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**REPOSITIONING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL
FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE SECURITY AND NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

By

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Abstract

In a pluralistic and multi-ethnicity society, religious education, sustainable security and national development are pivotal issues. The focus of this paper is to establish the intricate linkages among religious education, sustainable security that ensures national development in Nigeria. The paper posits that religious education introduced by the early missionaries in the country permeates attitudes, beliefs, practices and behaviors that have acted as a driven force for the attainment of the socioeconomic and sociopolitical transformation of the country. The paper suggested amongst other things that different religious adherents should utilize the religious ethical codes as a veritable tool of achieving sustainable security and hence national development.

Key words: Religious education, Sustainable Security and National development

Introduction

Nigeria is a religiously pluralistic state. Academically three of such religions have been identified; they are African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. In practical terms, among the Nigeria population, two of the three religions are paramount and readily recognized by the Nigerian people; these are Christianity and Islam. The two religions have played extremely large roles in educational development of millions of Nigerians. Indeed religion is as important in the society as a form of social control because of people's adherence to religion whether traditional, Christianity or Islam. (Ikporukpo, 2000) which are the recognized religions in Nigeria though the last two are more pronounced. Churches and Mosques in Nigeria have contributed immensely to the economic development of the country.

One should appreciate the fact that it is when education liberates, one develops socially, physically, economically politically and psychologically in all ramifications of life that one can be relevant to ones environment, society, state, country, continent and the whole world in general. It is also in this way that education can serve as a way to a fulfilled future living. There is no doubt that education per se and not half-baked one, is "glistening commodity" like a gold silver or diamond. The commodity can be regarded as a fine instrument that can dissipate darkness, replace foolishness with wisdom usher in knowledge, light, liberation, independence, maturity, progress etc. In addition, according to Adelowo (2006) education if properly channeled, serves as a tool for human development and liberation and it can also serve as a gateway to a realization of one's hope of securing a fulfilled future living. The paper is divided into four sections. Aside section one, which serves as background to the study, section two dwells on conceptual clarification, while section three entails interface between adopted concepts. Section four presents conclusions and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification

It is pertinent now to explore the relevant concepts such as religion, religious education, sustainable security and national development, which underpin this study in order to understand this paper.

Religion

One of the most difficult concepts in terms of definition is the word religion. As a concept, religion has come to occupy a central stage in both our consciousness and in academic discourse. Religion can be broadly described as a set of common beliefs and practices generally held by a group of people. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (1999) describes

religion as a system of faith that is based on belief in the existence of a particular God or gods. According to Oke, Oloruntimehin and Akinola (1996), it is generally accepted by social scientists that people's religious beliefs and their social organizations are closely related. According to Adeniyi (1993), religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being. In addition, Bellah (1970) understood religion as a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence. Furthermore, Peter (1998) sees it as a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivation in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivation seem uniquely realistic. In another dimension, Adeferasin (2004) views religion as the recognition of all duties as divine commands. Religion is also a system of worship.

Development

It is widely believed that development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. The concept of development was originally introduced as an alternative to conceptions of development that focused on economic growth with or without equity considerations (Martinuseen, 2000). Therefore, it may be useful to begin by briefly referring to the definition of development as advancement through progressive changes in economic, social, cultural, technological and political conditions of the society leading to an improvement in the welfare of the citizen (Olomola, 1997).

Furthermore, the concept of development also connotes growth with changes that usually demands significant structural transformation within a country and that includes the re-organization and re-orientation of their economic and social systems, radical arrangements in installations and administrative structures, as well as re-orientation in popular attitudes, customs and belief (Todaro, 1999). Meanwhile, national development can be described as the overall development or a collective social-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country.

In addition, Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) opined that a country is classified as developed when it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. He added that Nigeria in the last fifty years has been battling with the problems of development in spite of huge human, material and natural resources in her possession. He concluded that faithful implementation of development plan, commitment on the part of the leaders and absence of corruption are required for the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Human resources development is also a sine qua non to Nigeria national development. Development depends very much on human knowledge and skills. This must be such that a high quality of education and training is achieved for a large majority at a reasonable price and or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. National development is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government. Sustainable development is therefore a new concept, which deals with environment related in the context and quality of such education and training which should be relevant and adequate to the country's development needs. Literature on development stresses the axiom that it is the people who develop and that unless there are large numbers of suitably qualified people, development cannot take place. National, according to Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary, refers to a whole country and its people, rather than to part of that country or to other countries. National development therefore can be described as the overall development issues. In this regard, therefore, sustainable development may be defined as a process that fulfils present human needs without engendering the opportunities of future generations to fulfill their needs (Martinussen, 1997:43). Development is complex and multi-dimensional; it entails process in the social, economic, cultural and other facets of life. Throughout human history, men have sought to increase their ability to conquer the environment with a view to improving their standard of living. Development entails qualitative and quantitative increase in the capacity, skills, creativity and general material well-being of individuals. The problem of development in Nigeria does not resume from lack of competent personnel or the absence of adequate financial resources, rather it is more associated with dishonesty and the quest for personal gain on the part of the policy makers and the implementers of the programme. The key issues that development tends to address are referred to as the indicators of development; they are inequality, unemployment, and poverty. According to Ohagwu (2010) development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization, but the nature, content and course of a society, it is the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential. Gboyega (2003) described development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security, livelihoods, and expansion of life chances. Naomi (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion

of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) assert that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved. Chrisman (1984) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people is generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is reasonable to know that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life. Development is not just a matter of getting more money into the hands of the poor, but ensuring that increased production, and its resulting increased income, leads to an improved standard of living (Isiugo-Abanihe, Isamah and Adesina, 2002). Every meaningful, concrete and lasting development begins and ends in the focus on human resources. Human resources refers to all economic resources that are wholly and directly supplied by human beings, this includes the suppliers of labour services and entrepreneurial function (Onyeka, 2010). The size of the human resources depends largely on the population size while the quality is a product of educational, health services and environmental factors (conducive environment that promotes an investment friendly platform).

Sustainable Security

The third variable in our discourse is sustainable security. Security is viewed as the condition of feeling safe from harm or danger, the defense, protection and preservation of values, and the absence of threats to acquire values (Terriff, 1991). Put simply, security is about survival and the conditions of human existence. We must quickly clear the misconception and myopic ideology of defining or understanding the concept of security to be solely military or conventional matter.

Security is broadly viewed as freedom from danger or threats to an individual or a nation. It is the ability to protect and defend oneself, be it an individual or a nation its cherished values and legitimate interests and the enhancement of wellbeing (Mijah, 2009). The nonconventional conception of security lays emphasis on human security. In addition, Fayeye (2011) implies the maturation of the structures and processes that can engender and guarantee political space and sufficient conditions for the realization of among other things, personal, group or national aspirations.

Elaborating further, Edeh and Ugwueze (2014) said thrust of the survival of any nation is embedded on its security situation. Insecurity is a threat to development because it produces economic stagnation. However, the situation is not different. In Nigeria given the insurgency of Boko Haram and its attendant negative consequences on the economy of the country. In a related study, Aligwara (2009) submit that security of the individual citizens is the most important thing. He argued that security is for the citizens and not citizens for security. Thus, for the citizens to live in peace the necessities of life such as food, good health, job opportunities, justice, freedom and all other ingredients of life must be provided.

The interface between Religious Education, Sustainable Security and National Development

The dividend of democracy is to address security and developmental challenges. To what extent has this been achieved remain the fundamental intellectual question. In this democratic era, the issue of insecurity should not be left unattended to, as a matter of fact government effort should be directed to addressing this challenge. Insecurity remains one of the major setbacks to development in Nigeria. Until very recently, plethora of explanations on the crawling pace of development in Nigeria tends to pay infinitesimal attention to the centrality of religious education to sustainable security and national development. Insecurity tends to have hampered national development. Security is seen as a pillar upon which meaningful development could be achieved and sustained and these are a product of good governance. As one of the passports to human development to great and fulfilled life, religious education plays an important role.

Religious education is the term given to the education that is concerned with the teaching of religion, this includes that practice that influence people's lives in every time and every place. It involves the forming of every human being to be a true child of God, a perfect man, in other words to be a finished man of character.

One will be able to sensitively take account of and value the religious and cultural diversity within their own local communities, using relevant contexts, which are familiar to young people. In developing a man, religion provides some codes of norms and obligations that subject man to regulations necessary for the progress of the society. This diversity supposed not to have degenerated to social disorder and impunity. Inability of the society to curb insurgency, kidnapping, militancy and arms race and other social vices has made the nation to be unsafe and insecure for the citizen and investors. However, Scholars like McNamara (1968) and Mijah (2009) see security as tantamount to development. Security is not just about

the presence of a military force, although this is encompassed. There can be no development without security. In the light of the above, both the Holy Bible and Qur'an for example expound all that is or may be needed by humankind for the fulfillment of life or his development. To the church, human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production. Human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economical and political organizations and carry forward development (Asaju, 1988). Christianity, with its scriptures (Old and New Testaments) bequeath to Christians basic scriptural and ethical or mores intended to guide people towards living an ideal life-style through individual conduct, inter-personal relationship and attitude in or to government.

Development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy; it is a socio-economic process, which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society (Mundi, 2008). Similarly, there can be no development without security. The nonconventional conception of security lays emphasis on human security. It also according to Fayeye (2011) implies the maturation of the structures and processes that can engender and guarantee political space and sufficient conditions for the realization of among other things, personal, group or national aspirations. This is achievable through sound religious education. For example, Christianity teaches that man needs to be in good relationship with God as a prerequisite to the realization of total well-being, the utilization of this manpower potentials and the achievement of his goals for national development. The Psalmist believes that his ability to attain righteousness and success in life depends on God's creation of a new spiritual heart in him and he supplicates for this. (Ps. 51:10-13). Prophet Ezekiel agrees with the above and declares it a precondition for human repentance from evil and for man's goodness (Ezek. 30:25, 27)

There is need for attitudinal change. Nigerians must in fact change their pessimistic attitude towards development. The idea or belief that "things cannot work in Nigeria or Nigerian factor" should be discouraged. Real development is achieved through internal activities rather than from external influences. Development is seen as a process generated within a society by forces propagated and invigorated by the actual members of that society. It is believed that true development can neither be started nor sustained by outsiders. Although, no country can develop in isolation, but heavy emphasis should not be placed on foreign resources for the

country's development. The models of development of Japan and China show how these countries utilize their internal resources both human and material for rapid economic development. It is reasonable that Nigerians should inculcate a high sense of patriotism as demonstrated by the Japanese and Chinese.

Furthermore, Asaju (1988) expounded the above scenario when he posited that the ethical nature of man could determine his productivity in labour. In the words of Jesus Christ, it can be rightly said that a bad tree cannot produce good fruits and vice-versa (Lk. 6:43-45). The Decalogue in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:2-17) which serves as the basic moral code of the ancient Israelites is relevant to the desired ethical orientation of man. The Ten Commandments provide strong challenges for the ethical orientation needs of man, both in achieving the development of human character and improved contributions to the manpower needs of any nation. Stealing, adultery, corruption and other social vices are sins by Christian standards and thus are counter-productive to human development. Like Christianity, Islam is a way of life. Islamic regulations on ethics and human development are set out in some details in the Islamic law or Shariah. As against inaction which is indiscriminately attached to Islam, the Qur'an invites men to labour and action: "God changes not the condition of a folk until they first change that which is in their hearts" (Qur'an 11). In addition, it is truism that Islam places high premium on education as a veritable means of human development. The ultimate aim of education in Islam should be to facilitate the balanced growth of the total personality of man, through training of Man's spirit, intellect rational self-feelings and boldly senses (Al-Atta's quoted by Muhibudden, 1988). Consequently, morality is indissolubly joined to religion while economic, political and laws are related to religion.

In a related study, Ali (2004) is of the view that from both practical and research viewpoints it is not coincidence that most humanly and materially developed countries of the world are the most educationally developed and progressive nations. Therefore, where education is prostrate or lame, it cannot be in position to serve as a tool for development. He added that the strategic use of education for planned and purposeful growth and development is only possible where a society is a country put in place educational system, which can respond to both the individual and national development aspirations and expectations.

Arising from the above is the fact that there is a close relationship between sustainable security and economic development through religious education. The study therefore argued that the only thing that can sustain development and curb insurgencies and invariably promotion of sustainable security in Nigeria is repositioning of religious education, as what

we are witnessing presently is the resultant implication of maladministration and impunity that had hitherto characterized the Nigerian state.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper had considered religious education as a veritable tool for sustainable security and national development; religious education in so many ways had served as springboard for human development in Nigeria. In view of the above there is need to promote national development through religious education. Education should be one that can restructure the orientation of life, outlook and thoughts with a view to becoming mature, developed in mind, body and thought and the various situations that may present themselves to them in later life. Religious education as a veritable tool for sustainable security and national development should be given attention it needs.

It should be noted, however, that education of any type without any element of religion is like soup without salt, and it will be tasteless. Perhaps such type of education instead of serving as a tool for achieving sustainable security and national development, it will then serve as an architect of various forms of misdemeanor and with various kinds of social vices such as robbery, poor attitude to work, dishonesty, irresponsibility disrespect to elders or authority, etc. Religious education is the most important of all the many ways in which Nigerian citizens "get involved" in the life of their community and society. Therefore, our religious life must equally influence our social, cultural, political and economic life.

Finally, we cannot divorce religious education from economic and political life and consideration. This paper therefore argues that religion has transforming power if there is sincere commitment to the truth that sets its adherents free and it can be used as a veritable tool for achieving sustainable security and socio-economic cum socio-political transformations, which are ingredients of national development

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