

# Adapting Adult Education towards Advancement of Moral Values Inculcation in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The term, *moral values*, could be succinctly defined as principles or precepts that provide an individual with a standard of right or wrong behaviour or action. The acquisition/inculcation of moral values takes place through two main processes: first, through their observation and internalization as part of societal culture; and second, through the various modes of modern education. Nigeria has experienced a steadily soaring phenomenon of moral decadence over several decades. This is believed by many experts of moral education to have been the result of sudden abandonment of trado-cultural processes and adoption of foreign lifestyles and attitudes brought into the country by colonial masters and missionaries. The experts also believe that properly planned education programmes, especially at the primary and secondary levels, would help to improve the overall tone of morality in the country. Unfortunately, this approach would leave out large populations of non-beneficiaries of and dropouts from the said and other levels of formal education, including the tertiary level. The purpose of this paper is to show that Adult Education, which takes care of those disadvantaged at various levels of formal education, has the components, structure, processes and methodology to foster advancement of moral values inculcation in Nigeria. To achieve this purpose, the author graphically and extensively discusses how to effectively adapt the potentials of Adult Education to achieve ultimate furtherance of moral values inculcation in Nigeria, under the various modes of modern education – formal, non-formal and informal modes.

**Keywords:** Adapting, Adult education, Advancement, Moral values, Inculcation, Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Concept and Importance of Moral Values

As social animals, human beings tend to live together with one another in a harmonious social relationship built around some fundamental shared systems of belief, principles and tradition. These basic ingredients of harmonious relationship are essentially referred to as *ethical values* which determine the degree of conformity of individual or group behaviour or action in relation to societal or organizational expectations (Wikipedia, 2021b). Stability in social or intra professional relations is built on such ethical values which guide perception of right or wrong.

Although the term ethical values are sometimes used interchangeably with *moral values*, nonetheless, there are still some thin distinctive characteristics for both. For instance, while ethical

values generally refer to rules of conduct for a particular class of human actions in a particular group of culture, moral values refer to principles or habits which ultimately provide a personal standard of right and wrong. To illustrate, an individual respects ethical values because *society* or *organization* says it is right to do so, but moral values are respected because the *individual* believes they are either right or wrong (Dictionary.com; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2002).

Harappa Educational Institute (HEI) summarizes the concept of moral values as being ideas at play when a person interacts with the wider world or has to make a decision that will have a consequence on others (HEI, 2020). HEI goes further to succinctly highlight the importance of moral values as follows (HEI, 2020, p.2):

Moral values are the behavioural practices, goals and habits which are validated by the society we are part of. This set of values typically becomes embedded in our behaviour through a long process of observation, education, conditioning and social guidelines. Usually, these are universal in nature and may not vary much in different parts of the world. For instance, no matter which community, religion or region you belong to, moral values such as truthfulness, loyalty, courage, faith and honesty will be equally respected almost everywhere. Moral values concern themselves with right and wrong. They also define what is socially acceptable, good or evil.

### **Processes of and Need for Moral Values Inculcation with Special Reference to Nigeria**

A close look at the above indented excerpt from the cited Harappa Educational Institute document (HEI, 2020) would reveal that moral values inculcation takes place via two main processes: first, the gradual and long process of individuals observing and internalizing moral values through social guidelines and conditioning embedded in the culture of their society; and second, through the various modes of modern education (formal, non-formal and informal modes). In some related literature, moral values inculcation is referred to as 'moral education' (Nduka, 1964; Iheoma, 1995). The interpretation of the concept of moral values inculcation as used in this paper virtually agrees with that given to moral education which has been summarized by Iheoma (1995, p. 37) as:

... not a process of 'character training' or a matter of giving 'moral instruction' to the young, nor is it a question of indoctrinating people into certain moral beliefs. Moral education (or moral values inculcation) is concerned with developing in people the ability to think for themselves on moral issues.

The need for moral values inculcation (moral education), especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was further highlighted by Iheoma as follows (Iheoma, 1995, pp. 21-22):

We live in an age in which there is no longer a generally accepted moral code or a set of standards of behaviour on which everyone can rely with confidence. Inherited values and attitudes are being called into question. In a word, our age is characterized by a widespread rejection of authority. Individual autonomy is now a highly esteemed value unlike in earlier culture. Not the least of the problems created by the authority vacuum is the confusion and uncertainty about moral values and standards engendered in the minds of many people by the dissemination of various and conflicting views about social life by the mass media. This has also contributed to the decline of the influence of religion and the waning of authority of the Bible and Koran. In these circumstances when we can no longer rely on the inspiration provided by trusted leaders, we must together come up with a set of rules of conduct to which

individual members of our society can freely and willingly subscribe. This is a crucial task of moral education in contemporary society, a task that must be accomplished if we are to avoid a dangerous state of anarchy on the one hand, or a painful return to political and ideological dictatorship on the other hand. This point brings us finally to a consideration of, perhaps the most important reason for the widespread demand for moral education in the world today.

Further to Iheoma's (1995) view above, and having observed and bemoaned the level of moral decadence in Nigeria overtime (despite various attempts to address the situation), and convinced that a properly conceived approach to moral education would have to improve the overall attitudes and moral orientation of Nigerians, an erudite Nigerian Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Education, Otonti Amadi Nduka, engaged in several research activities, lectures and publications to crystalize his conviction (Eheazu, 2006). Cardinal among Nduka's efforts along the said line, was his initiating on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the inauguration of *OTONTI NDUKA FOUNDATION FOR VALUES EDUCATION*, in May, 2006 with the objective to bring about (Ivowi, Orubite & Wodi, 2012, p. 4):

The revitalization of the moral fibre of all segments of the Nigerian society through the enunciation, inculcation, propagation and dissemination of appropriate positive values capable of sustaining a modern democratic, scientifically oriented, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

Since its inauguration, the Foundation has spearheaded the organization of four National Conferences on the way forward towards achievement of moral/values education in Nigeria. The Conferences were held in October, 2008; August, 2010; November, 2012 and May, 2016. Papers from these Conferences have since been assembled and published in two books respectively titled,

- i. *Values Education and National Development* (Ivowi et al, 2012)
- ii. *Corruption, Democracy and National Development* (Orubite & Wodi, 2018).

The purpose of this paper is to articulate the processes whereby Adult Education could be adapted to foster the advancement of Moral Values Inculcation in Nigeria.

### **Moral Values Inculcation in Nigeria: Past and Present**

Before the arrival of Western missionaries in Nigeria in the early 1840s, indigenous Nigerians had their traditional beliefs and customs imbued with moral codes that also stipulated stringent sanctions against deviants. Among the indigenous peoples, the tribe, village, clan and the extended family were reference points in matters relating to morality and custom. Any person accused of immoral behaviour or act was tried

according to the moral codes of any of these reference points concerned. Generally, the fear of the gods and the mystical view of the world prevalent among the natives at the time constituted effective check on immoral acts. Nduka (1964) provides an example of what obtained in the Ibo tribe of Nigeria before the advent of the Western colonialists in the following words (Nduka, 1964, p. 107):

Among the Ibos of Eastern Nigeria there is the expression '*Ofo n'ogwu*'. The first component of this phrase, '*Ofo*', literally means the staff of office of the family head, who was generally the custodian of the ancestral or other shrines. '*Ogwu*' is a principle of justice, righteousness in general. Now, the '*Ofo*', which is usually the branch of a special type of twig endowed with mystical powers, is used for divination. The combination of '*Ofo*' and '*Ogwu*', of mysticism and morality, is an extremely powerful one, and has been one of the props of the indigenous moral system. Few dared to perjure themselves whenever the combination '*ofo n'ogwu*' was invoked. One could say that, before the arrival of the British and until quite recently, truth and justice, within the limits of customary law, prevailed in all tribal communities.

With the introduction of Christianity in the early 1840s by the British colonial missionaries with assurance of forgiveness of immoral conducts (sins) through confession and penitence, many indigenous Nigerians abandoned their morally supportive native beliefs and customs and adopted the new Christian religious doctrines. The resultant weakening of traditional beliefs, customs and moral codes paved the way to the emergence of serious value conflicts and destabilizing of social order even in contemporary (21<sup>st</sup> century) Nigeria (Charles & Ikoh, 2012). The situation has further been identified as causative and supportive of the incidence and preponderance of such vices as bribery and corruption and the steadily declining moral and ethical values in Nigeria (Nduka, 2018).

Regarding the use of modern modes of education to inculcate moral values in Nigeria, Iheoma (1995) has painted a somewhat lucid picture of the need for as well as the inherent problems and discernible prospects of moral education/values inculcation in Nigeria, following colonization of the country and the eventual amalgamation in 1914 of the nearly 400 ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian nation. He stresses that promotion of individualistic tendencies through emphasis by Western education on development of individuals according to their capabilities and talents and the Western legacy of materialism as against the precolonial traditional communalism and the relative egalitarianism among the indigenes, combined to fuel the embers of the moral malaise in Nigeria, especially corruption which has its basis in selfishness and greed. In the light of this perception, Iheoma (1995, p. 187) harps on "the need for a review of the sort of moral

education currently in vogue in our (Nigerian) educational institutions". He suggests that a fundamental aim of moral education in Nigeria's educational institutions "must be to resuscitate those traditional African values which ensured a more just and egalitarian society in the past, prior to the colonial experience" (Iheoma, 1995, p. 190). He somewhat appreciated the secular moral education advocated for Nigerian schools by Lord Lugard, the Governor General of Nigeria from 1912 to 1919. Lugard's programme included teaching of such virtues as truthfulness, courage, love, justice, self-control and respect for authority. However, Lugard's civil moral education programme did not last for long as it was not well received by missionaries who owned most of the schools.

In general, cultivation of character traits like honesty, humility, kindness, truthfulness, obedience and so on preoccupied many attempts to foster moral education in Nigerian schools. This was, for instance, the case of Lagos State which developed a moral instruction syllabus in 1972. All in all, however, Nduka (1964) has pointed out that the content of moral instruction given in Nigerian schools will have to be more widely supplemented with lessons dealing with a rational appraisal of cultural values. He further made two important suggestions for the success of moral education/inculcation in Nigeria as follows (Nduka, 1964, p. 112):

A comparative study of cultural, especially moral, values could profitably be undertaken to suit the level of intellectual development of the students. But however well we may teach morals in our schools and colleges, our efforts will be nullified unless the mass of the people of this country become genuinely interested in seeing a higher standard of moral behaviour in private and in public affairs.

Additionally, there is a problematic issue of absence of specific content and methodologies for imparting moral education in Nigeria. In the effort to find solution to these problems, the Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, under the leadership of the then Dean (Prof. Otonti Amadi Nduka), organized a National Conference in 1982. The Conference, among other things, recommended allotting moral education a specific slot in the day-to-day curriculum of educational institutions, particularly in the primary and secondary schools (Nduka & Iheoma, 1983). The problem of methodology selection in moral inculcation, however, has been analysed as follows (Iheoma, 1995, pp. 193-194):

The existence of several 'models' of moral education is evidence of the fact that moral education is too complex a subject to be adequately treated under a single approach to the matter, however popular or authoritative. Models of moral education such as values

clarification, cognitive moral development and the consideration model have offered useful insights into the complex problem of moral education. But the methodological preoccupation of each model, which often excludes insight from other models, makes each model by itself inadequate as complete programme of moral education. For instance, the value clarification model seeks to help students to discover and examine their values so as to achieve authenticity. The advocates of this approach to moral education are so frightened by the spectre of indoctrination that they do not care much about the objective worth of moral values which they consider personal and relative. But the implication that one point of view is just as good as another is certainly damaging to the cause of moral education.

Iheoma thus suggested that moral education requires an integrated approach or methodology “which takes into account the three basic elements of morality; namely, caring, judging and acting” (Iheoma, 1995, p. 195).

The problems of content and methodology determination in moral education in Nigeria, highlighted in the above references, are yet to be resolved. As a result, moral values inculcation in Nigeria is currently experiencing some lull and therefore needs some propping to fulfil its purpose within the various sectors of the Nigerian population. It would be pertinent to postulate at this point and in tandem with the purpose of this paper, that Adult Education, by its nature, could serve as a platform for generation and application of the required moral values content and methodology suitable for various groups of learners, as well as elicit the necessary mass interest in and acquisition of higher standards of moral behaviours in Nigeria. How this could be achieved is the focus of subsequent discussions below.

## **Fostering Moral Values Inculcation through Adult Education**

### **The Concept of Adult Education**

To facilitate proper comprehension of the import of this paper, a brief clarification of the terms, *Adult* and *Adult Education* is necessary because of the various (and sometimes confusing) interpretations the two terms have been subjected to in related literature. The precise determination of who an adult is, for instance, is rather intriguing because of the legal, social, physiological and cultural considerations that have been associated with adulthood (Eheazu, 1998). To illustrate, while an adult in some Western societies may be seen as one who has attained the age of 21 or more, in Nigeria, adulthood begins officially at 18 when an individual is allowed to vote. In some other cultural societies, physiological maturity (capacity for marriage and parenthood and the ability to undertake civic duties) is used as a parameter to determine adulthood. In this case, an adult may be 15 or 51; 18 or 81 and so on.

Accordingly, one could sometimes come across such concepts as ‘young adult’, ‘old adult’ and ‘older adults’ or ‘senior citizens’ (CIA World Fact Book, 2012).

The definition of what constitutes adult education is no less complex than the definition of an adult. For instance, Lowe (1970) unhappily notes that Adult Education is described by several nomenclatures. He observes as follows (Lowe, 1970, p. 3):

What appear to be more or less similar phenomena are described by a perplexing welter of names such as Fundamental Education, Social Education, Mass Education, Continuing Education, Life Long Learning ... Even the term ‘Community Development’ is often used as though it were interchangeable with ‘Adult Education’.

Similar to Lowe’s observation, there are diverse terms used to describe Adult Education, such as those adopted by Liveright and Haygood (1968) and Nyerere (1971). To provide a remedy to the confusion generated in the definition of Adult Education, UNESCO in 1972 came up with a comprehensive definition of the concept (Adult Education) as follows (UNESCO, 1972, p. 2):

The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

This definition has since propelled the philosophy and practice of adult education in many countries including Nigeria (Eheazu, 2019).

The aim or goals of adult education are well captured in the above definition of the concept by UNECO. As a discipline or professional field of study, Adult Education is classified into five divisions or components which have been briefly presented as follows (Eheazu, 1998):

- i. Remedial; that is, making good the deficiencies many people experience through non-acquisition of certain levels of formal schooling.
- ii. Vocational, technical and professional. This division is concerned with either preparation for work or the recurrent need for up-dating and refreshing.
- iii. Health, Welfare and family life, including guidance about physical and mental health,

- family problems, parenthood, social security and consumer education.
- iv. Civic, political and community education, including instruction about national and international matters.
  - v. Self-fulfilment, embracing all aspects of education undertaken solely for the enjoyment of the individual.

Further classifications of adult education made by Prosser (1969), Townsend Coles (1978) and other experts involve different combinations of the above divisions or components. Such combinations have also resulted in classification of Adult Education into Formal, Non-Formal and Informal modes/forms within which elements or contents of the above five divisions could be identified. Accordingly, the contents of adult education are situation-specific; that is, structured or determined with due regard to the needs and motivations of individual or group adult learners through the process of “clientele analysis and incidental needs negotiations” (Eheazu, 1998, pp. 27-29).

#### **Mass Inequality of Access to Formal Education: A Challenge to Adult Education**

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), with endorsement by 48 out of the UN’s 50 member nations at the time (UN, 1948). On human right to education specifically, Article 26 of the UDHR proclaimed as follows (UN, 1948, p. 54):

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

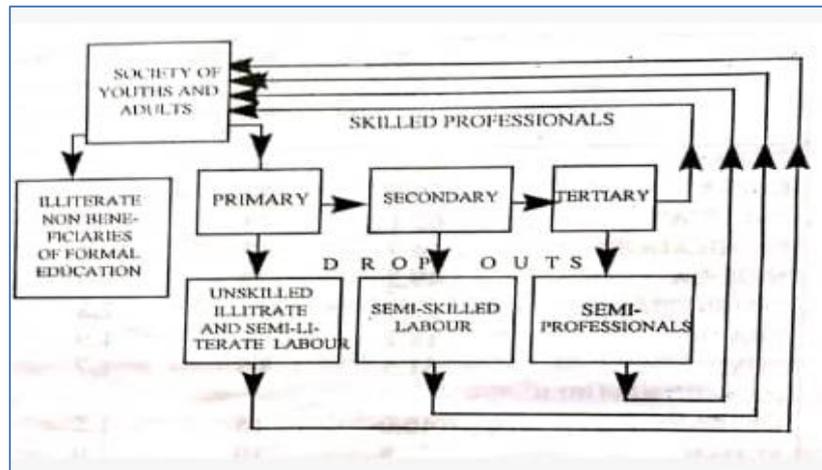
Following the UDHR, has been a worldwide Education for All (EFA) Advocacy/Movement initiated

by the UN in 1990 and placed under the charge of one of UN Agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the purpose of meeting, as of right, the educational needs of every human being – children, youth and adults (Wikipedia, 2020). The EFA Movement has passed through three significant stages between 1990 and 2015 with various levels of achievements of each stage’s goals (Eheazu, 2021).

Without prejudice to all these global efforts at ensuring human right to education which indeed simply translates to equality of opportunities in the education context, one indeed finds that such a provision for equal access is not quite feasible within the three-tier system of formal education (primary, secondary and tertiary) in the face of constraints posed by pervading differences in:

- i. Genetic endowments which affect mental capabilities and disposition to various levels of formal education;
- ii. Ethnological conditions (occupational tendencies, religious and customary beliefs about formal education, employment opportunities) all of which may affect individual motivation for embracing certain types or levels of formal education;
- iii. Social class which could generate disparities in the capabilities of families to provide for and ensure their children’s education. In this regard related research studies over the years (e.g. Eheazu, 1987) have shown that in Nigeria and many other developing countries:
  - (a) Inability of parents to settle the cost of their children’s education (transportation, fees, books and so on) has robbed many able and willing potential students of the opportunity of access to desired types of institutions and levels of education;
  - (b) In the particular case of Nigeria, political power and social positions of parents, the introduction of a quota system in Federal Government institutions, as well as general discriminatory admission policies in favour of the elite go a long way in determining access to the different levels of the educational system.

The impacts of the above natural and socio-economic inhibitions on formal education and schooling in any affected society are illustrated in fig. 1 below:



**Fig-1: The Input-Output Process in Formal Education**

Adapted from: Eheazu, B.A. (1998), Fig 1, p. 9.

A close analysis of Fig. 1 above would reveal that the outlined constraints to equal access to formal education severally and jointly lead to the existence of the following three main sad situations:

- i. A high percentage of adults in society who do not benefit from any level of formal education or dropped out too early from same and are thus illiterate (for statistical details, see Wikipedia, 2021a);
- ii. the incidence of high percentage of dropouts from the various levels of the three-tier system who constitute the unskilled, illiterate, semi-literate, semi-skilled or semi-professional labour force – depending on the stage of dropout;
- iii. The preponderance of illiterate non-beneficiaries of formal education, particularly in situations where primary education is not free and compulsory.

As also shown in fig 1, both the non-beneficiaries and dropouts as well as the skilled professionals stay in same society forming a great mass of adults for whom adult education has the challenge to provide various formal, non-formal and informal education programmes (basic literacy, remedial, further professional education and so on) as articulated earlier in this paper.

### **Adult Education as a Platform for Advancement of Moral Values Inculcation in Nigeria**

As has been made clear above, the impacts of the input-output process in formal education (fig 1) have generated masses of adults who are expected to benefit from the various programmes of adult education (from basic literacy to further professional education) deliverable through the formal, non-formal and informal modes. Obviously, this situation offers great opportunity to foster moral values inculcation among more and varying populations of Nigerians than would

be achieved through the usual concentration on primary and secondary levels of education. What may be necessary is to identify the requisite contents of the moral values to be inculcated through the said modes of adult education and according to the level(s) of the appropriate beneficiaries. Here, the various processes of developing moral education content suggested by Nduka and Iheoma (1983) and referred to earlier in this paper would be germane to effective inculcation of moral values through adult education. In all, however, consideration should be given to reflecting what has been identified as an appropriate cardinal aim of moral education in Nigerian educational institutions which Iheoma (1995,p. 190) explains as being “to resuscitate those traditional values which ensured a more just and egalitarian society in the past prior to the colonial experience”. Accommodation of the various beneficiaries and processes of moral values contents inculcation through the formal, non-formal and informal modes of education could be briefly articulated as follows:

#### **I. The Formal Mode**

This mode could involve inclusion in appropriate sections of the syllabuses/programmes of the basic literacy, secondary and tertiary institutions being attended respectively by illiterate adults, adolescents and young adults in Nigeria of relevant moral values and responsible behaviours they need to acquire. The method of delivering would be pedagogical for the secondary school young adults and adolescents, but andragogical for the adults in the basic literacy and tertiary institutions. The contents and delivery methods would be designed by experts in moral and adult education with sponsorship from the various Ministries of Education (Federal and State) and the National Universities Commission (NUC).

#### **II. The Non-Formal Mode**

The Non-formal mode is an alternative to the institutionally based formal mode. Accordingly, it is not systematically or hierarchically arranged like in a

school curriculum, but would address individual, group and community needs for specific moral values inculcation. The programme would be implemented virtually *in situ* as many of the societal members to be involved may not be able to leave their places of domicile. In effect, town halls, school halls, fishing ports, basic literacy centres and the like would serve as veritable centres for the non-formal moral values inculcation programme. The programme will take the forms of seminars, town hall meetings, conferences and workshops. Moral education experts and professionals in adult education would be invited to design the content and methodology for delivery. Funding of the programme would be done by Education Ministries and local donor agencies in Nigeria.

### iii. The Informal Mode

In this mode of education generally, learning takes place spontaneously, unintentionally and/or accidentally. It is also education that occurs outside an institutional or school setting and which is informative. It could take place anywhere and anytime. However, differences exist between one form of informal education and another, depending on the objectives to be achieved and the nature and dispositions of the target beneficiaries. With reference to the topic of this paper, the ultimate aim would be inculcation of desirable moral attributes and orientations among individuals and communities in various localities in Nigeria. The radio, the television, bill boards and mobile megaphones (where practicable) are among the channels to be used to inculcate desired moral values through the informal mode of adult education. Accordingly, well designed radio jingles and talks, television dramas, large attractive posters at strategic locations, as well as information passed through mobile megaphones and loud speakers could be used to impart the desired moral values informally to target groups. The services of moral education experts, professional artists and adult educators would be required to design and implement information programmes which should be funded by the various tiers of government (Federal, State and Local) in Nigeria with possible assistance from other agencies as mentioned in the case of the non-formal programme above.

### CONCLUSION

From the incisive discussion of the various elements of the topic of this paper, it is understandable that the unabating soaring level of moral decadence in contemporary Nigeria could be largely attributed to the sudden abandonment of the trade-cultural processes of inculcating moral values and adoption of foreign lifestyles and attitudes brought in by colonial masters and missionaries. Experienced Nigerian moral education experts seem convinced that a properly conceived approach (es) to moral education would help to improve the overall attitudes and moral orientations of 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerians. Suggestions on the desired approaches have included allotting moral education

specific slots in the curriculum of educational institutions, particularly the primary and secondary school levels. This, obviously, would leave out whole populations of non-beneficiaries of as well as dropouts from the said levels of formal educational institutions. It has been shown in this paper that adult education, which takes care of these and more people with little or no access to various levels of formal education, has the components, divisions, processes and techniques to inculcate moral values in various individuals and groups of Nigerians within its purview. Accordingly, it is quite apt to conclude that with the massive populations to be involved, adult education has the potential to advance inculcation of moral values in Nigeria and thus help to upgrade the moral tone of the Nigerian society. The processes of employing adult education to achieve this have also been articulated in this paper.

### RECOMMENDATION

In view of the clarifications on the topic of this paper and the conclusion arrived at above, it becomes irresistible to recommend that adult education be adapted towards the advancement of moral values inculcation in Nigeria using the processes enunciated here for the adaptation.

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