

**THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS AS A FOUNDATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE  
AND POLITICAL STABILITY**

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**Abstract**

*This paper examined the necessity of Christian Religious Education in Nigerian secondary schools. Christian education is a foundational knowledge for Christian children and the spiritual and moral teachings in Christian education prepare children for good governance, sound society and political stability. From the history of Israel, Christian Education was a process in which religious knowledge; skills and set of values were passed down from one generation to another in the informal setting. This was how learning of religious norms and values were done in the family and between groups even before the introduction of formal education in schools in Israel. This was done to produce the foundation and the success of Christian community among the people of Israel depending on the size, number of people and factors among the Judeo-Christian era. Good governance and political stability do not emerge from the blues. It has to start from a solid foundation through the God-given agents of transformation here on earth. It happened in the times of Old and New Testament, so it is happening in our contemporary communities today. Christian education in Nigerian secondary schools provides the common-good focus on moral responsibility, peaceful co-existence and national development. This study further recommends that Christian education is the interactive construction of moral knowledge in the students' class room and social settings. The discourse finally positioned Christian Religious Education as God's ordained tool for the foundation for good governance and political stability as it also provides quality assurance. The paper opined that substandard work force is detrimental to national transformation, growth and development. Hence, there is the need to reform the curriculum and the teaching of Christian education with a view to*

*meeting the needs of young people living in an era of corruption, stealing, kidnapping religious crisis and globalization.*

**Keywords:** *Christian Education, Moral, Foundation, Good Governance and Political Stability*

### **Introduction**

Deuteronomy chapter 6 is the foundational passage for the education of God's people (Garris, 2020). It begins with the declaration that Yahweh ("the LORD") is God and then follows with the command to love God with all of our heart, soul and might. Jesus also quotes this command by telling us to love God and that it is the greatest commandment, of which we are to also love God with our entire mind (Matt 22:37). It is clear from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 that God's words as taught in the Scriptures are to be a part of everything families do. Parents are to "teach God's words diligently to their children, and shall talk of them" whether sitting or walking or lying down or waking up. This means every aspect of parenting should involve the Word of God, and this certainly includes how and where parents educate their children (Garris, 2020). The Bible does not mention school where children should be educated but how children should receive education. Education should be seen beyond public, private or home school and in the book of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the quoted text below was stated.

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates".*

Nigeria is currently experiencing the problem of corruption. For corruption has eaten up all aspects of government in the country. For over two decades, Nigeria's development has been affected as cases of insecurity, kidnap and robbery on the highways and homes have

become prevalent. There is political instability at all levels of governance and the love of money has taken over all aspects of life in Nigeria. The spiritual drive of the youth is weak while the moral life of the students in the school is similarly decaying.

The purpose of Christian education is to direct the process of human development towards God's objective for man, godliness of character and action. In 2 Timothy 3:17, it bends its efforts to the end by saying "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (Handbook of Christian Education, 2020).

According to Nsongo (2001) cited in Njoku and Njoku (2015), the aim of Christian education is to train people who will be of immense help to the colonial trinity goals (God/Christianity, government/colonization and Gold/commerce). In order to achieve the above, the major curriculum contents of their educational system were Bible Knowledge, Arithmetic and English language for communication. To implement fully the contents, adequate attention was given to the understanding of the place of God in man's life (Njoku and Njoku, 2015). The Bible knowledge became a serious subject taught at all levels of the schools. According to Njoku and Njoku (2015), during the missionary era, bible knowledge otherwise known as Christian Religious Studies (CRS) was the core subject. Subsequently, after independence, government took over schools and there was a clarion call for a review of the curriculum in 1983 which was as a result of criticisms made against colonial education, which some scholars viewed as being too arts oriented and as such, lacked relevance to Nigeria's upliftment, political emancipation and infrastructural development (Ocho, 2005). With this development, there was a need for the modification of the school curriculum which the greater emphasis was now on majoring sciences and technological subjects.

Following the shift from Bible Knowledge to Christian Religious Studies (CRS) – due to the curriculum review – the motivation teaching and learning of CRS in Nigerian schools began to drop at a drastic rate (Kure, 2000. Arinze (1982:28) observed that the teaching of the subject witnessed slackening of control by principals/head teachers, difficulty of training and assigning teachers, including the subject on the school timetable, teachers' lack of commitment and other defects such as students' dishonesty, examination malpractices and disrespect. These are vices that have taken over in Nigerian schools. Following Ndarwa's

(2007) position, he maintained that pupils nowadays are groomed to be intellectual giants in science and technology with little or no interest in the moral growth, this he referred to as spiritually dwarfism. Ndarwa also posits that when the children/pupils grow older, they may create an avenue to close the spiritual vacuum. Little wonder some of the pupils join secret cults to perpetuate evil in diverse forms. Hence, students focus more on intellectual giant, passing examinations, making up of first class division and graduating with a better certificate without any concern for moral standard and integrity. With this, the goals and objectives of including CRS in the school curriculum have been jeopardized.

The absence of Christian Religious Studies as a core subject in education curriculum is one of the setbacks in children's discipline and their moulding character in the school (Njoku and Njoku, 2015). Judging from the state of the moral behaviour of school pupils, the educational system seems not to achieve its goals of developing their ability to attain intellectual and moral perfection, discipline both mentally and morally so as to face their daily and future challenges as good citizens (Akubue, 1992). This can result to poor governance. However, the question now is, why are students performing poorly in WAEC, NECO and JAMB examinations? More so, their spiritual and moral standard is decaying on daily bases.

Studies by Njoku and Njoku (2015) revealed that poor teaching methods, lack of concrete instructional materials and poor interest in the subject are problems facing the teaching of CRS. One could wonder why students do not have interest in the subject irrespective of its relevance. Others include poor parental involvements in guiding children in choosing CRS as a course of study in schools. The career masters in schools too do not play expected roles in guiding and counseling the children while preparing for the several areas of study. Why do students not have interest in the subject irrespective of its direct relevance to the human beings? Who could be the cause of this problem? Could it be a government's lack of commitment? The Nigerian society continues to experience rapid growth of social ills among students across the country (Njoku, 2012). CRS as a course need to be restored in Nigerian schools as a compulsory subject at all levels of learning in the schools, because its impact on the lives of the children cannot be underestimated (Njoku and Njoku 2015).

The study, therefore, identified the need for implementation of CRS curriculum in Nigerian schools. The social ills have overtaken the church and secular society. In the Church, today, there are cases of rituals, seeking for fake powers, fake prophets, pastors and sexual immorality. The Church has, more or less, been transformed into a business (Yaro, 2019). The Nigerian society is engulfed with nepotism, corruption, bad leadership, regional, tribal and religious differences.

Asue and Kajo (2018) entertained the fear of the Islamization of Nigeria via school curriculum which is widespread. There has been much ado in Nigerian media and warnings from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) that Christian Religious Studies has been deliberately eliminated from the new curriculum. Rev. Dr. Samson Ayokunle, current CAN President argued that “whereas CRK [Christian Religious Knowledge], according to the new curriculum, would no longer exist as a subject in schools but rather as themes in civic education, Islamic/Arabic Studies/French subjects on the other hand, have been introduced in the new curriculum” (Zaimov, 2017).

This paper argued that the necessity of Christian religious education is to promote the norms and values in Nigeria. According to Eluu (2016), the controversial curriculum has also been reverted to the old style, leaving both Islamic and Christian religions to be taught as legitimate subjects that will entrench nationalistic values. This paper, however, observed that their curricula (Christian Religious Education and Islamic Religious Education) should be actively included and restructured to be more relevant and practical in orientation. The necessity of Christian religious education in education curriculum will heal Nigerian social ills. The redressing of effective religious pedagogic approaches emerged as pragmatic and contextual responses to students’ diverse capabilities in a classroom, with the purpose of making religious literacy learning accessible and relevant to their lives (Lytra, Gregory and Ilankuberan, 2016). This study redressed the process of making Christian religious education much more practical to Nigerian students. The religious education is the light of the nation because, this is the right time to teach and learn Christian Religious Education in Nigerian schools. The Nigerian society needs religious subjects most to be taught in the schools due to the fact that it plays an important role in the good governance of the country. Hence, Christian religious education should be made compulsory in schools.

The right method of teaching and learning needs to be adapted. As a way of forming students in Christian practical knowledge, moral responsibility, and social skills; a curriculum design, the method of assessment and evaluation of students for optimal attainment of learning outcomes in the schools has been considered. Looking at Nigerian society with its social ills, religious education needs to be a core subject of which students from the respective religions should offer them. Christian children should offer Christian religious education, while Muslim children should offer Islamic religious education in the schools as compulsory subjects.

### **Aims of Teaching CRS in Nigerian Schools**

The major aims of inclusion of CRS in Nigerian school curriculum are as follows:

- i. To raise a generation of people who can think for themselves.
- ii. To raise people that can respect the views and findings of others.
- iii. To raise people that respect dignity of labour.
- iv. To raise people that can respect moral values stated in the national aims as good citizens.
- v. To prepare learners for useful living through inculcation of Christian attitudes and values.
- vi. To prepare learners for their salvation in heaven with God Almighty.
- vii. To prepare learners for useful life of peaceful coexistence in the society.
- viii. To prepare learners to be able to adapt to a new of Jesus Christ to be able to love one another as Christ did.
- ix. To prepare learners to practice Christian discipline and moulding of moral characters.
- x. To shape the human behaviour and moral values

Rampant moral decadence in contemporary societies leaves unanswered questions on moral values and effectiveness in teaching and learning of Christian religious education. While this issue is global, Nigeria is not exceptional. Decadence of moral values in Nigerian government particularly, is expressed by such behaviours like kidnapping, robbery, jungle justice, corruption and violence against

children and adults, men and women (Ngussa and Makewa, 2018). The killings in the northern part of Nigeria especially southern Kaduna are associated to politics.

### **The Purpose of Christian Religious Education**

There are many purposes of studying Christian religious education. That is why Itulua-Abumere (2013), states some of the most crucial purposes. The first of these purposes refers to the function of religion as component of the general curriculum. In other countries like England and Wales, religious education is taught as a mandatory subject for students to study at all levels of learning in schools as a legal and moral duty. Religious education becomes a fundamental curriculum taught to all students of all required school age, and ahead of the least school leaving age. According to Hull (1993), it was made available to students who hail from strictly religious family settings and also to those who are not. This purpose refers to the general learning result or outcome of religious education. Therefore, it can be expressed as making participation to all students. In this situation, students are not considered to be believers or non-believers but as students in general.

According to Itulua-Abumere (2013), Christian Education sees education both as an official, institutionalized process in schools, colleges, universities, workplace and faith communities and as unofficial development of nurture and development in homes and communities through the media and critical manifestation of experience. Young people need to be equipped with the appropriate knowledge needed in today's society, necessary behaviours needed to be practiced in order to face our challenging society and principles which will help them handle with the understanding, opportunity and complications of becoming an adult. For Christian Education, maturity is more of a developmental concept than a motionless differentiation, the identification of independence, sovereignty and yet connectedness with others and the surroundings. Its existence or nonexistence can be eminent at any age. Informal education in churches makes an impact greatly towards Christian education, with the experience and significance of worship playing a principally influential role for children and young people. Church education programmes and other Children and youth work also contribute to the growth of Christian discipleship

(Milton, 1974). This informal education takes place in Sunday schools, Bible studies, Choir practice or Youth fellowship.

Christian education encourages Christians to have fellowship with Jesus Christ of Nazareth who is the author of the gospel for humankind. Christian education, therefore, is a medium where Christians are able to speak out the word of God (Itulua-Abmuere, 2013). Christian education creates a relationship, acquaintances thoughtfulness that exists between humankind and God. Christian education nurtures the Christian life to be in tune with God's expectation for our lives. Creed (2007), also agrees that, "Christian education indicates the progression of human prospective, through time and into infinity. The actualization of this prospective is what Christian Education comprehends as learning both the transactional learning of the child and the transformative learning of the adult, together with the training outcome on each of the circumstances of time and place. Learning of this sort leaves the learner open to change in some way, becoming something other than previously. This is a Christian philosophy of education communicating what education in it is sincerely really about".

Christian education is an education that can be put into the crucial circumstance of the creation of human beings in the representation of God, anticipated for relationship with Him and to be stewards of the creation. Education brings out human's nature in the best possibility to achieve total human fulfillment to the glory of God and the good of all. In this sense, all education is basically religious for it is grounded in the nature of humanity and its function. It is truly learning what is to be discovered about one's self, others around us, the world and life. Christian Education understands religious learning to be developmental, preferably making progress from the mode of the dependent child to the mode of the independent adult, from the buildup of fragmented information to the achievement of an all-encompassing life-view. It is work which is constantly in progress and never definitively finalized (Creed, 2007).

Most importantly, Christian education can also be understood as a discovery about Christianity, just as science education might be seen as education in the sciences. Such explanations would involve the development, nurture and upbringing projected to lead a young person confessing the Christian faith. Such development would include

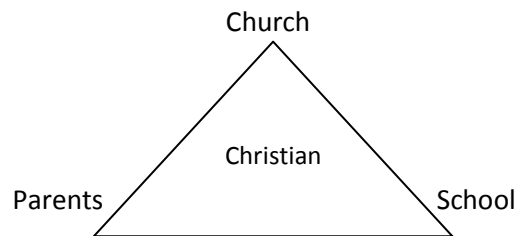


teaching and learning about that faith and understanding something of its relationship to the rest of life. Christian education of this sort might join in varying ways with traditions of catechesis, evangelization or conversion. This understanding of Christian education is important for families that practice Christianity and communities as well as persons, and would take place within the broader values of Christian education described above. It might also be said that this kind of Christian education may provide the inspiration for a Christian approach to education generally. One who admits the Christian faith would want to comprehend the whole of his life as important for that faith (Creed, 2007).

According to Creed, Christian education is definitely an training about Christianity. As far as this is one of the basics referred to above within education into Christianity, such a vision could be seen as a narrower account of Christian education. Christian religious education is grounded in a fundamental Christian theology, which interprets human life and endeavour within the reality of God. In this common sense, all Christian education is potentially transformative of human life for it involves some kind of encounter with God either directly or indirectly through His creation.

#### **Foundation of Christian Education**

Woloch et al. (as cited in Itulua-Abumere, 2013) explains the triangular affiliation of Christian education between the three role-players. This triangular involves the parents, the Church and the school, which have the triangular relationship which seem to be rooted from the biblical history (Deut. 6:7-9). This triangular relationship lays down a responsible arrangement as follows:



**Figure 1. The triangular affiliation of the Christian Education**

a. **Church:** The Church preaches biblical doctrine and truth, which forms the theological foundation of the Christian religious education. The

biblical foundation taught in the Church is to give the children the basic foundation. The activities in Sunday school class, Bible studies, Choir and youth fellowship and to equip the children on their sound spiritual stand. The Church also gives confidence and direct parents, from Scripture, to take up their Biblical responsibility to educate and raise their children in the fear of the Lord. At its heart Christianity is a teaching religion Jesus Christ is referred to as the Teacher (John 3:2), the Holy Spirit's ministry includes teaching (John 14:26) and the Great Commission includes "teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you" (Mathew 28:20). Christianity and the Church have always supported education.

b. **Parents:** The Christian parents are the primary role players in the Christian child's education as well as their upbringing, discipline and nurturing the fear of the Lord in their heart. They support their children going to Church, heeding the Word of the Lord as well as in getting education. Parent organise morning devotion, bible studies and the stories from the Bible for the children. Parents first give informal education to the children.

c. **School:** The school provides additional information about Christian religious education on the Biblical Worldview, looking at all areas of spiritual life of a child, including from secular education to the Biblical perspective. This is to prepare the Christian child to take authority for Christ and His Kingdom. That brings the primary purpose of teaching and learning Christian religious education in Nigerian schools. The society needs a perfect spiritual change. It's an extension for the child to receive a biblical training. The Bible speaks on "to train up a child in the way he should go and when he or she is old they will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6) and the Church's permission to "make disciples of all nations" (Math. 28:19).

### **The Benefits of Christian Religious Education**

Itulua-Abumere lists the benefits of Christian education on the lives of students in the schools as follows:

- i. A Christian education is an investment. With Christian education the future of children is sure. Christian education is an attractive option.

- ii. Christian education covers children from/for the genuine world.
- iii. Christian education expands sensitive hearts. That can be achieved by working through issues and negative influences with students in a practical and biblically based environment. Christian education confronts against things like humanism, evolution, dishonesty and greediness, influence that are basically promoted in some state schools or society.
- iv. Christian education gives us the perception of God and His world
- v. Christian education confirms the significance of this parental responsibility and the reasonable length at which the school goes to actively continue the work parents do. Livingstone (as cited in Itulua-Abumere, 2013)
- vi. Christian education recognizes the power of God over the dealings of men which can be considered an education about the genuine world.
- vii. Christian education a condition for genuine growth while a child is young.
- viii. Christian education produces a difference in the students' behaviour because they are well disciplined. When the time comes for them to be transferred into a more antagonistic environment, they are more likely to tolerate difficulties, overcome problems and continue to thrive because they have been nurtured well and has developed a sensitive heart. Livingstone (as cited in Itulua-Abumere, 2013).
- ix. It helps to provide support and shorten the duty of Christian home and churches by reinforcing the same values and beliefs.

#### **The Position of Christian Education for Good Governance**

Jesus Christ gave the metaphorical teaching of "Salt" and "Light" that Christians should be involved in national integration by influencing their own society. Christians can make contribution towards good governance and national integration from any standpoint. Christians should participate fully in the human character of moral, social, spiritual and religious participation in the governance. The essence of this participation in the governance for the national integration is to give glory to God and promote peaceful coexistence in the society. Our early missionaries made significant contributions in the national integration

and good governance through evangelism, character displacement, culture, education, and industrial attitudes to promote good leadership.

Ada (2018) opines that the aims of Christian religious education are inculcated into the students at all levels of education in order to produce good governance and sustainable development in the country. When the children are developed morally and spiritually in the society it also affects the government of the country. Education plays a vital role in the country. Whenever the standard of education in the country becomes weak it also affects governance (Yaro, 2018). Promoting the standard of education is the same as to promote good governance in the country.

Christian religious education nurtures the Christian children to be obedient and law abiding children that will become good citizens. When they discover themselves in the government to govern, they respect the rule of law. Christian religious education sharpens the spiritual and moral lives of the Christian children. Teaching and learning Christian religious education in Nigerian schools is necessary.

Lawson (2018) advocates that fathers were to teach their children God's laws and a trade to earn a living. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 presents the goal and process of Christian religious education. They were called to acknowledge and love one true God and to teach to their children in the daily bases. The children will grow in the knowledge of God's law. Having knowledge and an understanding of God provides obedience to his commandments. This attitude will help to provide good governance in the country.

Teaching and learning Christian religious education in the school can promote understanding among different religious groups. It can help promoting peaceful coexistence in the country. Every country needs peace to move forward. Peace drives development in the country. For examples, Nigeria has been suffering under development from the time the peace was lost. There are destruction of lives and properties in the areas of crises. Peace promotes stability that can gear towards sustainable development.

Teaching and learning Christian religious education in Nigerian schools can help create understanding and the meaning of existence. It is Christian religious education that can open the children's horizon to know the purpose of their creation. Every individual has their creation purpose (Yaro, 2019). He suggests that the major aim of Christian

religious education in school is to help the children know the meaning of their existence. Redressing teaching approach in Christian religious education in Nigerian schools creates change in the learners' spiritual life, God-centeredness and salvation. When a student thinks towards the life after death, the fear of is already in them.

### **Conclusion**

The study identified various needs for the necessity of the subject. The necessity ranged from good governance, good leadership, peaceful coexistence, and purpose of Christian religious education, foundation of Christian education, the position of Christian religious education for good governance, application of biblical theology of the subject, societal and moral development. Others include, control of moral decadence, passion and love for students and the job, good communication technique to vast and abstract the nature of the subject. All of these attract the common solutions to the necessity strictly demanded for CRS in Nigerian schools. The Christian educators and stakeholders in education of Christian children should remain focused because factors affecting teachers' preparation and execution of their duties effectively go round and jeopardize the aim of establishing the subject in schools. This otherwise mars the general aim of education, which is geared towards developing in man the knowledge of salvation and right attitude towards his neighbour.

### **Recommendations**

In this regard, one of the ways towards achieving this could be through helping teachers to upgrade their teaching skills and ability in order to keep update with the demands of the fast changing society. They need to upgrade their certificates and attend workshops and conferences.

Teachers should have respect for all in their preparation and delivery of the lesson in the classroom. They should promote values, diversity, and fairness, to encourage pupils to learn, generously with praise and apply good knowledge in the society. The teachers, parents and school should build a good environment positive for the teaching and learning of CRS, achieving the major goals of the subject. The necessity of CRS in Nigerian school's curriculum must be applied. There is a need for the subject to be considered equally important like the other subjects such as sciences and languages as prerequisites to gain

admission into higher institutions. Sometimes, negative comments are made by other members' of the staff and some parents concerning the subject especially during assemblies or career choice forum. These comments demean the status of the subject thereby making students to have negative attitudes or interest towards the subject.

The subject could be made compulsory at all levels of our education in Nigerian schools like the use of English bearing in mind, the role the subject is designed to achieve in the learners. Christian religious education prepares students for the good leadership. The students are to follow the example from the scriptures. The students develop the spirit of good governance, and good character.

The school principals, head-teachers, school managements should be sure of leaving CRS in the hands of those who only studied Christian religious education in higher institutions to teach and guide students in Christian discipline in the schools.

Christian educators should adopt appropriate pedagogical, philosophical and theological aims of the subject. In addressing the variables, the sets goals and objectives of teaching Christian religious education in the schools should be the target and maintained.

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