GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN AFRICA: NIGERIA AS A FOCAL POINT

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Abstract

This paper examines global challenges and implementation of sustainable religious education in Nigeria. The world is full of challenges in all ramifications especially in the 21st century. These challenges are affecting the under developed countries such as Nigeria and these challenges are poverty, bad governance, lack of quality education, poor educational programme and policy, terrorism, herdsmen killings, kidnappings, corruption and other social vices especially among the youths. However, with the implementation of sustainable religious education where people receive sound religious education in the various Nigerian Universities, the challenges can be mitigated. The learner will acknowledge the dignity of human beings and apply the necessary religious values that can bring about peace and development in all facets of life or as a panacea to development.

This paper examines the needs of Africa's involvement in the implementation of a sustainable religious education as a means of solving the challenges faced in different ramifications especially in the 21st century. These challenges are affecting the entire world but much more in the under developed countries in Africa such as Nigeria. In the words of Anyam (2011)the challenges can be seen as poor governance, poverty, lack of education, poor educational programme and policy, terrorism, herdsmen killing kidnapping, corruption and other social vices especially among the youths who are the leaders of tomorrow. Implementation and sustenance of religious education in Nigeria where learners can receive sound religious education in our various universities can greatly curb the problem. The learners will acknowledge the dignity of human beings and apply all the necessary religious values that can bring about peace and development in all facets of life which will in turn bring about development in all its ramifications. This paper focuses on Africa but with Nigeria as a case study. The paper also presents definitions of some major terms such as: the concept of religious education, sustainable

Christian religious education in Nigeria: historical background, Implementation and sustenance of religious education in Nigeria, Christian religious education as a panacea for national development, factors affecting the teaching of Christian religious studies in Nigeria, conclusion and recommendation.

Concept of Religious Education

Smith (1978) noted that in secular usage, religious education is the teaching of a particular religion although in the United Kingdom, the term religious instruction would refer to the teaching of a particular religion with religious education referring to teaching about religions in general and its varied aspects. Its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles in western and secular culture. Religious educationimplies a typeof education which is largely separate from academia and which generally regard religious belief as a fundamental tenet and operating modality as well as a prerequisite for attendance.The secular concept is substantially different from societies that adhere to "religious law" where religious education connotes the dominant academic study and in typical religious terms teaches doctrines which define social customs as "laws and the violations thereof as crimes" or else misdemeanor requiring punitive correction also the free choice of religious education by parents according to their conviction is protected by convention against discrimination in education.

Josephson (2012) noted that, religious education is controversialworldwide. Some countries such as the United States do not publicly find religious education nor make it a part of compulsory schooling. In other countries such as the United Kingdom, that open religious education has emerged from Christian confessionalism that it is intended to promote religious literacy without impacting a particular religious' perspective. This kind of religious education has drawn criticism because it is argued that there is no neutral perspective from which to study religions and any kind of compulsory schooling is likely to impact on the formation of a student's religious identity.

Since people within a given country often hold varying religious and non-religious beliefs, government sponsored religious education can be a source of conflict. Countries vary widely in whether religious education is allowed in government-run schools ("often called public schools"). Those that allow it also vary in the type of education provided.

People oppose religious education in public schools on various grounds. One is that it constitutes a state sponsored or establishment of whatever religious belief are taught. Others argue that if a particular religion is taught in school, children who don't belong to that religion will feel rather excluded from their peers. Proponents argue that

religious beliefs have historically socializedpeoples behaviours and morality. They feel that teaching religion in school is important to encourage children to be responsible and spiritually sound adults.

Christian Religious Education in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

Like in many traditional African societies, Christianity and education were inseparable. Fafunwa (1974) noted that Christian religious education in Nigeria began with the advent of missionaries and mission agencies in mid-1800's. it was not a deliberate action but rather viewed in the form of evangelism and as part of western missionary enterprise. Several factors interplayed and various motives were behind the introductionof education in Nigeria by the various groups and organization in Nigeria. The missionaries for instance saw the education of the indigenous populace as a means of facilitating their conversion to Christianity. The colonial administrators saw the education of the local populace as a means of producing literate beings who would run errands for them as a domestic messengers or at best as clerks, both approaches to education were based on giving to the Africans what was considered to be the best for them and not necessarily an educational system which was in accordance with his cultural heritage and sociological environment and one that was aimed at projecting and promoting the African personality.

Ivorgba (2006) stated that protestant missions came into Nigeria ahead of Catholic missionaries even though the North and West of Nigeria were under Muslim influence, the mission were still able to make some inroads in the East and the South. Their aims and objectives differed from each other while the Catholic missions sought to provide moral and religious education and to bring civilization and influence in pagan communities, the protestants missions aimed at training the young by giving them liberal education to create well prepared, well instructed and proven congregation. Ikechukwu (2014) stated that for protestant missions, educationmeant the building of schools, hospitals and centres for elementary industrial training were all integral parts of their evangelism. It is worth noting that while the motivation of education was evangelism for the missionary but for the tribesmen, it was a way of entering into the mysteries of western technological civilization. Khatani (2006) noted that, education helped to facilitate the spread of European civilization in Nigeria and Africa at large. There was a tendency to measure every part of the Nigerian life by the European standards.

Akubue (1998) noted that the issues of curriculum content and policy were extremely in the hands of individual mission agencies until government became interested in education when they issued grants of 30 pounds in 1872 and distributed it among the mission agencies. The grants were increased in the subsequent years and by 1876, it had increased to 200 pounds for each mission agency. This is because "He who plays the piper dictates the tune". Consequently, in 1882, there was a promulgation of an ordinance by the British administration in Nigeria, the declaration of religious

nationalism in matters of education. There was also a divergence of opinion on content and purpose of education; the government was trying to intellectualize the mission while the mission wanted spirituality.

The division which began to escalate eventually led to the formation of the Phelps stokes commission which visited Africa between 1922 and 1925. It was a major watershed in Africa's educational policy. The commission made a plea for religious and moral education as the basis for lasting education. It stressed on character training and many things needed for effective and lasting education in Africa.

Arinze (1994) stated that in 1952, there was a Cambridge conference on Africa Education and in 1961, the Addis Ababa conference on the development of education in Africa was held. There, far reaching measures on Africa education were arrived at in 1962, there was another conference for higher education in Africa, during which participants expressed the desire to exclude religious education from secondary school curriculum, there has been a lot of curriculum of missionary education activities in Nigeria but whatever the shortcomings, one can still point out a good number of major contributions made by these missionaries to the growth and development of our societies and communities.

The Place of Christian Religious Education in The National Policy on Education in Nigeria

Prior to 1977, Nigeria operated an educational policy inherited from Britain at independence. The inability of this policy to satisfy the national aspirations of the country rendered it unpopular. In 1969a national curriculum conference was organized by the National Research and Development Council (NERDC)in 1973 under the chairmanship of Chief S.OAdeba. This gave rise to the National Policy on Education in 1977 which was revised in 1981.

The National Policy on Education is anchored on Nigerian philosophy on education as enunciated through the nations objectives. Nigeria has five main national objectives as provided by the second national development plan and accepted as the necessary foundation for the national policy on education. They are the building of:

i. A free and democratic society
ii. A just and egalitarian society
iii. A united, strong and self-reliant nation in a great and dynamic economy.
iv. A land of bright and full opportunities (FRN, 1998).

Also, the National Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1984 drew both objectives and curricula of religious education for post primary schools. They were tasked to formulate objectives as follows:

i. To provide opportunity for Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby to develop faith in them
ii. To enable the youths to recognize god as sustainer of their lives

iii. To help the youths accept the basic teachings of their religions and apply these to their life work.

iv. To develop in youths, Godly attributes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice, fair play, spirit of forgiveness, devotion to duty, orderliness in behavior and selfless service to God and humanity.With the objective and curriculum of religious education has a basis in Nigerian schools to inculcate knowledgein the mind of the younger ones because they can easily be captured when they are young (implementation and sustainability). The teaching and learning of religious education in our Nigerian schools are explicitly implied as a tool for character change and attitude development along moral, social, economic and political lines. Only committed teaching of Christian religious education can produce the desired character in the nation area of concern.

The National and Development Council (2004) also viewed the objective of Christian religious education for higher education such as:

i. To provide more opportunity for Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in him

ii. To enable the youths to accept Christ as savior

iii. To enable youth, accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their daily activities.

iv. To enable youth to recognize Jesus as the founder and sustainer of the Christian church.

v. To help the youth understand the basic teaching of Christ and to apply these to their daily lives and works.

vi. To develop in youths Christian attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness, justice and fair play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, service to God and Humanity.

vii. To prepare the youths for higher education and for service with the community.

This curriculum has been designed with the intent that students should be given a complete theory of life, a philosophy which emphasizes that God should be their joy, the strength of their age and the life of their immortality. The Christian religious education is expected to fulfill the students great solemn mission of making spiritual values the principleof permanence in this world of change; the wellspring of sanctity in the midst of evil. The beacon of idealism in an age of cynicism and a ground hope in the face of discouragement and mounting fear. Furthermore, Christian religious education strengthens awareness of student's personal dignity. It drives deep into the consciousness of the students, the idea of the dignity of each soul, the inviolability of each conscience and the reality of individual destiny. Besides it creates for the students the concept of personal responsibility and the philosophical idea of individual vocation and the appreciation that Jesus Christ came to this world out of love and died for our salvation to also inculcate conduct so as to bridge the gap between creed and deed.Ideals and action meaning that the students should be equipped to live in the world guided by moral ideals of loyalty to God and of charity and justice to their

neighbors, its effective teaching and learning will help the students to give the best mode of action in all circumstances and to make one truly a citizen of his nation.

Christian Religious Education as a Panacea to National Development

For any nation that wants to develop the bedrock or the foundation is education and that has to do with national policy and establishing the curriculum with a specific objective. In order word, the implementation and the sustainability of Christian religious studies. Education lead to national development in the following ways:

Good governance: This has to do with politics and how to group power and to rule. It also deal with the running of the affairs of the government machinery, religious education can influence our leaders based on the knowledge when they receive in value, they are in the school.

Akanmidie (1993), noted that governance refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equality and inclusiveness, empowerment and broad-based participation. Governance also represents the norms, values and rules of the game through which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive. Governance therefore can be subtle and may not be easily observed in a broad sense. Governance is about the culture and institutional environment in which citizens and stakeholders interest among themselves and participates in public affairs. It is more than the organs of the government. If leaders possess al the leadership qualities to govern certainly that nation will grow and develop.

Wealth creation:Dyaji (2008) noted that it is widely acknowledged that religious ideas played an important part in the development of capitalism in the history of Europe, not always directly. But in influencing peoples thinking on the legitimacy of wealth and on the moral values of saving or investing. Ishaku (2012) noted that hard work was really appreciated by Paul who was a tent maker. Dignity of labour was highly addressed by Paul both in his life and teachings. He said that believers should work hard in order to earn a living and not to be a burden to others for work is the rewardto people who work. Religious education alsogingers the spirit of entrepreneurship but creating new products needed in the market through good packaging. Clapp (2012)noted that the spirit of entrepreneurship will boost the nation's economy whereby everybody is up and doing. To round it all, if everybody is up and doing in the society certainly will that society will grow to be a great nation. Just like the motto of the United State of America which states that "In God We Trust". For this, Christian religious education can be a panacea in boosting the economy of Nigeria.

Provision of Security: Anyawu (2011) noted that Nigeria is sufferinginsecurity today, kidnapping is rampant and very common, rubbery, terrorism by the Boko Haram Sect and killings by the Fulaniherdsmen, but through Christian religious education, the minds of the younger ones can be taught to abstain from evil through their early ages in schools through teaching them about the dignity and sanctity of human life. Further

emphasizing on the need to show more love, tolerance, forgiveness as stated as the core objective of teaching Christian Religious Studies in our schools, some of the social ills faced in the society will be reduced and hence giving way to security and peace.

Management of Natural Resources: It is agood thing to be blessed with natural resources and it is another thing to know how to manage this natural resources. For instance, Nigeria is blessed with crude oil and fertile land for agriculture. Ishaku (2011) noted that religious education encourages hard work and the fear of God after harnessing the resources. The fear of God will help individualsto process the resources to a finished product and to sale it and recover money and to have a financial discipline, in managing the money.For instance, the United States of America founding fathers work very hard in managing their resources very well and their religiousbelieves also makes them to keep trusting in God for prospects.

Health and Education: Several Scholars have acknowledged that in Africa there is widespread superstition that those in need of healingbothphysically and mentally including those suffering from stress. In order to encourage the weak and the less privileged, religious education play a great role through providing medical facilities. Seybold and Peter (2001) noted thatNon-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in providing free medical facilities by establishing schools and educational facilities, facilitates learning.

Factors Affecting the Teaching and Learning of Christian Religious Studies in Nigeria

the following can be considered as some of the factors affecting religious education in Africa Nigeria in particular:

a. **lack of Adequate Instructors**: Smite (1978) noted that even though the religious education has been into the Nigerian school's curriculum, the number of religious graduates employed to teach religious studies is not enough so the students suffer.

b. **Inadequate Instructional Materials:** Teaching aids such as the picture of events that took place in the Bible are not available for the teachers to show to the students when teaching them for effective learning to take place.

c. **Parental attitude TowardsReligious Education:**Most parents feel their knowledge of the teaching in their children received from the Church and the mosque is enough for their children.

d. **Students Attitudes Towards Religious Studies:** Most students feel that when they study religious studies, their friends and relations will be calling them pastors and imams so they don't give must interest.

e. **Religious Education is only taught in the Junior Secondary Level in Some Schools:** In some school's religious education is not being taught at the senior level in which that is a bad signal to the senior students.

f. **Presently Religious Education Has Become an Elective Subject**: With the present curriculum of Nigerian educational system, civil education has become compulsory while religious education is an elective and this will affect the moral character of the children towards the development of our nation.

g. No provision of incentive to the teachers

h. Lack of manpower in handling Christian religious education

i. Christian religious studies have been neglected in northern Nigeria public schools

j. In some schools, graduates of Christian Religious studies have not been employed to teach the course rather graduates of social studies etc.

Conclusion

This paper tries to examine global challenges and implementation of sustainable Christian religious education in Africa especially Nigeria and if religiouseducation as well as Nigeria and Africa at large is implemented and sustained, then there will be national development both politically, economically and socially.

Recommendations

The following can be considered as factors that can contribute to the implementation of sustainable Christian religious education in Africa especially in Nigeria:

1. Qualified religious teachers should be employed by the government to teach at different levels of education in our schools.
2. There should be provision of enough teachers to teach religious studies in our schools.
3. There should be provision of infrastructural facilities to the teaching of religious education in our schools.
4. Parents should encourage their children to study religious education because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
5. Religious studies should not be an elective subject but rather be a compulsory subject.
6. After the implementation of religious studies in the school curriculum, Ministry of education should strictly monitor smooth running of the course in our schools for sustainability.
7. Civic education should not supersede religious education rather religious education should be the head.
8. Government should make provision for giving scholarship to the best students in religious studies.
9. Books in religious studies should be provided by government in our various libraries.
10. Field trip should be organized to students that study religious studies

11. Adequate provision of appropriate in service training especially for poorly trained religious teachers.
12. Close supervision and direction by qualified and specialized supervisors and inspectors of religious education.

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