



TOWARDS A RE-ORIENTATION OF VALUES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Sexual misbehaviours or inappropriate sexual behaviours have been found to constitute serious threats to the educational as well as the spiritual, social and psychological stability of adolescents in our contemporary society. In our tertiary institutions, we are confronted daily with a series of problems which hinge on inappropriate sexual behaviours. It is for this very reason that most if not all tertiary institutions in Nigeria have adopted as a precautionary measure a dress code to curb this virus that is gradually and consistently eating deep into the fabrics of academic excellence in our tertiary institutions. Although the adoption of a dress code helps, it has not actually addressed the root of the problem. This is because the problem of sexual misbehaviours in our tertiary institutions requires more proactive measures than just a mere prescription of dress codes. For this reason, the paper using historical and expository methods examines the basic concept of sex or sexuality education and all it holds for a viral education in Nigeria. The paper, therefore, calls for a re-orientation of values as well as the introduction of a realistic and comprehensive sex education programme for our youths in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria in order to restore our cherished moral values.

KEYWORDS

Sex, Sex Education, Sexual Misbehaviours, Sex Orientations, Value Re-orientation.

Introduction

Our sex is a gift from God and our sexuality is part of what defines our human nature. Contrary to what some people think, there is nothing intrinsically wrong or evil about our sexuality. Our sexuality is purely good when it is rightly and correctly expressed at the right time, right place, and with the right person. It is unfortunate that traditions and customs have misguided many people into thinking that sexuality is something evil and shameful. That is why up till today, it is very impolite or imprudent to mention the name of male and female reproductive organs in public, in almost every society in Nigeria, and even in other African nations. To openly mention the word “penis” or “vagina” is regarded as an act punishable by castigation. The elders usually consider such a child who dares mention such forbidden words in public as a spoilt, wayward and untrained child. Even the adult who openly uses those words is seen as a person with a dirty attitude.

In fact, in the past, parents had taught their children how to despise their sexuality and to disdain their sex organs. Children are told that the sex organs are meant for passing out urine and for procreation purposes only. As such, most children come to regard their sex organs as something external to them; a thing or a tool which can only be useful when the natural call for excretion of urine knocks on the door. If a child is found touching or playing with his or her genital – a thing that is healthy and normal in children – he is not only scolded severely but in most cases given some slaps on the buttocks or even receive some strokes of the cane. But experts in sexuality agree that sex play is valuable since it helps the child become familiar with its own body and that of others. (See Derek Llewellyn-Jones).

Bad attitude to sex and sexuality by the parents has seriously contributed in a number of ways to the distortion of the child’s conception and perception of sex and sexuality. That is why most children still believe that babies are born through the mother’s abdomen which has to be cut open when the baby is due. Because the parents feel embarrassed to inform the child that babies (including the child himself) are born through the vagina of the mother. Most parents did not receive proper sex education. All they received from their own parents and society is what they pass on to their own children – the suppression of sexuality and the belief that sex and sexuality are both secretive and shameful. This might be the reason why there was no outward expression or show of love between husband and wife in the traditional society. It was strange to hear a man tell his wife the sweetest words women love to hear these days: ‘I love you’. It was even regarded as a taboo for a wife to say so to her husband. A woman who dares say such a word will be regarded as a prostitute. As a result, our traditional parents lived their marital lives suppressing and denying their sexuality. The only time they thought that they were male and female was when it was time for procreation – making more babies. Even at that, both the man and woman are supposed to show no sign of enjoying the sexual intercourse for fear of being branded wayward. Consequently, the children were handed down wrong concepts of sex and sexuality which has sadly resulted into series of sexual revolutions especially in our tertiary institutions.

Hence, sexual revolutions among contemporary youth as noted by Sule et al (2015) suggest that sexuality education is an imperative for adolescents in order to protect them from the harmful effect of deviant sexual behaviours. Equally, Omeje and Nwosu (2007) noted that integration of sexuality education in the school will help to reduce teenage pregnancy, school dropout, unplanned/early marriage, STDS and HIV/AIDS disease for the adolescent and the youths.

Value and Value Reorientation

Value as a term is very fluid and hence difficult to define. For Feather (1994), value refers to the general beliefs about desirable or undesirable ways of behaving. For him, values represent a core aspect of the self concept and they influence thoughts and actions in many different ways. Values therefore provide standards or criteria that people can use to eradicate actions and outcomes, to justify opinions and conducts, to plan and guide behavior, to decide between alternatives, to compare self with others, to engage in social influences and to present self to others. Value influences the way we construe events and situations, and are linked with our emotions. Hence we have values relating to honest, cleanliness, responsibilities and a host of others: that values influence thoughts and actions means that values can either be positive or negative.

Positive values are those that further the growth of the individual and the society in some desirable ways. Negative values on the other hand, are those that retard the growth and the development of the individual and the society. The negative values acquired implies that there is a need for a re-orientation hence value re-

orientation refers to the re-channeling of the people's attitude of the mind into a more desirable ways of behaving.

What then is value reorientation? Value reorientation is therefore conceptualized as the act "of deliberately attempting to change the direction which attitudes and beliefs in Nigeria are currently orientated or the act of adjusting or aligning behavior, attitudes and beliefs of Nigerians in a new or different direction within the public discourse of contemporary Nigerian politics" (Osisioma, 2012). Reorientation is the act of changing, adjusting, aligning or realigning something in a new or different reaction. This is articulated as a move away from corruption, embezzlement, dishonesty and general indiscipline to the direction of virtues of honesty, patriotism, hard work, and general abhorrence of social vices (Okafor, 2014). The aim of value re-orientation is therefore to enable the individual acquire good values otherwise termed morals that are acceptable to the society and which will further the growth of the individual and the society at large.

Sexuality and Sexuality Education

Sexuality is a broad term, which has varied with historical contexts over time so much that it lacks a precise definition. However, sexuality can be defined as the quality or state of being sexual. Sexuality can be expressed in ways other than sexual intercourse such as through close physical contact, caressing, and other touching. As rightly noted by Librach, and Moynihan (2011), sexuality has a number of components: biological, physical, psychological, social, cultural, and moral. Human sexuality is the way people experience and express themselves sexually. This involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual feelings and behaviors. Hence, sexuality issues may include sexual development, onset or resumption of menses, sexual performance, and fertility.

Sex education, also known as sexual education or sexuality education is the instruction of issues relating to human sexuality, including emotional relations and responsibilities, human sexual anatomy, sexual activity, sexual reproduction, age of consent, reproductive health, reproductive rights, sexual health, safe sex and birth control (Wikipedia). Usually, sex education may be provided by not only the parents but also caregivers, the church or at school programs which is why this paper attempts an examination of the role of sexuality education in our tertiary institutions, with a view to restoring moral values in our schools and society in general.

Adepoju (2005) explained sexuality education as simply the art of learning how to conform to certain art of living by being able to reason, examine and monitor oneself in clearly defined terms. Being able to reason according to Adepoju, is quite important in the overall import of human sexuality because sex education does not necessarily mean instructing children in sexual techniques or acts, rather it entails giving the necessary facts or knowledge about sex and encouraging questions and discussions (Nakpodia, 2012). Anameze (2002) in Nwakwurobi & Onwuachu (2009) sees sex education as the transmission of appropriate sex-based knowledge, values, attitudes and roles to children, which seeks to teach boys and girls the physiological functioning and use of sex organs and the expected roles of each sex organ. For Salami (2015), sex education is the acquisition of adequate information, forming right attitude and beliefs about sex, sexuality, sexual identify, relationship and intimacy. Lending credence to the understanding of sex education, Ameh (2015) notes that sex education is a deliberate, planned and organized learning experience in the aspect of human sexuality which is intended to equip young people with the requisite skills and adequate knowledge which will enable them to develop positive attitude on sex related issues as well as to take rational decisions in line with societal expectations.

Broadly speaking, sex education is a term used to describe the type of education that is concerned with human sexual relations, reproductive health, reproductive rights, and responsibilities as well as other aspects of human sexual behaviours. Sex education can be understood simply as the act or art of imparting, transferring and imposing knowledge about sex and sex differences to the young ones. In other words, sex education is a consciously planned programme in which the youths or growing children are taught certain important matters concerning sex, sexes, sex development, and human developmental stages that are bound to occur in their lives and how to control and manage them when they occur (Ejeh, 2011). As a consequence, human sexuality refers to how people communicate with the erotic and express themselves as sexual beings. Sexual elements have been found to play a significant role in the development of personal identity as well as the social and spiritual evolution of individuals. As a result, human sexuality is divided into three categories: biological, mental, and

physical or physiological. The biological component of human sexuality refers to the reproductive process as well as the essential biological drive that occurs in all aspects of life and can involve all types of sexual activity and sexual contacts. The emotional component is concerned with the intense emotions associated with sexual acts and the social relations that are formed as a result of them. Finally, the physical component requires strictly medical factors, such as concussions. The uniqueness of human sexuality defines and elevates humans above and above all animals whose sexuality is solely for reproduction. Human sexuality encompasses and extends beyond reproductive functions. Humans may reveal their sexuality in a number of ways.

In general, the term "sex education" refers to a form of education that focuses on human sexual relations, reproductive health, reproductive rights and obligations, and other aspects of human sexual activity. Sex education can be described as the act or art of imparting, transmitting, and imposition of information about sex and sex differences to children and adolescents. In other words, sex education is a deliberately designed curriculum in which youths or growing children are taught valuable lessons about sex, sexes, sex growth, and human developmental stages that will eventually occur in their lives, as well as how to control and handle them when they do. Sexuality education, then, is any advice provided to children and adolescents about the mechanisms and effects of sexual activity. It is commonly believed that it is the parents' duty to teach their children about sex. However, studies indicate that parental inhibitions or multiple intergenerational problems impede parent-child contact in sexual matters. As a result, children's parents are rarely the source of their first sexual knowledge. In reality, most children's first sexual guidance or lessons came from their peers, whether they were playmates, classmates, or relatives. The knowledge or lessons obtained through those networks are often half-truths. This creates befuddlement, anxiety, and a negative attitude toward sex.

Therefore, this paper undertakes a critical examination of the role of sexuality education in tertiary institutions since it is believed that sexual education can be best taught and learnt in schools as the school is equipped and best suited to address the socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual dimensions of sexuality from (1) the cognitive domain (2) the affective domain and (3) the behavioral domain, including the ability to communicate.

Objectives of Sexuality Education

The general aim of sexuality education is simply to minimize sexual misadventure and to assist the beneficiaries develop positive and appropriate attitude towards sex and sexuality. Specifically, the objectives, as perceived by the National Marriage Guidance Counseling Association of Nigeria. (1972) and the Nigerian National Council of Education (1999), are to assist individuals to:

1. Understand human physiology especially that of children, reproduction, abortion, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases etc.
2. Have information and skills needed for taking care of their sexuality health.
3. Appreciate the consequences of their sexual acts on them as individuals and on their society.
4. Acquire skills to make responsible decisions that affect their lives and welfare at all time.
5. Have a clear and factual view on sexuality.

The above five objectives are well-thought out and noble ideals that would bring sanity into the lives of many growing children in our society. Unfortunately, indecency, immorality, and crimes have rather permeated the fabrics of the lives of majority of our youths today especially those in the tertiary institutions such that the level of moral decadency cries out for an urgent need for value change or value reorientation.

Importance of Sexuality Education

The importance and the need for sex education can never be over-emphasized especially in this jet age in which children are dangerously exposed to sex and erotic feelings through several media such as the TVs, movies and advertising bill boards. As already noted sex education or any discussion on human sexuality had since being considered a taboo in various part of the world, particularly in Africa. It is a thing nobody wants to talk about openly, yet everybody wants and yearns for its fruits or effects. Most people believe that introducing children to sex education may lead to sexual misconduct and abuse. But then, has the silence that has reigned over sex education or the traditional attitudes to sex and sexuality helped in stopping the youths from sexual misconduct and abuse? A look at our society today where young kids in primary schools have begun to have dates or engage

in intimate relationships would dramatically and painfully show that the traditional attitude and silence over sex education has done more harm than good to the entire human society. The importance of sexuality education was aptly captured by Obiekea, Ovri & Chukwuma (2013) when they asserted that: Sexuality education could serve as an intervention and socio-psychological programme for youths in secondary education in order to reduce the rate of dropouts unintended pregnancies, deviant behaviours, early marriage that can cause VVF among females, reproductive health issues, contamination of diseases like HIV/AIDS, ST/s etc. Aniebue (2007) explained that sex education seeks to assist young people in developing a positive view of sexuality, provides them with information and skills about taking care of their sexual health and helps them make sound decision regarding their reproductive health. Henault (2005) in Ogbuinya & Nwimo (2015) contend that providing information on sexual relationships is beneficial in meeting the needs of the young people by decreasing inappropriate sexual behaviours and enhancing social skills among them. Therefore, the following are the benefits or importance of sex education generally and particularly in our tertiary institutions:

1. It makes the child to trust himself/herself, accepting his or her sex as a gift from God as something wonderful.
2. It provides and equips the child with the right and reliable knowledge or information about sex and sexuality.
3. It prepares the child and enables him or her to cope and deal with the sudden developmental changes that he or she is bound to experience in life.
4. It helps in check-mating promiscuity and the spread of HIV/AIDS.
5. It prevents shock resulting from sudden realization of changes in the body of the child.
6. It enables the child to appreciate his sex and the opposite sex.
7. It makes the child to be self-confident and positively familiar with his or her sex organs.
8. It helps in the building up of healthy relationship amongst youth.
9. It prevents superiority or inferiority complex usually felt by one sex against the other sex.
10. It eliminates guilty feelings about all erotic emotions (Ejeh, 2011).

Need for Value Reorientation in Tertiary Institutions

From the fore-going sexuality education has been identified as an important factor in our tertiary institutions. Unfortunately, a cursory look at the level of decadency in our educational system or tertiary institutions indicates a great and urgent need for an appropriate sexuality education based on the contemporary trends and authentic traditional African values. In the past, sexuality education was included in the tertiary institutions' academic. Unfortunately, due to certain reasons beyond the scope of this paper, sexuality education was systematically and craftily removed, stopped or de-emphasized in our schools and tertiary institutions which led to its eventual death. The amount of immoral behaviours and unethical activities in our tertiary institutions attest to the fact that sexuality education is no longer part of the school curriculum, and that there is a need for its re-introduction.

Hence, the following are areas that call for urgent attention; requiring a re-orientation of values in our tertiary institutions:

1. **Dressing Habits:** The mode of dressing in our tertiary institutions these days, despite the existing dress code, shows the level of immorality or lack of sexuality education among our youths. Apart from dressing half-nakedly, many of our young girls now wear clothes that would normally get them arrested for indecent exposure or at least for disturbing public peace and conscience. Many wear "T-shirts that carry suggestive inscriptions like, "Fuck Me", "Hug Me" "Missing You," "Love Me", "Mess Me Up", "Kiss Me," "Ready 24 Hours", etc. These words are sexually implicit and have serious effects on both the wearer and the beholder.
2. **Films or Movies:** Our society is currently filled with all kinds of movies both good and bad. In most of these films, youths are targeted as sex is starkly displayed and celebrated as the main theme of the movies. Unfortunately, there is little or no censorship on these films. Even our so called local films or home videos

(Nollywood) advertises sex as if it has become a custom that must be passed on from this generation to the next without failure. The danger here is that the youths have access to these films and therefore exposed to the damning consequences of erotic behaviours that affect their overall psychological well-being.

3. **Sex for Favours:** It was erroneously believed that lecturers in tertiary institutions deliberately lure weak female students into sex by failing them in exams. Today, it has been discovered that it is not exactly true in all cases. This is because, for many female students sex is a primary means of obtaining favour from men. Their slogan has always been: “I will use what I have to obtain what I need”. Girls who believe in this immoral philosophy usually dress in an outrageously sexy outfit in order to attract the attention of those who will provide whatever they need in exchange for sex. These female students would never be serious with the studies as they are always roaming the streets looking for customers to satisfy their insatiable material needs. This is why currently, the social media is agog and at the same time piqued with the viral video of some girls sleeping with dogs for money. Thus, immorality in our tertiary institutions has led many female students into exchanging sex for favours – money, to pass exams, or other material benefits.
4. **Music:** Music has always been an important element of the peoples’ culture through which cherished values are passed on from one generation to another. Unfortunately, contemporary music seems to have little or nothing to offer our growing youths as their lyrics are saturated with filths, immoralities and obscenities. Music of the years past was primarily for education, information, and entertainment. These days, what you get from contemporary music is merely entertainment which mostly is imbued with sexual or immoral messages. The youths have unrestricted access to these types of music as they see nothing wrong in the immoralities thrown about in the music. In the long run, these youths would begin to manifest the very symptoms of erotic or immoral music they listen to.
5. **The Internet:** The internet is a cyber highway of unrestricted information in both data and video. It is supposed to be used to enhance human learning and understanding for a better living. Unfortunately, the negative aspects of the internet have grossly surpassed the positive aspects. Today, all kinds of fraud are committed with the aid of internet. Above all, immorality has reached its crescendo through the use of internet. Pornography has been advertised and promoted above and beyond human censorship through the internet. Consequently, youths as well as under-aged children have been morally evaded and eroded through their romance and access to the internet.

All the above, lead to sexual violence and abuse in various forms such as sexual harassment, coercion, rape, incest, unwanted sexual contact and child trafficking and prostitution. Thus, there is a need for a reorientation of values in our tertiary institutions in order to bring moral sanity back into our school system.

The Role of Sexuality Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Since morality is a *sine qua non* for learning and or for the acquisition of higher degrees in our tertiary institutions, the role of sexuality education in our tertiary institutions should include molding of character, instilling virtues and maintenance of moral well-being of the learners. The school is an important agent of socialization where children are taught various things. As a result teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of educating the children in all aspects of life. Thus a teacher is everything (positive) to his students. He is their educator, their custodian, their guardian, their spiritual leader, their doctor, their counselor, and their educator in various matters affecting their lives including issues on sex and sexuality. It is these multiple roles of teachers that led parents to assume that the teachers are the most qualified, endowed, and gifted and in a better position to discuss all matters including sex education.

Teachers should therefore be able to handle sex education with maturity and be able to comfortably expose and introduce the children to a healthy sexuality. They should be able to comfortably and without fear mention all the parts of human reproductive organs so as to educate the children and lead them in the right direction. Teachers should be adequately and properly trained to enable them break away from the bondage and shackles of societal biases and traditional taboos on sex and sex education. When the teachers are freed from the cold hands of traditional beliefs and misguided concepts, then our children will benefit so much.

Thus in schools where sex education is not part of the curriculum, teachers should therefore, find time in their lesson periods to slut and discuss vital issues concerning sex and sexuality.

Recommendations

The following are some recommendations towards arresting the problems of sexual misbehaviours in our tertiary institutions:

- (1) **Appropriate Sex Education Programme:** A realistic and comprehensive sex education programme is urgently needed in our tertiary institutions. Many of our youths have acquired a very wrong and faulty sex education. Some are still very deeply rooted in ignorance. A realistic sexuality education programme is urgently needed to correct the faulty and unhealthy sex education, which many have already received.
- (2) **Value Reorientation:** Core values cherished by our traditions and culture must be made to bear in the lives of our youths. Virtues of honesty, purity, modesty, virginity or chastity before marriage and respect for traditional values must be adopted. Morality should be allowed to resume its role as the bedrock of our tertiary institutions.
- (3) Apart from the role of the school system or educational system, the government and non-governmental institutions must play formidable roles in providing the youths with sound and positive information on human sexuality.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted a critical examination of the role of sexuality education in our tertiary institutions and found that sexuality education has been long downplayed which led to the evolution of ugly trends of unethical, immoral and indecent behaviours in our tertiary institutions. The paper advocated for a value reorientation as a possible way or method of arresting the problems associated with lack of sexuality education as identified and discussed in this paper. Finally, the paper recommends some measures to be employed in addition to value reorientation for a better and sound moral well being of students in our tertiary institutions.

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