

THIRD DIVERSITY FORUM
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: POLICY, CHALLENGES AND
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Admittedly, we are left in a perplexing state. The lack of evidence for propositions concerned with religious educational functioning in addition to inadequate safe space for deliberating our diverse values, which may offer useful assistance and act as stimulus to our future activities. The direction we take in this gathering will depend mostly our willingness to step out of our orbit, take a critical look at our world with empathy thoughtfulness and ingenuity. Over the years in the last three decades through acts of commission or omission, we have gained the impression that educational politics can be change with drastic consequences. Willingly or unwillingly the tampering with our cultural, values has rewarded us youth restiveness lawlessness, moral decadence, indiscipline,

Education. Scholars in this field can be requested to harness our diverse culture and produce a system that will be tolerable to all and sundry, which will also address issues shrouding the right of others even in educating our world.

The paper intends to look at religious Education from three worldviews: Judeo-Christian, Islamic and African traditional systems. It will also explore the impact of these: Christianity; Islam on the global south especially a case on Nigeria; conceptualized to represent the south and to look at the various ways these three view education.

BACKGROUND:

Most countries of the South are plural societies in grip of strong centrifugal forces, including secessionism. The south is deeply divided by religious differences, which are often politicized. It is prone to violence, atavistic nationalism, territorial disputes and struggle over natural resources. The stabilization of the youth by the wealthier nation of the North is another source of division and conflict in the South; now and

marginalized and relegated to the background because of stigmatization influence, by the dominance of Christianity and Islam. Traditional religious educators are viewed as mundane, uncivilized because of the "Civilization" so to say that came with Islam and Christianity.

This phenomenon has compounded the formulation of an agreeable universal religious education policy.

In other to appreciate the nature causes and implications of this conflict or value, one need to understand that the *Global South* has been divided by the scheming of the North who have one thing to protect, which is their economic and political interest. These interest cut across both the West and the Middle East which exert their influence and their expansionist tendency over demarcated and segregated South. Another thing of immense concern is the fact that, the South has become more Christian than the West and more Islamic than the Middle East. It was said by the BBC report in early 2004 that Nigeria, a country in the South is the most religious nation on earth. This weakness or rather still

Prior to discussing this it is of paramount important to understand this terms; what is Religion? What is education and what is the relationship between the two from the Islamic, traditional and judeo-Christian perspectives?

Generally speaking, I see education as a provision of equal opportunities to all people to realize their potentials through an Educational process that has human, moral and spiritual values at its heart.

DEFINATION:

Education is a process involving three references. The individual, his/her immediate society, national and international community.

Different people each according to his point of view have defined education differently but all agree that education is the process by which a society transmits its values and cultural heritage to its younger generation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE:

What Is Islamic Education?

Islamic education is an education, which trains the sensibility of pupils in such a manner that in their attitude to life, their actions decision and approach to all kinds of knowledge, they governed the spiritual and deeply felt ethnical values of Islam. They are trained, and mentally disciplined, so that they want to acquire an intellectual curiously or just for material worldly benefit but to develop as rational, righteous beings and bring about the spiritual, moral and physical welfare of their families, their people, their country and mankind.

DIARCHY IN EDUCATION:

In nearly all-Muslim countries nowadays there are two systems of education, the traditional and the modern. Whereas in the early days of Islam, there was only one system which taught theological subjects and

technology as they have developed in the West, are normally ignored and they are absent.

From the above discussion it very clear to understand the importance of Islamic religious education in producing God fearing personality hence, fighting illiteracy.

CHALLENGES:

The defect of modern system of education is that we have separated Islamic studies or the study of the Quran from our day-to-day lives; we have this abandon the basic principle of Tawhid (**Theology**). The principle of unification. Hence, we must incorporate the teaching of all sciences and technology in all our curriculum of studies in Islamic schools.

It is undeniable that our hold on religion has now weakened. Religion has gradually been banished from our hearts and minds. The home environment instead of promoting religious education, have contrarily combined to undermine it. In such conditions, only school curricular

which the ancients had no conception this has been fully analyzed and all benefit derived, from modern sciences by Bert and Russell in his book impact of Modern science.

Yet this material progress, which is within reach of common people, is not matched by any spiritual development on the contrary, spiritually man today is much less happy than his predestine predecessor two hundred years ago. This harmony and tension have ruined his mental peace, rendered his soul, life infernal and deprived his existence of all meaning and purpose. The more the West reaches out for a solution without spiritual value and faith, the greater the confusion, the greater the agony. Bizarre Philosophies like existentialism and logical positivism try to discover a meaning of existence within the stuffy atmosphere of a Godless universe. But the more they seek to evade the central and crucial problem of fault, the more dreadfully they fail to provide satisfactory answer to the problem of life. A large number of Western educators are aware of this solution.

Scholars in both old and modern times have engaged themselves in studying and defining religion. Thus, we now have various definitions close at times and far- removed at others.

Some Westerners define religion as the collection of duties which man has towards God, society and man himself.

Others say it is the lot of beliefs and injunction, which should guide our behaviors with God, people and with ourselves.

Religion may mean the social system adopted by a group of people performing certain rites and constantly developing actions and believing in an absolute spiritual power superior to all human beings.

Religion with its different definitions is as old as humanity itself. Not a single group of human beings lived in ancient times without having a turned by intimidation at times by inclination at others. Perhaps' both intimidation and inclination constitute a characteristic feature

Al Tahanwy says in his book "**Index of Technical Terms**" that religion is a divine institution guiding those who have reason-on their volition to righteousness in this world and happiness in the hereafter. It can designate the faith of any prophet, or it may be applied specially to Islam. It is related to God, having been issued by Him to the prophet, having been revealed through Him, and to the people who adopt it.

If religion is not taken as something revealed from the Almighty Allah but is considered from the linguistic point of view alone, then it will include both the true and the false creeds, except those, which admit neither resurrection nor reward. This is because the Arabic term for religion (din) is derived from the root "Dan" meaning "to reward " when the Holy Qu'ran says "to you be your religion to me my religion, it indicate that the word "religion includes the untrue creeds as well, for it has designated as a religion the pagan belief of the Arabs in the days of ignorance.

But true religion, according to Islamic law, is that which is revealed from God for the elect among His creatures, for man's guidance along the right

LIVING IN HARMONY WITH RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY:

This inclusive approach is vital, for only in accepting the rights of the 'Irreligious others' can there be a just society. The laws, beliefs and the ways of life may differ and yet the divine essence, the divine truth is the same. It is reflected in all religions, in all spiritual and traditions and we humans have no right to judge or reject the 'other' as legitimate, much less, false. Thus it is our human ego that rejects the religious order.

Whatever his or her beliefs may be.

The Qu'ran gives Muslims and non-Muslims the right to worship in accordance with their own faith and to have their own beliefs. This freedom of conscience cannot be taken away from any human being, Islam not only accepts the legitimacy of religious pluralism but also considers it quite central to its code for a just and harmonious coexistence.

The Qu'ran does not take a narrow sectarian view. Its view is very broad, humanitarian and emphasis is on good deeds; it strongly condemns evil deeds, which harm the society and humanity at large. In this respect also it makes no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims.

From the foregoing, it shows clearly that we have a unique opportunity here to harness this texts that encourage collaboration and coexistence

TRADITIONAL RELIGION:

BACKGROUND:

The African traditional religion has mostly the Local Boundary Practice (LBP) and in most occasions; these values are not documented but are passed-on from generation to generation through Experiential and Observatory Learning Systems (EOLS). These are governed by morality and ethics that are defined and structured within the boundaries of clans and tribal settings.

Various clans and African traditional system has spiritual duties that each successive generation tends to derive guidance, protection and provision imbedded within the African tradition. Tribal belief system, the spirits, are the hidden and the unseen powers and mysteries that governs families, clans, communities and tribes. This defines the reality of the

In this, man identified animals and plants, no less than human beings had their own spiritual existence and place in universe as independent pair of the whole.

2. MAN'S CREATUREHOOD AND SENSE OF AWE

This aspect opens up man for the possibility of religious beliefs and practices.

3. MAN'S BELIEF IN TRANSCENDENT SPIRIT BEINGS AND POWER

Man is not alone in the universe; there is a spiritual world of powers or beings more powerful and ultimate than man. Thereby giving man the possibility of seeking affinity with those spiritual powers that are beyond him.

4. MAN'S COMMUNICATION WITH THE BENEVOLENT SPIRIT-WORLD

This aspect leads man to develop means of communications with the

6. HARMONY BETWEEN THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL WORLDS

This explains the reason for the existence of the law of harmony in the traditional societies, where the physical serves as the catalyst for the spiritual power whilst the physical realm is held to be patterned on the model of the spiritual world beyond.

The above categories defined, though in a scanty manner, the basic beliefs found in the traditional worldview, which we call its philosophical foundations. These philosophical foundations are interrelated and integrated with the theological foundations.

THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONDITIONING EFFECTS:

The traditional African Religion tends to educate the community using codified rituals that are only decoded to people within certain age

sought. Sometime collective sentiments are expressed in crying as a therapy for trauma?

CHALLENGES FACED BY AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION&

However with the advents of the two most populous Eastern Religions in Africa i.e. Christianity and Islam, the African traditional educational system is gradually being faced out. People practicing them are stigmatized, will often rather not make their belief conspicuous.

However in some African societies the Judeo-Christian and Islamic education are practiced side by side, those who profess beliefs in either of the two Religion when faced with challenges of life which seems insurmountable or beyond their understanding turns to traditional priest for consultation. These double standards are the major challenges to a holistic traditional system of education.

In summary, these traditional religions has elaborate religious beliefs and

- Religious education does not indoctrinate but rather educate.
- Education is open-minded and accepts no absolutes.
- It appeals primarily to rational capacity
- It tolerates the watch ward of education
- It follows an objective process

The conclusion of education is subject to scientific verification hence they are tentative.

Education, as Dewey (1939) pointed out, is not the preparation of life but represents the continuous changes and processes of life. To identify education with book knowledge is a rather narrow view, for education often arises in the matrix of practical activity. Education implies not merely discipline of thinking but also a passion for creativity.

discipline. It awakens man to his own creative possibilities. Christian education, rightly considered, is man's formidable tool for survival.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Teaching is imperative in molding a child because it is the primary method of building the Kingdom of God, that teaching is the means of building Christian character in His follower.

That is why the Bible is very clear in the instruction to parent in child upbringing as is stated in proverbs 22vs6 " *Train up a child in the way he should go,- and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" the Hebrew word "**Chanok**" initiate child at the opening (The mouth) of his path" when he comes to the opening of the way of life, been able to walk alone, and to choose; stop at this entrance, and being a series of instructions, how he is to conduct himself in every step he takes. Show him the duties, the dangers and the blessing of the path, give him directions on how to performance the duties.

The parents were the chi Id's first and most important instructors in

you sit In your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your head, and they shall be as frontlets between your eye. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates

BIBLICAL SCRIPTURES THAT ENCOURAGES EDUCATION:

Luke 13:26

"But we ate with you, and you taught in our streets, ' you will say.

TLB

Job 33:33

"But if not, then listen to me. Keep silence and I will teach you wisdom!"

TLB

John 14:26

"But when the Father sends the Comforter instead of me-and by the Comforter I mean the Holy Spirit-he will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you. " (TLB)

"Some of us have been given special ability as apostles; to others he has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust him as their Savior; still others have a gift for caring for God's people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God. " (TLB)

Titus 2:3

"Teach the older women to be quiet and respectful in everything they do- They must not go around speaking evil of others and must not be heavy drinkers, but they should be teachers of goodness. " (TLB)

CHALLENGE:

The Advent of socialism in our higher institution and its attraction to youth who want to live free from their assumed restriction coursed by the dos and don'ts of Christian religious as post a great threat to religious education the clarion call by socialist movement to fight social evils like injustice, to align with the poor and the oppress seems appealing to a lager proportion of the youth of our generation.

what is required of them and so when they try to educate people on Christianity it proves abortive. "

The proliferation of Christian faith groups is a measure challenge to the coloration of an agreeable curriculum, once source estimates that there are about 34,000 separate Christian groups in the world and this number is growing by the day, because of intra-religious conflicts. These groups are further sorted into:

- Three meta-groups, (Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism).
- The three wings, (Conservative, Mainline and Liberal).
- Fifteen religious families, (Adventist, Baptist, Lutheran, Reform e.t.c.).
- Dozens of denominations, (from The Amish to The Way).
- Many systems of Belief, (Arminianism, British Israelism, American Israelism, Calvinism).

Islam is another appealing ideology as it is more evangelism than Christianity. Islamic theologians are consistently modifying their position and making their religious more attractive than ever before. It is a practical religion like socialism.

Our schools today instructor tends to be superficial and much of their teachings are actually anti religion. Religious is giving little place in our modern public schools secularization of public education has brought in a situation that is very dangerous to moral and religious development of our societies.

However children are brought into the government schools were provisions are made for their education in everything order than religion that is why our children have relegated religious to a place of know important with no bearing to the affairs of their present life.

Our nations are saturated with infidelity, materialism, secularism, and a general lack of respect and sanctity of home, bribery has become an

Pornographic materials defiles the thought of our youth making them pure and unholy this promotes long hours of laziness and keep our youth from sincerely desiring honest work and honest means of getting wealth this is bad for our generation and challenges religious education.

*" I am fast coming to the conviction that schools for the rising generation must be the basic of all missions among barbarous and savage heathen. The Gospel should be preached regularly and steadily, faithfully and prayerfully, but through children we get at the root of idolatry and leaven the whole lump
(1858 -', 12, ?) "*

In Nigeria for instance in 1976 the government took away many schools belonging to the missions and made them public schools this has resulted in some states in the Northern Nigerian to cease the teaching of religious education and those who thought Christian in many states of the region were persecuted.

Christian Education has been frequently related with contempt

class in most societies. The existence of world body and fora as this is the opportunity we have to correct the wrongs and ameliorate the suffering and catastrophe that this policy has caused our people. The synergy that such universal and regional consultation around identified thematic areas on religious education will be un-quantifiable. The Third Diversity Matters Forum is one of these opportunities.

"However, the opportunity of Christian Education have a better option to discuss, Christian Education makes people know more about the religion and the divine personality behind the religion God (Jesus Christ). It further makes Christians have more value for their faith and everything about it. Christian Education helps build the mindset Christians and others who are willing to learn, towards moral perfection or growth.

Other initiatives on frameworks for Religious Education do exist, and it is our responsibility to liaise with this group, for instance the national framework for Religious Education of the Church of England in her press release PR44/04 posted 28 October 2004 states that: RE has been

enable every pupil to understand and respect the other great faith traditions found in England. Above all it will help pupils with their personal religious development." This idea was welcome by various stakeholders in the educational sector in England. Cannon Hall hopes that the national framework for Religious Education will reset the balance.

MY PRAYER:

In a world like ours, which has religious pluralism, and where each religious group might try to win the favour of the governments of the day, a neutral -and an impartial role by these governments is an absolute necessity. We would, therefore, like to recommend the following, if neutrality and impartiality are to be achieved.

- A. Policy makers should make sure that constitution of the land does not only guarantees religious freedom, but also is seen to do so.
- B. Governments should not, either openly or secretly, give undue favour and or attention to one religious group.

- E. Governments should ensure equity in making its facilities available to religious groups.
- F. Governments should not join any religious organization as representing their country in that organization whether within or outside the country.
- G. Government should create a pool of renowned scholars across our various faith traditions to review our school curriculums with the aim of injecting our spiritual conduct.
- H. Regional and national monitoring and evaluation structures should be established to ensure compliance to formulated religious education policies.

It has been said that all progress stems from dissatisfaction, that every advance in society is a result of someone not being satisfied with things

("Knowledge is the lost property of the believer, take it wherever he finds it"). **Hadith "You can get knowledge even from the Devil's House"**
Unanimous.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Nations should develop a culture of life long learning where both the young and adults can access Religious Education (R.E.) at any stage of their lives. People should be encouraged to study the basic belief system of each other's faith.
- Governments should provide the initial take-off grants for the restructuring of modified coordinated Religious education curriculum.
- Parents should encourage their wards to study religious Education within their nations.
- Religious Leaders should be given orientations on how to operate the modified curriculum and should encouraged their followers

Trust-deed and ensure that force conversion is not encouraged and parents can be allowed to withdraw their children wholly or partly from Religious Education institution or class.

- Religious Education Educators should be placed on equal status with their counterparts that educates or teach other subjects.
- Governing Bodies and Head Teachers should consult with parents in developing policies to ensure it reflects parent wishes and cultures of community they serve.
- Independent Bodies should be constituted to inspect and monitor the implementation of quality of Religious Education and their teaching and their reports should be published for public consumption.
- Periodic Exchange Programme for Religious Education instructors or implementers should be organized for sharing and

- There should be effective partnership at all levels educational hierarchy particularly at the local level so that a common goal of higher Educational standard can be attained.

CONCLUSION:

I want to encourage sincere cooperation on this matter; because cooperation is reciprocal, one who cooperates receives cooperation. The method of cooperation is to use the energy of the mind to create vibrations of good wishes and pure feelings of the other and for the task, by remaining detached, objectives and influenced by innermost values and not external circumstances, subtle cooperation in the form of wisdom immerses with this, we can achieve our set objectives.

It is my humble submission that in today's world where religious motivated violence is on the increase. The capacity to contain this crescendo has in the inculcating of the right religious education to our people. This is the key to harmonious co-existence personal prosperity,

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