



## **Recourse To African Indigenous Education: A Way to Mitigating Moral Degradation Among the Young People in Kenya.**

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### **Abstract.**

Immorality and indiscipline among the youth is a worldwide concern that is experienced in both religious and non-religious countries. In Kenya for example, there are serious cases of rape, suicide, burning of schools, domestic violence, killing among the newly married, high rate of pregnancy among school-going children among others. These cases are rampant among the youth. The youth engage in certain vices or crimes and other unethical activities that were not experienced in the African traditional societies. In these societies, the issue of immoral behavior and indiscipline cases was minimal. Several factors may have contributed to immorality, but this is not the aim of this paper to investigate. This study was aimed at critically examining the role of indigenous education in the mitigation of youth immorality and indiscipline in ancient indigenous Africa and how it can be regained in contemporary society. In particular, the study sought to examine the values, attitudes, skills (content), methods of teaching and training as well as validation modes that reinforced indigenous education and the influence indigenous moral education can have in the concern of mitigating the youth immoral behavior and indiscipline in the contemporary society.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, Education, Morality, Mitigation, Kenya

### **1. Introduction**

The prevalent education system before the coming of the missionaries and western civilization was African indigenous instruction which was generally known as informal education. With the infiltration of the Christian missions as early as the fifteenth century, Western ethos particularly British and French had started to infiltrate innumerable parts of the African continent. The Christian missions not only brought with them a new religion but also western culture and civilization which ended up in the introduction of formal education with its pressure of legendary and purely academics. Most African parents willingly believed this new instruction and they

initiated to refer their progenies European schools with their fashioned curriculum to be instructed at the expense of their indigenous African education which was fashioned for the wholistic, formative and utilitarian end. The utilitarian and formative nature of African indigenous teaching has been appreciated to the extent that in our contemporary society, the demand in most African cultures is for a return to the aboriginal instruction arrangement, although in an adapted form. The demand is that an education system that has the involvement of all adherents and which formulates each personality for an exact occupation with a suitable character or work-related activity, ought to be the model in various African civilizations currently. This paper recourse to the indigenous system of holistic education to join in the mitigation of moral degradation in contemporary society.

## **1.1. Definition of Terms**

### **1.1.1. African Indigenous Education**

African indigenous education can be descriptively defined as a lifetime method of education in which an individual proceeded over prearranged phases of life, Cameroon & Dodd (1970). This means that this type of educational system was from childhood to old age, you don't stop learning in this system of education. Mushi (2009) on the other hand, defined it as a method of passing among the ethnic memberships and from one age group to another the hereditary acquaintance, skills, social civilizations morals, and principles of the ethnic community.

Morality can be defined as the excellence in anthropological performances by which we consider them as correct or erroneous, moral or malevolent.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

There is an increase in cases of immorality and indiscipline among the youth in contemporary society unlike in the ancient days. The phenomenon is experienced even in countries where the majority are adherents to Christianity and Islam. These two major religions are believed to instill moral values among their adherents, but this is questioned by immoral cases in contemporary societies unlike what was in the indigenous societies in Kenya.

## **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

As little literature exists concerning the role of African indigenous education in mitigating immorality and indiscipline among the youth, it is the intention that this paper will:

- a) Regain African indigenous moral education in mitigating immorality and indiscipline among the youth.
- b) Be beneficial to policy-makers in Kenya and beyond, especially curbing of immorality and indiscipline cases in schools and colleges.

- c) Add to the existing literature on recourse to African traditional education in curbing immorality and indiscipline in the society.

#### **1.4. Methodology**

The material confined in this work is mainly from analysis of secondary sources; published books, articles, and oral interviews of some Luo elders.

#### **2. Aims of the traditional Education system.**

African indigenous system of education was mainly a predetermined system of instruction with the aim of a holistic formation of a human person in terms of morality and acquisition of skills for the future role of husband and wife. Fafunwa (1974) appealed that the objective of aboriginal African instruction is multi-layered but the main end aim is to yield an honest, upright, proficient, and cooperative. A person who follows the societal demand of the day. Fafunwa, listed seven aims of aboriginal African instruction as follows:

To advance the young person's hidden physical skills; to form character; to indoctrinate esteem for elders and authority; to advance rational skills; to gain precise occupational drill and develop a hale and hearty attitude towards work; to fully and willingly participate in community affairs in promoting social inheritance, (Fafunwa, 1974).

Firstly, the most evidenced trademark of aboriginal African instruction is a training of the person's character. Fafunwa (1974) supposed character development to be at the foundation of the African indigenous educational system. Majasan was in support when he concluded that the two main objectives of the Yoruba educational system were the drilling of character and sacred education, (Majasan, 1967). He supposed that all other aims are merged in them. In the indigenous societies, all the family members are in charge of drilling the younger generation to be morally upright. There was both direct training and indirect training. Direct training involved telling the child what to do on certain occasions and correcting him when he goes wrong. Indirectly but corrective it was done through punishment given to other people that were moral rebels. The young ones are taught about hospitality, how to take care of the family, etiquette, endurance, and other good behaviors

Secondly, is the respect for elders which is closely associated with training of character. African indigenous society attached great reputation to respect for those that are older than one, to those in authority, particularly the Chiefs and old neighbors and relatives. One facet of respect is demonstrated in the complicated systems of greetings for various classes of people. There are

certain traditions of greeting the Chiefs, priests, old people, parents, and relatives. Among the Luo for example, it is the young person to greet the elder while among the Maasai community, the young girls and boys were not to greet elders by shaking hands instead they were to bow their head down and the elder to lay hands on them. Generally, Africans demonstrate the utmost multifaceted oral and physical system of communication the young generation must master the various greetings of his cultural collection before attaining maturity, (Fafunwa, 1974). This was to instill that respect to those older than them in the community.

Third, African teaching also aimed at training the various vocations, skills, sciences, art, song, and indigenous decrees and ruling of various communities in Africa. In terms of the community benefit, is aimed at changing one's orientation and formation from 'I' to 'we', that is from self-centeredness to community-centeredness. The above pieces of training are aimed at putting an individual to be independent in terms of survival. In contemporary society, one of the major causes of moral degradation is unemployment. Using the above indigenous approach the youth would have something to do, hence not idle. Education is demanding, with the foundation of the custom of physical workout, grounding for trade, religious nurture, a reverential insolence towards those older than one, and full of life participation in communal life. All these are essential surroundings for any African desiring to be a well-thought-out being of significance.

Fourth, African indigenous education enabled a person to comprehend cosmic life and the preeminence of upholding natural life, to appreciate an individual's position and function in the household, the society, and creation, and to acquire the countless skills required to become a causative adherent of the society. The individual was essentially to be a source of skills and indigenous knowledge. Other facets of African aboriginal instruction are rational drilling, occupational exercise, and advancement of social inheritance. These and other many instructions given to the young people meet the basic foundational and basic requirement for the child in the ethic community. Fafunwa (1974) thought that traditional education is not any more conservative than any other system. The strength and weaknesses of any educational structure can superlatively judge by positive results evidenced on the individuals who go through such a system.

Lastly, indigenous educations aim at understanding, increase in value, and endorsing the social inheritance of the society at hefty. Although the educational system varies from one community to another, the aims are essentially similar, that is, implanting the acknowledged morals and

principles overriding right conduct and fashioning unison and harmony. This was the general view of an individual's role in society.

### **3. Contents of Indigenous Education.**

The indigenous instructive structures are initiated from the physical, communal, and mystical pre-colonial African cultures. The physical setting predisposed the content of the syllabus since what was imparted to the young people was mainly to help them adjust and adapt to the physical environment and be able to benefit from it. Castle, for example, reasons that "Whether the child's environment was dominated by a mountain, plain, river or tropical forest, he had to study to battle its threats and to use its fruitfulness" (Castle, 1966). For the sake of adaptation to the physical setting and environment, the rising individual learned about landscape, weather, animals, and plants life. The growing child needed to learn about the benefits of both plants and animals together with taboos that are linked with them.

The natural situation in addition predisposed what the children were to learn for practical purposes in terms of impending household tasks. The young people who lived in the lake region, for example, learned skills such as fishing, mending of nets, ways of preserving fish, and building canoes. Among the pastoralist community, they learned how to graze, milk, and observe when cows are in heat, (Rodney, 1972). In whichever way, the instructions for each culture were predetermined with the main reason of preparing the young people to acclimatize with the environment in terms of life and work. The child was to benefit from the given environment. This kept them busy hence few cases of crime and immoral behaviors were experienced within the indigenous societies.

The traditional syllabus also originates from the spiritual milieu. In traditional African, every incident in the lifecycle of a human person has bestowed a spiritual implication. education therefore inclined to emphasize sacred education. Children received education on the impact of both malicious and compassionate spirits and cleansing rituals. It may be correctly reasoned that a bigger portion of African traditional educational content was religious-centered. Religion impacted and continue to impact greatly in the lifecycle of all people, both children, and adults. It also provides a reassembling opinion for the society and supported up informally acknowledged morals and customs such as trustworthiness, big-heartedness, meticulousness, and hospitality (Castle, 1966).

#### **4. Methods of Indigenous Education in Africa**

As is a fact in contemporary society, a variety of methods of teaching prevailed within non-literate societies in Africa. In societies like the Luo and the Luhya of western Kenya, formal methods of education were common and specialized teachers who imparted a predetermined content of knowledge existed. These teachers were also remunerated in kind but the remuneration was commonly referred to as a gift. Specialized teachers were used in training young people in negotiation, herbal medicine, fishing, and other expert livelihoods. The mode of teaching was both practical and theoretical ranging from reciting poems to singing. "Schools" and "classes" were frequently held in isolated places for example grandmother's kitchen for the girls, the grandfather's hut for the boys, and the chief's place. The completion of pupils from such "schools" was realized only after sufficient mastery of the course and it was marked by great celebration. (Tiberondwa, 1978).

In pre-colonial Africa, initiation rituals were common in both centralized and cephalous communities. The initiation rites created a special time for education which was more formative than informative. It was branded by instruction and learning of fatalistic content in a definite physical setting where there was a clear difference between those teaching and the ones taught. (Rodney, 1972). Since initiation practices included education of the initiates, it lasted for the varying periods. Among the Bukusu in western Kenya, initiation instructions went on for as long as one week but continues until marriage. In most cases, initiation observances were meant to offer detailed education in a wide range of areas, for example, agriculture, plaiting, protection of the community, mediation, history, and mothercraft. In some communities' female initiates experienced functional, communal, and ethical instruction to turn out to be proficient mothers and wives. However, male initiates were instructed to defend the community and provide for their families. (Kalusa, 1998). In most societies that practiced initiation rites, the end was commonly marked by clitoridectomy or circumcision which also symbolized transition into a responsible adult in the community. (Kenyatta, 1961). The initiates were now to act morally and according to the set communal standards. Initiation rites were prevalent and have been recognized among many communities in Kenya. such communities include the Luhya of Kenya, the Masai of Kenya, and the Nandi of Kenya, (Datta, 1984). In most non-literate societies, education was informal. As Rodney (1972) claims, education of children was "from the example and behavior of elders in the society," by initiation, repetition of what parents and older people do, and lastly by observation of the happenings in the society. It was also done through drama

and oral literature. These empowered the young generation to be responsible and morally upright members of the community. They also developed such qualities as determination, self-control, bravery, and fortitude. In this informal way, the young people established an ability to execute their male and female duties.

It is significant to note that in civilizations where instruction was informal; parents were principally in control of the instruction of their children, unlike today where teaching is predominantly left to teachers in schools. They indoctrinated good behaviors, standards, and morals into their progeny, using their domiciliary as the "school." This domiciliary instruction covered practical skills. The efforts of parents in the education of children were supplemented by other members of the community. All older people in the society were projected to play a parental role in teaching, reprimanding, counseling, rewarding, and correcting young people in the community. (Blackmore and Cooksey, 1980). Among the Luo of Kenya, an elder who exhibited a lack of attention in the instruction of the children in the society was viewed as a witch. This observation is also experienced in most of the Kenyan communities. This designates that the mission of education and the formation of children in pre-colonial societies was a communal obligation. In fact, among the Luos of Kenya, the child and the wife belong to the community.

### **5. Moral Education Among African Indigenous Societies**

The human being is born neither moral nor immoral; it is, therefore, the responsibility of the community to bring out of him or her a moral or immoral person. The community is charged with imparting either the wrong or right behavior to the individual, (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). The Africans had their own set moral standard which may be unique though the goals of moral education were universally similar among the African people. The main aims being preparing personalities with appropriate information and skills and accepted codes of behavior. These eventually enabled them to properly take part in the community. Moral standards accentuated were collective (Hurlock, 2010).

According to Kenyatta (1953), a self-centered individual was viewed to be anti-social and was treated with distrust and not projected to flourish. This is dissimilar from the contemporary society where individualism is in the order of the day.

According to Ocitti (1973), hospitality was valued among the Acholi of Uganda. They upheld that this hospitality was of benefit to the one who offers than the recipient.

African societies condemned unrestrained sexual behavior. Sexual affairs in many African indigenous communities were restricted in marriage. Sexual misapplications, for example, rape, fornication, and incest were intolerable and any person who participated in such sexual misconduct had to attend a public cleansing ceremony, (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). Fidelity, especially of the wife was highly treasured among the Luo and bride to be paid included that of fidelity. Honesty, fidelity, and faithfulness to their husband formed a greater part of the instructions to the girls. A family was not a personage's concern. Children had to be born in a family and children born out of marriage were rarely welcomed. African indigenous society highly valued the family environment as the best place to form children in a satisfactory moral behavior. (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007).

The moral instruction of progenies commenced as soon as a child is born. The mother was responsible for the type of child she wants in adulthood. Through oral literature, the mother passed the social inheritance of the community to the child. As the child grows, they were expected to live the morals set by the culture. The father was a protagonist of moral discipline hence in matters to do with discipline, fathers' instructions were taken more seriously than the mothers. The father's authority was reinforced by his religious place in the family, (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). The man was both the head of the family and a priest of the household hence he could offer sacrifice to please the ancestors, (Kenyatta, 1953).

The family was vital in the ethical instruction of children. It stood for the values and children who disobeyed their parents risked being cursed, this fear improved the submission of the children. In moral teaching, indigenous instructors used several methods of teaching. The informal technique comprised of education through play, oral poetry, dance, folk songs, and proverbs. Proverbs were mainly for warning, giving advice, and presentation of moral lessons. Bad habits were not tolerated and corporal punishment was used to administer discipline (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). Informal approaches of teaching included exposing progenies to work activities. This kind of education equipped them for their imminent roles as future parents (husbands and wives).

African Societies have confidence that their future is to be contingent on the moral behavior of their community and religious adherents. The means used to impart virtues vary from age to age; for example, the fairy stories and folk tales that are told to young people often with special stress on the immoralities and virtues of the characters. The children are to internalize these (Bujo, 2001). Proverbs play a significant position in communicating ethics and correct behavior. For example, the Luo in Kenya says "if a tree is not set in an upright position very early, it remains



crooked forever.” This means that if a child is not corrected, it will be too late for him/her to learn correct behavior when he is an adult.

Moral education was seen as a communal concern and children being at the center of this educational structure. All members of the society were agents for instructing the youth. In this moral education, religious life instruction was closely linked with most aspects of life, that is political social, and economic. Religion permeated all events and education indoctrinated a religious attitude to the life of the children. The duty of imparting required religious information, practices, and observations was assigned first to the parents and nuclear family members. Parents were not only projected to be custodians of ethics but also role models in their religious observances (Ocitti, 1973).

The variance between contemporary education and the indigenous one is that while in the indigenous educational system the entire family played an essential part in the formation of the young person, in the contemporary society, this role is fully handed over to schools with the power to admonish withdrawn from them in Kenya. The children's rights have been stressed at the expense of their responsibilities. Sanda (1972) describing the western type of education says that it is a tool of isolation, away manipulation, and the awareness of cultural colonialism which together form part of the process of “de-Africanization” of the Africans. most African believes that this kind of education has destroyed their identity and great blame is put on the missionaries, (Haar *et al.*, 1992). African religion is a lived religion, not a doctrinal one. traditional educational structure underlined communal responsibility, job positioning, political participation, spiritual and moral values. This emphasis can be of great benefit to contemporary society, where there are several cases of immorality and discipline among the youth.

Although indigenous instruction seems to be deteriorating, it is probable to find some essentials of indigenous African education in most African communities. The initiation foundation has become relatively flimsy. The town scenery in Africa is a great challenge to traditional education sustenance. There is decay in the role of the family in supporting social morals in town atmospheres. Native instruction and western systems of education do not essentially oppose each other. In both systems, children receive purposeful knowledge which equips them to live, work and occupy various specializations in society. The reason for the triumph of moral instruction in pre-colonial Africa was because the society had very well-defined goals on moral education. There was no room for perverts since operative approaches of instruction were used such as lullabies, stories, proverbs, and songs. Erny (1981) perceives that Africans were obliged to lead moral life lives for fear of both psychological and physical removal from society.

## 6.0. Conclusion and Recommendations.

From the analysis, it is clear that African Traditional Religious moral education has a positive role in nurturing moral values. The education can instill in the youth a sense of responsibility and respect. ATR education also made the youth shun irresponsible behavior. This can be beneficial in contemporary society despite the negative influences of behavior from the mass media. ATR education has also endorsed respect for elders and parents as well as in instilling moral values like bravery, fortitude, and generosity.

From the analysis, it is recommended that the government should censor the mass media to avoid exposing young people to programs that wear down their good values. The government should initiate severe procedures to check all forms of immoralities that are beset at young people. The ministry of education and society should also regain the traditional moral educational values that assisted in the formation of the youth to be used in contemporary society.

Indigenous education and western forms of education are not essentially in opposition to each other. In both systems, young people obtained a practical education which mostly prepares them to live and work in their environment and various occupations. The main reason for the triumph of moral instruction in pre-colonial Africa was because of the societal well-defined goals on moral education that most of the African communities had. This paper recommends a blend of indigenous education with the western type of education in terms of the curriculum.

The paper recommends a refurbishment of the Religious Education syllabus in terms of its content. Kenyan's Ministry of Education to plan a premeditated plan to realize the interests of the founders of education (missionaries) as well as the purpose of indigenous religious education in pre-African societies. They should draw Religious Education inclusive instructive methods of teaching about religion. The ministry must understand the dangers of teaching using pedagogical approaches that focus on teaching for commitment to a particular faith. In a religiously pluralistic community like Kenya, teaching for commitment creates divisionism and disunity and this is dangerous for social harmony, peacebuilding, morality formation, and a culture of tolerance. For this reason, the paper recommends that every career or profession that the youths are being prepared for should be permeated by some religious units. This is to form the person to the standards set by the community,

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