

THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION AND THE PLACE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper focused on the role of religious education in the development of Nigeria. It is erroneously believed in some quarters that religion has out-lived its usefulness and therefore has nothing to contribute to human development in this age of globalization. The government in most African countries and Nigeria in particular are not helping the situation either. They focus the attention of their educational policies and agenda on the sciences as the foundational courses around which they think actual development must spring up. Little emphasis is laid on humanities under which religion is a core course. This situation calls for holistic reflection and intervention of all stakeholders in the field with a view to repositioning religious education to an enviable position. The research method adopted for the study was documentary approach using library materials and internet based sources. It was discovered that religious education in schools is valued by individuals and communities who understand its contributions. Religion is also potent enough to stabilize the country since high moral values, ethics, principles and character conducts are exemplified in it. The paper argued that it is only when religion and religious education are upgraded to its rightful position by the government in the formulation of developmental policies that Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular would adequately progress. Finally, the paper recommended the need for religious scholars to integrate religious education with science and technology to function optimally in this era of globalization and that religious education should be made compulsory at all levels of education in Nigeria since each child is constitutionally entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religions.

Keywords: Religious Education, development, globalization.

Introduction

Globalisation is one of the most frequently occurring terms within the academic parlance coupled with development issues in the last two or three decades Orngu (2014). To a great extent, it has become an outstanding nomenclature in scientific studies, seminars, conferences and developmental researches (Didigwu, 2014). Igwe (2013) corroborated the above submission when he says:

The concept of globalization is perhaps the most recurrent term employed by authors, scholars and world leaders alike to rationalize the development

and underdevelopment of the various parts of the world.

The idea of globalization is not a new one, as the spirit to move beyond one's natural boundaries has been the preserve of man (Igwe, 2013). According to Held et al quoted in Igwe (2013), globalization is neither novel nor a modern social phenomenon, though its forms may have been changed over time and across key scope of human endeavour. Globalization also involves economic integration; the transfer of policies across borders; the transmission of cultural stability; the reproduction, relations, discourse of power, a global process, a concept, a revolution and an establishment of the global market free from socio-political control. The effect of globalization is spreading by the days at a very fast spread and no nation can afford to be behind if that nation is to maintain acceptance rate of growth and development (Didigwu, 2015).

Economically, this age has been the most productive in human history. Mankind mastery of science and technology has developed further and faster than ever before (Akinwumi, 2007). To this end, technology and mathematics education is accorded profound recognition by different countries of the world (Nigeria inclusive) and they are today used as a reliable standards of measuring the potentials of development. Every nation the world over, regardless of its level of development, geographical location, political, socio-economic and cultural aspirations, strives to pay adequate attention to the development of science and technology. Nigeria as a developing nation too is not left out in this all important crusade for scientific and technological advancement (Fadeiye, 2002).

The main focus and agenda of most governments, at all levels is presently on Science and technology while frivolous attention is paid on Arts and Humanities under which religion is a core subject. Since the whole attention of many governments have been shifted to science and technology coupled with their lukewarm attitude towards placing the much needed moral and religious teachings in our schools, moral decadence continues unabated in Nigeria's society today (Fadeiye, 2002).

It is a common knowledge that the Nigerian society in the contemporary era is witnessing and wrestling with an unprecedented moral degeneration – killing, yahoo boys syndrome, kidnapping, pornography, child abuse, rape, prostitution, drug addiction, international terrorism, cultism, examination malpractices to mention but a few. Since morality is basically the fruit of religion, any developmental plans of any nation will succeed only when it addresses morality and religion. Each religion has a set of moral codes and series of teachings which discourage corrupt practices and low morality (Anyacho, 2002).

It was with this background that this work intended to investigate the age of globalization and the position of religious education in curbing social vices that are currently serving as cog in the wheel of the development of Nigeria.

The Meaning of Globalization

Globalization as a concept has generated a plethora of definitions from scholars of various intellectual backgrounds and orientations so much that it becomes tempting to conclude that there is not likely to be a consensus among scholars on what globalization actually means (Orngu, 2014).

According to Orngu (2014), globalization is an old long term feature of international relations. It connotes the uniformity and standardization of the international system based on the increasing interconnectedness through technological, commercial and cultural synchronization that consistently emanate from the West. It also explains all the processes that emphasize the villagisation of the world. Mazrui quoted in Orngu (2014) states that globalization consists all the forces that are leading the world towards becoming a global village. He further submits that the term can as well be conceived as the maturation of global capitalism and its inter-dependencies, alongside a new network of the information super high ways.

Anozie (2007) summarises globalization as a movement towards a global economy in which national boundaries cease to matter. It corresponds to an unprecedented concentration of space and time through the development of new means of communication technologies across the world. It is aimed at creating new avenues for the regulation and functioning of a social order that goes beyond that of the nation state.

The new ideology now according to Ikeke (2007) is globalisation. It aims to create a global village in which there is a totally free market full of goods, technology and information.

Effects of Globalisation

There are positive and negative influences of globalization on Nigerians especially youths. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has advanced to a level of rendering distance irrelevant because one can stage in Nigeria and Communicate to any part of the world using telephone, fax machine or internet (Didigwu 2015). It has also led to the transfer and diffusion of knowledge and information across the globe. Today, ICT forms the backbone of several industries such as airline, banking and research and has made it easy for people to access information practically anywhere in the world (Sofadekan, 2007).

The internet has become a key element in the globalization of society, providing technology without boundaries. It enhances business and promotes human development. The internet possesses two basic characteristics. The first is that it has the richest, biggest and wide ranging recourse of information worldwide, the second is that it enables people obtain an interactive mechanism to instantly communicate with each other. It provides a transparent window through which global experiences and best practices are shared. It enables knowledge – networking, learning and saves cost (Didigwu, 2015).

With the above merits of ICT, it is an open, free and unregulated device, which brought negative challenges that affect the youth. It influences and changes their moral perspective and ethical values. One of such major negative challenges is the exposure of the youth to Western idea and culture, among most dangerous of them are pornography,

money laundering, cultism, international terrorism, child abuse and yahoo.com boys (419). It is extremely difficult for Nigeria with strong Christian and Islamic culture to condone the level of pornographic activities that surface in the internet. In many Nigerian tertiary institutions and urban centres, nudity has become elegant and a rich dressing habit. Boys wear what is termed “sagging”, whereby trousers are no longer worn around the waist but would be hanging on the buttocks thereby exposing their underwear (Didigwu, 2015). Most of such dresses are really provocative and sexually attractive and the resultant effect of them on youths is unimagined (Fadeiye 2002).

Series of immoral songs which pollute minds of young Nigerians and invariably contribute a lot to moral decadences are available via the internet. Such reckless songs have no meaningful contributions to healthy societal growth. Such morally bankrupt songs focus attention on indiscriminate sexual relationship, desire to accumulate wealth unjustly, lack of regard for elders and other legally constituted authority (Fadeiye, 2002). Drug abuse, uses of fire arms and ammunitions and various other negative life styles are often a fall out of accessibility of the youth to the internet and cable channels (Didigwu, 2002). The positive and negative impact of globalization cannot all be enumerated here. The above is sufficient for this paper.

The Meaning of Religious Education

Onovughe and John (2017) defined religious education as the teaching of a particular religion or teachings of religion in general and its distinct features: its beliefs, devotions, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles. Religious education implies a type of education which is largely separate from strict academia which considers religious belief as a fundamental tenet and operating morality as well as a prerequisite of attendance. Mordias quoted in Onovughe and John (2017) indicates that religious education connotes the dominant academic study and in typically religious terms, teaches doctrines which refine and define social customs and societal norms as law. Irika as quoted also in Onovughe and John (2017) states that religious education defines the norms, customs, ethos and the social and ethical norms of any society.

Wikipedia quoted in Adebowale (2013) explained that the secular concept of religious education is largely different from societies that support firmly religious laws, where in “religious education” connotes the most important academic study and in typically religious ideas, teaches doctrines which define social customs as “laws’ and the violation thereof as “crimes” or else, misdemeanours requiring punitive correction. Religious education is also the instruction on the teachings of a particular religion as contra distinguished from moral education which is wider in scope and is not confined to a particular religion and whose parameter of assessment is the consonance to rationality (Azuakor, 2019).

Definition of Religion

Religion according to Mbiti as quoted in Anyacho (2002) is the strongest element in traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of people. The extraordinary nature of religion has made it too complex to explain

and define. Many scholars have tried to define religion in many ways but have not arrived at any definite and concise definition (Bankole, 2007).

Bamisaye quoted in Bamikole (2007) defines religion as a human effort to reconcile himself with cosmic forces which he believes to be capable of influencing his fate, positively or negatively. This definition gives religion the connotation of a body of doctrines to believe, commandments to be kept and social norms to be adhered to as a mark of adherence to cosmic forces, which are generally believed to be supernatural. Glock et al as quoted again in Bamikole (2007) defines religion as consisting of institutionalized system of beliefs, values and symbolic practices which provide group of men with solutions to these question of ultimate meanings to death, difficulties, sufferings e.t.c. According to Bamikole, this definition sees religion as a social institution and it agrees with the view of Bamisaye that religion is a social manifestation of the spiritual life views of the people. Some of these manifestations dictate both the outlook behaviour of the people and the accepted state of affairs in the society.

In his own definition, Balogun (2007) defines religion as a system by which man is expected to obey God or to disobey Him according to man's whims caprices begun with the creation of man. Adereti quoted in Omidiwura (2007) defines religion as the most important social institutions the world over. It is universally present and in fact grows and multiplies everyday. One could easily assert that because of its universal presence it must have certain role to play in human society. Adua quoted in Azuakor (2019) defined religion as a system whereby there is recognition of the existence of a supernatural controller of the universe-God- who is the object of worship, obedience and love, that ultimately results in practical piety and morality. These definition of religion are in consonance with the objective of this study.

Religion and Religious Education in Nigeria

The two dominant religions in Nigeria are Christianity and Islam (Azuakor, 2019). A sizeable population of the country are Muslims. Most of these Muslims are to be found in the Northern and South Western part of Nigeria, while there is considerable Christian influence in the South Eastern sectors of the country. Muslim minorities are still found largely in Eastern Nigerian where Catholicism predominates (Adeniyi, 1995). African Traditional Religion is another force to be reckoned with as there seems to be an upsurge in adherence to this religion among many Nigerians today (Azuakor, 2019).

Every religion aims to teach its adherents how to be good, responsible and mature human beings that are equipped with skills and competences to contribute positively to the all-round growth and development of self, one's family and society in general. While quoting the aims and objectives of Christian Religious Studies in Nigeria, Azuakor (2019) writes:

The contents of the books are treated in a holistic manner to build spiritually, morally sound and upright citizens who would ensure the promotion of the political and socio-economic development of Nigeria.

On the side of Islam, the aims and objectives of Islamic education is to guide mankind to live a happy, prosperous and productive life in this world as well as a happy and successful life in the hereafter. The aim of teaching is to encourage the children to cultivate some moral habit. At the end of each stage of education, the children should acquire the consciousness of Allah and recognize Him as the Creator and Sustainer, of the universe. It is also aimed at exposing the child to the history and civilization of Islam, *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *Tawhid* (unity of Allah). The end objective of this is to develop a positive attitude of promoting what Allah wants and abstaining from what He prohibits (National Teachers' Institute 2000).

As for ATR, Azuakor (2019) avers that the main objective of traditional education is to inculcate a sense of social responsibility of the community to the individual members who are becoming contributing members of the society and it must be noted that traditional education is enmeshed in traditional religion and African morality like African traditional ethics is dependent on the ATR and it provides the rule for right conducts and prohibitions against wrong acts.

As good as religion is, it is a controversial concept worldwide. Series of challenges too are attached to its practice. Some countries such as the United States do not publicly fund religious education nor make it a part of compulsory schooling (Wikipedia). Nigeria society too is seen as a secular one where religion is said to be a private affair (Owoyemi and Akanni, 2017). Hence, government at all levels gives little attention to religious studies in Nigerian schools. Even the introduction of African Traditional Religion is still limited to colleges of Education and University (Oyebanjo, 2002). Other challenges include inconsistency policy on education, lack of enough teachers to handle religious studies in Nigerian schools, problem of employment among graduates of religious studies, and lastly, religion has been one of the factors of violence in the country. On religious violence in the country, Falola quoted in Folarin (2015) comments:

Since 1980, incidents of religious violence have increased in number, intensified, spread geographically, and affected larger and larger portion of the nation. The scale of violence and brutality is greater.....

Bamiloke (2002) also acceded to the above submission. He says:

“Religion in Nigeria today has been bedevilled with religious intolerance and disharmony culminating in want on destruction of lives and property....”

In spite of all the challenges stated above, religion is still having a role to play in human development especially in this age of globalization as shall be seen in the next section.

Research Methodology

The researcher adopted documentary approach in the study, through library and internet surveys, he harnessed the benefits and roles of religion in nation building. He x-rayed the

inevitable contributions of religion to science and technology and its overall contributions to national development and globalization agenda.

Discussions

The researcher conducted documentary and internet surveys and in his observations and findings he discussed his discoveries under the following significant national and international roles which religion could contribute to global development in all ramifications of lives.

Religious Education and National Development.

Negative effects of globalization are trailing the contemporary Nigeria at alarming rates. They are directly or indirectly jeopardizing the development of the country. Religion therefore, is one of the potent instruments that can curb the menace to the barest minimum if the points raised below could be favourably considered:

Religion Inculcates Morality in Man

According to Anyacho (2002), education without morality is madness. For a nation to enjoy all-round national development, religious and moral education must be genuinely entrenched in their educational system. All forms of religion in Nigeria Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) are known for impressive core values such as sanctity of life, respect, obedience, good character, honesty and so on. Each also maintains peculiar system of moral teaching and set of sanctions and regulations which discourage corrupt practices such as, stealing, killing, yahoo boys activities, terrorism and other social vices and make people learn probity and sense of responsibility in public and private affairs (Anyacho, 2002). Religion also provides mankind with moral values and enlightenment on what is just and unjust, right or wrong, good or evil, virtue or vice and this directs man towards living a virtuous life (Adebowale, 2013). Anyone living a virtuous life will keep away from all indecencies. This will enhance development and make the society a heaven for all and sundry.

Religion also cultivates the whole person and produces in man the necessary virtues for building a just and egalitarian society (Anyacho, 2002). To build a better Nigeria, in this era of globalization, religion and moral instruction have to be given to children in schools. Moral re-orientation has to be taken seriously in our schools and colleges in order for the country to move forward.

Religion as a Contributor to Knowledge of Science and Humanities

As a matter of fact, religion has been contributing to knowledge of science, Arts and humanities from time immemorial. In the European history, from the period of the scholastics to the beginning of the 18th century, education, politics and other socio-cultural institutions of human endeavour were in the control of the church. The church defined, encouraged and developed education, built schools and learning centres where religious and mundane education were taught. The ancient Greek Arts, Literature and philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and other classical writers were preserved and promoted by the church. Writings of churchmen such as St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St.

Bonaventure, Albert the Great and host of others are still relevant today. On moral scene, functionaries of the church served as both moral, spiritual and legal consultants to kings and despotic kings were deposed and excommunicated by the church to give a sigh of relief to the masses. The church also championed the cause of technology (as it was known then), monks wrote and copied the Biblical manuscripts and other ancient writings. The church equally promoted the Arts of painting, drawing and sculptor-ship and other artistic ingenuities that modern technology has not rivalled (Onovughe and John 2017).

The development of Arts and sciences had also been championed by Muslims. From the 9th to 13th centuries, Muslims were the acknowledged world leaders in the development of Arts and Sciences. Philosophy and science sprang to life as Muslim developed almost every field of study: Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology, Astronomy, Geography, Medicine, Surgery, Anatomy, Physiology, Optics, Pharmacy, Agricultural Science and Political disciplines, Philosophy, History, Theology and so on (Lemu 1990).

Muslim scholars made advances in the use of drugs, herbs and foods for medication, founded hospitals with a system of interns and externs, discovered the immediate and remote causes of certain diseases and developed correct diagnoses for them, proposed new concepts of hygiene, made use of anaesthetics in surgery with newly and improved surgical tools and introduced the science of dissection in anatomy. Muslim also developed system of schools and Universities all over the world. Among the most famous were the Nizamiyyah University in Baghdad, Al-Azhar University in Cairo (both founded in the 19th Century) and Sankore University in Timbuktu, founded in the 16th century. The schools were numerous and often attached to mosques (Lemu, 1990).

In the contemporary Nigerian society, religious bodies continue to establish and run schools where people are trained to take up developmental projects in the community. Apart from the secular education they offer, these schools also incorporate religious values and discipline which assist individual later in the society for peaceful co-existence and national development (Ondvughe and John 2017). To this end, since religion has not at any time found to be discriminating against science. Then, religion and other Arts subjects should be encouraged in our schools as an avenue to achieve all-round national development.

Religious Education as an Instrument of Social Order

Through the teaching and learning of religious traditions, restrictions are made prohibitions and peace drives promoted. This encourages the maintenance of law and order which are essential ingredients for development. No nation can develop under fraudulent practices, tension, disorder and chaos. By preaching peace, harmony and obedience to the law of the land, religious education enhances orderliness which culminates into a conducive and favourable atmosphere for business and other human activities to thrive as no investor will like to site an industry in an environment where unruly behaviour among people is the order of the day (Onovughe and John 2017).

Religion is also an instrument that can provide inspirations to Nigerians to unite and wrestle with social upheavals and moral decadence. And it promotes economic development through hardwork in legal business and it helps to build a good citizen who will contribute immensely to the development of the country. Youths are engrossed in all forms of immoralities because they are devoid of religious and moral training. If the seed of God consciousness is sown into the heart of a child from the tender age, he would not grow up and deviate from the path of righteousness (Bamikole, 2007).

Religion Unites the Human with the Divine and enhances Development

As a social institution, religion establishes a spiritual rapport between man and, the divine force of creation (Bamikole, 2007). Onovughe and John (2017) also alluded to the above assertion when they say: “Religious education presents religion as that which unites the human with divine”. Through the act of worship and communication with the divine, religion makes the power of the divine to come to the aid of man. To safeguard Nigeria from shackles of moral and spiritual laxity as well as persistent lack of sustainable development, despite the developmental strategies in the past, the social function of religious education should be positively applied and harnessed to the project of national development in this country. This will promote and foster development in all ramifications.

Religious Institutions Play Complementary role to the Government in Fighting Crimes

Majority of Nigerians professed one religion or the other. This affords each religion an opportunity to admonish her adherents on dangers of amassing wealth through illegal and dubious means. By so doing, religious institutions complement the efforts of the government in fighting criminality tendencies especially among the youths in the country. The church has to preach against social ills. The evils of crime must at the same time be preached to the Muslim faithful in their various mosques. The same should also be stressed in the traditional religion (Anyacho, 2002). This complementary efforts of the government and religious houses indeed is a force that is potent enough to reduce prevalent immoralities in the country to the bearest minimum.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has been shown that globalization is one of the most frequently occurring terms in scientific studies, seminars, conferences and developmental researches in the contemporary period. The paper also dilated upon the positive and negative influences of globalization on Nigerians especially youths. Efforts have also been made therein to examine religion as an institution and religious education as well as the extent at which religious education is capable of reducing crimes and negative life styles in the country to the bearest minimum. It has also been established therein that peace, progress and development will only be achieved in a crime free society.

Recommendations

- Every family is advised to be alive to its responsibility of giving their children religious and moral education. Every society grows from the social unit called

family. If every member of a family is morally balanced, the whole society will be morally sound as well.

- Religious studies in schools should be given a new look. Theological exposition and theories should be set aside from our religious curricula. Rather, morals and aspect of sociology of religion should be emphasized. This will make religious education more meaningful in our schools.
- Since it is the constitutional right of every Nigerian child to be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the school curriculum should be redesigned in such a way that all children from primary to senior secondary school be taught his or her faith irrespective of whether such student in (secondary school) is in Science or Arts class. Religion should also be introduced as a general course for all our Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education programme in order to produce, disciplined and morally upright graduates.
- Since religion is the mother of all sciences, religious educators should as a matter of obligation endeavour to utilize products of science and technology to promote religious education in this age of globalization. This will enhance the functionality of teachers and students of religion in this era.
- Lastly, all Nigerian youths and others that engage in one crime or the other - internet fraud, kidnapping, pornography, drug addiction, cultism, examination malpractices and so on, should desist from this inglorious acts as this represents a way by which the image of the country could be redeemed among the comity of nations and whereby the country becomes a heaven for all and sundry.

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