

# THE PLACE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN POST-PRIMARY INSTITUTIONS: ITS IMPLICATION AND RELEVANCE TO NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

There is need to be aware of the implication and relevance of religious education in Nigeria especially in the post-primary institution today. Our society is today being threatened by state of insecurity both from within and without among which-are poverty, oppression, persecution, humiliation, deprivation, degradation, deterioration, degeneration and dehumanization, The above situation has been on the lips of almost every Nigerian, both within and in diaspora. The only way to tackle the situation is through God because with God all things are possible. This paper, therefore, examines the implication and relevance of religious education in post-primary institution with a view to explaining effective ways of tackling the problem. Few suggestions are given before conclusion.

## **Introduction**

The youth are found at all levels and in all categories. They simply reflect the values of the society. The demonstrative effect of the adult world is too strong. The values and demands of social dictates on them are too strong to allow them to develop a counter culture. They also preclude radical action and radical thinking. Several of the demonstrations of "student power" in Nigeria have had to do with their own well being as students. And also their concern in some issues affecting them like Scholarships, accommodation, structure courses and examination, number of unites to be taken and passed, type of certification agitation for or against removal of school authority. The implications and relevance of religious education in post-primary institutions, family, the Church and the entire Nigeria should not be over emphasized. The mass media have made the world very small and brought about that is known in some quarters as the 'international culture of the youth: hence the contemporary youth found mostly in post-primary institutions in Nigeria now possess the capability of a world-wide exchange of ideas in language, dress, fashions and attitudes toward life. The trend certainly does alarm the elders and some of those in authority especially some good parents, teachers, the Church and the society. Mass media is good and is one of the essential means of conveying the good news to the masses but some aspects of it lead to broken families, divorces, murder, suicide, armed robbery, and other evils, which are contrary to the teaching and doctrine of the church and the entire Nigerian culture. Parents and teachers are encouraged to be attentive to watch out those ones and discourage the youth from participating in them. Some of them have instead adopted what may be regarded as a "**mind-your-business**" kind of attitude and culture which is contrary to the African community and extended family system and the African way of being one's "brother's keepers".

## **The fundamental Religious Education**

The family, which is founded and given by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives. Its first task is to live with fidelity the reality of communion in a constant effort to develop an authentic community of persons.

The family must be encouraged to take seriously the religious education in order to educate the children for life in such a way that each one may fully perform his or her role according to the vocation/career received from God. The concrete example and living witness of parents are fundamental and irreplaceable in the life and religious education of (heir children. The family has a vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that can enhance the development if the society. Thus far from being closed in on itself, the family is by nature and vocation, open to other families and to society, and undertakes its social role. (John Paul II 1981).

## **Abdication of Parental Responsibility**

Some parents give up caring for their children once they attain teenage age. They challenge the

children to go out and fend for themselves as best they can, as well as provide for their parents and the younger children in the family. All too often, they do not care to ask how the children do it, as long as they do it. Most often, they compare them with their counter-parts who are considered as having "made it". Some mothers even sent their young girls to look for money by any means possible. These girls are generally prey to all sorts of evils.

### **Why Religions Education in Post-primary**

The world is today witnessing a modern version of the long discredited practice of slave trade. It is called woman trafficking, a system whereby women and girls are sold and bought for the purposes of providing sexual gratification to fee-paying clients. The process follows a recognizable pattern.

Someone approaches a girl or young woman here in Nigeria with the promise of gainful employment or an educational opportunity in Europe. Given the depressed state of the Nigerian economy and the absence of gainful employment for the vast majority of young Nigerians; the person who I approached accepts the offer to her. The contact then sets in motion a complex machinery of obtaining travel documents, most of them forged, for the new recruit. Nowadays, girls at twelve years of age are being recruited. They are considered to be less likely to be infected with the HIV/AIDS virus than older women.

### **Causes of the Problem**

#### **Poverty**

Nigeria is not a poor country perse. Any nation that is as blessed as Nigeria in terms of human and material resources cannot realistically be said to be poor. Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of the "black gold", crude oil. .In the midst of all that wealth, the vast majority of Nigerians are desperately poor. They are simply living from hand to mouth. In not a few families parents are out of work, children's school fees cannot be afforded, rents have accumulated, and food is in short supply. Times are really hard. That is a perfect situation for parents and children to fall for bogus promises of good times abroad, with the prospect of earning foreign exchange that will convert into tons of Naira back home in Nigeria. •

#### **Illiteracy**

With the high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria, many parents can neither read nor write, while their children are attending fourth rate schools, where they learn next to nothing. As a result, both groups are easily deceived by simply pick hard currency off the street.

#### **Corruption**

The high level of corruption in Nigeria makes it possible for unscrupulous parents to use official channels to secure bogus travel documents for new recruits into prostitution abroad. At times there is corruption even within the foreign missions themselves, making it possible for criminal-minded persons to procure VISAS for a fee.

#### **Greed**

Not to be discounted is the greed of some of the victims and their parents. They want to make a lot of money and live beyond their means. They believe they can do that by earning hard currency in Europe, which they can then convert to a lot of local currency to feed their greed. As a result, some of the so-called victims of women trafficking are not really victims. They are persons who have gone abroad for the purpose of prostitution, fully aware of what they were going into.

#### **Peer group pressure**

Many young women and girls fall prey to pressures from their peers, who they perceive as having "made it". They want to make it too, and be able to flaunt their affluence like those people, not knowing or caring how they "made it".

#### **Moral decadence**

Undoubtedly, the most potent cause of the evil of trafficking in women is the moral decadence that has overtaken our land. So many people, young and old, have lost the sense of right and

wrong. They will do anything for the sake of money, including putting their bodies on sale. Such is the situation that has given rise to a dangerous slogan: "if you can't beat them, join them". This situation is not unconnected with the ill-advised take-over of church and voluntary agency schools in most part of Nigeria. In the schools taken over little or nothing is taught about religion and morality. Consequently, there is a near-total loss of the sense of God. Where a people have no sense of God there can be no sense of sin either. This is one of the tragedies of contemporary society in both Africa and Europe.

### **School**

The role of the school should be that of assisting and completing the work of parents, furnishing children and adolescents with love as well as the value and task of the whole person. It is the role of teachers to form the young, thereby helping them to become effective citizens. In educating the young in post-primary institutions to participate fully in the society, the teachers demonstrate their solidarity with Pope John Paul II, who exclaimed; "if you hear the Lord's call, do not reject it! Cultivate ideals proper to your age, but readily accept God's plan for you" (John Paul 1981). Since the youth are the future hope of the Church and the entire Nigeria no amount of care or love is too much to shower on their formation and education. Teachers and Lecturers in post-primary and higher institutions are encouraged to do anything within their power to ensure sound religious education. They can also introduce games, symposia and quizzes, cultural and play group (Odey, 1997). They can as well train young men and women to be active participants in worship and in serving the Church. The members of the Church are also urged to offer all the young people care derived from the ideals and standards of the Gospel (Castel, 1986).

Teachers and lecturers during moral instructions should, lay more emphasis on good moral life. Parents ought to play a vital role in their children's' lives especially during adolescence and youth. Therefore, by preaching the Good News, the church unfolds for the Christian family its true identity, enabling all to live in accordance with the plan of God,

### **The Contemporary Youth**

The contemporary man is not comfortable with the denial of access to goods and benefits of the society, as well as the absence of social security. The absence of functional or reliable infrastructure and utilities such as electricity, water supply and telecommunication leads many to seek costly alternatives that are far beyond their reach.

Another focus that needs special attention is the mass media. It has a special impact on the youth especially culturally. Today, African parents, teachers, the Church and the entire society are worried and alarmed by the youth influx into towns, even into cities in European countries in search of jobs or comforts. It is observed when they come back that they have lost to varying degrees their cultural identity and some of their traditional cultural values.

From every indication, it is very clear that the problem in Nigeria today finds its root from the adult world or from parents who neglect their duties as parents, not to mention the socio-political, and economical situation which strike the youth always on the face. How can one study under a tensed condition, no comfortable classrooms, no seats, not to mention air conditioner during summer when the weather is generally very warm. (Uzukwu, 1985).

Among other things, the religious education should be the priority in the Nigerian education system because apart from their natural families, the next formator is the school. They encounter them from their kindergarten level to even university level. The school has greater opportunity to form the young. In some private schools, Reverend sisters, fathers, and some good parents are sole proprietors of school and the school curriculum is under their control and sound moral doctrine and the teaching of the Church should take precedence among other things.

It is also clear that most of the youths study outside their homes and most of the time far away from their parents. They are most of the time with their teachers especially those in boarding houses. It is therefore the main duty of teachers teaching in such schools - like the parents at home - have to love, respect their job and be morally disciplined so as to command authority and respect from the youth. Teachers in forming the youth "need to love, work, pray and play with the youth in order to establish and develop, between themselves and the youth, that sense of community (Uzukwu, 1985).

In the religious education - especially with girls - there are certain criteria that make for fidelity in marriage and that prevent broken marriages and divorce. These should be taught to the

young as part of their formation because gone are the days when people are ignorant about sex education. There are some factors that are favourable to fidelity on the part of the husband:

The wife should be a good housekeeper, pleasant with her husband, calm, watchful of her figure, careful about spacing her pregnancies, a good manager of the family and the family budget, respectful of tradition, capable of portioning out her affection between her husband and her children, careful about her hygiene (Beya, 1997).

The formation of youth is not just the spiritual aspect of it but the entire person by following the signs of the times. A consistent realistic analysis will provoke the emergence of projects that will make things happen, bring the desired changes and make the youths and the Church under whose auspices they are performing, some functions. The organization of symposia, seminars, crusades, conventions and rallies, will be means of conscientization, education and promotion of youth programmes. The organisation of competitions, contests and quizzes will help sharpen the spirit and practice of perfection and excellence in talents. And the use of media by the youth as well as other literacy avenues like publications, circulation's of relevant and well-prepared papers, information and journals will massively promote religious education of the truth and elimination of falsehood and mediocrity.

### **Conclusion**

The young are from the greatest extensions and prolixities of the region, to near ubiquity. If there is any group that can penetrate to the farthest nook and crannies of religious education, it is the youths. Thus, they are to be made to carry the message of teaching, living and witnessing Christ to these corners. They are to confront with love and solicitude the different layers of the community. The unbelievers are to be treated with love and dialogue; they both in the sense of cult system, armed robbery, and in the sense of carelessness, indifference and downright negligence of the faith. The different sects that confuse the people should also be their locus of truth proclamation. The mission to the disadvantaged, the sick, poor, abandoned and lonely is also a youth pre-occupational endeavour.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Federal and the State Governments are encouraged to insert in curriculum religious education at all levels of our educational system.
2. Parents to inculcate in their children the fear of God and good moral behaviour.
3. Parents to provide for their children good, religious and educative home videos.
4. Parents should ensure that the family eats together in one place at least once a day. Dipping from the same pot encourages a communion of love.
5. Go to Church together every Sunday and receive the Sacraments regularly with your family members.
6. Family get together is necessary at least once a month. Discussions should include religious topics, Bible study and learning of catechism along with topics of current affairs.
7. Let every member of the family be involved in the family chores according to age and other involvement.
8. Parents to sponsor worthwhile concepts like dignity of labour, fair judgment, justice, respect for life, personal responsibility and collective responsibility.
9. Parents to sponsor all aspects of life that promotes the basic virtues of prudence, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, piety, religion, honesty, etc.
10. Model the family on the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph founded on humility, poverty, work and detachment from worldly pleasures and treasures.
11. Provide a library in your home for Christian literature, Bibles, magazines, video cassettes, newspapers, etc.
12. Display in prominent places holy pictures, images, crucifix, so as to remind members of your family, of the lives of Christ, Mary and Saints (for Catholics).
13. Encourage the use of Vernacular proverbs, idioms and folklores as a means of giving moral instructions to your children.
14. Give the children sex education at the appropriate age on the purpose of sex, chastity as a virtue, virginity, venereal diseases, AIDS, divorce, etc.

15. inculcate in the family members the defense of the family name, dignity and honour by good behaviour and achievement.
16. Watch the company that the children keep and the effect of the societies or persons on the good behaviour of the children. Ensure that they do not join secret or dubious societies.
17. Encourage the children to adopt vocations to the religious life through exposure and help them to live pious lives.
18. Make friends of your children so that they will grow up to confide in their parents all through their lives (Ugorji, 1997).

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