

Original Article

Examining moral values in the policy document and in the contents of moral texts: An overview

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Abstract

The aim of this article was to scrutinize moral values in the contents of moral texts and in the policy document. Having this aim, the researcher used document analysis (policy documents and the moral text books). The education system has missed the chief aim of education which is the formation of character achieved through moral education. The blind reliance on western education costs us much and the moral matters have been weakened by western education which has controlled our youth's thinking. Although holistic human personality requires virtues like rational thinking, preserving one's cultural values and moral principles, these traits have not been central to the objectives of the education and this has immense implications for the behavior of students. The recently introduced moral text books were far from dealing the valid contents of moral issues. To heal our education system, there is a need to rethink the objectives of education of the country and prepare appropriate moral texts for the renewal of the eroded Ethiopian moral values.

Keywords: Objective, Education, Moral

1. Introduction

Evil doings (cheating, lying, theft, gambling, homosexuality, the use of illicit drugs, nepotism, tribalism, corruption and the like) are the results of human endeavor in an attempt to gratify his needs. But these needs could be nurtured by moral and spiritual principles. Educational objectives lacking moral/spiritual matters are devoid of the guiding principles for the formation of learners' personality. This is because the essence of moral matter is to develop in the hearts of learners a sense of unselfishness, love, respect, tolerance, patience, holiness and self-sacrifice. Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all (Aristotle). Educating the heart refers to the importance of not only focusing on developing the cognitive aspects (our minds) but also all the qualities that make us human (our hearts) and ultimately give us meaning in our lives. In

this case, true moral lessons have the potential to unlock personality traits like being humble, honest, respectful, tolerant, patient, holy, fair and the like.

These traits, which have been eroded through time, have been the values of the Ethiopian society before the advent of modern education in Ethiopia. In this regard, Germa (1973) noted that the overemphasis on the extrinsic value of education in many African schools and universities denies the youth African scholars the opportunity to develop these qualities. Baker (2005) argued that schools are indeed institutionalized organizations whose functions extend beyond the purely academic or economic matter. In a similar manner, Germa et al. (1974) argued that education should emphasize the formation of a man rather than on training him for an occupation. That is, the aim of education is not only to prepare trainees for the world of work; or it is not only the mere matching of manpower supply to manpower demand; or it is not the mastery of pure academic skills. Rather, the chief objectives of education are the formation of a man that extends beyond the mastery of employability skills. In explaining the objective of education, Baker further (2005) clearly stressed that the deeper institutional value of the “individual as moral social actor” is more influential than even the “individual as human capital producer,” Furthering the discussion, Germa et al. (1974) asserted that if knowledge and skills provide the means the moral and cultural values provide the ends for which such means are to be used.

According to this view, the aim of education has to nurture each student as the complete individual coupling academic and moral integrity. Simply stated, the intrinsic value of education is the formation of rational human beings governed by the principle of commitment, honesty, patience, kindheartedness, tolerance, truthfulness, courtesy, loyalty, justice, sincerity, endurance, courage, self-control, non-violence, forgiveness, and the like. Brennen (1999) on his part noted that education enables humans to achieve their fullest personal, social and physical potentials. Germa et al. (1974) further noted that an educational system that merely provided knowledge and skills without the essential blend of such value is in danger of producing soulless and rootless robots. In clarifying the point under discussion, education must give high premium to the moral and cultural heritages or values of the society. In summarizing the above points, Germa et al. (1974) argued that if educational objectives are to reflect the basic aspirations of the society they are meant for, then they cannot fail to include a moral dimension.

Thus, this article needs to assess moral values in the policy document and in the moral text books. So far, no-one has made a record of examining moral values in light of policy document and moral text books. Thus, this article fills in this gap. In light of this, the main objective of this article is to examine moral values in the contents of policy document and in the moral text books.

2. Methodology

In the current study, the researcher has employed document analysis (policy documents and moral text books). Document analysis has served as a complement to other research methods and as a stand-alone method (Bowen, 2009). That is, document analysis could be applicable in some specialized forms of qualitative research that solely rely on the analysis of documents (Bowen, 2009). In studies where document analysis was used as a sole research method, content and thematic analyses were used complementary to produce research findings (Kutsyuruba, 2017). Owing to this, the present researcher has used both content and thematic analyses as components of document analysis.

The researcher used thematic analysis for examining the moral texts by exploring patterns across the texts and he used content analysis for the policy document, by exploring the presence of moral concepts in the policy document. In such cases, he tried to describe the characteristics of the policy document. With regard to moral text books, MoE prepared moral texts from grade one to six. As a sample representative sample, the researcher took grade one, two, five and six moral text books. For the policy document, the researcher considered two education and training policies issued in 1994 and 2023. During analysis, the researcher followed the procedures of document analysis which include identifying the meaning unit, re-contextualization and categorization.

3. Results and Discussions

As per the aim of the study, the results and discussion section has two broad divisions, examining moral values in the policy document and in the moral text books. In view of this, the first section dealt with moral values in the policy document and the second section of the analysis was about examining the contents of moral text books.

3.1. Moral values in the policy document

Before the emergence of modern education, traditional education had been carried on exclusively by the Orthodox Church and this was backed up by Islamic educational system. In both religious

institutions, the objective of education was geared towards producing qualified individuals devoted to serve their own respective religious institutions (Teshome, 1979). That is, the aim of traditional education in Ethiopia is to prepare priests, monks, deacons, teachers who would give religious services in the church's program but church education was also able to produce civil servants such as judges, teachers, governors, scribes, treasures and general administrators (Teshome, 1979; Ephraim, 1971). This happened because there was no other educational institution producing trained civil servants.

Upon the advent of modern education in Ethiopia, the objectives of Ethiopian education have been regrettably oscillating along with the changes of governments and regimes. That is, the objective of Education has had a variety of modalities changing in line with the changes of the political ideology of governments and the country has never had a long standing policy that embodies the picture of the country. During the Imperial Period, education aimed at spreading the idea of the perpetual rule of the feudal lords with a God-chosen emperor at the top and after the down-fall of the Imperial government, the Derg sought to construct an education system which was highly skewed to inculcating the Marxist Junta (Germa, 1967).

After the downfall of Derg regime, the EPRDF regime issued a new education and training policy in 1994. The federal government is committed to decentralization that provides each region with autonomy accompanied by fiscal decentralization (Education Sector Development Program IV, 2002). As it is stipulated in the former Education and Training policy (1994), the general objectives of education in Ethiopia are to:

1. develop the physical and mental potential and the problem-solving capacity of individuals by expanding education and in particular by providing basic education for all;
2. bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely, and who are trained in various skills, by raising the private and social benefits of education;
3. bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline;
4. bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones; and who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society;

5. cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive, and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs.

As it can be seen from the objectives of education above, the first and the fifth objectives of education have similar spirit; the proper cultivation of the cognitive domain might make learners be creative, productive and appreciative and physically fit. The second objective might let learners use resources wisely whereas the third objective expects students to be just and to respect human rights. The fourth objective requires students to stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show desirable attitude to development.

Despite the fact that there are vertical and horizontal relationships among subjects in terms of contents, the school subject deemed appropriate to materialize the formation of ‘good citizens’ is ‘Civics and Ethnical Education’ which has generally the following eleven contents: building a democratic system, the rule of law, equality, justice, patriotism, responsibility, industriousness, self-reliance, saving, community participation and the pursuit of wisdom. These contents are taught from grade five to university level with certain degree of variation. Most of the personality traits stated in the objectives of education (such as traits of being creative, productive, peaceful, wise, economical, appreciative, just, and the like) and the contents of the course (justice, patriotism, responsibility, industriousness, self-reliance) could not arm students with basic moral and social values of the society.

Moral values, the weightier matter of life in the formation of personality, are not addressed in the objectives of education and in the contents of the subject, ‘Civics and Ethnical Education’. Owing to this, the objectives of education could not make learners be rational human beings having missions for themselves, for the family, for the community and for the country at large. The foundational objectives of education, moral matters, are left un-discussed both in the objectives of education and in the contents of the course, ‘Civics and Ethnical Education’. Instead, the Education and Training policy (1994) has given due attention to decentralization. Criticizing the Ethiopian education policy, UNESCO (2007) states that the cardinal principles which form the basis for the provision of educational services are: decentralization of the management of education, people participation, equitable distribution of educational services and the development of local culture and language.

During the current regime of Prosperity Party (PP), MoE (2023) has also issued a new Education and Training policy which does not show much difference from the previous policy except the catchy slogans which try to persuade citizens about the change of the policy. However, the new Education and Training policy (2023), despite its flaws, has included the subject moral education in the Ethiopian educational landscape. As it is set in the Education and Training policy (2023), the general objectives of education in Ethiopia are to:

1. offer free quality education from KG to junior level to all citizens by developing the cognitive, social, physical, spiritual values of citizens;
2. associate the education and training policy with the personal and social values which include economic development and change;
3. develop those skills (moral education, issues prevailing peace) upon graduates who are committed for the establishment of the government;
4. produce graduates who are competent in the international level, who give response to the diversified economic development;
5. produce graduates who accept diversity, know their history, love their mother land and fellow citizens, who respect democratic rights, who stand for justice and arm themselves with moral, and ethical principles
6. produce graduates who are reasonable, self-confident, innovative, competent, stand for truth and admire beauty, committed to develop indigenous knowledge;
7. link the education policy to the existing socio-cultural milieu.

As noted above, at face value, the objectives of education (particularly objectives stated under objective two, three, five and six) are to develop the personal and social competences of graduates that enable them to respect democratic rights, be reasonable, and accept diversity and the like. Despite the objectives stated above, there is no specific subject/course mentioned which materializes those objectives stated above if formal education is taken into account. Had the education system considered the contribution of non-formal education, the objectives of education should have made remarks in relation to non-formal education. The policy document neither says about non-formal education programs like (community-based programs) that cultivate the indigenous culture and education system nor elaborates the development of moral issues upon the minds of the students.

In both policy documents, moral values have never been the core elements of the policy document. In a society in which morality has a strong base, it seems unreasonable to exclude these values from the objectives of education. In a culture with deep moral roots, it would be unfair to exclude the moral aspects in the objective of education.

The powerlessness of the educational objectives to form rational human beings could partly contribute for the present societal crisis. For the last three regimes, there have been a number of crises and conflicts in the country caused by inequalities, unequal distribution of national resources, injustices, exclusions, nepotism, corruptions, poverty, bad governance, ethnic politics and the like. All these have led to the breakdown of social cohesion leading to violent conflicts in schools. To worsen the matter, universities which are incubators of ideas have been setting of conflicts. At present, students' aggressive and violent behavior in the university remains a significant threat to safe and secure learning environments and students do not come to university with all the necessary social skills and experiences to cooperate with each other (Arega & Mulugeta, 2017). Similarly, Abebaw (2014) noted that there have been several ethnic tensions and conflicts in different parts of the country, and also in public universities since the introduction of ethnic federalism. Students' interpersonal conflicts are very serious in many universities in Ethiopia in general (Yalew, 2007; Miressa, 2018). At present, in most public organizations including academic institutions which are supposed to become a basis for new insights and rational human beings are center of academic theft and nepotism. The social crisis and the deterioration of pro-social traits among the population are to a certain extent the results of the education system that learners have passed through. Recent events, like September 11, 2001, brought most Americans to a point of dramatic disorientation, not least of all about the role of teachers and the nature of their education (Gal, 2005).

Over three decades, Ethiopian students have long traded on the politics of antagonism, resulting in failure to communicate with each other over the most important social matters. In addition to this, there have been rampant bribery, corruption, fraud, favoritism, nepotism, impunity in every sector of the education. The World Bank (2012) reported that there have nepotism and favoritism in the country. To worse the matter, the World Bank noted that there is significant risk of corruption in examination which includes forged admission cards, assistant from invigilators,

schools and local officials. To improve this condition, MoE has made the secondary school leaving examinations be given at universities. But for the problems that the country faces, nothing is more important to Ethiopians than moral education and a sound education policy.

In a country where individuals fight for their ethnic group’s position, where citizens are ethnically divided, when gross human rights are violated and ethnic federalism has been the building blocks of the political philosophy, it is quite hard to realize the real objective of education. Without changing the political ideology, it seems a wishful thinking to comprehend the objective of education in Ethiopia.

The process of moral text preparation has also been prepared under the yoke of the aforementioned malpractices. The quality of the moral texts seems to be a testament to the situation.

3.2. Moral values in the moral text books

As a representative sample, four moral text books (grade one, two, five and six) were examined. The following table depicts the contents of grade one and grade two moral text books.

Table 1: Grade one and two moral text books

Unites	Grade One	Grade Two
Unit 1	Children’s self-discipline	Self-respect
Unit 2	Children’s discipline in the family	Pursuit of truth and honesty
Unit 3	Neighborliness	justice
Unit 4	Students’ school discipline	Positive social interaction
Unit 5	Knowing community values	Concerns for the common good
Unit 6	Knowing local cultures	Cultural heritage

As noted in the table above, the first three unit of grade one moral education contains lessons about self-discipline (the meaning, key behaviors of self-discipline and importance of children’s self-discipline). In a similar manner, the second unit is about children’s self-discipline in the family (the meaning of family and the importance of family). The third unit of grade one is concerned about neighborliness (the meaning of neighborliness, traits of neighborliness and importance of good neighbors). Likewise, the first three units of grade two moral education has talked about self-

respect (the concept, importance and ways of showing self-respect), pursuit of truth and honesty (the meaning of truthfulness and honesty, types of truthfulness and honesty) and justice (meaning of justice, the concept of fairness, importance of fairness). The following table also shows the contents of grade five and grade six moral text books.

Table 2: Grade five and six moral text books

Unites	Grade five	Grade six
Unit 1	Discharging responsibility	Moral integrity
Unit 2	The culture of hard working	Law abidingness
Unit 3	Moral-decision making skills	Good behavior
Unit 4	Caring for the environment	Participation in socio-economic activities
Unit 5	The ethics of using social media	Pursuit of patriotism
Unit 6	Intercultural relations	Peace and cooperation

As pointed out above, the first three units of grade five moral education has talked about discharging responsibility (the meaning, attributes and importance of discharging responsibility), the culture of hard working (the meaning, importance and characteristics of the culture of hard working) and moral-decision making skills (meaning, attributes and steps of moral-decision making skills). In the same manner, the first three units of grade six moral topics are about moral integrity (the meaning, attributes and importance of moral integrity), law abidingness (the meaning, importance and characteristics of law abidingness) and good behavior (the meaning, attributes and importance of good behavior).

The moral text books which are prepared by Ministry of Education from grade one to six appear to be far from addressing the intents of its initial objectives. Most of the contents of the texts have never taught morality but rather they taught about morality. Arming the students with moral traits (such as kindness, honesty...) are the goal of moral education which is what the education system aims to achieve. But this aim cannot be addressed by teaching the definition, importance of theoretical moral-related issues. Instead of talking about the importance of discipline, self-respect, responsibility, integrity and the like, we need to teach students to be kind, respectful, honest, and obedient by using various tasks or moral activities.

Students need to develop moral principles through storytelling, role playing, presenting scenarios, problem-based approach, moral model, action learning, and the like. In a similar manner, the contents of moral education should be personality traits like kindness, patience, honesty, respect, gratitude, empathy, obedience, sharing, commitment, fairness, equality and the like. But all these contents are not presented in the textbooks through diverse moral tasks and activities. The central contents of morality which are the hearts of the matter in the development of personality are not touched. Without incorporating moral matters, it seems hard to find behavioral changes in the learners since moral affairs which have an intact potential to convert people to developing pro-social traits are ignored.

The Ministry of Education was approached to address the issues raised; however, the Office has turned a deaf ear to the matters due to a servant-owner power attitude. Owing to this, the appellant was cold shouldered by the Minister. This happened because educational policy agenda was exclusively shaped by higher officials of the government politicians, not by the practitioners. To better reflect this point, Freire (2005) noted that many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality. Similarly, Seyoum (1996) noted that the attempts made so far at educational reforms in Ethiopia had been quite prescriptive, with hardly little or no input from the general public.

4. Conclusion

The consequence of missing a rational objective of education and a sound teaching text of moral education has partly put the country in a vicious circle of crisis.

Ethiopia, regrettably, has never had long-term education policy, encompassing the common needs of the population. Objectives of education have been changed along with the change of the governments and regimes. Education needs to sharpen the Ethiopian youth to be critical thinkers and not mere reflectors of Western's thought which stands in sharp contrast with our traditional education in terms of moral values.

The pursuit of full humanity has to encompass qualities such as respect, obedience, loyalty, perseverance, patience, kindheartedness, accountability and the like which are the virtues of morality. Moral education is basically an elaboration of the principles of love of one's fellow human beings which is a basic tenet of all religions (Germa et al., 1974). These virtues also reflect

the cultural conditions of the surrounding social value. The binding forces for all humanity are common moral values which need to be prolonged in the school structure through moral or character education. A common thread running through all human beings is holding a common moral code that guides learners to the path of righteousness, truth and desirable behavior. Education system that does not rest upon the development of personality having moral values lacks an important ingredient. Thus, moral values that the society has had have to be prolonged by the education policy that the country follows.

Non-existence of moral values in the curriculum has been one among the many reasons for the current wide-spreading corruption, injustices, contradictions, and problems in our country. In a state of moral bankruptcy where the core moral values are missing, students are prone to committing immoral acts. For such moral bankruptcy, the contribution of the education system is sadly immense. The policy document which encompasses moral education could partly heal the society suffering from injustice, discrimination and immoral acts but it has not been prepared as it should be.

In view of the points above, it is suggested that the current objective of education and moral text books are subject to critical scrutiny. To look at the past in order to interpret the course of the future may not only be extremely valuable but necessary (Ephraim, 1971). In doing so, we need to rebuild the moral fabric of the society by instilling moral instruction in the conscience of the youth through plausible objective of education and moral texts.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares that no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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