NIGERIA
HIGHLY RELIGIOUS BUT HIGHLY IMMORAL, NEED FOR AUTHENTIC MORAL EDUCATION

By
Azuakor, Paul Okwuchukwu, Ph. D.
Department of Social Sciences, School of General Studies
Federal Polytechnic, Oko
Anambra State, Nigeria
08035440767, frpaulokwy4all@gmail.com

Abstract
The present author was prompted to undertake this research because of the apparent pervasiveness of immorality in Nigeria irrespective of the evident high religiosity of Nigerians. A lot of research was done using methodic and impartial observation as well as by library research. The causes of this malaise are attributable to hypocrisy, non-imbibing of proper moral tenets of the existing religions and culture, inefficient moral education and preference of ethnicity over objectivity. The following constitute some recommendations proposed to effect the required good change: moral education should be made a compulsory subject at all levels of education, questionable characters should not be installed chiefs or given titles so as to teach the value of integrity, churches should refuse donations from perceived criminals as to discourage impunity, indiscriminate spraying of money at social events must be discouraged so as to forestall greed and encourage hard work, parents should encourage hard work by never colluding in examination malpractice of any sort, “sorting” of all sorts must never be encouraged in all tertiary institutions, government and religion must ensure leadership by good example, moral education must be taught objectively and without discrimination, etc.

Key Words: Religion, Morality, Moral education, Authenticity.

Introduction
Another name for moral education is “character education”. According to Okafor (2013), “In our present day Nigeria, among the various questions that confront education, one of the most vexing ones relate to moral education” (p. 4). It is believed that once the character of the child is properly moulded, then the child develops right attitudes that enable them to become well adapted and functional members of society. Realizing that moral bankruptcy ensued with the removal of Churches from running the schools, after the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha championed the allowing of Churches’ presence in
the schools, which received the blessing of the then governor of the old Anambra State, Chief Jim Nwobodo, and thus began Thursday moral instruction classes of Thursdays (since 1982) which has spread to many states of the federation. But this paper is not talking about just Thursday moral instruction classes but for moral instructions to be properly enshrined in the school curriculum and adequately taught as compulsory school subject. For Nwodo (2013), “through the little efforts of Rev. Sister Nwodo Moral Education has been included in this new National education curriculum tagged ‘Religion and National values’” (p. 21). The appellation “Religion and National Values” has however created lots of confusion with respect to its interpretation and the mode of application, but certain consensus has been reached more recently.

According to Nduka (1980), “It will be argued, first, that fundamental social changes took place in the traditional societies of Sub-Saharan Africa in the wake of the contact with the West, and, secondly, that those changes also affected traditional values (including moral values)” (p. 154). Some argue that while the Christian religion that came with the West destroyed a lot of the traditional values, it failed to effectively replace them with Christian values. Moreover, for Nigeria to be highly religious and yet highly immoral shows that (i) religious education is different from moral education, though all religions teach morality, (ii) the religions may have been failing in their tasks of teaching morality, or (iii) the society has paid deaf ear to moral teachings, (iv) the schools where children spend most of their time have not been serious enough about imparting morality.

-Nigeria
Nigeria is a geo-political entity with over 250 ethnic groups and a population of over 177 million citizens. It is the most populous country in Africa and is bounded in the North by Niger Republic and Lake Chad. In the East it is bounded by Cameroun. It is also bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the South and by Benin Republic to the West. It is a democratic and secular state but with three major religions of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR).
-Religion/Religious
A wide variety of persons, peoples and disciplines are interested in the subject of religion and this has led to multifarious definitions of religion with none of those definitions devoid of some flaws on critical analysis. But basically, religion connotes belief in a Supreme Being though we have atheistic definitions of religion. However, Madu (1997) holds that there are certain uncontested basic elements common to religion qua religion. Citing Arinze (1970) the elements are identified by Madu (1997) as: “beliefs, worship (cult) and morals” (p. 17). In our context, “religious” is relating to religion or believing in a religion. Being religious leads to religiosity, a noun, which means “strong religious feeling or belief.” For Wikipedia (2017), “Most dimensions of religiosity are correlated, meaning people who often attend church services (practice dimension) are also likely to score high on the belief and spirituality dimensions” (p. 1).

-Morality
"Moral" is from Latin “mos” meaning “practice”, ‘custom” or a characteristically and more or less established pattern of behaviour relative to human acts as contradistinguished from the acts of man. For Pazhayampallil (1997), “Morality, then, deals with regularity. And there is no regularity in man’s actions without a rule or norm; hence morals treat of norms for man’s actions” (p. 3).

-Moral Education: moral education is teaching children and members of society, in the process of socialization, to imbibe the virtues, values and moral habits necessary to be able to live a good life and become productive, functional and integrated members of society. In this connection, Muoghalu (2016) writes, “moral education should contribute not only to the students as individuals but also to social cohesion of a community” (p. 34). In the same vein, Okafor (2013) writes, “Moral education refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their communities” (p. 6).
For ASCD Panel on Moral Education (1988), “moral education is whatever schools do to influence how students think, feel, and act regarding issues
of right and wrong. American public schools have a long tradition of concern about moral education (p. 4).”

Indices of Nigeria’s High Religiosity
The following indicators, through observations, show that Nigerians are highly religious: churches and mosques litter everywhere in Nigeria; the churches and mosques are usually full of worshippers; people pray at almost all public functions; there is evident belief and fear of the deities; Nigerians showcase elaborate and pump religious ceremonies at the religio-social level.

Evidence of High Immorality in Nigeria
- Bribery and Corruption: Bribery and corruption are rife in the Nigerian society. Greed is orchestrated everywhere. The loot people perpetrate in the land is gargantuan; public servants and political office holders loot government treasury with impunity and embezzlements are very common. People in business places cheat with glee and pride themselves for success in the field while internet fraud has become the occupation of many a youth. Thus commenting on the Nigerian situation Muoghalu (2016) states, “Whether one considers the economic, political or social management of social affairs, one is not left in doubt as to the prevalence of impunity in the conduct of public affairs” (p. 31). But corruption did not just start today in Nigeria. It has always been there from the time of independence and has continued till today. For example, according to Ogbeidi (2012) “The First Republic under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, and Nnamdi Azikwe, the President, was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity” (p. 6). Till today the trend has continued such that the present Buhari administration has consistently made the fight to retrieve looted funds, from ex-government officials, one of the central thrusts of government. However, the manner in which it has been carried out begs some questions. For example, according to Taiwo-Obalonye and Adegbite (2016), “President Buhari, in his address marking Democracy Day kept mute on the identity of looters, but said that significant amount
has been recovered” (p. 6). Fighting corruption also means punishing looters appropriately.

- Examination Malpractices
Examination malpractice/misconduct is very common in Nigeria and the very painful thing about it is that it has become very organized; not only the examinees are involved but also parents, examiners, exam board agents, examination syndicates and examination “miracle centres”. This reflects how the sense of hard work has been destroyed and how all those colluding in the anomaly have not only displayed a lack of moral fibre but also are active agents in the destruction of Nigeria by grooming immorality. According to Emenusiobi (2016), “Academic corruption is so pervasive that it appears to have been accepted as the norm at examinations. It is obvious that examination malpractice has already become a very big business” (p. 105). For Emenusiobi, it has not only become pervasive but it has also become persistent. Emenusiobi also pointed out that the Director General of National Orientation Agency (NOA) by 2014, Mr. Mike Omeri, told Nigerians that Nigeria ranked first in the world’s examination malpractice index at the time. The examination malpractices include bringing in “foreign” materials into the examination hall and using them to write the exams; copying the work of other students in the examination hall; collaboration, whereby students exchange their scripts or verbally communicate with each other to enhance performance; collusion whereby students and teachers or members of staff obtain set questions and answers beforehand, or submit an already prepared answer sheet in substitution for the original script after examination; intimidation of examination officials by students and their supporters to allow for misconducts. Others include “sorting” and marking whereby undeserved marks are awarded in exchange for money or other forms of gratification in kind, including sex; tampering with results in documentation; leakages from exam authorities, etc.
Extortions; Police and Public Servants, Lecturers, Religious Charlatans
Travelling the Nigerian roads, police and the other security agents are seen on daily basis extorting money from people. Some persons have even been shot dead on different occasions in Nigeria for failing to offer the police a paltry bribe of twenty naira. Some civil servants and lecturers, even some religious charlatans have devised heinous means of extorting money from people in need of their services either in cash or in kind. Reporting on the Nigerian police, Gistmania.com (2017) notes: "The evidence suggests that police officers have on numerous occasions severely beaten, sexually assaulted, or shot to death ordinary citizens who failed to pay bribes demanded" (p. 1).

People do not React to Evil with Shock as Expected
It is generally observed that most times, Nigerians do not objectively react to evil with shock. Many people defend evil where they should not, especially if it is coming from people of the same ethnic group, religion or party as theirs. This shows that the moral stance of a good number of the populace is faulty.

Good People Lack Courage (to die)
Lack of courage to confront evil can also be said to be responsible for evil and corruption thriving in the land. Most times, the rich and powerful are the ones who perpetrate the more grandiose corrupt practices. Oftentimes, those good people who see this and who should voice out the evil of such crimes are afraid for their lives and even positions or jobs. And so, they keep mute while evil reigns. Oftentimes you hear people making such statements as: “You want me to talk, will you feed my family for me?”

Characteristics of Authentic Moral Education
It is Not Discriminatory (extra and intra)
The young ones must be taught to be virtuous and imbibe the sense of social justice which enables them to give to everyone what is their due whether they are members of their particular denomination/religion or not. And within the same religion or denomination, the virtue must radiate
without nepotism. The ability to effect this is to bring out the non-discriminatory character of morality.

**Emphasizes Good Morals Objectively**

Morality is objective for not caring whose horse is gored. Evil is evil no matter who does it. A government or religion that covers up or defends vice because the perpetrator belongs to its forum is simply immoral and vice versa.

**- Teaches Right Attitudes**

Right attitudes are dependent on the value systems of individuals. To effect right attitudes certain moral values must be inculcated in the individuals from their very early ages. Such values include the following as argued by Bolarin (2005) as the perceived core values of Nigeria and quoted by Enu and Esu (2011): Dignity of labour, Detesting laziness, Hospitality, Respect for parent/elders, Respect for authority, Public spiritedness, Hard-work, Honesty and Truthfulness, Respect for sanctity of life. If all these are in place religious fanaticism would die, violent crimes too as well as corruption and injustice all of which have been responsible for the lack of social, economic and political growth of Nigeria. Irrespective of the genuine efforts being made by certain religious preachers to make a mark in the effort to impact on people’s moral life, there seem to be factors trying to overturn such genuine messages, namely selfishness, greed, etc. we should be more spiritual than just being religious (cf. John 3:23).

**Need for Moral Education in Nigeria**

For Nwodo (2013), “In the early 1980s, amid the widespread concern over students’ poor academic achievements and behavior, educators rediscovered the need for moral education” (p. 20). This implies that good moral conduct also stimulates good intellectual feat.

The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in a conference held by Association of Moral Education Nigeria in 2015 but published 2016, while discussing quality management of schools presented so many points that would ensure success in whole school development, and some of them border on moral education. They include: (i) maintenance of school
registers and other statutory records, including punishment and commendation books together with dossiers; (ii) making sure that both pupils and teachers come early to school and attend other duties on time and close at the correct time; (iii) insisting on strict adherence to school time table in both curricula and co-curricula activities; ensuring recognition and obedience to the rules and regulations of the school; (iv) continuous assessments and exams to ensure adequate emphasis on moral and ethical issues. All these hinge on discipline for the entire school and adherence to them already sets the right tone for proper moral formation.

For Temitayo, Audu and Lukman (2014) “morality provides ethical principles that safeguard the right of the individual in the society and points out to him his reciprocal duties and responsibilities. In this way there is justice, freedom and social order from the contents of morality” (p. 72). Citing Cox (1981), Temitayo, Audu and Lukman (2014) state: “the protection, safety and welfare of the society is the generating motive in the development of moral rules” (p. 73).

Okafor (2013) believes that it is high time schools started looking beyond the level of academic achievements of pupils in mathematics and the sciences and rethink their moral mission as well, which moral responsibility the teachers should shoulder squarely.

Moral education is inevitable for national development. This is premised on the fact that according to Uche and Nwodo (2016), “moral education is character moulding, inculcates in human life the enabling grace to live a life of honour, become first among equals and role models” (p. 131). Education must be for the development of the intellectual, affective (moral) and psychomotor dimensions of the human person. Even the psychomotor dimension which has to do with activity is also linked to morality. And so the moral dimension of education must be taken very seriously. For Okafor (2013), "Serious and wise societies since the time of Plato have made moral education a deliberate aim of schooling, they
educated for good character as well as intelligence, decency as well as literacy, virtue as well as knowledge” (p. 5).

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 408) John Paul II (1995) writes, “Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals” (p. 121). The expression: “the sin of the world” - 1 John 5:19 aptly describes this condition of man in society. Therefore, serious effort must be made through education to guide individuals away from the concupiscence resulting from his wounded nature and equip him with virtues for proper functioning.

In Gaudium et spes (GS, 37 par 2) The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council (1965) write:

“The whole of man's history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity” (p. 936).

It is evident that Nigeria is currently experiencing serious moral malaise. Iheoma (1985) believes that the problem is situated in the inappropriate and inadequate situation of the system of moral education in the Nigerian schools. For Iheoma (1985) “Current approaches to moral education in Nigerian schools have been examined and considered inadequate to cope with the contemporary moral crisis.” (p. 1). He proposed then that the implementation of a consequentialist approach within the nexus of the existing integrated approach in the schools' moral education curriculum would lead to the much desired results of reaching the widest audience in our multicultural society and effecting thereby meaningful progress. For Onyeocha (1991) “in order to reconcile the conflicting interests and tendencies in the country, an integrated approach to moral education is required” (p. 1).
Moral education is central to the building up of right reasoning and fellow feeling among the citizens of a state. All this put together creates harmony among the citizens and removes strife. This way justice, fair play, love, peace and cooperation are engendered while corruption and fraud are reduced all leading to advancement in society. Thus, for Okiro, (2016), “In developed societies, part of the strategy for growth and development is the recognition of the moral imperative and its centrality in the realization of a sound and rational society” (p. 25). Once a sound and rational society is obtained, then corruption and immorality are drastically reduced and the society is conducive for all the inhabitants. It becomes crystal clear, therefore, that serious moves must be made for the inculcation of this moral imperative; the solution is authentic moral education strategy.

While the infusion approach to moral education argues that moral education should not be a separate course thereby adding to the load of the school curriculum but that the entire course of study in the schools together with the gamut of school experience should be pervaded by good character, in words and actions, this paper posits that in addition to this, it is still expedient to devote serious time to it via religious education, civic education and social studies in schools. Moreover, such subjects such as Literature, History and the likes should be laced with moral stories and lessons to be infused into the students to challenge them to upright living. And then, very critically, a Subject-Moral Education— must be taught as a particular subject sans religious affiliation but wholly objective.

Possibility of Authentic Moral Education for Nigeria and the Anticipated Effects
We must respect our traditional values and never conceive them as inferior to exotic values inasmuch as they are objectively rational and humane.
For Nduka (1980) from the 19th Century, the fateful contact between Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, led to moral education taking place in the shadow of a conflict between indigenous (traditional African) and
exotic (Western) values and institutions whether within or outside the schools. Further, Nduka notes that “success of moral education, generally given in the schools under the umbrella of Christianity, has been hampered by the difficulties inherent in the attempt to integrate western and indigenous values and by other concomitant factors of the colonial situations” (p. 153).

One snag in the effort to do proper moral education in the schools is the non-availability of competent teachers. A Latin dictum holds: “Nemo dat quod non habet” - No one can give what he does not have. Apart from the need for intellectual training in this respect, which will be essential, there is also the challenge of producing morally fit individuals to impart moral education. In this regard, Muoghalu (2016) writes, “It must be remembered that many of our teachers are products of degenerate Nigeria, who passed out of secondary schools with examination misconduct and out of universities through sorting, sex donations or outright purchase of grades” (p. 43). What do we expect people like this to impart if not what is already in them? Speaking in concord, a teacher is reported by Okafor (2013) thus: “We have to look at ourselves as teachers. If we cannot be role models, we will never be able to teach any value” (p. 9).

Moral education mostly takes place in three institutions: the family/home, the school and the religious institution. For Arisi (2013), “The family is responsible for teaching children what is right and wrong long before there are other influences. ... school helps some to shape the values of children. Then there is religion that the family introduces to a child” (pp. 248-249).

Reflecting on the possibility of moral education with respect to the school, Okafor (2013) writes: “Through discipline, the teacher's good example and school curriculum, schools instruct children in the virtues of patriotism, hard work, honesty, altruism and courage” (p. 5). It is the present researcher's strong conviction that if this is done from the
earliest times, then a good number of students will turn out into moral individuals.

But in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, the portion referring to moral education outlines the aims and objectives for all levels of education in Nigeria to include: the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society. This policy evidently recognizes the possibility of the implementation of its content. The only task is to strategize and effectuate the said content.

The curriculum for moral education must have the following contents—insistence on: respect for other people's rights, respect for the law of the land, concern for the common good, respect for life, voluntary participation in public life, the dignity of labour, respect for truth, value for personal dignity and integrity, and respect for elders.

For Obioma (2016), “the culture of high ethical standards and deep integrity can be acquired through learning. And learning itself, when effectively conducted brings about positive changes in the behavior of the partakers” (p. 14). He thus argues that the laying of the foundations of moral education for the development of Nigeria should be through the school sessions. In the basic education curriculum (BEC) today in Nigeria, because of the perceived use of moral education for national development, Civic Education, Social Studies and Religion (Christian Religious Studies [CRS] and Islamic Religious Studies [IRS]) have been placed as core subjects to be compulsorily undertaken by all students. The only problem will depend on the delivery. In 2013, the curriculum was further developed and updated to include Religion and National Values. All of this is aimed at helping the student to acquire high moral values during the school session. The only problem is how effective the delivery has been. The revised BE (Basic Education) curriculum which came into effect in 2014 was intended to gradually and systematically phase of the BEC. But this revised BE has raised some serious dust with respect to implementation and the National Assembly has recently approved the
separation of Religion and national Values. These national values could form the basis of the moral education proposed in this paper.

In the secondary school level, Civic Education, starting from 2011 became a compulsory subject to be taken by every student in their final public examinations of WAEC, NECO and GCE.

Obioma (2016) sees subject overload, teacher capacity, and lack of curriculum and teachers’ instructional guides as the challenges to adequate implementation of moral education in the Nigerian schools. There are various approaches to moral education which include: (i) Humanistic Approach, and (ii) Social Learning Approach. The humanistic approach eschews all supernatural influence on man. It could be in the form of role-taking where according to Kohlberg, as presented by Ozuloha (2013), the individual is allowed to interact with other persons and see the raison d’être for people’s vagaries of perspectives. But it is a participation wherein that individual is allowed a central role in decision making. Then there is the social reinforcement approach that was championed by such people as B.F. Skinner and Albert Bandura and co. Skinner believed that the quality and strength of reinforcement aided a child’s moral behaviour leading to self-control and altruism. And commenting on Skinner, Ozuloha (2013) states: “Moral behaviour that is rewarded or reinforced frequently tends to establish as a habit. Also timing of the reinforcement is very vital in promoting the desirable behaviour” (pp. 14-15). Ozuloha while accepting the above two approaches also talks about what she calls “Use of Personal and Naturalistic Examples”. And this is one way of saying that while applying the above two approaches the teacher should also be an available model utilizing reinforcements, allowing for the interactions of the humanistic approach while intelligently availing of the social and human environment for the inculcation of cherished values and virtues into the students. The present writer however holds that over and above all these, the supernatural and religious content must be brought in for man is inescapably religious. For being a transcendent being, man’s aspirations and telos (end) should never be limited to the spatio-temporal.
The Effects: Education for Obioma, (2016), “develops in the individual those values which make for good citizenship such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work, and personal integrity all of which enhances good leadership potential” (p. 14). And in this case then, moral education holds a special place in the enterprise. According to Ozuloha (2013), the goal of moral education is to produce citizens who are best fitted for work, leisure and play.

For Onyeocha (1999), “both Nigeria’s political ideals, as enshrined in its constitution, and the predominantly religious orientation of its people, are resources on which moral education can build” (p. 1). It is true we have religious diversity in Nigeria but reason/rationality can serve the use of delineating and harmonizing the humane contents of the tenets of the various religions in Nigeria and proposing them as the content of the nation’s moral education to be taught in schools. It is in this context that Onyeocha (1999) proposes “a form of moral education which incorporates what is most valuable in traditional Nigerian practices; and for a religious education which takes account of common factors within a situation of diversity” (p. 1). If this is done, then the students would have been adequately empowered to function with success.

Evaluation and Conclusion
When moral education succeeds in teaching students that there is dignity in hard work they will be better able to have self-confidence which is necessary for any meaningful progress. Again, moral education if properly imparted will create human persons with conscience, who will shun evil/corruption and do good, just as the basic precept of conscience - synderesis- would insist that the good must be done and evil avoided.

Recommendations
i. Churches should refuse donations from known criminals so as to teach practically the value of honesty and hard work.
ii. Questionable characters should not be installed chiefs and titled men by their local traditional communities as to teach the value of integrity.

iii. Indiscriminate spraying of money at social and suchlike events should be stopped to teach that money is not everything (cf. 1Tim. 6:10)

iv. Moral education should be made a compulsory subject at all levels of formal education in Nigeria.

v. Parents must insist on hard work rather than patronizing magic examination centres for their children's and wards' academic certificates otherwise the young ones are taught that it is correct to defraud, to cheat, to be lazy and to be, simply put, corrupt.

vi. Teachers and lecturers should all be disciplined and self-controlled rather than being ill-mannered and exploitative of students by asking for “sorting” in cash or in kind, because this institutes, entrenches and propagates corruption and decay.

vii. Adherents of all religions should strive to live according to the objective religious and moral tenets of their respective religions.

viii. Governments and their agencies should be very serious in tracking people's sources of wealth and also ensure right moral ethics in work places (he who does not work should actually not eat, 1Thess. 2:10b).

ix. Government should live by example in moral education. It is not enough to enact good moral education curriculum contents for schools but rather, government by its practice must ensure the observance of right moral rectitude by providing equity and fairness in wages of the various categories of the working class and by avoiding embezzlements and looting of government coffers.

x. Religious leaders must enhance good moral education and life via exemplary lifestyle.

xi. Parents must teach the moral codes of their religion, culture and society by word and action in their families and elsewhere.
xii. In addition to providing good human models for proper students’ conduct, the physical environment must also be made to be humane. I recently got wind of Youth Corps members in one of the states in Nigeria living 7 in a room and having one toilet and one bathroom to 14 persons, in a Command secondary school. This is treating people like animals, and they will turn out to wolf on others, invariably.

xiii. Hard work, honesty, discipline, creativity, truth, virtue in general, must be positively reinforced at all levels of the academic, social, religious, political and economic lives of all Nigerians.

References


