

THE METHODOLOGY FOR STUDYING CHRISTIAN MORALITY IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This paper is a critical analysis of the scientific study of methods used in a discipline to impart knowledge or information to learners, in order to gain understanding of the subject matter under the particular aspect of study. Methodology deals with the cognitive processes imposed by the problems that arise from the nature of its subject matter. Methods are the systematic combination of cognitive processes, making use of specific techniques. Different methods are distinguishable in accordance with the variety of ways in which human thought can be organized and the different tasks to which it can be applied. In every scientific method there should be close and systematic relation between theorizing and experience. Moral education is aimed at the inculcation of good manners and character building. Having taught religious knowledge for many years, this is an attempt to contribute to the methods of studying morality.

Key words: Methods, Moral education.

Introduction

Education involves the transmission of what is worthwhile. Traditionally the teacher was the authority on the transmission of what was worthwhile (Peters, 1980). Historically there has been a very close connection between religion and morality, for it is likely that religious customs were recognized as such by men before moral customs were distinguished from them. In this way morality may be said to have developed from religion. Religious beliefs are meant to affect people's lives. The term 'belief' is also sometimes used for opinions about morality. Sometimes 'faith' is simply used as a synonym for 'belief'. Faith is sometimes used to mean beliefs, the grounds for which are authority rather than experience or deduction. 'Faith' is sometimes used to mean belief without grounds. Faith is also used to mean trust. The New Testament seems to use 'faith' to mean trust: to have faith in God is to trust him (Collier, 2003). Christian faith is rational if it is founded on certain beliefs about God. Those beliefs are straight forward cognitive beliefs. They are rational if Christians have good cognitive grounds for them. If Christian beliefs are cognitive, they must be interpreted in a realist sense. For example, in

saying the creed I am expressing beliefs but I am not talking about my beliefs. I am talking about God. I intend to say what is objectively true (Collier, 2003). Religious beliefs are said to be more akin to moral beliefs, to say 'I believe in God' is to claim to know that God exists. People continue for a period to observe the customs of their fathers without holding the religious beliefs on which these customs are based, but after a time the customs too are neglected and the moral code enjoining them falls into disuse. Large sections of mankind at present appear to be giving up the moral codes handed down from the past in this way (William, 1971).

Globally in the teaching of the major Religions; though diverse in their theologies and forms of worship, distinctions of organizations and ceremonial, different in their methods of application of truth, they are nevertheless united in three basic aspects:

- (i) In their teaching as to the nature of God and of man.
- (ii) In their symbolism.
- (iii) In certain fundamental doctrines.

The methods of science, investigation and analysis, comparison and deduction – are being applied to morals and religious belief. The history of religions, the foundations of doctrine, the origin of ideas and the growth of sacred knowledge are being subjected to research and study. This leads to much disputation; to the rejection of old established ideas about God, the Soul, man and his destiny (Bailey, 2001). The science method above refers to empirical verification. The system of empirical verification began with the Vienna philosophers in the 1920s. These philosophers rejected the need for metaphysics, for them, a sentence could only be meaningful if it could be related to experience. It had to be positive and it had to be logical. The same could not be said of religious language. Here, it is not a case of whether a statement is true or not, it is rather that they cannot be proven one way or the other (that is, they are not verifiable) and are, therefore, meaningless (Ottuh and Onimhawo, 2010).

Mythical Method

Myths are stories written as a guide on how to deal with critical problems that human beings face. They are not historical but they concern a wide variety of things, such as the purpose of living, misfortune, cruelty, love and fertility, magic, power, fate, war, accident and chance. Ifedili (2005) writes on different stories in her book *Upholding Moral Values*. The stories are on corruption in the civil service, removing non-indigenes from the state service and replacing them with indigenes, behaving like a fake pharmacist, being proud and pretending to be someone else. The different stories have their moral lessons for the youths.

Imaging how the Lion became the king of animals (Oguejiofor, 2014) saw animals appearing as human beings competing for positions in society. The animals did not think of acquiring possessions. They were satisfied feeding on grass, except

the Lion who was lazy. In *The gods are hungry*, Okeke (2010) displayed how the early Missionaries did not find it easy to convert people in Umukabia. The people were unwilling to give up their traditional ways until Reverend Uwalaka rescued Nwadi, a girl who wanted to hang herself on a tree. This girl from the Osu clan became the first convert and many of her clan folk later accepted the Christian faith.

On the need to pay bride prize before marriage (Akenzua, 2009) said, Olokun had a daughter a chatelaine but she kept sitting in front of her father's house. One day Ogun forcefully carried the girl away to be his wife while the father was away. When Olokun returned and could not find her, there was tongue wagging. He put a curse on her. She lost her beauty, all apertures in her body sealed up, she became deaf and dumb. The marriage was not consummated until proper marriage rites were performed before she turned normal. These stories collected from Ifedili (2005), Oguejiofor (2014), Okeke (2010) and Akenzua (2009) are not historical, therefore they are myths, stories collected from events of distant past.

Myths was the first method of teaching, it is related to story-telling. In the ancient world, story-telling was in all societies. Religious teachers referred to Genesis 1 – 11 as myths while Genesis 12, the story of Abraham began the history of the Hebrew race. Teachers use myths or stories to capture the attention of kids in schools. Some of the stories are ancient while others are invented by teachers based on some current events.

Biblical Method

The teacher who is convinced that he possesses sound moral qualities in the light of the Gospel is the one who can convince others. Fulton Sheen (2007) said, some read the Bible as a lawyer might read a will, studying all the technical loopholes and exactness of phrase. The teacher who believes what he or she teaches will influence students more than the one who plays with words of textbooks. The listener s to unvirtuous teachers may say, "I cannot hear what you say because I see the way that you live". The teacher is a model to the pupils, he should not only be skillful but also convinced about what he teaches.

John Jeffrey (1992) gave an example of two religious knowledge teachers, the first he categorized as a fundamentalist who believed everything in the Bible literally and unquestionably. The second one had more liberal views, and he dismissed anything that sound supernatural as being primitive such as miracles. Jeffrey argued that, the second teacher made him doubt the miraculous stories in the Bible. He recalled both teachers telling the pupils the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. With the first teacher, there wasn't a great deal to say. He took it as a miracle and it goes to show that Jesus is God. The second teacher did not make the pupils believe it was a miracle, instead, she said the disciples shared their own loaves and fishes with the people nearest them. Then many more people around noticing this wonderful example of compassion and unselfishness, suddenly

remembered that they had brought their lunch boxes with them and were inspired to share very compassionately what they had too. The second teacher said, 'the real miracle' is that, if only each one care and share with others, the world will be a better place (Jeffrey, 1992). The Biblical methods portray compassion which is the greatest virtue. The stories in the Bible teach wisdom, the New Testament portrays Jesus as a teacher who was ready to help with his possession, and he was not selfish. Teachers cite Bible passages in moral classes both in schools and Sunday schools.

Doctrine Method

This refers to fundamental beliefs in the teachings of religious groups. Religious doctrines are a combination of the oral and written body of teachings of a religious group that is generally accepted. It does not only focus on large scale teachings, but daily moral codes as well, like appropriate dressing code, or what social networks to be involved in or avoid and what kind of communication between individuals is accepted. There are many types of religious doctrines that play a key part in shaping a religion and its beliefs. The Christians believe in the virgin birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, penance, the Mosaic creation story, in Genesis, the Eucharist and the Trinity. The Muslims believe in Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet, the five Pillars of Faith and ritual cleansing. Doctrinal methods emphasize tolerance. The Roman Catholic Church emphasizes the seven sacraments, among which are baptism and confirmation. The Pentecostals emphasize Holy Ghost baptism and speaking in tongues. The leaders of the different denominations were touched by some aspects of the Bible. This aspect dominates the teaching of their followers.

Moral principles in many religions are derived from the sacred books of such religions. The Christian morality is based on the Holy Bible while the Muslim morality is based on the Holy Quran, Sunna and Hadith. Different societies set standards of right and wrong, good and bad that govern individuals in their relations with each other. Morality has been taught in schools, churches, mosque, in the home and by the elders in the society. Since ancient times it was society that determined which behaviour was acceptable and which was unacceptable (Anyanwu and Amelo, 2013). In schools, teachers are the guidance of morality.

Besides traditional morality, many factors influence ethics for example, the communication media, video tapes, games, television, recorded music, electronic games, computer, print media, comic books, magazines and internet. The kids today are attached to these media and many are sexually influenced (Anyanwu and Amalo, 2013). The kids involved in violent video games for long periods of time have the tendency to manifest aggressive behaviour. It is the duty of parents and teachers to warn their kids on the dangers of attachment to the media and games. In some primary and secondary schools, phones and electronic gadgets are not to be

in the possession of pupils during teaching hours, but are allowed as part of extra-curricula activities.

Religion offers some comfort over uncertainty. This concept corresponds with the idea that religion serves to answer the questions of the uncertainties of life. By attempting to offer answers to such large questions, religion fulfills an individual's "needs to know", and thus offers some relief to an individual's uncertainty about life. Religious teachers tell their pupils about the need to have faith and to pray citing Bible passages. This concept of believing in the answers which religion offers is called faith. In religion, the word comes first: 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing the spoken word of God' (Romans 10:17). It is like the Samaritan Woman's converts (John 4:39-42). Her words aroused their interest in Jesus before they met him, they relied on their own experience, not hearsay (Collier, 2003).

Literary Method

This refers to materials obtained from literatures. Barclay (2014) writes on the story of Cal Weaver who was stopped at a red light on a rainy night while driving home. He ignored the bedraggled- looking teenage girl trying to hitch a ride- even when she starts tapping on his car window. But as soon as he realizes she's one of his son's classmates, he knows he cannot really leave her alone, on the street. He allowed the girl to join him in the ride, with the hope of taking her home. The girl decided to stop at the next supermarket. After coming down, Cal Weaver waited for her for about 30 minutes. Another girl who pretended to be the first girl came to join Cal Weaver and he drove off. After a short conversation, he discovered she was not the real girl and therefore dropped her. He then drove to his house.

The next morning it was discovered that the girl he dropped along the road side was murdered after rape. The police took his car number in the previous night, he was accused as suspect. The first girl was declared missing. He suddenly found himself at the centre of a deadly puzzle which reaches the heart of the city. The situation changes, which leads to questioning the motive of his action in trying to help the first girl. When she was in the car he asked questions about her relationship with his son. She came down, but he did not drive away immediately, was he trying to make fun with her or trying to get some information about the killers of the son. His son was reported killed before this incident. Should one give lift to strangers or simply ignore them, that is a moral issue. This is about compassion in the midst of suffering. Teachers tell kids of the need to be kind to the needy using passage like "God helps the cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

According to Achebe (1986) "in all great compounds there must be people of all minds – some good, some bad, some fearless and some cowardly; those who bring in wealth and those who scatter it, those who gave good advice and those who only speak the words of palm wine." That is why one will say that whatever tune

one plays in the compound of a great man there is always someone to dance to it. Looking at these two authors, it is morally right to help those in need like Cal Weaver did. It is also morally right to give good advice in a compound. On a daily basis car owners help people in their cars, in most cases everything is formal and it simply ends in appreciation. By helping the girl who tapped at his window, he was simply showing his interest in other people. Teachers tell pupils to be kind in school and to their neighbours, to give not sparingly but bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6).

In the ancient time, among the different people in a compound were those with witchcraft. Witchcraft was seen as evil, different societies had different ways of dealing with this evil, one of which was ordeal. Witchcraft Poison ordeal was common throughout Central Africa and West Africa in the 1900 AD. At the time when Europeans appeared on the scene, they frowned at the poison ordeal from the beginning (Douglas and Kaberry, 1969). During the poison ordeal many of the victims lost their lives after drinking the witch poison. The deadly drug was administered in the bush. Among the Bushong, the poison ordeal was a most powerful rite. It has as its ambitious aim to eliminate evil and death. In some respects it even shows some parallels with human sacrifice, the witch being seen as victim. In its form it is a dramatic rite of passage. The public resort to the ordeal was suppressed by the Colonial Government. Teachers inform pupils to desist from evil and cultic practices. Witchcraft was a cult in some societies where there were mystical nocturnal birds and animals meetings. The mention of withcraft brings fear and suspicion among pupils.

The Cololialists suppressed the ordeal in order to preserve people's reputation. Some people came from old families that deserve a great deal of consideration.

Ethical Method: The Morality of Fashion

In any culture dressing is an important index of worth or value. It improves one's appearance and boosts one's ego; for a right fitting out fit can minimize some physical flaws and even enhance one's positive features. Clothing depicts one's identity, culture and heritage. The everyday wears in each society are largely shaped or determined by fashion, the desire for novelty and conformity. Fashion is culturally conditioned, it is flexibly adoptable and adaptable. It is easily transportable from region to region, and state to state, and is catalyzed by human inter-relatedness (Shishima, 2017).

Many of the current dresses among the youths in the contemporary time have their origin with the punks, the hippies, stage artists, and musicians. Since clothing identifies one with a social group, wearing these attires is invariably identifying with these groups- approving their anti- social behaviour. Some fashion materials for example, the sexy versions of dresses- wears and other bare bodies – expose the fashion star to grave dangers. The girls involved in micro-mini shirts,

transparent clothes, “lowwaist” may be suffering from Nymphomania (Shishima, 2017). Nymphomania is a very serious sexual disorder which is caused by poor hormonal and childhood development. The indecent youths bore their masters and the masters snub them. It simply shows that one has to flatter people whom he despises in order to impress other people who despise him.

Some of the youths dressing indecently are in the hostels, others are simply imitating their peers. In the home, sometimes the parents are too busy as working class, they do not communicate with their kids. The parents leave home too early in the morning. They come home late at night, fatigued not only from their work, but also from travel. They would like the home to be a quiet place and they wish that the kids would be still (Ukaga, 2016). The Aristocratic families can afford to employ ‘nanny’ or ‘governess’ to care for their kids (Adichie, 2014; Gaston, n.d.). The dressing of this youth is a symbol of the contemporary society. Teachers instruct their pupils to dress properly and be neat, using phrase like, ‘cleanliness is next to godliness’.

Morality of Force Men

Force men have the duty to protect lives and property. In schools, beside the police there are para-military and security men who maintain law and order. In some countries people are so well armed that police officers must always assume that everybody has a gun, including the victims, witnesses, passersby and the perpetrators. Police officers often flick on the siren, hoping people would hear it and throw down their weapons. The police officers investigate different crimes such as homicide, drug offences, murder cases and youth crimes. When in operation detectives are in a kill-or-be-killed situation. The purpose of the job is survival, some police men do not care about anyone or anything- not home, family, country when in operation (Buchana, 1992).

The job of these uniformed men demands self-sacrifice which is altruistic method. Altruistic method is a conduct aimed at the good of other persons. Altruism is from the Latin word ‘altar’, meaning ‘the other’. It is doctrine which demands that man lives for others or place others above self (Macquarrie, 1967).

The Christian is commanded by the New Testament to love his neighbour as himself, and even to love his enemies. Other religions likewise teach an altruistic ethic. The poor altruist are rich in patience. In the service those who want to get far had to learn to drive fast. Some are afraid to drive fast, or to drive at all. The altruist did not earn much, and he was a man of this country but he did not have the character to steal from his work (Armah, 1969).

Guns command respect and usually make people quite agreeable, ever eager, to do exactly as the cops wish. During investigation police officers check alibi, inventory, cell phone, Laptop, social network because kids today are all in network. They also look at Facebook and the password of the person in the crime

(Barclay, 2014). Police force is an institution that emphasizes discipline and physical fitness.

The Police assist victims of car accident, helpless on the road side with no one to help. They take the unconscious ones and dead ones to the hospital, at odd hours (Donaldson, 1977). In schools, the uniform men help to maintain peace especially in the tertiary institutions, they shut and open gates, and hostels.

Peer Group Pressure

In the ancient world (even now) certain standard of moral was expected of the youths, one of which was chastity. Chinua Achebe emphasized the importance of chastity by saying in the ancient times a husband was supposed to “find his wife at home.” Finding a new wife at home testifies to her good behaviour. “Should a wife prove to be a virgin”, the husband will send a goat and other presents to the family (Achebe, 1986). Such quality is real currently because many girls today made bad influence on their boyfriends by living their house or hostel to the boy’s house sleeping with him often when they are not married (Barclay, 2014). In this contemporary society, most youths are in schools; primary, secondary and tertiary till about twenty to twenty five years. During this long period of education many do not remain in their pure state any more.

Many youths or minors below 19 years of age are involved in drinking alcohol and smoking. According to Barclay the State of New York, in its infinite wisdom, raised the drinking age of minor from nineteen to twenty-one in 1985. It is simply a methodology of controlling what kids do. In Canada drinking age for minor is nineteen. Many kids are still having parties in their basements, having a wild time when their parents are out of town. The society globally places values on chastity and avoidance of excessive drinking among the kids. In some Universities dressing code is strictly adhered to at the lecture hours. Hostel regulations are strictly observed, such that all students must be in residence before the gates are shut. Students are advised to join only registered organizations, it is the policy of Universities to prohibit the existence on campus of secret fraternities (University of Benin Orientation Brochure, 2017/2018). Enforcement of rules and regulations by authorities is a methodology of maintaining sanity, safety, security, wellbeing of individuals in the society.

Moral judgements are based on laws, religious codes, codes of institutions, and country constitution. Generally there are expected standards of behaviour in each society. In Edo State, secondary schools open by 8.00a.m and students are expected to be in school before that period. If a student comes to school by 9.00, am such will be punished for lateness. This also applies to indecent dressing in the school hours. It is difficult to punish some pupils who are fragile, because of ill-health, even though they are funny and troublesome. Deciding whether actions are right or wrong, leads to making moral judgements on an individual conduct. There

is a problem in deciding whether or not an action is right or wrong in a multi-ethnic society with diverse religious and cultural groups, where there is no agreed set of criteria for evaluating moral conduct. What really exists is some understanding of what ought to be done and this can be interpreted differently. Values are constantly changing as there are modern technologies. Quite often one hears another describe an action as right or wrong because there has been a departure from the way the act is constantly done (Omatseye, 1992).

Personality

Character in Latin Language is ‘persona’ and in Greek ‘prosopo’ meaning person, self, or centre of consciousness in English. ‘Persona’ and ‘Prosopo’ originally apply to masks worn by actors in drama. By reference they came to refer to the role or character to be played (Urban, 1986). Character means, generally speaking, a distinguishing mark, and hence when applied to human beings it denotes those qualities or traits that distinguish them from other beings (Macquarrie, 1967). In Edo Language, character mean ‘uyimwe’ the essence of a human being. Edo people distinguish between a person with good character and bad. A person of good conduct is said to have ‘uyimwe no ma’ while a person with doubtful character is ‘omwada’. When there is proper counselling and listening to sermons in the church a person with doubtful character can change.

The concept of personality refers to the sum-total of an individual’s psychological make up. There are several terms that constitute this make-up. In a lay man’s language it is often said, “He is a man of character or he has a good temperament”. Other words used are introvert, extrovert, good and quiet disposition. These words simply describe an aspect of one’s personality. Derville (1975) describes disposition as a tendency to behave in a certain way. The person who is by disposition an introvert is one who tends to be more interested in his own ideas and feelings than he is in the affairs of others. The extrovert is more interested in what is going on around him than his own ideas and feelings. When one talks about a person’s character he is simply referring to his moral dispositions such as: honesty, kindness, reliability, loyalty, generosity, attitude and values. Personality refers to individual psychological make-up, it includes his temperament, ambition, character, intelligence, sentiments, attitude, interests, and ideals.

There are two types of students in tertiary Institutions. The students with support or sponsor and those without support. The students with support find things easy, attend fraternities, participate in games and make friends. The students without support find life boring, they are hard and may not show interest in fraternities (Ayn Rand, 1993). Some ethical values and norms are specifically Christian. The laws in the New Testament pertain to the category of the moral norms which man can know by nature. The Old Testament laws are based on the Torah, the Torah contains religious, social and moral obligations (Peschike, 1986).

Finally, myths was the first method of teaching adopted in the pre-historic age. Information was passed on through memory and story-telling. Information not based on facts today are considered under rumour and hearsay. In the past, such were referred to as myth. Biblical methodology refers to ways of teaching Bible stories. Doctrinal method concerns the traditions of the different churches which the teachers wish to emphasize. The founders of the denominations claimed some passages of the Bible were important to them especially at the moment of calling. Literary method refers to the books read which gave some moral lessons. Some of these books were not written for moral purpose. Ethical method focuses on information collected from philosophy books and others which teach moral. Morality of force men is simply the enforcement of law in schools by the uniform men. The youths face peer-group problem in schools, many do not have the will to take decision on their own.

Conclusion

Morality can be studied using the methods outlined in this article. The first method listed is myth, mythology has been a method of teaching since ancient time in all societies. Getting facts out of myth is one of the problems in this method. The next method is Biblical, which concerns the use of the Holy Bible in teaching morals. The third method is Doctrine, which covers the use of the Bible and the traditions of the different churches. The fourth is literary method, this concerns using records or facts written in books to correct morals. The fifth is ethical method, which involves taking materials from books to judge morals, if possible philosophy books. The sixth is the morality of force men, this can be rephrased morality of law, because force men emphasize discipline and law. The seventh method is peer group, this is the major area of youths problem. Many of the youths are working like sheep and imitating their friends. The last is personality, the focus of this is the development of the youths.

Ethics is universal and multidisciplinary, applied in every aspect of life. Its application is on two basic principles, these principles are the characteristics of a society; to protect the rights of people and let the public know what behaviours can be expected from occupants of a position in the society. Behaviour is a need driven interaction of an individual in an environment. Role is a set of expected behaviour pattern attributed to someone occupying a given position in a social unit. Role expectation is defined as how others believe one should act in a given situation. There are basically two types of expectations namely rights and obligations. Rights are role expectations in which the actor of the role anticipates certain performances from the actor of reciprocal role, for example, it is the citizens' right to be protected (Idiakkena and Imhonde, 2017).

Max Weber highlighted the value of discipline in occupation and raised questions as to why some people place a greater importance on commitment and

appear more conscientious than others. He investigated why some people were committed in their occupation even when there was bullying, harassment, discriminatory and retaliatory behaviour in civil services or company. Occupational ethics are intrinsic, stems from the moral belief in the importance of doing ones duty, it is a combination of what the family has infused into the kids as well as what the organization has taught employees in the course of socialization. The code of ethics is a set of principles that guides the organization in its programmes, policies and decisions for the business (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003).

Finally, occupational ethics include not only how one feels about his job, career or vocation, but how one does his/her job. This involves attitude, behaviour, respect, communication, and interaction; how one gets along with others. It involves such characteristics as honesty, integrity and accountability. Occupational ethics is about what one does or would do in a particular situation, one should not only want to do a job, but desire to do it appropriately in any given situation. Respecting leaders, wearing uniform in some establishments, reporting to work early and obedience are part of the code of conduct for employees.

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