

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINING QUALITY EDUCATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper checked the moral decadence, social vices, academic backwardness, spiritual lack of warmth and formlessness which have eaten deep into our Nigerian society today. Social transformation is a task that must be carried out by any concerned citizen of any country in the world in which Nigeria is no exception. Christian Religious Education plays a vital role in sustaining quality education and social transformation in the country. The teenage and youth of any nation are no doubt the future leaders of any nation. Thus, any agenda that will enhance and bring about societal transformation must start and involve the teenage and the youth together if success is to be achieved in the country. These evils have brought about failure in academic performance, loss of ethical values, loss of educational standard, no respect for human life and dignity, total failure in moral standard, bribery and corruption in Nigerian education have become the order of the day, people no longer fear God nor live for Him. All forms of sexual immorality, indecency, abortion and lies have become a fashion and are no longer frauds or, as the taboos of those days in Nigerian Education. The scriptures clearly point out in the book of Romans 1:10-35 (v. 29-30) where Paul says they have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity although they know God's righteous decree that those who practice or do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also of those who practice them (v. 32). However, the paper proposed to address the objectives of Christian Religious Education in Nigeria, the Character of the Youth in Nigeria, the areas that needed transformation in the life of the Nigerian youths, and Christian Religious Education as a tool for social transformation.

Keywords: Role, Sustaining, Quality, Education, Religion, Vices, Spiritual, Christian, Social Transformation

Nigeria as a developing nation is undergoing a period of transformation economically, politically, religiously, educationally and socially and youths are the

centre of this transitional affair. This group (section) of Nigerian population is always the victim of circumstance either positive or negatively and mostly is the negative aspect of it that tends to have greater impact on their lives. One of which, is a social phenomenon called the computer age which has cut up with us as a nation and has now become one of the greatest channel of perpetrating evil among the youths and the school aged.

Nevertheless, the role of religion in development and transformation of societies can never be over emphasized. This is because religion plays a key role in capacity building and in formulating societal view as well as in regulating the behavior of people in the society. According to (Lateju, 2007) “Religion performs the function of social control, specifies norms and values which in themselves control public and private life. These norms are enjoined on the people as requirements of a higher supernatural order” as pointed by (Lateju, 2007) Religion is one of the outstanding component of the social structure, it shapes people’s relationship responses and reaction which influences individuals, families, community and beyond.

Religion has the capacity to empower, restore and liberate the dignity of Nigeria as a nation and our various institutions of learning. It supplies all kinds of moral anchorage which the society yearns for. It provides meaning to life, offering hope to the people, gives them courage and faith to overcome life obstacles and challenges. In view of the above challenges, this research work is timely, using Christian Religious studies as a tool to bring social transformation in some secondary schools in Nigeria, which will in turn bring positive development in the education field and progress to the nation Nigeria.

The rate of moral decadence as a result of corruption infiltrating the Nigerian society is so alarming and calls for immediate attention. Christian Religious Education has the capacity by the virtue of its teachings and belief to faster positive change, (Igwe 2013) observed that our society has drifted to a state of what today is called formlessness. The social problems that are common to some secondary schools in Nigeria include: cult in many students have knowingly or unknowingly join cultism in search of power, academic excellence, material possession and famousness.

What are the causes of this? This can be caused by broken homes, peer group anxiety, etc. To avoid this, parents should educate their children on evil implications of cultism; parents should create closeness with their children and give them the right counsel. *Drug abuse*: a lot of students are into drunkenness, smoking, drugs, etc in the name of being bold and strong to do any work.

Sexual immorality: these include teenage and premarital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, etc. this is done in the name of civilization and to feel belonged in the society: (Igwe 2013). Students should be told the implication of sexual immorality which results into sexually transmitted disease, HIV/AIDS, etc.

Sexual abuse: this include rape which most children who fall within school age are vulnerable to, by evil men and women, uncles, guardians, teachers and some parents,

PASCAS (1999) and Samuel Waje Kuniyo (2008) held that such acts results into hatred, unwanted pregnancy, VVF and psychological trauma, etc. therefore student are advised not to move with bad friends and to avoid indecent dressing that will expose their bodies to lustful attractions.

Absenteeism: this is a situation where by a child is not regular in school because of in genuine excuses. In such a case the parents should be invited to the school for dialogue.

Truancy: most students comes to school at any time they want and they leav the school at their wish. To address this, regular attendance should be taken to fish them out and punish them accordingly.

Internet fraud: a lot of students today are using computer and cell phones to steal, tell lies and to cheat and manipulate people.

Pornography: many students are in the habit of watching pornographic films, reading sexual magazine, applying makeup and indecent dressings: Kuniyo (2008) held that schools should ban such practices. Other social vices that are common to secondary schools in Nigeria are visiting cinema houses, pop music, romantic movies, stealing, bully, etc, (Kuniyo 2008).

History of Christian Religious Education

According to Moses, the prophet (Genesis 12:1-7) a new race after the generation of Noah was consumed and Abraham whom God called and revealed the knowledge of salvation to. The act of worship at that time was to raise an altar and offer sacrifices in recognition to God's presence in their midst. Later at the time of Moses, the worship of God became more elaborate and recognized with the introduction of the ten (10) commandments and the building of the tabernacle. Later these grew into synagogues and at the time of King Solomon the magnificent temple was built. The history of Christian Religious Education started from the activities that took place in the synagogue.

Quar Coopame (2009) talks about the synagogue school, which in the beginning, was the place of worship of Jehovah, the Jews always gather on the Sabbath day to read the scriptures which contain the law of Moses, the ten commandments etc. the activity of the synagogue later expanded to the teaching of the law to the Jews and their children and in the time of Jesus i.e. new Testament period. Synagogue was used both for worship on the Sabbath and other days of the week the synagogue would be used for school, where the children of the Jews were being taught the ten commandment, the mosaic law, the history of Israel involving the call of their father Abraham, their settlement and slavery in Egypt, the call of Moses and their movement out of Egypt, the wilderness experience and their settlement in Canaan the promised land.

They were also taught the feasts in Israel e.g. the feast of the Passover, the feast of the tabernacle, the feast of Pentecost etc. at the age of twelve children graduates from

the synagogue schools and were certified and were satisfied as the sons of the law. This was the case with Jesus, Apostle Paul, Gamaliel the teacher etc

Looking at the History of Christian Religious Education from the Old Testament to the New Testament stated above, we shall stream line our study to the background of Christian Religious Education in Africa through Nigeria. Korb, (2017) explained that Christian Missionaries initially came to evangelize Africans, however, they came t realize that this was not possible without teaching Africans how to read and write. They therefore, set up schools which they use as vehicle for evangelization and spreading of western civilization. However, this was the beginning of Christianity and formal education in Nigeria. Christian religious education which was known by different names at that time become one of the key subject in the school curriculum, to ensure its success in achieving the intended objective of evangelization, it was taught by identified persons with good morals and practicing Christianity.

Christian religious education, before and after the immediate post-independent year, was known by difference names such as religious instruction (RI) Bible knowledge (BK) Divinity, Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) and of recent Christian Religious Studies (CR5). CRK was provided by two major Christian denominations in Nigeria namely: Protestant and Catholic group. However, this has been taken over by the government who now take the responsibility of developing curriculum and recruiting teachers for the subject.

According to the National Policy on Education (2013) edition, the new Christian religious studies curriculum has the following content: it is assumed that the formative years for a child is from ages 1-15, therefore religious studies is made compulsory from primary 1-JSS III and made optional at the senior secondary level. The basic education curriculum which was revised in 2006 has again been revised in 2012 c.f. appendix 1 for the 2012 revised basic education curriculum. The 2006 curriculum has Christian religious studies and Islamic religious studies as completely independent and compulsory subject along with seven others out of the lower basic i.e. 4-6-9 others at the upper basic (JSS 1-3). But the 2012 curriculum made it an integrated subject called religious and values education.

The Objective of Christian Religious Education

According to Korb, (2017), Christian Religious Education has the following objectives, it should seek to: foster a personal consciousness of God as a reality to human experience and a sense of personal relationship to Him. Develop an understanding of appreciation of the personality, life and teaching of Jesus Christ which will lead to experiencing him as Saviour and Lord, loyalty to Him and his cause manifest itself in our daily life and conduct. Foster progressive and continuous development of Christ like character. Korb, (2014) added that a Christian should develop the ability and disposition to participate in and contribute to the building of a social order throughout the world embodying the ideals of the fatherhood of God and

the brotherhood of man. Develop the ability and disposition to participate in the organized society of Christendom. Develop an appreciation of Christian family and disposition to participate in and contribute constructive to the live of primary society. Lead people to interpret life in the context of God's purpose and plan, help people to assimilate the best religious experience in the Bible as effective guidance.

The Role of Christian Religious Education/Educator

According to Rev. Dr. Maiture, who was told a story of two missionaries that came to settle in his village (Kaltungo in Gombe State) we are a population of not less than 200,000 people, we have our own religion, cultural and traditional beliefs. The two missionaries, Elcrofort and Mr. Bingham came and settled in our midst having a vision and mission, the fear of God in their heart, disciplined and focus, persistent and determined only two of them, were able to change the entire people of Kaltungo in Gombe state, they change our religion, our traditions, our culture, our food, our dresses, our life style, our entire orientation to Godly pattern. This is because they have mission, they were focused on the mission and were persistent and disciplined to carry out this mission

If one or two persons, who are fellow human, can change the entire lifestyle and the orientation of entire settlement overtime such that today in the entire land of Nigeria, you can hardly trace a youth that is neither a traditional worshiper, nor serious church servant but you point out serious shrines worshipper for traditional worship. Considering this today, that we have thousands of Christians religious teachers in our churches, communities, schools and the nation and yet we record persistent failure in moral standard among our youth; this is to say that we the Christian Teachers have failed in our responsibility and have compromised the sanctity of this religion that was handed over to us by our previous Christian religious teachers from the missionaries.

Nevertheless, if there will be a significant and a lasting change in our society today, it must start with us the Christian religious teachers, we must pick up the challenge, looking at the life of the missionaries that brought the gospel and introduced this subject in our educational curriculum as stated above, we the Christian religious teachers should then go back to the drawing board to redefine our vision and mission and take up the task with all diligence and faithfulness, for it is written "faithful is he that calleth us" he will take us to an expected end, "He that beganeth a good work in us shall bring it to accomplishment (KJV)"

Looking at the above challenge we hope to consider the following role of a Christian religious teacher: Kure, (2000) opined that "Christian religious Educators are to be the Lord's Ambassadors on earth, a light to the dark society and salt to the sour world" This means that Christian religious educators are representatives of Christ. They should be seen as light to the society, place of work, government agencies etc. if you and I can shine no matter how little the light might be, I am so optimistic that darkness of corruption, terrorism and social vices will be dispelled with time. As Christian

religious Educators we should stand for the truth and the teaching on the reality of the evils of the contemporary Nigerian society if individuals would dare to take his/her stands in our different societies, working place, neighborhoods, government houses and agencies, business locations, market place, and institutions of learning to shine, the darkness of Nigerian society will experience drastic change and development.

Kwasua (2007) argued that credibility is a necessary need in one's personal life because it teaches more than words. The credibility of a Christian Religious Educator is something that he/she must value and protects if he must remain relevant as agent of transformation in the society. As Christian religious Educators, we should drive and preach peace as the scripture advised (Hebrews 12:14) it says "follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man can see the Lord" we should also be praying for ourselves and the nation because no transformation can take place without God's intervention. (I. Timothy 2:1-2) instruct that "first of all, I urge that supplications, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life, Godly and peaceful in every way"

Another role of a teacher is his or her academic qualification, Kwasua (2007) argued that the "development of any country depends very much on the education of its citizens and the education of its citizen depends largely on the quality of its teachers", the teacher in any school system is an all important factor. Evidently, every single thing that has any bearing upon the pupils or students in the school affects the quality of teaching. The qualification of the Christian Religious Education teachers particularly in Nigeria are quite embarrassing in the sense that apart from his academic and professional qualification he/she does not know anything (Kwasua, 2007). Christian Religious Education teacher, however need other qualifications before, he /she can be an effective teacher. Qualifications such as God centeredness care for his students, credibility, knowledgeable and organized. According to Kwasua, the teachers need to be qualified in Pedagogical skills and competences which require an up to date diverse teaching methods and techniques, classroom organization etc.

In the past emphasis rested upon the handling down of materials, imparting the information found in literature, arts, traditions or past experience. Presently, the real subject matter or curriculum is not the experienced of the race, rather every day experience of the learner's that is learning by experience etc. based on this, it becomes imperative that Christian Religious Education teacher should be well trained and should be examples of good moral

Ilori (1992) quoting Lawrence (1920) stressed that "the greatest need in our school is trained teachers who will put their whole mines into preparation and their whole life into their illustration" from the above, it is important that Christian Religious Education teachers should possess, full mastery of his subject, pedagogical skills of delivery and should also be moral.

Looking at the above requirements, the curriculum of Christian Religious Knowledge should reflect the need for societal transformation as well. Government should develop a holistic curriculum that addresses all facets of life that is moral, spiritual, academic, social and cultural rather than emphasizing on religious knowledge. The students should see education as an important period of preparation for their future life, and imbibe the right character that will be beneficial to them in future and the society.

Ilori, (2007) “as laity, sacred, we have a role as church, in relation to the proportion of justice’s fair play and moral transformation of Nigerian society. Church as an instrument and agent of transformation has not been indifferent in searching for solution to the array of problems. The contemporary church has now developed into community of faith and dynamism which has the potential to change people’s value and perception about life and “Nigerian factor. This can be done by the church through its bible teachings by rebuilding self understanding of it adherers to the moral standard of the bible and the society, reforming their attitude towards life in general so as to avoid social vices like terrorism, corruption, fraud etc.

If the church is to be seen as the light of the world, then it must lead as to how a country can transform itself from an oppressive Oligarchic regime to that of democratic, egalitarian society.

The role of Christina religious education in societal transformation can never be over emphasized in the sense that the Christian religious study teacher has a major task to play in bringing peace, cordial relationship between Christian religion and other religions also in national building. McCain, (2006) suggested that Christian religious teachers should teach that, the man was made in the image and likeness of God. They should clearly state that all men, irrespective of race, tribe, creed, religion or colour are made in Gods likeness and are entitled to dignity and right. The Christian religious education curriculum should begin to focus on the elimination of ignorance about other faith from basic level.

McCain, (2007) added that Christian religious education can help Christian students to interact and live in peace with people of other religion. It can also encourage dialogue, friendship, good leadership trait, Christian principles of democracy and governance. In this way the product at this educational phase can also contribute their quota in the substances of democracy and peaceful co-existence.

Nevertheless, Korb, (2014) contributed that Christian religious education either by the school or church procedures have the capacity of building lives of people for God and his kingdom and for responsible life or good leadership on earth. Modeling moral for good human relationship and molding considerate or rigid behaviour in communities or general society. Christian religious studies teachers are to embark on the service of reforming even the most difficult ones with fearful doubtful or dangerous and hopeless character, strengthening the effort of parents and teachers in building up children fulfilling glorious future with Godly standard

The Characteristics of the Youths

According to Anike, (2014) the youth of most countries in general and the African countries in which Nigeria is no exception are more than half of the entire population of the country. As future leaders of the country, many African leaders often channel the power and influence of the youth towards criminal tendencies quiet often because of the characteristics they are often used to perpetrate criminal activities like political tugs, kidnapping, vandalism hired assassin etc.

This should not be so; the characteristics of the youth should be channeled towards transforming them in order to take their proper position as the future leaders of the country. If there is any group of people in any nation that needs to be transformed and be carried along in any transformation agenda, they are the youth. The characteristics of the youth involve the following:

Impressionability: according to Korb, (2015) a young person's mind is like a blank exercise book the experience of childhood becomes the boosts for adult behaviour and values. A young child's mind is like wet cement. It is easy to make a mark on wet cement and even to change the mark immediately after they are made but when it is allowed to dry it becomes a permanent mark which can never be erase except by God's mercy. The impressions made on children during childhood and youthful age will determine the direction they will follow in life. No wonder the bible emphasizes the need to train and instruct children and youth (Prov. 1:7; 22:6), the classroom teacher has a lot to do here in creating the right impression on the youth or the student in and outside the classroom.

According to Korb, (2014), another character of the youth is physical strength energy and enthusiasm (Prov. 20:29) "the Glory of young men is their strength" this energy and enthusiasm needs to be directed in the right way. Most corrupt leaders often take advantage of these unique qualities of youth mostly in the negative ways, as political tugs, miscreants, vandal etc. there is the urgent needs to train educate and guide youth in to doing the right thing.

The Christian religious educators, who are classroom teachers, must take the task of moral and spiritual training serious. The training will have a lasting impact on their lives and will turn them in the right direction to serve God and humanity other than involving themselves in criminal activities with adverse consequences Korb, (2014) added that excitement and new ideas is another characteristic of the youth that has been greatly shown in the use of internet computer entertainment, shown business etc. they are easily influenced to change in way adults would never consider. This tendency has both secular and religious implications with teaching implication. The duty of the classroom teacher and the significant adults in their lives is to help them channel the new ideas and excitements into the proper areas that can be of positive values not only to them but the entire nation.

Youth are good disciples or followers of any course; due to the fact that youth are interested in exciting entry, and new ideas, they quickly follow and copy ideas of

people, this has influence their mode of dressing, attitude, general outlook life style and almost every aspect of their lives, the classroom teachers should be available to transform these areas of the youth life the moment he or she notices this changes in the life of the youth.

Lack of mature wisdom and judgment; because of this characteristic of youth, the classroom teacher must teach the youths by their exemplary Christian living and their lessons so that they may gain the wisdom they need for Godly living. The story of Rehoboam son of King Solomon is relevant here (1Kings 12).

Needed Transformation among Youth

The areas that needed transformation in the lives of the secondary school age youth involve value and attitude.

According to Korb, (2017) values are desirable moral disposition exhibited by individuals in the society, there is need for the transformation of the value of youths, their exposure to foreign media via internet services and other technological based media has eroded the core values cherished by Nigerians in the lives of the youth; values of dignity of labor, integrity, sanctity of human lives, accountability, probity, truthfulness, collectives sense of responsibility of what happens to others in the society etc, these values have been corded in the lives of most youth of Nigeria, the result of the loss of these core value are evident in what we are seeing as moral decadence and insecurity in Nigeria. There is the need for classroom teachers to teach these values in their various lessons in Christian religious studies, also the need to draw moral lessons from the various bible topics to promote the inculcation of these much needed values.

Never the less, change of attitude is another factor in the transformation of the lives of the youth, students attitude exhibited by most youth today are unacceptable. Attitudes of insubordination disrespect to parents, elders and constituted authorities, non-challenge in the discharge of their duties both in the school and home. The classroom teacher is charged with the responsibilities to promote acceptable attitude among the youth and the students.

Christian Religious Education as a Tool for Transformation

All form of education is for the transformation of the world, It is important to note that any and all education that is received should have the word of God as its foundation. This is not to imply that the bible is text book on anything but rather, that the bible is to be the point of reference from which we can evaluate all other source of knowledge.

According to Cates (1975); Christian education is a process of guided teaching where the teacher and the Holy Spirit combines effort to help the learner to spiritually grow and mature and conform to the image of Christ. The scope of field of Christian Education through guided Bible truth, it's not limited to Biblical exposition. A Christian school seeks to develop the learner's world view perspectives that enable him to

understand, appreciate and live a Christian life in the world in which God has placed him. The schools education hopefully, shall help individuals develop the ability to separate truth from error, not only in bible doctrine,, but also in the facts and issues of his everyday life.

According to Ilori, (2005), capacity building goes beyond the provision of basic need it is a matter of development at all level of the society, including institutional developments, community development and economic development.

Christian education strengthen parties ability to work together for their mutual benefit by providing them with the skills and tools they need to define problems and issues and bring out solution.

Sule Cletus (2014) Christian Education Centers on Development, it leads to the production of trained and skill man power who are inseparable in bringing about transformation in the system of teaching their students, for example the skill requires participation activity in developing society, create job opportunity by empowering individual and Christian who will take responsibility for their welfare and that of their families. This means funding social programmed to foster human development and organizing training session to develop people's knowledge and skills.

The teaching of Christian Religious Education plays vital role in socio-political and economical transformation as the basis which all academic pursuit are built, it develop human personality and intellectual, by keeping the learner informed of their right and responsibilities about legislation polity and critical independent.

Conclusion

Looking at the challenges of the youth of our time, especially the secondary school students as stated in chapters two and four above, the greatest need of our society today is godly home where the life style of parents will create a sound atmosphere for proper child upbringing. The second thing that the society needs is well-trained and God fearing teachers who will put their whole life in their career, hence it is important that Christian religious education teachers possess full mastery of his/her subject, the skill of delivery and should also be moral for no one gives what he does not have. Therefore the character and behavior of Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) teachers must exemplify that of Christ whom he/she preaches. Government should develop a holistic curriculum that addresses all faces of life that is moral, spiritual, academic, social and cultural rather than emphasizing on religious knowledge. The students should see their school education as important period of preparation for their future life, and imbibe the right character that will be beneficial to them in future and in the society; else their future will be destroyed or wasted by what they do now.

Recommendations

Looking at all that is contained in this research work, the recommended the following:

- i) The church should imbibe the social teachings of Jesus Christ in their messages and Sunday school teachings, Education department of the church, facilitators of the bible studies, etc should be sound in their teachings and lifestyles. The church and parents should continue to double their efforts in meeting the spiritual needs of the youths and teenagers;
 - ii) Since religion is a powerful force in nation-building and societal transformation, the teachers of Christian religious education and other subjects like social studies, civic education, etc should centre on the sound truth of tolerance, honesty and social transformation;
 - iii) The teaching of Christian religious education should be given special attention in schools, teachers must demonstrate the qualities that is enumerated in this research works;
 - iv) The need for training and retraining of CRK teachers should also be given special attention so that they can be up-to-date on the current trends in education for societal transformation and curb with the current challenges in teaching secondary schools
 - v) The curriculum of Christian religious education should be holistic curriculum that addresses all faces of life such as moral, spiritual, academic, cultural and social values
 - vi) Christian religious educators should live by example not by words alone and reflect these “if everybody is like me, how will Nigeria society be? Teachers should be models.
- Finally, to achieve social transformation in the lives of the secondary school students and to raise youth that are completely sound, physically, socially, mentally, morally and spiritually. It is then the responsibility of all including the parents, teachers, the church, government, the community and the child himself.

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