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The Influence of Religious Education in Building Moral Generation Through Investing on Students in Tanzania

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Abstract

Moral decay among youths in Tanzania, especially students, is associated by different factors among them is the decrease in following and abiding to religious ethics. This article examines the way in which religious education contributes greatly to building an ethical society for the future generation of Tanzania. This article has used a desktop research study method whereby literature has been surveyed. The article argues that following religious principles and commandments in different places of the globe, Tanzania in particular, contributes much in moral development to school boys and girls. Hence, lagging behind the emphasis on following and living according to religious principles and commandments, contributes much to moral decay leading them to engaging in various deviant behaviours. The article suggests that there is a need to curb the devastating situation through re-emphasizing vigorously on teaching and learning religious ethics to students. This initiative should be done by the Tanzanian government to re-authorize religious subjects to be taught and learned as subjects with credits in the National Examination showing their importance and applicability in the life of students.

Keywords: Education; Ethics; Moral; Religion; School; Society

1. Introduction

In the age of scientific and technological civilization, contemporary human society faces an alarming debasement of values everywhere among people of all ages. However, this debasement is extremely prevalent to the young generation, which basically labels school boys and girls. There's a tremendous prevalence of various violence, injustice, wars and human cruelty mostly involving youths. This prevalence exists because youths are suffering from pressures of seeking their self-identity making them choose wrong ways of doing things. Damon (as cited in King, 2003) comments that as youth today struggle towards identity cohesion, they actively look for a way of self-esteem. They start this psychological endeavor to consolidate and understand their experience of self-trying to identify themselves in terms of familial, vocational, and societal roles. Swart (2009) confirms that society must find ways to enhance its moral standards, especially in the settings where there has been a rise in immoral acts.

As in other countries, Tanzania isn't left behind of moral decaying situations among the young generation, especially young boys and girls in schools. Ethics and morals are

important aspect in any society's functioning, and may be seen as complex concepts containing many facets. Ethics and morals also can be seen to be influenced by sorts of factors (Swart, 2009). The terms Ethics and morals are used interchangeably in this article to mean an equivalent idea of excellent behaviour or all deeds which will be done by the youths in Tanzania. In addition, the terms religious ethics and spiritual subjects have sometimes been used interchangeably to mean religious education subjects. Moreover, the article uses a case of religious' beliefs that focus on the two dominant religions in Tanzania, namely Christianity and Islam, to explore their influence in building moral behaviour among school boys and girls in contemporary Tanzanian school setting.

Experience shows that in the previous time religious (spiritual) teachings strongly and effectively taught by various religions to the least levels of education within school settings in Tanzania helped in maintaining ethics to students. However, such strong emphasis on religious teachings in schools is minimal today; hence, there is a negligible recognition of religious subjects in schools. Religious subjects add little to continuous assessment of students. The religious teachings, which mainly emphasize on detaching from all evil

deeds as God fears principle, help in building the generation with less commitment to evil deeds, hence positively affecting the society entirely. This effect occurs because religion has been an outstanding tool to supply a crucial structure for the precious moral code valuable in most world societies (Broom, 2003; Swart, 2009).

Through the stated experience, this article examines the role of spiritual teachings in rebuilding ethics among students in contemporary school settings in Tanzania. Religious teachings can hardly be separated from ethics simply because there has been the connection between religion and ethics that has occupied a crucial place within the discourses of philosophers. The logical position regarding the connection between the two as contingent facts of history has never been and never is it often denied. There can be morality without religion, but faith without morality. This relationship becomes too clear only when one examines the contents of good living religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam; religions which have made a really fundamental use of ethical objectivity (Guru, 1990; Bakhle, 1999; Broom, 2003; Feather, 2005; Salili, 2005; Swart, 2009). In view of literary philosophical argument pointed out, it's true that whichever religion exercised everywhere in the world promotes ethics to its members of various ages, who are also members of their societies.

Alongside, Aggarwal (2002) believes that a lot of ills that our world of education and society suffers today results into a widespread disturbance and dislocation of life, which mainly leads to gradual disappearance of the hold of essential principles of faith within the hearts of people. The sole cure, it seems to us, is within the deliberate inculcation of ethical and spiritual values from the earliest years of our lives. Hence, an individual who abides to religious principles has ethics in his/her lifestyle and the other way around. This behaviour is regardless of age, gender, color, level of education, economic status, nationality and whatever character. From this articulation, one can therefore understand that moral decay in any society is mostly related to lack of adherence to spiritual teachings.

In fact, teaching and learning religious subjects instills moral values among pupils/students helping them to maintain ethics. This fact has been emphasized by Tandler (as cited in National Bioethics Advisory Commission, 1997) that providing moral education to the young generation is more important and is the best sort of human control over cloning technology. Through providing moral education, we will train a generation of youngsters not committing murder or stealing and prepare them not using this technology to the detriment of mankind. These results contribute to the decreasing of ethical civilization in contemporary society, especially for the youth who are mostly students and members of society also.

Therefore, following the stated thesis, this article argues that the resurgence of ethical decay persisting among students in Tanzania is far contributed by the decrease within the morale of teaching and learning spiritual teachings in contemporary school setting. In order to defend the stated thesis, this article discusses some necessary themes basing on the literature surveyed as follows: the relationship between religion and ethics, roles of religion in building ethical societies, religion and education in Tanzania, the role of

religions in building ethics among students, and hence conclusion and recommendations.

2. Relationship Between Religion and Ethics

Strictly speaking, a human being cannot live without religion because it is intrinsic in nature involving individual's preferences. There is no one who prefers nothing, but every individual loves or prefers something. Since religion always talks about life and how to live according to ethical principles, one cannot isolate religion from life. Since there is a great relation between religion and ethics in society, religion also enhances human values by providing society with ethical codes, social rules, rituals, devotion and self-awareness. According to King (2003), the unique role of faith and spirituality has generally been overlooked as either a helpful or hindering source of identity formation despite the very fact that religion offers worldviews, social norms, relationships, and experiences to influence the formation and contouring of a young person's self-concept.

King (2003) writes that "existing research demonstrates a positive relation between religion and identity among adolescents. A conceptual framework is presented suggesting that religion provides a definite setting for identity exploration and commitment through offering ideological, social, and spiritual contexts" (p. 197). A sense of identity for an individual is equal to self-awareness whereby an individual having a sense of self-awareness is aware of what is bad or good and its consequences in the society.

According to Shehu (2009), religion and morality are obviously intertwined with regard to different common religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Religion and ethics are both action-guiding, dealing with human conduct or what premises people 'ought' to 'be' and 'do,' in order to maintain moral order in their individual or social life. Religions in general and Islamic-Christian religions in particular, promote moral values and forbid immoral values. Although religions differ from one another regarding the way of dealing with the subjects of ethics, it is very clear that ethics is inseparable from religion and is built entirely upon it. In line to what has been pointed out by Shehu, we can believe that the differences in terms of philosophies, beliefs and other principles guiding each religion, they all preach and emphasize on following ethics. Hence, it can be said that religion and ethics are just like identical twins.

It is well believed by religious believers that the ways of life that conform to the will of God, the ways that are good; the ways that please God and fulfill human nature in tandem define what it means by the study of ethics (Jones, 1994; Pettegrew, 2000). However, this definition leaves the question of 'how one knows what pleases or not pleases God' unanswered. In line to this question, Pettegrew (2000) brings a challenge to Christians that though they claim the Bible to be their guide, they are seemingly unable to derive different ethical systems from it. In this view point, if ethics means pleasing God the one who is not seen physically, this interpretation brings a controversial meaning of ethics.

On the one hand, in Christian context, Christian theologians have given recognition to the concept of free-will; and according to them, the origin of sin or evil in this world is

the misuse of free-will which God provided to them (Andersen, 1991; see also Swart, 2009). From this Christian contextualization of religion and ethics, it can be stated that God the creator of the universe is the father of ethics among individuals in society. Hence, human beings, regardless of races as individual, group, organization/institution, etc. are responsible to God the creator abiding in spiritual teachings in order not to violate the free-will which God has given. A person is a decision-making engine in doing either right or wrong deeds. This way of understanding is a clear interpretation of what ethics is.

On the other hand, looking at Islamic contextualization of religion and ethics, God is the Supreme Lord and man's duty towards God is an unconditional and absolute submission. Much of Islamic discipline consists of teachings that teach its people definite ways of sincere devotion and prayer to God. It also consists within itself the disciplinary procedures of self-purification and liberality. Thus, the Islamic discipline may be taken both as a religious and ethical discipline simultaneously (Tiwari, 1987). It is true that even Islam has its intention of an entire practice of religion in tandem with ethics just like Christian religion and other religions established regarding the meaning of religion.

Basing on the relationship between religion and ethics to different religions as is seen in Christian and Islamic religions, it becomes true that all religions recognize the importance of ethics. Hence, we can believe that since religion is the human strategy of finding God's presence, the aim of all religions should be emphasizing the existence and practices of moral values among followers interconnecting them with their social code of ethics and conduct. Therefore, every Religion has its own code of ethics which, to a large extent, needs to link with social codes of ethics and conduct of its followers. Since all religions set ethical standards and provides intense motivations for ethical behavior, it is important for a human being to abide to religious teachings in order to live moral a life for one's betterment and the entire society.

3. Roles of Religion in Building Ethical Societies

It's our belief that any society with good ethics has a great relationship with religious beliefs which insist in the observance of social codes of ethics and conduct. A society with high level of ethics associated with religious ethics is more advantageous in nurturing its offspring and preparing the young generation for good socialization and performing various good deeds for the future betterment of that individual and society at large. One Islamic scholar stresses that "as participants act with God, can actively engage in furthering well-being of humanity by intervening in the works of nature, including the early stages of embryonic development, to improve human health" (Sachedina, as cited in National Bioethics Advisory Commission, 1997:46). Therefore, there is a need for making a school to be an industry of producing and preparing an informed generation with integrity; this integrity can be achieved by promoting and integrating religious ethics in schools.

Hereunder are some of the suggested roles that religions play in building the ethical society. For example, in Tanzania, for a long time, there have been some harmful traditional practices such as hiding the disabled born children believing that such children are cast creatures, killing albinos as a

superstitious belief of accumulating wealth, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and others of the like. Gruenbaum, Tholley and Conteh (2008) report that:

In several towns and villages we encountered Christian preachers, primarily from the Pentecostal or "Bible-believing" and other "born-again" churches (such as the Assembly of God, New Testament Church, etc.), who argue that Christians should not do genital cutting on girls since it is not in the Bible, and circumcision should be practiced only on boys. These churches are growing in popularity and becoming increasingly influential". (p.25)

These religions, according to Gruenbaum et al. contributed much to discouraging Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), one of the most harmful traditional practices which have been being practiced in Tanzania. Through religious teachings emphasizing on human kindness and equality among all of us as human beings, these harmful traditional beliefs are decreasing day to day. Therefore, through religious teachings, members of society, including the youths in Tanzania, start to understand that relying on traditional beliefs, especially harmful ones, leads to the loss of the hidden treasures (youths) likely to be leaders of the nation tomorrow.

We believe that religion helps people in the society to improve communications and interactions. This improvement can be done when people gather and share various issues of the common goal. Through gathering and sharing various ideas, both religious and normal stories from their surrounding environments, they can solve various problems and issues arising from their dialogue. These kinds of communications and interactions basing on their social contexts can be called horizontal kinds of communications and interactions because of their humaneness.

Krause, Ellison, Shaw, Marcum, and Boardman (2001) comment that membership in a religious community can enhance coping skills. They add that people are much more inclined to using positive coping responses when they receive spiritual support from fellow church members. When like-minded individuals and families join together in prayer, mutual support, or religious practice, they view their circumstances with spiritual significance: not only in mundane daily affairs, but also major life traumas (Ellison, Bartkowski & Anderson, 1999). Apart from having these horizontal communications and interactions, they can share different issues, which mean the experiences that stick on the way of communicating and interacting with God the creator who creates the fear of committing sins.

Thus, involvement in religious practices, religious organizations, and religious communities tends to lead to favorable self-image and foster the development of faith, hope, benevolence, and a belief in divine grace as personal spiritual resources (Ellison et al., 1999). All the two kinds of communications are so vital in helping the young generation (school boys and girls) who are also members of the religion. In this belief, religion improves communications and interactions in society. We also believe that religious organizational charities as they appear in the society can

improve the life of people in the society by giving assistance of different kinds to various people in society depending on their needs. For example, the humanitarian aids that can be provided by religious charities are like food for marginalized groups of people like people with disability, orphans, elders and street children. Also, providing health services such as incurring the huge amount of money for medication to those who are poorer and education sponsorship to the young boys and girls, just to mention few of them.

According to Marripedia (2019), religious practice is linked to greater generosity in charitable giving and volunteering. It correlates with a higher rate of care and concern for others and more likely having tender, concerned feelings for the disadvantaged. Fagan (2006) says that religious practice benefits not only individuals, but also communities. Religiously active men and women are often more sensitive to others, more likely to serve and provides to those in need, and more likely to be productive members of their communities. All these reveal how religions are important in the provision of social services. We can conclude that religions are part and parcel of society we live; hence, following religious ethics is one of our obligations.

Moreover, another great relationship between religion and society bases on improving harmony in marriage between couples simply because there is no any religions that emphasize on divorcing with no concrete reason. Although religious participation doesn't appear to directly reduce barriers to marriage dissolution, a robust religion in marriage as a lifetime commitment has been linked to higher levels of marriage stability and quality (Tim & Stan; Shlomo, as cited in Mullins, 2016). Religious beliefs concerning relational values (e.g., forgiveness, commitment and sacrifice) appear to indirectly improve marriage satisfaction and quality (Randal & Alan, 2013). It also includes beliefs about the sanctification of marriage that may help married couples resolve conflict by preventing conflict, improving conflict resolution and enhancing relationship and reconciliation (Nathaniel & David, 2006).

People who believe that marriage is sacred may also be more likely to remain committed to marriage because they have made a promise to God of wanting to abide by God's guidelines for marriage and believe their marriage is part of God's will (Nelson, Kirk, Pedra & Sheryl, 2011). Therefore, since all religions preach about love and peace building in society, especially starting from the family level where we find marriage couples, we suggest that, religious teachings have got a big chance in building an ethical society.

Last, but not least, religions help in reducing evil deeds in society. Zuo'an (2013) has this to support:

All religions seek peace, oppose violence, champion universal love and preach goodness. All religions should protect the purity of faith and give back to religion its original face, so as to eliminate any room for evil doings by groups or individuals" (p. 212).

Basing on this quotation, it shows that, religions serve as catalyst of doing good deeds to any individual abiding to religious teachings. By doing so, religion shows people in

society that human beings are asked to live holy life like God their creator who deserves holiness; that life of holiness is what we can call as ethics in human life.

4. Religion and Education in Tanzania

Modern education in Tanzania is taken into account to be one among the positive and progressive legacies of Christian's mission. For many Tanzanians, during colonial rule, education was "the primary route to a more secure life, to relative influence, and to the benefits afforded by the colonial situation" (Samoff, 1987:333). The value of education has remained the same; many years after independence education has been playing a high social, political and economic role. It enhances individual and family mobility, has a socializing effect on those who experience it, transmits skills, and enables those who have it to influence political affairs (Court, 1979). It is true that the aim of secular education has a great collation with religion in Tanzania since formal education was greatly championed and introduced by missionaries who at the same time emphasized spiritual teachings. In Tanzania, most high official leaders, both in government and private sectors, are beneficiaries of missionary schools popularly known as seminary schools; and most of them are trusted as being leaders with integrity because of being products of seminary schools which considers spiritual teachings.

According to Mhina (2007), there is no doubt that religions are key players in the public sector, especially in the provision of health services and education. They would, therefore, be expected to be interested in knowing what was happening in these two sectors, especially at policy levels. They are indeed interested in the ongoing reforms in the public sector. To a great extent, religious organizations seem to support the public sector reforms partly because of addressing issues that are close to religious principles such as equality, access for services, transparency and collective responsibility. For instance, faith-based organizations insist on equal access to health and education services, while reforms have also introduced primary education development programmes that place much stress on improving the quality and providing free access to primary education (Mhina, 2007). Hence, it is obvious that religious institutions are co-partners of the government in providing social services like education and humanitarian services in many countries, including Tanzania.

Therefore, following the relationship and contribution of religious institutions in providing social services in line with government policies, there is no doubt that religious institution are counter-parts of governments in fighting against illiteracy in different countries of the globe. This fact exists because religious institutions introduce schools of which they teach people regardless of their gender, race and denomination, similar to what is done by government schools.

5. The Role of Religions in Building Ethics among Students

There are a number of relating studies that suggest a connection between religions and the promotion of ethics in society, especially to the young generation school boys and girls being our case. One of the studies was that done by Osulah (2007) which aimed at examining the extent at which

teenage pregnancy contributes to school dropout among girls. Her study involved 300 schoolgirls, Head teachers and guidance and counseling teachers from those schools. One of her research objectives focused on investigating factors predisposing high school girls to teenage pregnancies; she found that one of the factors leading them into pregnancies was their failure to comply with religious principles and commandments as prescribed by religious ethics. This failure to comply leads them to sexual permissiveness. The study gives clear evidence that there was a reality on the relationship between teenagers' pregnancies and their in-compliance with religious principles and commandments.

Moreover, the study by Osulah, reveals the reality that without spiritual teachings that aim at helping all human beings to live with ethics and integrity, students in schools can hardly achieve their dreams. This fact has been confirmed by the Holy Bible where it is written that, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Proverbs 1:7, NIV). Reflecting to this scripture, it is true that fearing God is the only source of knowledge to human beings that can be utilized in various occasions as they live. It should be born in mind that, abiding in God's wisdom that is found in religious ethics helps in attaining one's success regardless of age, gender and denomination because religious ethics are interconnected with our social code of ethics and conduct. However, her study was gender biased because it only assessed girls and ignored boys as teenagers who also faced challenges of moral decay just like girls; as a result, failing to comply with religious principles and commandments as our thesis focuses on assessing both school girls and boys in Tanzania.

Another study was that of Juma (2012) on the challenges of teaching Islamic religious education on spiritual and academic formation of students in Nairobi, Kenya. In his study he found that Islamic religious education was significant in guiding a person's life to spiritual attachment, love and devotion and therefore the moral development of an individual. He noted that Education was the inspiration of Islam; knowledge acquisition was one among sublimity spiritual merits of the learned over the ignorant. Seeking knowledge was one among the foremost meritorious acts of ibadat (worship) that a Muslim could perform. His findings were in line with the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad within the Quran and Hadith, as expressed by Maina (1993) saying:

Acquire knowledge; he who acquires knowledge within the way of Allah Performs an act of piety; he who speaks of it praises the Lord; he who seeks it adores God; he who dispenses instruction in it bestows alms; He who imparts it to the deserving persons performs an act of devotion (p.44).

In line with his findings as stated within the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad within the Qur'an and Hadith, and as expressed by Maina (1993) still turn the very fact that he who abides to Allah's doctrines deserves his/her humanity with reference to the social code of ethics and conduct. However, through his study revealed the importance of spiritual education to students through pinpointing Muslim believers, its main focus wasn't on examining the connection

between religious teachings and moral existence to secondary school students in Tanzania. I looked at the challenges of Islamic religious education on spiritual and academic formation of students in Nairobi.

Further, Neal (1998) in his study aimed at examining academic achievement of students in religiously affiliated schools; Neal found that Students in religiously affiliated schools tended to exhibit a better level of educational achievement than their peers in secular schools, particularly in low income urban neighborhoods. Additionally, he found that, inner-city students in public schools lagged behind in educational achievement, as compared with students in Catholic schools. According to his study, it can be argued in line to the experience that, most students in religiously affiliated schools have desirable discipline. The rationale is that they follow school rules and regulations with a fear of God as they are taught religious ethics contrary to public schools where religious ethics which talk about fearing of God are merely taught and not being compulsory as in religiously affiliated schools.

In addition, it is often said that what makes students in religiously affiliated schools achieve better academically than those in public schools is discipline catalyzed by religious ethics, which help them avoid committing crimes and other evil deeds. As a result, they spend longer times concentrating on their studies and following what's said by their teachers.

However, his study didn't show whether religious ethics was taught or not even in public schools to some extent, and what was the extent of educational achievement to students followed religious ethics if were there in public schools.

In Tanzania, religious education has mostly been ignored by the government as a credit subject in both religious affiliated schools and public schools. Hence, the stress on spiritual teachings emphasizing on fearing God which help in building ethics to secondary school students has decelerated. As a result, moral decay among schools in Tanzania has been extremely reported. Therefore, all the studies done in different countries show that the teaching of religious ethics in schools has great interrelationships in several places of the world. Students with religious ethics have an honest chance of behaving more ethically consistent with social code of ethics and conduct as well as being in good position of anticipating their determinations.

However, what lacks in these studies is that they have not talked about the governments' attitudes on either emphasizing the integration of religious education within the national educational curricular or discouraging it in the particular country where the study based. Contrary, in Tanzania, the government has discouraged religious education subjects being subjects with credit among secular subjects in the National Examination evaluations. Consequently, this decision has reduced the morale of teaching and learning religious ethics resulting in alarming moral decays among secondary school students.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article argued that there's an excellent relationship between religious education which will be provided to students in schools and therefore the building of ethical

society in Tanzania. Reflecting this argument it has been discussed in this article that our nation of tomorrow goes to be what students at school today will make it. The edifice of our nature entirely depends, for its beauty, dignity, utility and skill on the foundations we lay today, within the sort of the education and training that our students receive. If all people within the society shall abide to religious teachings, the hope of ethical life to whomever within the society are going to be seen. Thus, if we shall have the society which lives consistently with religious principles, it's true that students will inherit the culture of ethics. It's due to the common beliefs that whoever abides in religious principles immensely is of excellent ethics.

Therefore, to make sure ethics among students, especially in Tanzania, we propose that religious teachings should be taught vigorously in schools and therefore the emphasized by all education stakeholders, including the Tanzanian government. This emphasis should include re-allowing and re-considering credits to religious subjects as for non-religious subjects in the National examinations. To our point of view, the authorization of spiritual subjects will increase the morale of reading and putting into actions the taught religious ethics emphasizing on social code of ethics and conduct as a true life to students who are the nation's possible leaders of tomorrow.

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