to achieve this there must be a rapid and constructive

change in human behaviors and altitude. This requires effective leadership. However, the Nigerian situation and efforts to improve the human capital has been retarded by issues and challenges amassing the effectiveness of the leadership.

Capacity building has been defined as a series of activities which an organization, enterprise or even a nation needs to undertake to provide for itself on a continuous basis a regular supply of skilled manpower to meet its present and future needs. It follows that the prosperity of any enterprises or even a nation depends to large extent of the competence of its workforce. As a resource and like other factors of production, human capital has a life span, not in terms of life expectancy at birth, but life span measured by economically active period (Makintola, 2010).

Furthermore, capacity building involves strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes that a nation needs to survive in the fast changing world, taking into consideration what inhibit people, organizations from realizing their developmental goals while at the same enhancing the ability that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. Poverty is indeed one of the factors that inhibit quality education and as a result national development; sequel to this, poverty alleviation has been an issue that is a paramount goal of different developmental programmes by different governments.

Subsequent discussions will highlight how ineffective leadership and lack of quality religious education has been crippling different efforts/assistance programmes to alleviate poverty among the generality of Nigerians in spite of its enormous wealth, in forms of human and natural resources.

### **Leadership Define:**

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do what you want done because he wants to do it (Maigari, 2012). It is also to develop people and see satisfaction as the means to greater productivity.

Leadership therefore is being responsible for managing and creating an environment where individuals work together to achieve set goals. Getting things right using command and control for maximum output.

### **Qualities of a Leader:**

A leader is: characterized, by a number of qualities which stands him out, Adair (2009) state that the following are some of the qualities of leader:

1. Reliable
2. Responsible

3. Trust worthy
4. Hard work
5. Thrifty with scarce resources
6. Good time manager
7. Keep control of things

### **Levels of Leadership:**

In all organization or institute, there are three levels, team whereby the leader is responsible for about 2 to 10 people, then the operational level where there is more than one team reporting to the leader. The third one is strategic level, the leader is in charge of the whole, there is no good leadership at the strategic level if the team and operation levels are useless, it is quality at the sub-levels that will bring the ultimate One. It is what happens at the bottom that goes up. (Adair, 2009).

### **Effective Leadership:**

Skills are very crucial to effective leadership. It is the capacity to develop and improve their skills that distinguish leaders from their followers (Maxwell, 2007).

This means skill in knowing what to do or not, quality of mind and temper, self control, lack of rashness, ability to focus on a problem, reach the right conclusions and decisions remarkably looking into the future, doing the right thing at the right time/moment. (Adair, 2009), (Maxwell, 2007) Identified others as moral and spiritual integrity, ability to inspire others to do what needs to be done the very essence of all power to influence lies in getting the other person to participate.

Effective leadership as Makintola, (2010) noted is seen in what leaders do. Effective leaders add value, they see their, followers growing, do they have hope? The kind of value you add comes from the value you hold There should be selfless service, effective leaders are not selfish and they serve an exemplary life, they don't spare themselves, they are part of the process and as Adeir (2008) observe that such leaders convince their followers by what they do so they set and prepare people for success through coaching, counseling and providing success.

### **THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon with universal applicability to human society. Consequently, poverty has become a major concern for the global community development experts and the international agencies. At the national level many governments had embarked upon various types of poverty alleviation programmes (PUP) example, Better Life, Family

Economic. Support Programme, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) etc. The World Bank defines poverty as hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and unable to see a doctor, inability to go to school, illiteracy, and joblessness and fear of the future.

Amadi (2012) defines poverty as the state of being poor unable to provide basic needs such as food, cloths, shelter and other necessities of life It is an intolerable health 'service, low calories in take and low per capital income, inhuman living condition and severe deprivations.

Poverty has been a deplorable state of living which could be extreme or moderate and it can have psychological effects on the mind. Extreme poverty has been defined by World Bank (2012) measures of poverty as living on 2 \$ income person per day. And Nigeria has been ranked as 27th poorest country in the world (UNDP, 2001).

Therefore going analysis shows that poverty refers to the deprivation of basic needs which include education.

### **Secular Education/Religious (Moral Education)**

Education has been defined in numerous ways all showing the fact that education is important for both human and societal development. According to National Policy on Education (NPC, 2004) it is a process which helps to develop man to enable him function effectively in whatever environment he finds himself .Education as a necessary tool for development involves three references, the individual, the community to which he/she belongs and the whole content of reality, both (material and spiritual) which plays a dominant role in determining the nature and destination of man (Ashraf, 2009).

There are various forms of education which consists of different contents and Processes; there are Sciences, Arts etc it is from these divisions that scholars refers to some forms of knowledge as secular and others as religious. Nevertheless, whatever form education takes the aim of developing the individual and the society are not Separable from it. Religious and moral educations are forms of education which aimed at educating the individual for life. It covers the whole aspects of human development, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. It is not just learning to read the scriptures but how to translate these teachings into, everyday life and improve the society. What is today referred to a modern education (western) is believed to be the Yardstick for social mobility and determines ones, social status.

However as:(Awoniyi, 199 1:50) observed although, most people believe that formal education contributes to societal developments and changes, its strengths that, in-fast, must be channeled to usefulness for the overall benefit of the society, the social ill which go along with it must be

checked. Nigeria like other developing nations is facing formidable problems and challenges, socially, politically, economically and educationally.

## **RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION**

The aim of Moral education is not simply to enlarge moral knowledge, certainly it seek to provide practical experience of situations through which children may learn the basic principles and values involved in living together. But it is also concerned with insight and imagination as much as with understanding, with emotion as much as with reason. This experience, Bull (2003:44) states are the moral skills, and further to elaborate that involves the shaping of attitudes and the development of moral skills. Mora) attitudes as expatiated by Bull (2003 :44 are the expression of self, and the heart of morality is care and concern for others and hence the basic themes of all moral education is the self, others and the relationship between self and others. Religious education is not just education for skills development it is more than that, it attempts to kindle the light in all individual, it is as Ashraf al (2009:80) observed education for life, it enables the best in the individual to be brought forth, to be nurtured and advanced. It imparts the awareness of the real place of things in life, not only in this life but also the next life (after death). Among others, religious education also teaches the extent to which what has been learnt can be internalized to become disciplined in such a way that individual faculties blossom and qualifying him for the rewards of higher life, this is surely precisely the extent to which on one be described as being educated (Ashraf, 2009:80).

### **How religious and moral education can transform the Nigeria Educational system**

Psychological theories have shown that growth and development are important states in the life of the individual and these are affected by both and environment. Psychologist have also explained that growth, and development are interrelated and interdependent on each other and it is difficult to differentiate contribution of either of them in the development of personality of the individual (Chauchan 2004:316).

Moral development is an essential stage of the development of personality which determines what kind of person the teacher is dealing with, Chauchau (2004:317) noted that prior to coming lo school, a child has accumulated many experiences in his home and neighborhood environment which are very useful to start formal education in an effective way. For this vital reason and our discussion of what religious and moral education means and encompasses, it is the best way to start educating the child and maintain it through his adolescences and adult life.

The following are the steps through which religious and moral education could be imbibed: -

1. The foundation stone is to link the child with God, to realize the principles of faith in God, with true, religious education he/she will be able to learn the supremacy of God, His love to his creature and the need for his creatures to be faithful, obedient and submissive to Him. In this way the children will grow up to be men of knowledge and piety. Whatever brand of secular education he/she pursues, this foundation will be his torch light for all that he/she goes. Ashraf (2009:65) noted that, it is axiomatic to the scholars of education and ethics that a child is born with an upright belief in God as taught by Islam, but (it is his/her) parents that Make him/her a Jew, or, a Christian. Through religious and moral education the general ethics conduct can be taught to affirm the teaching of righteousness which should have been started at home.
2. This education, educate individuals to become serviceable agents who can impart a new direction or creative impulse to history not just inheriting what has been bequeathed to them by human race. To be taught how they can serve their communities and humanity at large, not just to be anticipating what they will get from others but what they can give to spread love and kindness. This can be done through the teaching of the history of great men of religion and other philanthropists from other fields, .this will make them patriotic and seeking their reward only from God. The problems of corruption will be done away with.
3. This form of education also teach value judgment, activities of intellectual reasoning that will enable them form correct judgments in relation to suitable data for consideration not to be stunt and cannot form correct judgments even on elementary data they should not become intellectually retarded or educationally backward in any brand of human knowledge. The pursuit of science and technology which are vital for the nation will be done.
4. The teaching of code of conducts will make them to present personal examples of moderation, simplicity, selflessness, etc. Personal and enabling examples set by individuals have great psychological effect on all sections of People of every age and country. (Hussain, 2009:91) in this way there will be Continuity of development of moral conduct in the society.
5. The education teaches frank information about sex in a way that yields Psychological comfort, how to guard against illicit sexual relationships its dangers and the importance of marriage (Ulwan 2001:43) the social ills of adultery, fornication now prevalent in the society will be done away with.
6. Self control, here educators should organize activities that will occupy the Children's time. How to spend their leisure time in such a way that the child is occupied with sports hobbies in a way that keeps the child's religious feelings intact (Ulwan, 2001:45).

7. Teaching some selected religious legal ruling at certain level so as to instill accountability, transparency and above all the rewards and punishment for deeds (done in this life) after death and all about eternity, this will definitely affect behaviors especially where faith has been well established. The Policy of due process in all governments' administration will be assured, and problems of giving 10% out of contract awarded to senior officers by contractors will be eliminated
8. The whole content is geared towards education by establishing habits, selling examples, admonition, and punishment where necessary are the effective means and basis for preparing children religiously, morally, and educationally psychologically and socially (Uwan2001: 50) Consequently, these will produce a transformation of the individual, the family, the community and the nation at large.

### **ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE NIGERIA LEADERSHIP WHICH CHALLENGES POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

There are several Issues, and challenges in the effectiveness of the leadership in Nigeria which are obstacles to poverty alleviation and consequently human capital development and sustainable development from the nation.

1. Political instability which makes the platforms fragile, there are constant political crisis, change of governments and politics with no continuity, religious 'crisis, insecurity etc., i.e. if there is no, political stability in the nation it is impossible to rest there must be stability in the political arena for the economy to ride on "(Makintola- 2012).
2. Lacking Moral Authority to Command respect and listening ears from followers. Words lack power on subjects when leaders cannot cover their scars, they spare themselves in the land, of luxury and allow the followers to feel the pain, people will not hear what you say because of the thunder of what you are (Adeir, 2009).
3. Lack of integrity to be transparent administratively and in financial dealings, they are not faithful and open but selfish and greedy. Trillions of naira are drain out through various means, corruptions in forms of kickbacks, gratifications, unnecessary allowances etc. If followers are treated gently with compassion they will show themselves to be great.
4. Moral laxity and lost of values – most leaders lack values in themselves with which to attract their followers with. They do not offer honest and selfless Service for the poor masses they are only after what they will get, there is no reciprocity (give and take). No innate feelings for the task only the monetary reward matters to them.
5. There is mismatch between appointment and qualifications. Experiences are not respect (values) the leadership is characterized by favoritism, partiality and over loading of responsibilities on the poor populace. Although experience may not necessarily guarantee

credibility it surely encourages people to enhance and to prove you are capable (Maxwell, 2007).

6. Interfering with opportunities when opportunities for professional growth Comes along most leaders hinder. Training, retraining, promotions are tempered with and this end up discouraging employees from making progression financially and making meaningful contributions for development at all levels.
7. Some leaders lack empathy for their followers i.e. to see things from their point of view and accept concrete Criticisms for the betterment of the followers and the system, so that the followers will remain in service and poverty. Due to this leaders do not provide sensitization which assists civil servants or employees to prepare how to emancipate themselves from real poverty, by having support for their salaries, as an adequate preparation for retirement, many employees end up retiring to frustration, depression and ill health. For this many are afraid of being retired, they have to be forced to.

### **STRATEGIES OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH AN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA**

Personal and organizational effectiveness is proportionate to the strength of its' leadership. For any meaningful development through poverty alleviation for Nigeria, the leaders have to encourage it through nurturing directing, focusing their followers through a culture of change in effective leadership that will enhance capacity building and utilization of human capital. Quality Religious^ oral Education will do this in the following ways: -

1. There is need for government to make religious and moral education an important part of the curriculum (course content) at least up to pre-degree level. This will serve as a guide and checkmate for our growing youths who are to become leaders of tomorrow.
2. Serious enlightenment campaigns through the media, community leaders, NGO's and religious bodies on the importance of setting proper and sincere marriages. It is through sincere and God fearing marriage relationship that children begotten will be reared with love, care with fear of God discharging all the responsibilities of parenthood. These kinds of children will be nurtured with piety and the school will continue from where the parents stopped.
3. Establishing community counselling centres where pre-marital counselling will be provided, in this way people will be properly prepared for marriage fully aware of its responsibilities and challenges, in addition to this, the counselling centres can handle problems of divorce and its avoidance where necessary and measures dealing with its problems especially where it is inevitable In this way many of the problems emanating from it will be properly handled.



4. Schools should through moral and religious education, activities of NGO's and religious organizations sensitize and inform students on the importance of religion and be proud of their faith and combine faith with actions, this is because with so called modernization some people are even ashamed of being recognized as faithful e.g. to be a born again or Ahlus-Sunnah, i.e. in the two famous religions of Nigeria i.e. Islam and Christianity.
5. Effective teacher education programmes, this is important because of the importance of teachers as the main determinants of quality in education. As Adamu (2006:13) states value inculcation has become an important function of education and teachers have to shoulder this responsibility.
6. There should be no unlawful favour in our educational processes like giving school admissions to the unqualified; strict measures should be taken to prevent that. Students also must be punished on cases of examination malpractice, because these problems are part of the challenges facing quality education in Nigeria.
7. Educators, parents and other people should match knowledge with action and faith with actions.
8. Leaders should develop good rapport with their followers.
9. They should also work like a team, communicate effectively, expand their visions, motivate them on how to better their lives and fulfill their rights, listen effectively to understand their problems and solve them. In these ways they will leave a befitting epitaph for themselves.

## **CONCLUSION**

Education is indeed an important part of any nation's development. Most of the world's leaders acknowledge that a nation's development is very much dependent on its work force. In order to achieve qualitative education for poverty alleviation in Nigeria, moral and religious education will serve as the foundation because good laws could only benefit humanity if they are worked out by men standing on a high moral standard. For it is this education that will enhance ethical development where faith and morals that are taught will be internalized it is in this way that the inner person will be re-created, it will subconsciously shine out and be reflected in behaviour. And these skills are necessary for effective leadership that will help in poverty alleviation by ensuring piety (fear of the unseen) transparency and accountability in all they do. In this way embezzlement, corruption in form of faked contracts, bribery will be eliminated and ensure poverty reduction or even its total alleviation.

The transformation of Nigeria to a socially, economically, politically and virile, nation may take a long time because of the issues and constraints that engulf its leadership, these can nevertheless

be eliminated if they bear in mind that becoming, a leader is a lot like investing in a stock market if you hope to make a fortune in a day you are not going to be successful, absence of this led to the predicament of Nigeria and Nigerians and has basically been thwarting efforts for national development in spite of its abundant resources.

The Nigerian followers have lost confidence in the leadership and the so called EFCC, ICPC programmes introduced to checkmate it. Nigeria needs leaders who are faithful, God fearing, honest, transparent, accountable and emphatic just like great religious leaders and patriotic citizens who achieve high rate of success in bringing about complete transformation in the life of their followers and they were cleansed of rooted and bare faced immorality, they inspired with a burning desire for the best and noble deeds in the services of not only a country or nation but what is far higher-Humanity. As Oru (2009:18) reaffirms "Even if an immediate effect is not achieved, persistency would in the long-run help in affecting the lives of majority of us".

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