

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AS A MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE SEVEN-POINT AGENDA OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

There is need to encourage the teaching of Christian Religious Studies of all levels of our educational system in order to teach the values and virtues that are necessary for the achievement of the Seven-Point Agenda in Nigeria. On the basis of the above statement, the paper examines the various programmes of the federal government of Nigeria including Seven Point Agenda, the concept and national objectives of CRS, and some empirical studies on the problems of the various government programmes in Nigeria. In addition to the above, the paper also examines the relevance of CRS to the achievement of the objectives of Seven Point Agenda with appropriate conclusion and recommendations.

Introduction

Since independence, every successive government of Nigeria has made sporadic attempts and frantic efforts to improve the quality of life of the Nigerians through the improvement of the socio-economic and political sectors of the country. In the process of doing this, so much financial, human and material resources have been invested in these gigantic national project.

To start with, the Green Revolution by President Shehu Shagari, Operation Feed the Nation by Olusegun Obasanjo, and the Mass Mobilization for Social and economic Recovery by President Ibrahim Babangida were efforts by the government to boost food production and sustainable socio-economic development to improve the quality of life of the Nigerians. Unfortunately, much of the resources injected into the various national projects have been met with disappointments, frustration and failure. The failures of these national programmes by the various governments may be attributed to either lack of political will by the government, misplacement of priority, mismanagement of resources or corruption. The present Seven Point Agenda by President Shehu Yar'adua's government is another good attempt to make life meaningful for Nigerians. For example, the famous Seven Point Agenda includes provision of better life for Nigerians through the following sectors:

- 1) Education
- 2) Agriculture
- 3) Security
- 4) Electricity
- 5) Employment
- 6) Health
- 7) Transportation and electoral reforms.

At this juncture, it should be mentioned that certain national problems, such as lack of good will by the government, misplacement of priority corruption and mismanagement of resources that effected the realization of the objectives of the various government programmes should be properly addressed in order to be able to achieve the objectives of the Seven Point Agenda in full. It is on the basis of the above exposition that the teaching of Christian Religious Studies in the schools to inculcate virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, steadfastness, patriotism and transparency in government officials and Nigerians becomes necessary for effective implementation and the realization of the objectives of Seven Point Agenda in Nigeria for Nigeria for national development.

Conceptual Clarification and National Objectives of Christian Religious Studies

According to National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) (1992) Christian Religious Studies is an academic discipline designed for the moral and spiritual development in the country. Similarly, Lekwat (2000) also defined CRS as veritable channel of acquiring a sound moral and spiritual development for peaceful co-existence. In the context of this paper, Christian Religious Studies is a course of study that inculcates in the recipients a sound moral and spiritual development for harmonious relationship between God and men, and between man and his fellow human beings.

National Objectives of Christian Religious Studies

The national objectives of Christian Religious Studies according to NCCE (1992) are as follows; the learners should be able to:

- i. Demonstrate sound knowledge and appreciation of the moral values needed to live as a Christian in the various stages of growth and development
- ii. Express accurately and respectfully what the various churches and religious groups believe and practice and to eliminate prejudice and intolerance.
- iii. Explore the place and significance of religion in human life and to make a distinctive contribution to one's search for a faith by which to live.
- iv. Logically resolve tension and conflicts arising from interplay of traditional practices and gospel values
- v. Radiate attitudes and values which are typical of a nature and responsible member of the Christian community such as love, respect, honesty and service.
- vi. Demonstrate professional proficiency for teaching CRS in the primary, junior and senior secondary schools; and
- vii. Express satisfactory intellectual capacity to benefit from further education in CRS.

It can be deduced from the above laudable national objectives of CRS that the discipline is meant to produce a well behaved cultured community of people whose ways of life are associated with discipline, tolerance, honesty, kindness and steadfastness necessary for the attainment of the objectives of Seven-Point Agenda in Nigeria.

Empirical Studies on the Problems that Militated against Various Government Programmes in Nigeria

Hauson (1999) in his study on the problems that militated against the success of government programmes in Nigeria revealed inadequate funding. According to his findings, government in power often invests much of the available financial resources on electoral campaign in order to perpetuate itself in power. The finding of his study also revealed lack of strong economic base to support government programmes. According to his findings over dependence on revenue from the oil sector with its fluctuating international prices is not good enough to actualize the objectives of any government programmes.

Dare (2006) in his study on the problems of government programmes in Nigeria identified inactive involvement and participation by non-governmental agencies. This situation therefore puts the financial responsibility on the government alone. This is not good enough for the actualization of any government programme.

Another study by Alfred (2000) on the problems that militated against the success of government programmes in the past revealed corrupt practices. According to his research findings corrupt practices such as bribery, tribalism, nepotism and mismanagement of government funds were part of corrupt practices that marred previous government programmes in Nigeria.

Crampton (1999) in his study on the problems militating against government programmes revealed lack of accountability and transparency. According to his research finding most government officials unlawfully enriched themselves in the process of implementing government programmes in Nigeria.

A similar study by Johnson (2000) on the problems militating against government programmes in Nigeria revealed dishonesty. According to his research finding, government often pays lip services to some of its programmes without the necessary political will to really execute them. It can be deduced from the outcome of his study that, dishonesty arising from false political promises can affect the execution and the realization of the objectives of any government programmes.

The Relevance of CRS to the Achievement of the Seven-Point Agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria

The teaching of CRS at the various levels of our educational system can have positive effects on the achievement of the seven-point agenda of the federal government in various ramifications.

Morally speaking, the high level of moral decadence, indiscipline, corruption and other vices that are prevalent in Nigeria today are largely due to ineffective teaching of CRS. Apart from the academic aspect of our education system which develops the intellect of the teeming youth in the

regular and irregular educational programmes the teaching of CRS is necessary to also develop the moral and spiritual wellbeing of the youths. This development is necessary for the achievement of the Seven-Point Agenda in Nigeria.

Socially speaking, through the teaching of CRS the nation shall be able to boast of a community of people whose ways of life and actions will produce the needed peace, harmony, kindness, patriotism and tolerance and love of ones neighbour and country required for the attainment of the Seven-Point Agenda in Nigeria for national development.

Economically speaking, the teaching of CRS at all levels of our educational system will curb corrupt practices such as misappropriation of funds, embezzlement mismanagement of government resources fraud, and money laundering. The teaching of CRS involves the inculcation of the fear of God in the recipients in order to be modest and humble in all aspects of life. The teaching of these values and the ability of the recipients to inculcate these cherished values is a necessary pre-requisite for the achievement of the Seven-Point Agenda of the federal government of Nigeria.

In the political aspect, the teaching of CRS can lead to the political development of an individual. The teaching of the right political values such as respect for constituted authorities, free and fair elections, acceptance of election results, security of life and property required for the attainment of the objectives of the Seven-Point Agenda in Nigeria. Through the teaching of CRS in our schools political thurgery and hooliganism, can also be eradicated in Nigerian politics.

Spiritually speaking, CRS programme is geared towards the production of individuals who possess full awareness of God's relationship with man and whose personal character and discipline reflect authentic Christian values and virtues, such that they will be able to function effectively as custodians of sound moral and spiritual qualities required for the attainment of the objectives of Seven-Point Agenda of the federal government of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The importance of the teaching of CRS at all levels of our educational system cannot be overemphasized. The teaching of CRS promotes the teaching of virtues such as honesty, patience, tolerance, peaceful coexistence, fear of God, harmony, discipline transparency and accountability required for the achievement of the Seven-Point Agenda of the federal government of Nigeria in all ramifications.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of the relevance of CRS to the achievement of the Seven-Point Agenda of the federal government of Nigeria, the following suggestions are advanced.

- 1) The Seven-Point Agenda programme should be adequately funded.
- 2) Non-governmental agencies, as well as other national and international agencies should be sensitized to participate in financing the Seven-Point Agenda.
- 3) The teaching of CRS should be encouraged at all levels of our educational system to inculcate the right moral, spiritual, social, political and economic values in the Nigerians.
- 4) Government should through its various relevant organs ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of Seven-Point Agenda programmes in Nigeria.
- 5) Government should put in place effective monitoring mechanism to ensure effective implementation of the Seven-Point Agenda.
- 6) Only government officials who have been tested and found to be people of integrity should be given leading role in the implementation of the Seven-Point Agenda programme.
- 7) Good governance that is very fundamental to the execution and sustenance of any government programmes should be enhanced.

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