

# THE ISSUES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY IN NIGERIA.

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## **Abstract.**

This paper focussed attention on the definition of religion and issues in religious education in Nigeria. The paper also highlighted the concept of sustainable development and how religious education helps in national development. Problems of religious education and solution to the problems of religious education in Nigeria were also discussed. Finally, conclusion and recommendations are made.

Religion is belief in God or super natural being. It concerns man's commitments to his object of belief. It helps to regulate man's behaviour to his fellow men and his physical environment. Idowu (1986) in NCE/DLS course book on primary education studies cycle 3 defined religion as "the ultimate fact of human nature in his belief in the existence of the super natural". It is a personal conviction of what man beliefs and adheres to as supreme. Moral education is the process through which religious principle, practices and values are transmitted from generation to generation. It involves systematic treatment of issues concerning religious matters. All religions, preaches peace and where there is peace, sustainable development can take place. Religious education preaches against evil vices like bribery and corruption, murder, robbery, drug abuse, prostitution and so on in the society. When the society is free from all evil vices, national development can take place. The transmission of religious education should not be left for the educational institution alone, but should be by a combined effort of every body in the society. Peter (1970) in NCE/DLS course book on primary education studies cycle 3 defined religious and moral education as "a direct teaching of issues concerned with right conduct".

## **Issues in Religious Education**

Religious education broadens the child's out look on issues affecting religion and it eliminates religious fanaticisms in the society since religious matters are debated out rightly in the class. It encourages the learner to see God at the centre of every happening in mans life and it makes the learner to respond to Gods love through worship, faith and obedience to His will. It improves the learner's relationship with God and promotes morality. The responsibility of imparting religious education should be that of everybody in the society and should not be left to the educational institutions alone. Religious education helps spiritual development of the learners and make them differentiate right from wrong and good from evil. It helps one to choose the best from situations. When the teachers of religious education do not show good example, the followers will do the same thing. The government needs to encourage teachers of religious education in our educational institutions. The government should take note that, it is through religious education that the young ones are introduced to the moral requirements of the society and these help them to develop good character. Proper religious education will make the children avoid violence and crimes. Nigerians need to have at the back of their minds that no amount of material wealth can lead them to heaven.

There is the saying that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom". It is good that everyone need to be prepared to live exemplary life for others to copy. Sanity must prevail in our political, economic, social and religious institutions and this must begin at home with the parents, at the school with the teachers and with all other soundness or completeness. Personal integrity has a very high sense of regard. People need to be fully

aware of the expectations of the law and abides by them without being forced. This makes one upright in his dealings and honest in his ways. With the knowledge of religious education, personal integrity will improved.

**Patriotism** This one involves self-sacrifice to promote the general good of a country. It is some ones readiness to defend and maintain the right and freedom of ones country. When one is patriotic, obeys the command of the government e.g. pay your tax willingly, respect the right of the others within the nation. Pray for the leaders continuously and show love to God and fellow men and do justice. Religious and moral education will make one to be patriotic.

**Respect for Law and Orders** This is a set of rules made by the authority for a better regulation of the community and therefore, religious education should teach religion and the need to abide by the laws of the country. Law guide conduct of life and punishment is duly stated for those who break the law. Order is to remand people to obey laws and regulation. Order is a way in which things are placed in relation to one another. With good knowledge of religious education, respect of law and order will be maintained. There must respect and honour for those in authority. Right from childhood there need to be respect for parents as head of the house. Those in power should be recognize e.g. the president.

Religious education will equip individuals with good education which will make them avoid doing wrong things like cheating, stealing, bribery and corruption etc: Ilori (1994) saw religious and moral education as “right or wrong of an action, rules of conduct based upon the principles of right conduct rather than on law or custom”.

#### **Problems Facing Religious Education in Nigeria.**

Problems of religious education in Nigeria are financial constraints. The government needs to employ more religious teachers to teach in our schools. No enough religious textbooks in the schools. Most parents do not train their children in the right way. If there is good religious education from the home, the children will be well disciplined. Religious education helps in good character development and gives good character training and helps children avoid crimes in the society. The following are some of the major problems of religious education in Nigeria:

1. Religious education is left for the educational institution alone which is supposed to be a combined effort of every body in the society.
2. Lack of discharging responsibilities by teachers.
3. Lack of encouragement by government to the teaching of religious education.
4. Corruption on the part of religious leaders.
5. Prevalence of bribery, corruption, smugglings, cheating, greediness.

#### **Solution to the Problems of Religious Education in Nigeria.**

1. Every one must be prepared to live exemplary life for others to copy: sanity must prevail in our political, economic, social and religious institutions and this must begins at home with the parents.
2. Nigeria, as a society, must re-define religious values. The identified values must be vigorously and aggressively pursued by all and sundry.
3. The government should show interest, and visibly encourage the teaching of religious education in the school.
4. Good citizen are made and it is important that the fear, of good be instill in the heart of every Nigerian citizen.

#### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, one can see that religious education helps in character training and preaching the importance of peace. It teaches one how to avoid evil vices like cheating,

greed and bribery and corruption. Religious education makes one come closer to God and do the right thing in life. Religious education makes one to be self-disciplined and patriotic. It makes one to respect those in authority. Without proper religious education, there will be no peace and where there is no peace, development cannot take place.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the discussion in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should employ more religious education teachers in the schools.
2. More funds should be provided to take care of all religious matters.
3. Punishment should be stipulated to all religious offenders e.g. burning of place of religious worship.
4. Special allowance should be given to religious education teachers.

### **References**

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