

THE RADIO AND THE TELEVISION IN THE MORAL EDUCATION OF A CHILD

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Preamble

The radio and the television, audio and visual techniques of transmitting information, knowledge and education to a wider audience, are eloquent testimonies of man's creative potentialities in recent times. Their power and influence on the contemporary and globalized human society can not be doubted. The young and the undiscerning adults are at the mercy of what they hear on radio or watch/receive through television sets.

Powerful members of the human society have amply exploited these techniques of mass-information to influence the life styles, including the behavior, character and opinions of both the discerning and undiscerning public. Because the radio and the television both affect and influence our choices, ideas and opinions, there must be an appraisal of their worth to the overall health and integral development of society. It is in this regard that this paper proffers to weigh the moral value and implications of the radio and television with other services and usages they could be employed.

Moral education is an asset which any wise society or individual wish to possess. The radio and the television could be applied effectively in the moral education of children and the sanity of all in the society. This responsibility is a duty which the sage, the patriotic, the mass media practitioners and well-meaning individuals owe the human society, especially one like ours, where ideological riots, mental infantism and attitudinal dependence are evident.

Explication of Terms

For brevity and for the purpose of our present considerations, we shall give the following contextual definitions to our operative concepts.

The Radio

The radio is an audio-electronic and mechanical device for dissemination and transformation of information, ideas and opinions to a wide audience. The radio is an eloquent child of science and

technology. Its history could be dated as far back as 1844 when an American inventor, Samuel Morse, introduced the telegraph, which made long distance communication a reality. See Baran (1999: 180). Later innovators in the 1800's made several attempts in perfecting the physics of sound and electrical waves by experimenting on the possibility of a wireless telegraph and wireless telephony. Alexander Graham Bell's invention and exhibition of telephone in 1876 told the world that long distance, wireless communication through voices was possible.

However, it was James Clark Maxwell, a Scottish physicist and mathematician who predicted that radio waves existed, and demonstrated that radiation system was possible using electromagnetically sent signals, in his published equations of 1864 (Baran (1999:181). So the radio has seemingly ubiquitous influence: it is personal, inasmuch as one could listen to it alone; and it is mobile, so long as it could be carried around or could travel with us to our different places of work and abode. In this sense, it makes sense to say that the influence of the radio in communication, information and education cannot be ignored by any sane society or sage.

The Television

The television is an electronic cum mechanical device for audio and visual instruction, information, education, advertisement, publicization, and massive outreach at ease and in leisure. It is a modern scientific-technological improvement (over radio) on dissemination or transformation of information and communication of ideas, ideals and goals. The television, like the radio, has its own scientific and technological history. It is a wonderful achievement of man's developmental instinct that has helped in easing the burden of existence, albeit, with its misuse. Kirpatrick (1983: 1330) defines the television in terms of "the electrical transmission of...distant objects, events and occasions", to a wider audience.

No doubt the television is among the latest scientific and technological advancements that have helped in making the universe a global village. It is at the beck and call of every "Dick and Harry" that is desirous to get informed, instructed, and entertained, in "the global culture or auto-socialization". Like the radio, it could be

listened to/viewed personally or collectively; it could also be mobile. In this wise, the television holds the capacity of widening man's horizon in handling his existential predicaments as well as the possibility of eclipsing man's dignity and morals. The television captures the two main empirical sources of receiving information viz: the eye (visual) and the ear (audio). Thus, like the radio, the television could be very powerful in its influence.

Moral Education

Contextually, moral education involves character formation, spiritual elevation, and social or cultural approbation. Moral education aims at imparting good social habits and norms which are capable of fostering integral human and dignified existence. Moral education has as its pre-condition the establishment of the sacredness and sanctity of life and existence.

The metaphysical dimension of moral education aims at the preservation, protection and refining of living and existence. The moral philosopher applies the prescriptive method in out-lining the "ought to be" and the "ought not to be" in existence. In this perspective also the moral philosopher is one of the gadflies or watchdogs of his age or society, highlighting those aspects of existence which he/she believes are worth upholding and criticizing or attenuating those habits or cultures in existence which he/she believes do not augur well with holistic existential preservation or upkeep.

Moral education from conventional or scholars' perspectives involves distinguishing wrong or bad actions from right or correct actions. By so doing the moralist or moral educator tries to influence the actions and behavior of the students/educands positively and objectively because it is hoped he/she should emphasize morally good actions. That is why moral education from etymological purview suggests leading out of bad norms, mores and habits to better conducts, behavior and actions since morality is rooted to "mores" which implies "norms", "customs", habits or way of life. Education on its part is rooted in the Latin word-"ex", which means "out of", and "duco", which means "to lead". Taking the two concepts together, "moral education" implies leading one out of bad human habits, conducts or behavior in view of proper development

of man's social, religious, economic, political, psychological and other aspects.

A Child

We shall briefly define "a child" here from five broad perspectives, namely: biological, constitutional, cultural, dictionary/lexical and psychological/philosophical viewpoints. Biologically speaking, a child is one who is undergoing physiological development and growth. The different biological organs or elements of a child are still undeveloped and therefore a child could not perform all functions requiring these bodily or biological constitutions.

From constitutional or legal perspective, a child is a legal entity or personality who is below certain statutory age limit. Usually the statutory records or constitutions of most societies or nations specify the age bracket of childhood. In most western and eastern countries, this age limit is usually below 14 years, while in most African countries like Nigeria, the constitution and other statutory records place one below 18 years of age as a child.

Culturally, a child could be defined in some societies in terms of immaturity in knowing the cultures and norms of the locality or establishment. Thus, not minding his actual age, a child is one who is not mature in the cultures of his people or in the ideals of his society/institution. From lexical purview, Kirkpatrick (1983: 218), defines a child as a youth; a very young person (up to the age of sixteen for the purpose of some acts of parliament, under fourteen in criminal law); thus, "childhood" is "the state of being a child; the time of being a child".

Psychologically or philosophically speaking, childhood or adulthood is a thing of the psyche or mind or spirit. One whose mind or "psyche" is at its lowest ebb is a child no matter how tall or huge he/she is in stature. If one's reasoning or intelligent quotient is low in action, utterance, behavior, and choice-making or decision-taking, we could classify him as immature and therefore a child. From psycho-philosophical perspective, childhood or adulthood is exhibited or acted, not inherent or impassive. Thus, one is trained to become an adult and not necessarily by age. So education, information, learning and knowledge make for maturity and adulthood.

Positive Aspects of the Radio and the Television in Moral Education of a Child

Most of the items or menus in a radio or television programme encourage the development of human character, intellect and physical prowess. The radio and television programme most often offer alternative formal or informal education for children, the youth or even adult listeners or patronizers. These two media of mass communication and education give knowledge of diverse sorts and inculcate in individuals the ways, manners, and habits of other people in order that they become not only aware of them but better able to appreciate and evaluate them appropriately.

Thus, through the means of the radio and the television, one is exposed to other people's views, cultures, and circumstances. This, no doubt, encourages the appreciation of one's cultures and those of others, the appreciation of one's environment and those of others, as well as the appreciation of existence generally. This appreciation leads to superior moral qualities of tolerance, unity and harmony in existence.

Moreover, the radio and the television, in their vast arrays of features, widen the horizons, visions, perceptions, articulation, reasoning and "weltanschauung" (world-view) of the child. They educate, inform, entertain, publicize, socialize, communicate and liberate individuals including children from pettiness and short-sightedness. Children could also learn good manners and etiquettes like respect for elders and authority through listening to radio or watching television programme. Thus, through their variety exhibitions and shows, the radio and the television inculcate in a child the good habits of accommodation, tolerance and open-mindedness.

The radio and television in their wide applications reach greater populations of viewers including children in education, formation, learning, teaching, publicizing, information and influencing. By so doing, they give holistic, apodictic, and effective education for the child. However, this holistic or integral education ought to be censored by a higher intelligence than the child's.

Both the radio and the television encourage concentration for the child and even their adult listener or watchers/viewers in order to follow the programme properly and effectively. They can also

impose self-restraint or control for the child or even adults to sit in a place to watch or listen to these programmes. By this act of self-restraint, the child is taught discipline and obedience in order to get at what one wants.

Finally, a child who listens to, or watches television and radio programme always or regularly is sure to get enough education, especially good morals, that could help him/her manage his/her existential problems or difficulties.

Negative Aspects of the Radio and Television in Moral Education of A Child

We must unequivocally state that even though the radio and television have come to stay in our society, their influence especially in the education and formation of children or the young must carefully be discerned. Such negative aspects of these two media of communication like eruption of creativity, originality and fastidiousness must keenly be evaluated and re-evaluated for the sound and integral health of the society. Gone should be the days when the radio and the television are purchased solely for the pleasure, the luxury or the entertainment which they offer. Behind the screens of the television and the sweet voices from the radio, we should be able to decipher whether or not they contribute to wholesome development of the entire human race.

It is not uncommon these days to see children or younger generation spending enormous time listening to radio or watching television programme. Most often parents and adults encourage this stupendous time consumption by leaving the children or the youth stay glued to radio and television programme irrespective of the items that are offered. It is arguable the type of education or formation this time consumption give children much as it is indubitable that it creates or develops idlers, charlatans, indolent and lazy hooligans.

Moreover, health inconveniences such as obesity, visual and audio problems are concomitant companions of regular television viewers and radio listeners. The constant sound waves which these media emit are also suspected to be the remote causes of hypertension and restlessness that are prevalent in the society today.

Care must, therefore, be taken to properly assess the values of the television and the radio.

Again, most radio and television menu give false promise of easy and "already-made existence". Children who keep glued to them, lose touch of reality and existence in their practical dimensions. This, no doubt, has encouraged the proliferation of copy-cats, imitators, pirates and plagiarists. Originality and creativity, which are the hallmarks of youthful exuberance and vigor, are gradually losing grounds in our globalized generation. From purely moral perspectives, the radio and the television have contributed enormously to the degradation of human dignity in our generation. Bad habits, manners and cultures which are show-cased, without censorship, are easily copied by children without much discernment. The increase in violence, cultic activities, man's inhumanity to man, which are prevalent in the human society today, could be traced to the remote or overt influence of the radio and the television. Sexual immorality, corruption and atheistic tendencies are also part of the cultures introduced through the radio and the television.

Combating the Bad Effects of the Radio and the Television in Education and Social Development

It must be stated, that moral education, specifically, is a function of a good moral philosopher, or a real pastor of souls, or he/she who is unmistakably concerned with the ultimate good of the society. The moral sage, the responsible media practitioners and the God-fearing pastors of integrity should be part of the censor team to monitor, evaluate and recommend items that should be parts of the programme for public consumption through the mass media of the radio and the television. This call for censorship of the materials for public influence, consumption and knowledge by censorship teams is very important now that we are living in a society bereft of sound morality.

The government, educational agents, religious and moral formations, instructors, directors, parents and well-meaning individuals should see this call for information censorship as urgent for the sanitization of our existential habitat in our age of "free-

information-flow”. The responsibility of the censorship – teams should include inter alia:

- a. Careful selection of the news items, programmes, information, advertisements for goods and services which the child, or indeed the general public, are exposed to.
- b. Scheduling appropriate time for different programme and items for visual and audio consumption of the child and the general public.
- c. Delineating the age boundaries for listening to watching some radio/television programmes and menu; and enforcing same (limitations of age) through appropriate “time-management” of programmes.
- d. Maximizing and appropriating proper times for airing or featuring religiously, morally and educationally-inclined programmes.

Given the numerous interest groups which Radio and Television journalists are responsible to, and given the ubiquitous influence of these two media of mass communication, we recommend the appropriation of “Radio – Television News Directors Association’s Code of Broadcast News Ethics” for all media practitioners. These standards and code of conduct which members of the Radio – Television News Directors Association should accept and should uphold are:

1. Strive to present the source or nature of broadcast news material in a way that is balanced, accurate and fair.
 - a. They will evaluate information solely on its merits as news, rejecting sensationalism or misleading emphasis in any form.
 - b. They will guard against using audio or video material in a way that deceives the audience.

- c. They will not mislead the public by presenting as spontaneous news, any material which is staged or rehearsed.
 - d. They will identify people by race, creed, nationality or prior status only when it is relevant.
 - e. They will clearly label opinion and commentary.
 - f. They will promptly acknowledge and correct errors.
2. Strive to conduct themselves in a manner that protects them from conflicts of interests, real or perceived. They will decline gifts or favors which would influence or appear to influence their judgments.
 3. Respect the dignity, privacy and well-being of people with whom they deal.
 4. Recognize the need to protect confidential sources. They will promise confidentiality only with the intention of keeping that promise.
 5. Respect everyone's right to fair trial.
 6. Broadcast the private transmissions of other broadcasters only with permission.
 7. Actively encourage observance of this code by all journalists, whether members of the Radio-Television News Directors Association or not."

This ethical code of conduct for Radio – Television News Directors is, “*prima facie*”, based on truth, honesty, transparency, objectivity and impartiality, which are sound moral prerogatives. We advert to them.

What we need to add, however, is that Radio – Television News Directors Association should incorporate in their membership, whether as full-time or associate members, the principal stakeholders in news consumption, opinions and influence of Radio – Television

programme such as parents and guardians from different fields of life, the state/society major representatives, religious and church representatives, moral sages or reputable philosophers.

Conclusion

It is evident from the foregoing that the Radio and Television are among the recent offspring of science and technology. Like all offshoots of science and technology, the radio and the television are both blessings and precious gifts which must be duly appreciated and handled with utmost responsibility. I have reasoned elsewhere that: “Science and technology can lead us to life or death, if they are able to lead us to both, then we should be wary about them”. (See: *Sparks of Wisdom*, p.104). What we have tried is to highlight the positive and the negative aspects of the radio and the television (children of science and technology) in the formation of the character, ideals and models for the child or the youth. We have also suggested ways of maximizing the benefits of the radio and the television in the moral education of the younger generation and indeed in the proper social development of the human society.

We may like to emphasize that the human society stands to gain tremendously if the radio and television are put to gracious and optimum utility. Through these two media of mass communication, the human society could be elevated to such a civilizing prodigy that history never experienced, if only the ambassadors of the future – the children are taken into proper considerations.

Thus, we conclude by re-echoing our clarion call that the sage, the patriotic and the God-fearing should rise to the responsibility of harnessing the benefits of the radio and the television in the proper moral and integral education of the child and society.

References

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