CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IN NIGERIA

Afsat Sanni-Suleiman, Ph.D
Department of French, Faculty of Arts
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
afusat@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract:
Education, whether secular or religious, plays a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and professional capacities of individuals if properly structured. It is a common belief that secular education is the only route to technological advancement particularly building on the renaissance history of Europe. In Nigeria, where unemployment among youths is rampant, there is a growing concern that the emphasis on religious education may be hindering technological development. Using France, a secular nation to the core as a particular case study to illustrate our points, this article investigates the relationship between secular and religious education in Nigeria. The comparism with France, is to illuminate the differences in educational priorities and its implications for technological advancement. By understanding the intricate interplay between the two educational paradigms and their implications for technological progress, this study also seeks to identify strategies for leveraging the most effective educational approaches to drive innovation and technological advancements in Nigeria. Contrary to popular belief that excessive focus on religion is undermining technological advancement in the country, the findings suggest that religious education does not inherently impede technological growth; rather, it underscores the importance of focus and collaboration among stakeholders. The study concludes that whether secular or religious, the most important instrument to technological advancement in Nigeria is proper structuring of the educational system.

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a sizable number of Muslim and Christian populations, including other religions that are not officially recognised by the Government. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not declare any religion as a state religion and guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all citizens. Thus, Nigeria is referred to as a secular state. However, the secularism in Nigeria is a topic of debate, as some religious groups advocate for a more integrated role of religion in government and society. Moreover, Nigeria operates two systems of laws, namely the common law (English law) which is essentially secular and the Sharia law (Islamic law) which fundamentally religious.

In a nutshell, it is worthy to note that, while Nigeria's Constitution establishes the country as a secular state, the role of religion in our day-to-day activities and politics remains a complex and contentious issue. It is therefore important to make a proper distinction between secularism and religion and their implications to education and technology. Amidst the recognition of education's pivotal role, there exist growing concerns regarding the impact of religious education on technological advancement in Nigeria. While religious institutions play a significant role in shaping the moral and ethical fabric of society, there is apprehension that the emphasis on religious socio-

life may be a major hindrance at fostering a robust foundation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. This concern is particularly salient in light of the pressing need for Nigeria to harness technological innovation to address socio-economic challenges and enhance global competitiveness.

To contextualise these concerns, this article draws a comparative analysis with France, a secular nation renowned for its commitment to secularism in public life. It should be noted that there are many secular Nations in the world, but the French secularism presents a particular specie different from the types found in other countries. Thus, secularism is a core concept in the French Constitution. By juxtaposing Nigeria's approach to education with that of France, we aim to shed more light on the concept of secular education and determine if religious education can really constitute a setback to a country's technological development. Through this comparative lens, we seek to explore the intricate interplay between secular and religious education in shaping attitudes towards technology and innovation, with the ultimate goal of identifying strategies to propel Nigeria towards a more technologically vibrant future.

Secularisation and religious states

A secular state is one in which the government does not interfere with religion matters. It is one that does not consider any religion as an official religion, treats all its citizens equally regardless of the religion they practice. Secular states support the separation of religion from civil affairs and the state, ensuring that the government does not favor any particular religion or impose religion on its citizens. Secularism thus promotes legal equality between people of different religions and non-religious philosophical convictions, and it is associated with a separation of church and state. It is in that light that Baubérot cited by Copson (2019), declares that secularism is divided in three parts: "separation of religious institutions from the institutions of the state and no domination of the political sphere by religious institutions; freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all; and no state discrimination against anyone on grounds of their religion or non-religious worldview".

Countries like France, Mexico, Japan, China, Canada, Turkey, to mention but a few are cited as examples of secular states. These countries have successfully implemented secular education system that set equal opportunities for all children regardless of their social status and religious beliefs. On the other side, a religion state is one in which a particular religion is officially recognised. In such state, the government dictates the regulations of the religious body and monitors its activities. The government also goes as far as nominating only those who are affiliated to the state religion to be elected to key post in the land. This practice often leads to discrimination of other citizens who though qualified for a particular position, may be sidelined because of their religion. Examples of countries with official state religion are Afghanistan, Algeria, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia (Sunni Islam), Monaco, Malta (Catholic and Apostolic Church), Italy, Spain (Catholic Church), etc.

Although, Nigeria is not explicitly described as a secular state in its constitution, it is often referred to as such due to its lack of an official state religion and its treatment of all citizens equally, regardless of their religious beliefs. However, because of the religious and cultural diversity, as well as the presence of Sharia Courts in certain parts of the country, some areas are referred to as Muslim states.

Method

For the purpose of this study, the research method adopted was historical, descriptive and comparative. The historical method was used to trace the origin of secularisation in France as well as the religion education in Nigeria. The descriptive approach assisted in eliciting information through qualitative method. As for the comparative approach, it helped in no small measure in juxtaposing the concepts of education from two different perspectives. Instruments used were

Journals and archival documents retrieved from the internet and the library, while inductive and deductive inferences are used for data analysis.

Secularism and secular education in France

Secularisation is a disconnection between the state and religion in the affairs of the state. That is the complete separation of the church and state. There are various definitions of the term 'secularisation', but we opted for that of Srinivas (2022) online, who asserts that secularisation "implies that what was previously regarded as religious is ceasing to be such, and it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of society, economic, political, legal and moral, becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other". But according to him, "differentiation does not mean disconnection".

The French secularism has a long history. Secularisation in France started gradually with the French revolution that overthrew the *ancient regime* in 1789 to give way to the Third Republic. Prior to that, France was a very religious state which socio-political and administrative affairs were run by the church. The Catholic religion which is the main religion was so ingrained in their socio-cultural life that the Church was considered to detain solutions to every societal problem. Moreover, every second born of the French family was donated to the church to serve God. However, the revolution brought a total transformation that led to major policy changes, including the separation between the church and the state. But it was in 1905 that the law on the Separation of the Churches and State (*Loi du 9 septembre1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat*) was enacted thereby proclaiming France as a secular state (Troper, 2000). That law stands as the backbone of the principle of secularism (*laïcité*). That implies for example the removal of priests from the administrative committees of hospitals and boards of charity, and subsequently the substitution of lay women for nuns in hospitals. Therefore, secularisation involves the complete removal of religious values from the public sphere and their replacement with secular values such as liberty, equality and fraternity. In addition, religious leaders lost their authority and influence over the society as a whole even though individuals were allowed to practice their religion.

Thereafter, secularisation spread over the various domain of the nation. Examples of secularisation include the removal of religious activities from public education, and government. Marriage is now based on secular attitude rather than a sacred religious ceremony, and it is celebrated *à la mairie* (Town Hall). The education system is also reorganised to exclude any religious activity by establishing public, secular and compulsory education from primary to secondary schools. In other words, secularisation is the decline of supremacy of religion on societal values and the belief in the supernatural and the sacred. The concept is to give room to rational and philosophical thinking, science and technology advancement. Henceforth, individuals may choose to rely on science to explain how the world operates rather than spirituality.

Theoretical framework

Sociologists (Berger 1969; Casanova 1994; Wilson 2016) have theorised multiple reasons that explain and support the idea of secularisation and these include: rationalisation, structural differentiation, industrialisation and multiculturalism, religious diversity and cultural defense and transition. However, for Weber (1968), it is the rationalisation of the society that led to its eventual secularisation. He defined rationalisation as the "process by which rational ways of thinking and behaving come to replace religious ones". This is because, for centuries, Europe in the middle age was dominated by the Catholic world-view and seen as an 'enchanted garden' in which God and other supernatural beings shaped and explained every aspect of life; the Church had explanations about everything. However, Protestantism brought a reform that rejected the 'enchanted' world-view and believed life operated on natural principles, which means people could not turn to religion to

explain every happening any more. This different outlook gave room for the development and influence of science in the society. For instance, if someone is ill, he will rather seek for doctor's help for cure than go to a priest for a solution to his illness.

Bruce (2011, p.2) asserts on his part that: " the shift from religious to secular control of a variety of social activities and functions" as "increased specialization directly secularized many social functions that were once dominated by the church: education, health care, welfare, and social control (p. 27). He further added that "the growth of a technological word-view completely replaced previous religious views as it provides logical explanations and arguments and replaces religion" (p.30).

Parsons (1951) refers to structural differentiation as "a process of specialization that occurs with the increasing development of industrial society". Parsons added that "secularization has come about due to the development of separate, specialized institutions to carry out duties previously performed by a single institution, religion". The sections that were more affected were education, social welfare and law which were eventually passed over to institutions like the State. Thus, religious institutions like the church became 'disengaged' from wider society. And as such, it strictly became a private matter. The disengagement of the church from the public life rendered the religious establishments to be deserted.

However, Tschannen (1991, p.404) considered the concept of differentiation to be the most importance when talking about the theory of secularisation. He affirmed that differentiation "…in one form or another, is absolutely central to all the secularisation theories, without exception". This is because, 'differentiation' touched every sphere of human life. He summarised the concept as follows:

In the course of history, religion becomes progressively differentiated from other domains of social life, eventually emerging as a very specific institutional domain within a new type of social structure made up of several such institutions (education, politics, economy, etc.). For example, Church and State become clearly differentiated … At the same time, the different non- religious institutions born from this process of differentiation start working on the basis of criteria that rationally related to their specific social functions, independently from any religious control or guidance (p. 400-1).

Wilson (1966) on his own part opines that "the decline of religion is to do with industrialisation and the erosion of communities", because according to Durkheim (1977), "industrialization and urbanization led to greater individualism and therefore a loss of social solidarity". Berger (1969, p.75) on his part opines that "the existence and knowledge of other religions in contemporary times challenge the idea of an 'absolute' religion or one true interpretation, affecting levels of religiosity".

Though all these theories tend to portray secularisation as being bias with religion, it should however be noted that there are many types of secularisation and most do not lead to atheism, irreligiosity, nor are they automatically anti-thetical to religion. For that, we can cite the examples of India and Nigeria were secularisation does not negate the religious belief, that is, religion continues to be of major social and political significant across the two countries even though their constitutions have declared them to be secular States.

Influence of colonial legacies on educational paradigms

Secularisation is a western concept. The enlightenment era (*siècle des lumières*), was the turning point in European history as the period was dominated by the notions of secularism and rationalisation. "Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot championed the ideals of reason, Science, and individual liberty, advocating for a society guided by empirical evidence rather than religious dogma (Amilcar 2023, p.542). The concept was later on extended to other spheres of the globe through colonisation.

In the francophone African countries (Benin Republique, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Gabon) for example, there is a complete separation between the Church and the State. The education system of those countries is devoid of any religious activities and religion is not in any way, included in their curriculum. This is because the Governments of those countries do not as a matter of principle fund any religious related activity. Nevertheless, even though states are separated from religion, the freedom to practice the religion of one's choice is much respected, so long as it is done within the limits of neutrality. Hence, the introduction of chaplains into institutions like the army, prisons, hospitals, and some schools. Moreover, since public schools do not provide religion education, school schedules are planned in a way that allows children receive such education outside the school premises. For that purpose, a law has been enacted to provide one additional free day per week (Thursday specifically) apart from weekends to allow parents who so desire to send their children to catechism class or madrasa. The special concession operates only in the primary schools. Whereas in their counterpart anglophone African countries (Ghana, Nigeria), which no doubt reflects the typical British compromise with respect to religion, the teaching of religion features prominently in the school's curriculum.

The legacy of colonialism continues to shape Nigeria's educational landscape to this day. Colonial policies favored the propagation of Western education, which was perceived as superior to indigenous knowledge systems. This legacy has contributed to the dominance of English as the language of instruction, the adoption of Western curricula, and the marginalisation of indigenous languages and cultural practices within formal educational settings. Furthermore, the colonial emphasis on a Eurocentric curriculum has perpetuated disparities in educational access and quality, particularly between urban and rural areas and among different socio-economic groups. The legacy of colonial education has also influenced societal perceptions of educational attainment and social mobility, with Western education often seen as a pathway to economic success and social prestige.

Evolution of secular and religious education in Nigeria

Religion is too pervasive in Nigeria to be considered a 'private matter' meant for families and communities. As such, education in Nigeria has undergone a complex evolution, shaped by both indigenous traditions and external influences. Prior to colonialism, traditional education systems prevailed, characterised by apprenticeship, oral teachings, and communal learning practices. With the arrival of colonial powers in the 19th century, notably the British, formal education systems were introduced, primarily to serve the interests of the colonisers.

The colonial period witnessed the establishment of secular educational institutions, aimed at imparting Western knowledge and values to the indigenous population. These institutions, often run by Christian missionaries, coexisted with traditional Islamic schools (madrasas) and indigenous educational systems. Over time, both secular and religious education systems expanded, catering to different segments of the population and reflecting diverse cultural and religious beliefs.

Education and employment prospects for Nigerian youths

Education is highly valued in Nigerian society, symbolising prestige, social status, and upward mobility. However, the disparity between educational attainment and employment opportunities remains a significant challenge, particularly for the country's growing youth population. Despite high levels of educational attainment among Nigerian youths, unemployment rates remain high, leading to disillusionment and frustration among many.

Societal attitudes towards education are complex, reflecting the divergent aspirations and expectations of individuals and communities. While formal education is often viewed as essential for securing stable employment and achieving socio-economic advancement, there is growing recognition of the limitations of traditional educational pathways in meeting the evolving demands of the labour market. As such, there is increasing emphasis on the need for education to be relevant,

adaptable, and responsive to the changing needs of society, including the growing importance of technology and innovation in driving economic growth and development.

It is therefore worthy to note that, the historical context of education in Nigeria is characterised by a dynamic interplay between secular and religious educational systems, influenced by colonial legacies and societal attitudes towards education and employment. Understanding this historical background is crucial for contextualising contemporary challenges and opportunities in Nigeria's educational sector, particularly with regards to technological advancement and innovation.

Prevalence of secular and religious educational institutions

Nigeria's educational landscape comprises a diverse array of secular and religious institutions, catering to the educational needs of its multiethnic and multicultural population. Secular educational institutions, including public schools and government-funded universities, coexist alongside religious schools affiliated with various faith traditions, such as Christianity and Islam. While secular institutions dominate in urban centers and government-controlled areas, religious schools often play a significant role in rural and private education sectors.

Analysis of curriculum content and emphasis on STEM Subjects

The curriculum content and emphasis on STEM subjects vary across secular and religious educational institutions in Nigeria. Secular schools typically adhere to national curriculum standards set by government agencies, which include a balanced mix of academic subjects, including mathematics, science, and technology. In contrast, religious schools may integrate religious teachings and values into their curriculum alongside core academic subjects, potentially influencing the emphasis placed on STEM education.

While there is recognition of the importance of STEM education in preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce, challenges persist in the implementation and delivery of STEM subjects in both secular and religious schools. Limited resources, including qualified teachers, laboratory facilities, and instructional materials, often constrain the effectiveness of STEM education initiatives, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Challenges facing the education sector

The education sector in Nigeria faces a myriad of challenges, ranging from infrastructure deficiencies to funding constraints and quality assurance issues. Infrastructure deficits, including inadequate classroom facilities, lack of electricity, and insufficient access to technology and internet connectivity, impede the delivery of quality education in many schools, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Funding remains a perennial challenge for the Nigerian education sector, with budgetary allocations often inadequate to meet the growing demand for educational services. Limited funding contributes to teacher shortages, low teacher morale, and inadequate instructional materials, undermining the quality of education provided in many schools.

Quality assurance mechanisms are also lacking in Nigeria's education system, leading to disparities in educational standards and outcomes across different institutions. The absence of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms hampers efforts to assess and improve the quality of teaching and learning, exacerbating inequalities in educational access and attainment.

Therefore, while Nigeria's education sector is characterised by a diverse mix of secular and religious institutions, significant challenges persist in the delivery of quality education, particularly in STEM subjects. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to improve infrastructure, increase funding, and strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to ensure equitable access to high-quality education for all Nigerian students.

Perspectives on religious education in Nigeria

Stakeholders in Nigeria hold diverse perspectives on the role of religion in education, reflecting the country's rich cultural and religious tapestry. For many, religious education plays a vital role in instilling moral values, promoting ethical conduct, and fostering a sense of community and identity. Religious leaders often advocate for the integration of religious teachings into the educational curriculum, emphasising the importance of spiritual development alongside academic instruction.

However, there are also concerns among some stakeholders regarding the potential drawbacks of religious education, particularly in its impact on critical thinking skills and exposure to diverse worldviews. Critics argue that an overemphasis on religious teachings may hinder students' ability to engage critically with scientific concepts and technologies, leading to a narrow-minded approach to learning.

Societal attitudes towards religious and technological pursuits

Societal attitudes towards the perceived conflict between religious and technological pursuits in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted. While many Nigerians value the role of religion in guiding moral behavior and providing spiritual guidance, there is also a growing recognition of the importance of technological innovation in driving economic growth and social progress.

Some segments of society view technological advancement as compatible with religious teachings, viewing science and technology as tools for improving human welfare and fulfilling religious obligations, such as alleviating poverty and promoting social justice. However, others perceive a tension between religious and technological pursuits, particularly in cases where scientific discoveries or technological advancements challenge traditional religious beliefs or practices.

Impact of religious education on technological progress

One common misconception regarding religious education is that it inherently impedes technological progress by promoting a rigid adherence to traditional beliefs and values at the expense of scientific inquiry and innovation. However, empirical research suggests that the relationship between religious education and technological advancement is more nuanced.

While religious education may prioritise moral and ethical teachings over scientific knowledge in some contexts, it does not necessarily preclude engagement with technology or hinder technological innovation. In fact, many religious institutions recognise the importance of technological literacy and incorporate technology into their educational programs to enhance teaching and learning experiences. For instance, in the Holy Qur'an, reading and writing are preconised for all Muslims: "Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught by pen- taught humanity what they knew not" (Surah Al Alaq, verses 1-5). The pen, according to Akter (2023) "… is a writing or drawing tool used to articulate ideas and create blueprints for artists, engineers, designers, architects, researchers, and others". This verse paves the way for Muslims to develop and adopt technology as part of their efforts to seek knowledge.

At another clime, Pathak (2023) confirms that technology has a significant impact on religion. This is because, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp have facilitated the connection of people all over the world. "So, individuals from all over the world can now take part in religious services and rituals, fostering a sense of belonging".

Moreover, religious values such as compassion, stewardship, and social responsibility can complement technological advancements by guiding ethical decision-making and promoting the equitable distribution of technological benefits across society. Rather than viewing religious education as a barrier to technological progress, it is essential to recognize its potential to enrich and inform ethical debates surrounding technology and innovation in Nigeria.

Comparing education in Nigeria with France

Nigeria and France represent contrasting paradigms in terms of educational priorities and approaches. In Nigeria, education is highly valued as a means of social mobility and economic empowerment, yet the educational system grapples with challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, funding constraints, and disparities in access and quality. The curriculum often reflects a mix of secular and religious influences, with varying emphasis on STEM subjects and vocational training.

In contrast, France has a long history of secularism in education, with a strong emphasis on the separation of church and state. The French educational system places a high value on academic excellence, with a standardised curriculum designed to promote critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual development. STEM subjects are prioritised alongside the humanities, and vocational training is integrated into secondary education to prepare students for diverse career pathways.

Role of secularism in shaping educational policies and curricula

Secularism plays a central role in shaping educational policies and curricula in France, where the principle of secularism (*laïcité)* is enshrined in the constitution. The French government maintains strict neutrality in matters of religion, ensuring that public schools remain free from religious influence. As a result, the curriculum emphasises scientific rationalism, secular ethics, and citizenship education, reflecting the country's commitment to secular values.

In contrast, Nigeria's educational system operates within a diverse socio-religious context, with both secular and religious institutions coexisting within the education sector. While secularism is formally recognised in the Nigerian constitution, the country grapples with challenges related to religious diversity and sectarian tensions, which can influence educational policies and practices. The role of religion in education varies across different states and regions, with implications for curriculum content, teacher training, and school management.

Technological innovation for economic development

Technological innovation and economic development are key drivers of prosperity in both Nigeria and France, yet their trajectories differ significantly. France boasts of a highly developed economy with a strong emphasis on research and innovation, particularly in areas such as aerospace, automotive engineering, and information technology. The French government invests heavily in research and development, fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that drives economic growth and competitiveness on the global stage.

In contrast, Nigeria faces significant challenges in harnessing technological innovation to drive economic development. While the country has made strides in sectors such as telecommunications and fintech, technological infrastructure remains underdeveloped, and innovation ecosystems are nascent. Limited access to funding, inadequate regulatory frameworks, and a shortage of skilled professionals hinder Nigeria's ability to capitalise on its technological potential and achieve sustained economic growth.

Thus, while France prioritises secularism, academic excellence, and technological innovation, Nigeria continues to grapple with challenges related to religious diversity, educational quality, and technological infrastructure. By understanding these differences, policymakers and stakeholders can identify strategies to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing each country in promoting education and technological advancement.

Strategies for enhancing technological advancement in Nigeria

For Nigeria to advance technologically, there’s a need to promote technological literacy in the schools ‘curriculum for proper integration. Therefore, the followings should be taken into consideration:

i. **Integration of STEM education**: Both secular and religious educational institutions should prioritise the integration of STEM education into their curricula. This includes enhancing the teaching of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for technological innovation.

ii. **Teacher training and professional development:** Provide continuous training and professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their proficiency in teaching STEM subjects and integrating technology into the classroom. This includes workshops, seminars, and certification programs aimed at improving pedagogical techniques and leveraging educational technology tools.

iii. **Promotion of digital literacy:** Emphasise the importance of digital literacy skills, including computer proficiency, information literacy, and critical thinking, across all levels of education. Encourage the use of digital resources and online learning platforms to enhance students' engagement and facilitate self-directed learning.

iv. **Innovation hubs and maker spaces**: Establish innovation hubs and maker spaces within educational institutions to foster creativity, collaboration, and hands-on learning experiences. These spaces provide students with access to cutting-edge technology, prototyping equipment, and mentorship opportunities to explore and develop innovative solutions to real-world problems.

Bridging the gap between education and industry needs

There is an urgent need for concerted efforts to bridge the gap between education and industry needs, foster collaboration among stakeholders, and promote a holistic approach to education that integrates both secular and religious values. Thus, the following should be taken into consideration:

i. **Industry-Academia collaboration:** Foster closer collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders to align educational programs with industry needs and emerging job markets. Establish advisory boards comprising representatives from academia, government, and industry to inform curriculum development and promote industry-relevant research.

ii. **Internship and apprenticeship programmes**: Expand opportunities for students to gain practical experience through internships, apprenticeships, and industry placements. Collaborate with private sector companies and government agencies to facilitate work-integrated learning experiences that bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

iii. **Entrepreneurship education:** Integrate entrepreneurship education into the curriculum to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and cultivate innovation-driven enterprises. Provide students with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to start and grow successful businesses in technology-related fields.

iv. **Incentives for research and innovation:** Offer incentives and funding opportunities for research and innovation projects that address pressing societal challenges and contribute to technological advancement. Encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and partnerships between academia, industry, and government to drive innovation-led economic growth.

Collaboration and partnerships in driving technological innovations

Stakeholders, including parents, communities, and industry leaders, have a crucial role to play in supporting educational initiatives and promoting a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, through the following activities:

i. **Multi-Sectoral collaboration**: Foster collaboration and partnerships among government agencies, educational institutions, industry stakeholders, research

organisations, and civil society groups to leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks for driving technological innovation.

ii. **Knowledge exchange and transfer**: Facilitate knowledge exchange and technology transfer initiatives to bridge the gap between research and practice. Establish platforms for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions across different sectors and regions.

iii. **Public-Private partnerships:** Encourage public-private partnerships to co-invest in technology infrastructure, research and development initiatives, and skills development programs. Leverage the strengths of both the public and private sectors to accelerate the adoption and diffusion of technology across society.

iv. **Community engagement and outreach:** Engage local communities and grassroots organisations in promoting technological literacy and innovation. Empower citizens to participate in the co-creation of technology solutions that address community needs and enhance socio-economic development.

By implementing these strategies and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, Nigeria can harness the transformative power of technology to drive inclusive growth, foster social progress, and build a prosperous future for all its citizens.

Recommendations

In the light of the forgoing analysis, the study recommends as follows:

- Educational policymakers in Nigeria must prioritise reforms to enhance the quality and relevance of education, particularly in STEM subjects and digital literacy.
- Practitioners should leverage partnerships and innovative teaching methods to foster technological literacy and critical thinking skills among students.
- -Call to action for fostering a conducive environment for technological advancement in Nigeria, grounded in a balanced approach to education. Through it, Nigeria can unlock its full potential for innovation, economic growth, and social development.
- While Nigeria faces significant challenges in promoting technological advancement, there are also immense opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and positive change. By embracing a balanced approach to education and harnessing the collective efforts of policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders, Nigeria can chart a course towards a more prosperous and technologically vibrant future for all its citizens.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the impact of secular and religious education on technological advancement in Nigeria, juxtaposed with France as a secular nation. The comparative analysis has shed light on the contrasting educational priorities, approaches, and outcomes in both countries, highlighting the challenges and opportunities facing Nigeria in promoting education and technological innovation.

In light of the above, we can conclude that there is a symbiotic relationship between religious education and technology. Thus, we can say that technology is not in any way impeding the technological advancement of Nigeria. France as a secular state is not exclusively devoid of religion. Technological innovation and economic development are results of investments in research and development, and industry-academia collaboration. It is therefore imperative for the Nigerian government and all stakeholders in education to restructure the educational system by injecting some technological courses into it at all levels of education.

References

Akter, F. (2023). "Integrating Science, Technology, and Engineering with Insights from the Quran and Hadith", fakter-64263.medium.com Retrieved on 22/06/2024.

Amilcar, A. (2023). "The influence of Religion on Technological Advancement in Europe", *International of Science and Society.* Vol. 5, issue 4. Pp.541-550.

Berger, P. (1969). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion (1st ed.)*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Bruce, S. (2011). *Secularization: In defence of an unfashionable theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casanova, J. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Copson, A. (2019). "What is Secularity?" Secularissm: A very Short Introduction, Very Short Introductions. Oxford online edu, Oxford Academic.

Durkheim, E. (1977). The Evolution of educational thought (P. Collin, Trans.). London, England: Routledge, Kegan Paul. [Google Scholar]

Parsons, T. (1951). The Social System.Tavistock Pubblications. [Google Scholar]

Pathak, I. R. (2023). "Breaking Barriers: How Technology Bridges the Gap Between Faith and Believers". Medium.com. Published in The Daily Cuppa Grande. Retrieved on 21/06/2024

Srinivas, M.N. (2022). Secularization: Characteristics, causes and effects. www.lotusarise.com Retrieved on 16/06/2024.

The Holy Qur'an Chapter 96, Verses 1-5.

Troper, M. (2000). "French Secularism, Or Laicity". Vol. 21:1267, pp 1267-1284. [Google Scholar].

Tschannen, O. (1991). The Secularization paradigm: A systematization. Journal for the Scientific Study of religion30: 395-415. [Google Scholar]

Wilson, B.R. (1966/2016). *Religion in secular society: fifty years on*. Oxford University Press.