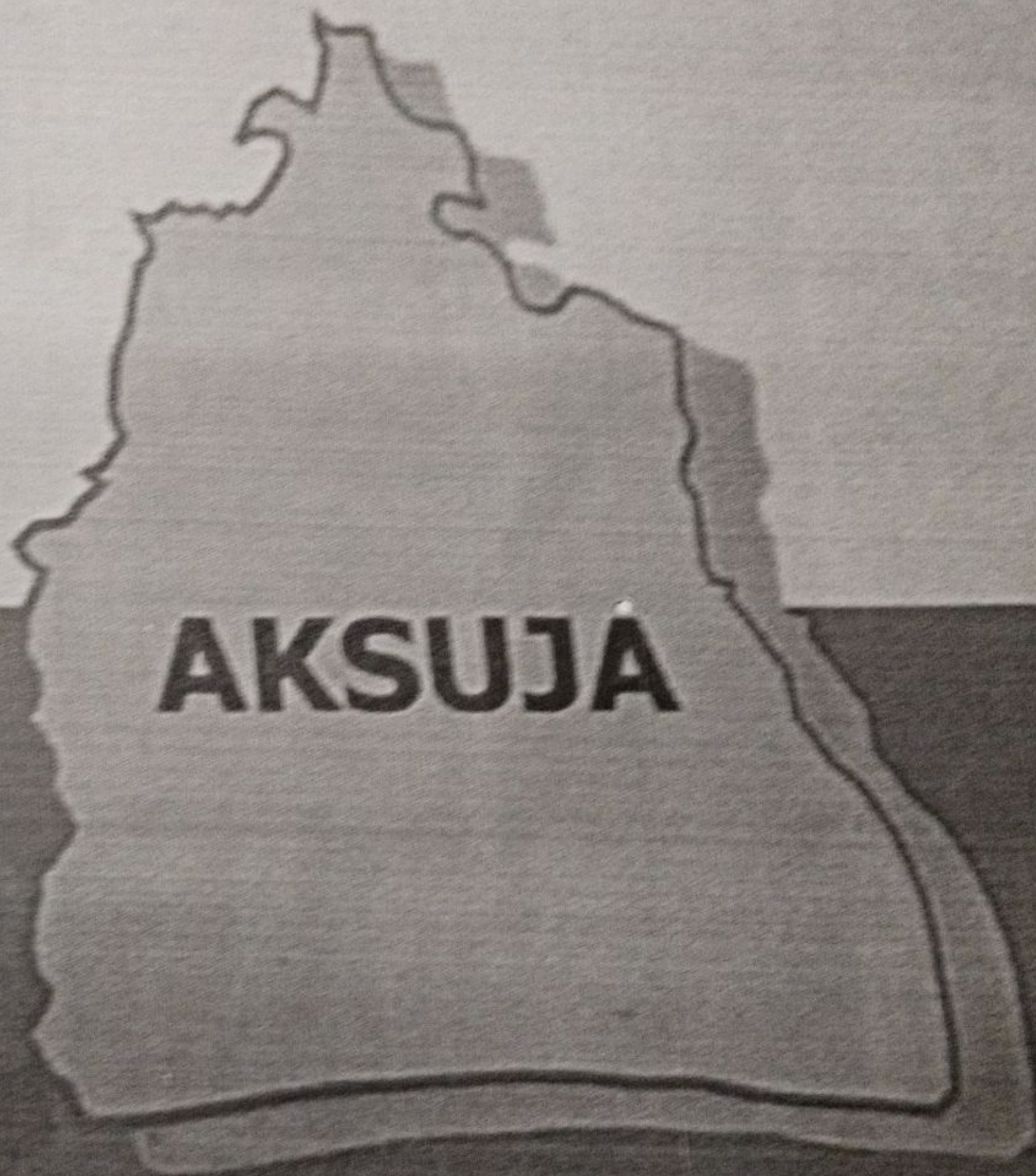




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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The history of development of religion and religious studies is as long as history of the existence of man on earth. Hardly the history of a particular cultural group or a certain nation been told without reference being made to their spiritual aspect of life. The spirituality in people's culture however depicts religiosity. However, in the contemporary societies, it appears that little or no interest is being given to religious studies. Thus, this study is carried out to examine the development of religious studies (Christian /Islamic Studies) in Nigeria. The study concluded that in spite of the unattractive status enjoyed by Religious Studies under the auspices of Nigerian education system, Religious Studies remain significant channels for inculcation of moral values.

Introduction

Education is believed to be the sole and reliable instrument for progress and development of a given society. It has been often reiterated that the level of development to which a society can attain would always be determined by the quality and standard of education of that particular society. Education is perceived as a transformer of crude, raw and underdeveloped manpower resources of the nation into skilled, technical, costly, and highly- valued elements in the productive process of a given nation. It facilitates national development as it equips the people with the needed knowledge, skills, techniques and information for the improvement of national economy (Amaele, 2007). The criticality of the roles played by education in long-term productivity and growth of a nation at both micro and macro levels should not be undermined. As such, education needs to be given proper attention it deserves as allowing the quality of education to decline has far reaching negative impacts on a nation's moral, civic, cultural and economic sustainability (Kingdom & Maekae, 2013). In addition, Abdur-Rafiu (2014) is of the view that the challenges that threaten political, economic, scientific and technological developments of a nation can be tackled through education. Owing to the fact that education constitute the process through which an individual is exposed to forms of knowledge, skills and experience that make him useful to himself and the society in which he lives, it is incumbent on

every citizen of a given society to be provided access to education. This point has also been stressed by Oyelade and Abolade (2018) when they observed that education is a basic human need without which personal or national development is inconceivable.

Moreover, the policy makers and the stakeholders involved in designing educational system of a nation have to be careful when planning a nation's educational system. The major task of education has to be identified and understood. This is because not all forms of knowledge could be regarded as education. Education is the product of refined knowledge. The major task of any system or form of education is to inculcate the desired values of the society. The moral values of such nation have to be keenly portrayed in its education system (Amaele, 2007). In other words, as every nation is struggling to plan, provide and promote sophisticated knowledge in science and technology nowadays, educational curricula of whatever nature should be ethical-oriented. It should not be devoid of moral aspects. According to Plato as cited in Amaele (2007), any form of education that is devoid of teaching of virtues, no matter the interest it may carry, cannot be called education.

1998 noted that scholars agreed that both morals and religion are inseparable twins. This point however puts religious education among the channels through which moral values could be inculcated. The Nigerian government attaches great importance to teaching and learning of moral and religious education (FRN, 2013). The policy statement has therefore, been practically pursued with implementation through provision of religious studies curriculum, training and recruitment of qualified religious studies teachers and the teachers' eventual cultivation of religious studies into the learners (Abdul Hameed, 2013). According to the National Policy on Education (2013), both Christian and Islamic religious studies constitute part of the school subjects at both primary and secondary levels. In addition, religious studies are also studied at the higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. According to Leonard and Felix (2014), religious education is taught in Nigerian schools because it helps to streamline the thought, character, moral and aspiration of the students. In spite of the crucial roles played by religious education in nation building and development, it is an observable fact that the deserved utmost understanding, attitude and attention have not been accorded religious education. On this note, this study is to examine the trends in the Christian/ Islamic perspectives in the development of religious education in Nigeria. Emphasis would also be laid on challenges and prospects of religious education.

Religious Education and its Importance

Religion could be perceived as a belief system of a person or group of persons which guides individual or group practice in the worship of a spiritual being(s) variously called God, Allah, Olodumare, etc. and the attendant relationship within the adherents themselves and between them and non-adherents of that faith (Amaele, 2007). It could be inferred from this that religion is all about spirituality. It

(2016) when highlighting the components of religious education in Islam gave an instance of prophetic tradition which reads thus:

Abu al-'Abbas 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas, *radiyallahu anhum*, reported: One day I was behind the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi was allam*, and he said to me:

O young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]: Be mindful of Allah, and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. If you (have need to) ask, ask of Allah; and if you seek help, seek help from Allah. Know that even if the Nation (or the whole community) were to gather together to benefit you with something, they would not benefit you with anything except that which Allah has already recorded for you, and that if they gather together to harm you with something, they would not be able to harm you with anything except that which Allah has already recorded against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried."

[Al-Tirmidhi relates this and says: It is a good, genuine Hadith]

In a version other than that of al-Tirmidhi it reads:

"...Be mindful of Allah, you will find Him before you. Get to know Allah in prosperity and He will know you in adversity. Know that what has passed you by was not going to befall you; and that what has befallen you was not going to pass you by. And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship."

It could be deduced from the above prophetic tradition that in Islam, religious education is geared towards concretizing someone's faith in Allah and reposing confidence in the Almighty Allah. In other words, spiritual, moral and socio-political training are all components of religious education in Islamic world view. For instance, in Islamic religious school curricula in Nigeria, spiritual, moral, economic, social, political and educational significances of the five pillars of Islam are stipulated to be exposed to the students.

Further still, on the importance of religious education in Islam, Allah enjoins in Q28: 77 "But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world..." It could be deduced here that what is primarily required of any human being is seek Allah's pleasure which implies spiritual perfection. It is upon this that all other worldly achievements stand. Thus, to attain spiritual excellence, every individual needs to take cognizance of religious tenets and this can only be achieved through religious education. Hence, religious education becomes a powerful necessity in the life of human beings. This is corroborated by Ayanlowo and Bello (2015) when they submitted that Islamic religious education aims at enabling students to have engrained in their minds the key Islamic concepts of *Tawhid*, *Hayat*, *Akhirah*, *Dunya*, *Jannat*, *Nuur*, *Deen*, *Munkar*, *Nafs*, *Kufr*, *Ajr*, *Sabr*, *Fitrah*, and so on, all of which rule human lives. Islamic education is tailored towards enabling recipients to have consistent self-assessment, so that they would be able to evaluate the action they embark upon, they

is all about adopting a set of spiritual principles as a model for someone's life. This also implies that one's spiritual steps would revolve around the laid down tenets of the adopted belief system. Another key point to be deduced from the definition of the term 'relationship'. The locus of relationship that is stressed in the definition of religion is a multifaceted concept. i.e. through religion, a smooth relationship is maintained between the believer and the object of belief (in most cases the Creator); through the religion, a cordial relationship is focused among the believers in the same object of belief; and likewise the locus of religion is to foster a good relationship between believers in different objects of belief. However, the foregoing assertion points to the fact that religion plays important role in any society. It is a vehicle of unity, explaining human predicament, helping to control social behaviour and providing individuals with emotional support in respect to uncertainties of life (Abdul Hameed, 2013).

Different religious practices exist in Nigeria. These include African Traditional Religion, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and other religions. The different religions possess acclaimed divine books or messages which they strive to inculcate into their adherents in order for them to practice effectively the dictates of their religion and as well indoctrinate the coming generations. This fact however portrays that each religions possesses its values, ethics, doctrines and teachings. Hence, the teaching about religious doctrines, histories, principles, ethics and etiquettes constitute what is made up of religious education.

Religious education is an umbrella under which the various tenets and traditions of world's religions are transmitted from a generation to another. The significant role of religion in human life makes religious education imperative in the society. Okonkwo (2004) submitted that religious education provides the students with the potentials that would make them understand that they have a supernatural destiny and as such, their intellect is trained and enriched not only by the study of science and arts of natural order but also by the study of revealed truths. Religious education can be described as those processes designed to induct each new generation into the attitudes, beliefs and the practices of religion or faith in order to promote the religion and at the same time provide for the individual unifying centre for his life (Abdul Hameed, 2013).

According to Ilechukwu and Uchem (2014), religious education is the academic field of multi-disciplinary, secular study of religious beliefs, behaviours and institutions. It describes, compares, interprets and explains religion, emphasizing systematic, historically based, and cross-cultural perspectives. However, Ilechukwu and Ugwuozor (2014) perceived religious education beyond a mere academic field. They viewed religious education as a form of education that would provide individual with necessary tools of tackling life challenges. On this, Leonard and Felix (2014) stressed that the main task of religious education is to guide students in such a way that they can attain intellectual and moral perfection, discipline themselves both mentally and morally, and face their daily and future challenge with the traditions of the past.

There are three systems of education in Nigeria namely: African Indigenous educational system, Islamic education system and Christian/ Missionary/ Western education system. Religious education has been part and parcel of the three education systems in Nigeria.

Before the infiltration of foreign cultures, spiritual training and inculcation of moral values constituted integral parts of African indigenous education systems that prevailed within the purview of African traditional culture. The African traditional education was based on a high spirit of understanding and co-operation between individual members of the community. The education emphasized social responsibilities, job orientation, political participation and the appreciation of spiritual and moral values (Abdur-Rafiu, 2009). Fafunwa (1974) has given the seven cardinal goals of traditional Africa education as follows:

1. Development of the child's physical skill (physical training)
2. Development of character
3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority
4. Intellectual training (development of intellectual skills)
5. To acquire specific vocational training, (agricultural education, trades and crafts) and to develop a healthy attitude toward honest labour
6. Community participation i.e. to develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs
7. Promotion of cultural heritage, i.e. to understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

The curriculum of African traditional education (though unwritten) stemmed out of the highly comprehensive and laudable goals spelt out above. The contents are briefly explained below.

1. **Physical Training:** The young ones were involved in several competitive games and other activities geared towards their physical, mental and social development. Examples of these are wrestling, dancing, acrobatic display etc.

2. **Character Training:** This was the corner-stone of African traditional education. Moral uprightness was highly valued and no parent would ever want to raise any child that would tarnish the image of the family (nuclear or extended family). As a result of this, all hands were on deck to make every child sociable, humble, honest, morally good and self-discipline. The training was given through the display of good character by adults for the young ones to emulate and also through discipline when wrong behaviours were display or reward for behaving acceptably.

3. **Religious Training:** Traditional African religion was prevalent before the introduction of Islam and Christianity. Worshippers passed the religious instructions to the younger ones. They were also taught the various mode of

worshipping the ancestors, for instance the shrine leaders in the presence of other members of the community taught the various ways to worship and appease the gods especially the god of iron, thunder etc.

4. **Vocational Training:** One of the aims of traditional education was self-reliance. The traditional society was determined to foster individual independence through exposure to vocational programmes, which were divided into three major areas. These areas were agricultural, education, trade and crafts and other professional programmes. These three areas were not truly emphasized by the missionaries and the colonial master who later introduced formal education to Nigeria. The fact that Africans were seen as slaves and servants created to serve their masters (the colonialist) shows that anything that would make them self-reliant were prevented.

5. **Community Participation:** Mutual and cooperative relationships were built through peaceful co-existence and involvement in community development projects like road construction, digging of wells, joint agricultural ventures, etc. Members of the society saw themselves as belonging to a big family whose values and interest must be cherished and sustained. Individualistic approach to life and issues were never allowed.

6 **Cultural Training:** Education has been traditionally considered as the process of cultural transmission and renewal. The essence of traditional education was to pass across to the younger ones the society's cultural heritage. The African child was taught through observation and by imitation the actions of those that surrounded them. Children copy the parent's mode of dressing, types of food taken and the various ceremonies observed in the society.

7 **Intellectual Training:** Traditional African education encouraged intellectual development. The younger ones were taught the history and geography of their locality. They were also intimated with the names of different useful herbs, the seasons of the year, types of soil, and their advantages to farmers children were also taught poetry, proverbs, arithmetic (counting) incantations and other forms of intellectual training.

Commenting on the above goals of African Indigenous education, Amaele (2007) noted that out of the seven cardinal goals above, three goals 2, 3 and 5 lay great emphasis on moral values. In other words, moral training is the most favoured aspect of African indigenous education. In addition, Abdur-Rafiu (2009) when analyzing the curriculum content of African indigenous education noted that the content includes physical training, character training, religious training, vocational training, community participation and intellectual training. However, while explaining religious training, Abdur-Rafiu (2009) submitted that traditional African religion was very prevalent before the introduction of Islam and Christianity.

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The incorporation of religious studies into formal educational system could be traced back to the history of Western education in Nigeria. Then, it was not generally accepted by the people, most especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Due to the fact that the earlier school was established by the missionaries, people of that time were not fully interested in enrolling their children in school owing to the fear of converting them into Christianity because their curriculum is Christianized (Ajidagba, 2002). That explains that religious studies has been in existence since the time immemorial. Islamic studies as a form of religious education holds its source from the principles and practices of Islam. The emergence of Islamic studies dates back to the period of formulating the national policy on education in Nigeria. The policy cherishes and promotes, among other things, moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations. Such values are clearly spelt out and emphasized in the various topics of Islamic studies taught in schools (Opeloye, 1994).

It could be observed from the above points that religious education is of crucial importance. Its relevance in nation building and development could not be undermined. Niculescu and Norel (2013) viewed the importance of religious education from the fact that education has to be done in accordance with the human rights. Thus, one of the important human rights is represented by the freedom of religion; this freedom implies everyone's right of being educated within the spirit of the personal religion and everybody's duty to be tolerant with the others' religious beliefs. Niculescu and Norel (2013) however noted that religion has a great impact on the day to day life and it seems to be the strongest anchor of humans. original inhabitants and new comers. As such, religious values belong to the set of values transmitted through the educational process as a complex whole.

According to Flourish (2013), religious education has actively been known to be a strong promoter of the values of genuineness, fairness, honesty, deference for all and care of the environment. Religious education provides the children with the opportunity of appreciating themselves and others. Through the teaching of religion, the real responsibility of family and the community in religious principle and action are inculcated. Religious education is also acquainted with shifting environment of the general public, including transformations in religious practice and appearance and the authority of religion in the neighborhood, homes, state and in the universal society.

Flourish (2013) submitted further that religious education has made significant involvement principally in its center of attention on promoting value everyone equally. Religious education has taken a front responsibility in fight against injustice, unfairness and pessimistic bias. Religious education builds awareness of major world religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism and well opening doors for individual expression and sacred maturity. Through

teaching and learning of religious education, students' consciousness of religious convictions and values, education and outward appearance of expression, as well as the influence of faith on persons, families, societies and traditions are facilitated. Religious education also facilitates students to build up value and compassion to others, especially those whose faith and way of life are dissimilar from their own. It helps to encourage positive judgment and enables students to fight against discrimination.

The Islamic Perspectives of Religious Education in Nigeria

Islam perceives religious education as an inevitable mechanism for harmonious living on earth and the hereafter. This is because according to Islam, the utmost purpose of creation of human beings and jinn alike is a spiritual engagement. All other purposes of life come after the attainment of excellence in spirituality. The glorious Qur'an reads: "I did not create jinn and human beings but for the purpose of worshipping me". "So set thy face to the true religion, the nature made by Allah in which He has made mankind; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion; but most people know not" (Qur'an 30:30). Since it is categorically stated in the Qur'an that the essence of creation is to worship Allah, the obligation towards Allah the Almighty Creator must be carried out and fulfill with utmost keenness, enthusiasm and perfection so as to get the best result which is Allah's pleasure. However, a desire to please Allah through fulfillment of His injunction (worship) would precipitate a quest for how best the worship is done.

The unique ways of worship are acquired through education. The form of education that can equip us best with all that is required in attaining higher level of spirituality is religious education. It has been reported from Hadith Qudsiy that Allah says; "inquire about me before you attempt my worship; can someone who is ignorant of (the cores of my worship) worship me perfectly?" Two points could be inferred here; the conceptual perspective of religious education in Islamic realm and the importance of religious education in Islam. For the concept of religious education from Islamic perspectives, it could be inferred that religious education is a form of training, teaching, enlightenment, information and awareness which human beings are provided with for the purpose of equipping them with spiritual ingredients that make them attain success in this life and in the hereafter. This perception is corroborated by Ajidagba (1998) when he submitted that Islamic education is a system of education which entails ideology concept expounding the very nature of life (here and after), and prescribing the position of man and his role on earth.

Albalagh (nd) was of the view that Islamic religious education is geared towards making people conscious of the Creator on a basis of rational understanding, so that healthy relationships would flower, helping to build believers' personalities and induce in them a correct vision of life and Hereafter. Through religious education in Islam, children and youth are groomed and trained to take lead in social activities in order to master specialized roles. Such talents should be vested in called people to the message of Allah, the message of virtue and peace. Abdur-Rafiu and Ibrahim

pose question on whether a particular action leads them to *Jannah* or leads to the hell fire.

According to Ajidagba (1998), religious education from Islamic perspectives entails giving instruction on purely theological matters, such that the trainee would be able to practice the five pillars of Islam. Islamic education is a process of self-discipline, which ensures spiritual and intellectual growth of the individual. He explained further that Islamic religious education is a system of education, which entails ideology concept expounding the very nature of life (here and after), and prescribing the position of man and his role on earth. The above definition of Ajidagba (1998) is greatly influenced by the opinion of Qutub (1977) from which we can infer that religious education in Islamic realm includes the doctrine and pragmatic set up which emanate from and premised on the ideological framework. The framework in question entails ethics and its sustaining power, politics and its characteristics, social order and its values, economic precept and its philosophy and internationalism in its ramifications. In a nutshell, religious education from Islamic world view could be inferred from what Islam stands for. Islam is said to be a complete way of life. As such, religious education could be viewed to be a sort of education whose components cut across all spheres of life.

With regards to the development of Islamic religious education in Nigeria, the emergence of Islamic education in a given location in the world is always concomitant with the history of development of Islam in that particular area. This situation is also the same in Nigeria (Ajidagba, 1986, Amaele, 2005, Oladosu, 2008 & Abdur-Rafiu, 2015). However, it is not a matter of coincidence or accident that Islam and Islamic religious education go together. The fact is that, without the latter the former cannot be said to have been firmly entrenched and understood (Ajidagba, 1998).

Islamic religious education in Nigeria started with the introduction of Qur'anic school in the middle of 14th century when Islam was introduced in Nigeria. Traditionally, the Qur'anic school is divided into two levels: Makaranta Allo (Elementary level) and Makaranta Ilmi (Higher level). The elementary level is the commonest. Wherever there is a Muslim populace there abound a Qur'anic school where Islam as a religion and Arabic as a language are taught simultaneously. Usually, Mallam's parlour, or under the shade of trees were used as classrooms. The Qur'anic schools exposes learners to the art of reciting the Qur'an. There was no stipulated duration of the course. Generally, learners are attached to their teachers for as long as the number of years necessary for learning to recite the Qur'an. The higher level (Makaranta Ilmi) is meant for the graduands of the Qur'anic schools that show interest in learning. There students are exposed to various branches of Islamic, Arabic, law, philosophy, logic and other advanced branches of knowledge.

Presently, the Qur'anic schools system is modernized by introducing Islamiyyah school system. Islamiyyah schools are organized educational institutions established by voluntary Muslim organizations or interested individual proprietors. Students pass through three distinctive educational levels: Ibtida'iyyah

level (primary), Idadiyyah level (Intermediate) and Thanawiyyah level (secondary). Apart from this, Islamic religious education has also been incorporated into usual Nigerian formal education system. Though not in a comprehensive manner, Islamic religious education is offered across all educational levels. On other hand, the broad goals of Islamic religious education in Nigerian secondary schools are:

1. To prepare the students spiritually, morally, socially, and intellectually for his role as a Muslim in the adult world which he is entering;
2. To give him an insight in the broad view of Islam in both the past and the present;
3. To help him further his studies in Islam both formally and otherwise throughout his life in accordance with the saying of the prophet Muhammed: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."
4. To enable him to practice properly all his religious duties

The Christian Perspectives of Religious Education in Nigeria

Religious education from Christian perspectives in Nigeria is given different names. Most of these nomenclatures are; religious instruction, bible knowledge, scripture, religious and moral instruction, religious studies and religious education among others. Religious education is not evangelization. Evangelization means the preaching of the gospel for the sole purpose of converting non - believers into the Christian faith. It is the conversion of people, not in the classroom, but in the Church and in the Communities. Furthermore, religious education is not catechism. Catechism is an oral instruction given to new converts into the Christian faith. In this case, those who undergo this instruction have already believed in the gospel. All that they need is something that will help their faith to mature and be established thus, catechism can only take place in the church, where there are believers and not in the school (Flourish 2013).

Ilechukwu and Ugwuzor (2014) gathered in their research that religious education is an invitation to pattern of thought which express itself in man's spiritual dimension. They found further that religious education is not merely a matter of telling student about God, rather it is a question of showing them, in the course of their development from childhood to adulthood, how all of life is threatened by the drifting away from God, which suggests that the central question is one of the full restoration of man. The main task of religious education is to guide students in such a way that they can attain intellectual and moral perfection, discipline themselves both mentally and morally, and face their daily and future challenge with the traditions of the past. Ilechukwu and Ugwuzor (2014) observed that Okonkwo (2004) stressed that religious education has the duty of making students understand that they have a supernatural destiny and seeing that their intellect is trained and enriched not only by the study of science and arts of natural order but also by the study of revealed truths.

More so, Abdur-Rafiu (2009) gathered that the coming of the Christian Missionaries, into Nigeria marked the beginning of Christian religious education in Nigeria. These Missionaries included the church missionary society (CMS)

Methodist mission, Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic mission. Their main objectives of education were to enable the native, (the Nigerians) to learn how to read bible and practice Christianity. Since the coming of missionaries in 1842, they solely championed the control of formal education Nigeria till 1882. It was in that year, 1882 that the British colonial Government began to show interest in education. This led to the promulgation of 1882 Educational Ordinance. After the Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern parts in the year 1914, another Educational ordinance was made.

Emmanuel (2006) noted that protestant missions came into Nigeria ahead of Catholic Missions, even though the North and West of Nigeria were under Muslim influence; the missions were still able to make some inroads in the East and the South. Their aims and objectives and strategies differed from each other. While Catholic missions sought to provide moral and religious education and to bring Christian influence to bear on pagan communities, the Protestants missions aimed at training the young by giving them liberal education to create well prepared, well instructed and proven congregations. For Protestant missions, education and the building of schools, hospitals and centers for elementary industrial training were all integral parts of evangelism.

The issue of curriculum content and policy were extremely in the hands of individual mission agencies until government became interested in education when they issued grants of 30 pounds in 1872, distributed among Anglican, Wesleyan and Catholic missions in Lagos. In 1873 no grants were given out but in 1874 the grant increased to 100 pounds to each agency. By 1876 it had increased to 200 pounds for each mission agency. Because "he who pays the piper dictates the tune", in 1882, there was a promulgation of an ordinance by the British Administration in Nigeria- the declaration of religious neutralism in matters of education. There was also a divergence of opinion on content and purpose of education. While the government wanted intellectualism, the missions wanted spirituality (Faneye, 2014).

It is pertinent to note that with a lot of transformations in Nigerian system, Christian religious education is not left out of the school curricula. Christian religious education which was introduced into our educational system with the inception of western education had the Holy Bible as the first curriculum. The Christian religious education curriculum however changed with the establishment of the West African Examinations council (WAEC) in 1952 and its intervention few years later when the body introduced its own syllabuses to its operation in the conduct of its examinations. Meanwhile, the first set of students were presented for WAEC examination in Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in the early 50's and that was under 7-5-2-3 system of education which remained operational till 1972. In 1972/73, the system on education changed to 6-5-2-3, later to 6-3-3-4 and presently, to 9-3-4. In all, the syllabus remained unchanged (Ajidagba, 2008). In addition, the National Policy of Education (2004) also specified the objectives of Religious Education as:

1. To provide more opportunity for Nigerian youth to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in him;
2. To enable the youth to accept Christ as saviour;
3. To enable youth to recognize Jesus as the founder and sustainer of the Christian church;
4. To enable the youth accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their daily activities;
5. To help the youth understand the basic teachings of Christ and to apply these to their daily lives and works;
6. To develop in youth Christian attitude and moral values such as humanity, respect, love, kindness, justice and fair-play, spirit of forgiveness, obedience, service to God and humanity;
7. To prepare the youth for higher education and for service with the community.

Challenges of Religious Education in Nigeria

The challenges in this context are referred to as the factors inhibiting effective implementation of religious education in Nigerian schools. On this, Ajidagba (2008) noted that the problems facing the teaching of religious studies generally could be viewed as follow:

A - Societal value: it has been observed that a lot of people attach much significance to material wealth. As such, anything that would make them rich quickly is pursued with utmost enthusiasm. For instance, an average Nigeria parent would prefer that his child read Medicine, engineering and other lucrative courses to specializing in religious studies. This view is corroborated by the submission of Ilechukwu and Ugwuzor (2014) that secularization of the society, religious unbelief and too much emphasis on materialism are seen as the factors that thwart the effort of Religious Education in Nigeria.

B - Dearth of Textbook: It has long been observed that there are no sufficient relevant text books for religious studies. In most cases, the old books that were written for the old School Certificate programme, being used in the pre-6-3-3-4 system, are still in use. The few new ones that have been written by scholars are either not physically available or they carry prohibitive prices.

C - Students' Negative Attitude: The societal disposition to religious education has negative influence on students' attitudes towards the subject. Students do not see religious education as integral part of their studies, rather they see it as unnecessary wasting of time.

D - Inconsistent Government Policy: The fact that the status of religious education in the curriculum keeps on fluctuating is a worrisome problem that stirs its teaching on the face. The teacher, the students and even the parents know the negligence with which the government handles religious studies. Initially, the subject was elective at the senior secondary school level; it later became a core subject, and later became elective again. This issue has generated serious argument in the country. For

instance, in the year 2012, the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan conflated the religious studies (Islamic and Christian religious studies) with Civic education, security education and Social Studies to become Religion and National Values. This issue however caused a lot of heated debates and protests particularly from Christian quarters. The situation compelled the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari to order the reversal of the status of religious education to its former status. The implication of the foregoing is that the government that controls education and that can make things happen, pays only lip service to religious education.

E - Insufficient infrastructure: it has been reported several times that basic facilities that are essential for meaningful teaching and learning are insufficient in most schools in Nigeria. A situation where a student do not have a seat and table to himself/herself cannot be said to be conducive for teaching and learning.

F - Quality of Teacher and Qualification: One big problem of religious education is quality and qualification of the teachers employed to teach the subject. Ajidagba (2008) reiterated that the assumption by some people is that being a Christian or a Muslim automatically confers on one the wherewithal to teach religion, especially, if the person can put on a Cross or Turban, as the case may be. He emphasized that most of our religious studies teachers could be termed as cheaters as they do not possess the requisite education to do the job.

g- Condition of Service: The poor condition of service is a serious factor that inhibits effective inculcation of religious education as many religious teachers are demoralized as a result of unattractive conditions of services.

H Job Aspiration: Ajidagba (2008) noted that religious studies certificate is not attractive in the labour market anymore, even in the teaching job. Advertisement is no longer favourable to the subject. Ajidagba (2008) lamented further that the situation is so bad that even the scholars, specialists and those who rose to prominence by the grace of the subject do not donate any of their children to the field. Religious studies have now become an area for those who do not have any other thing to read, but have to contend with it to have higher education.

Prospects of Religious Education in Nigeria

Despite several challenges, religious education enjoys some prospects. Ajidagba (2005) stresses that hope should still be kept alive with respect to religious education. No matter the situation now, improvement could still be envisaged. Religious education serves as panacea to various problems that ravage our society. For instance, Abdur-Rafiu (2016) was of the view that religious education could be adopted to tackle corrupt practices in Nigerian schools. Also, Abdur-Rafiu (2013) maintained that religious and moral education could be instrumental to peace keeping in the society. On this, the scholars in the field of religious education constitute most of the peace keeping committee that are commissioned to see to peaceful and harmonious co-existence in the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Owing to the important roles religious education plays in promoting national development and in building, grooming and rehabilitating individuals as revealed in this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- a. Religious education should be integrated fully into Nigerian education system.
- b. There is a need for regular religious campaigns targeted towards national integration and peaceful coexistence.
- c. The governments at all levels should display serious interest in religious education and provide necessary aids for smooth implementation of religious education curricular.
- d. Government should organize seminar for the religious teachers on how to inculcate moral and religious education that will facilitate national development.
- e. Religious education should be made compulsory for all primary and secondary school students. In addition, it should compose an integral part of general studies in higher institutions
- f. Qualified religious teachers at various level of education should be employed.
- g. There is a need for creation of ministry of religious affairs at both state and national levels

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