

Chapter 13

Religion, Culture, and Educational Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Various religions teach their adherents to imbibe and live out sound, moral, and ethical values that go a long way to create harmony in the human society, which is necessary for societal development. Religion cannot be practiced successfully without the teachings of its core ideas, principles, scriptural truths, etc. to its adherents. This study is hinged on the fact that the three religious traditions as practice in Nigeria have affected the way of lives of the people, thus giving Nigeria a unique religious identity. Religion, therefore, cannot thrive in any society without the culture of the people and that of the religion mixing. Every religion is borne out of a culture of the people. The study is an attempt to reveal that religious culture and tradition laid the foundation of educational development in Nigeria, for example, the establishment of mission schools and the development of Nigerian indigenous language.

INTRODUCTION

In a religious pluralistic society like Nigeria with diverse history, culture, language and religion, a country with three dominant religion of ATR, Christianity and Islam, each admonishing its adherents to live a good life according to its dictates which will grant them prosperous life here (on earth) and hereafter, volumes upon volumes of articles have been written on the topic Religion, with many criticizing Religion that it ought to do more while some would praise religion that it has done a lot.

Religion cannot be practiced successfully without the passage of its core ideas, principles, scriptural truths, and so on to its adherents. This can only be done through inculcation of those scriptural or sacred truths of the religion to its adherent. Thus, making education an inseparable tool in the hand of Religion for dissemination of Scriptural truths, ideas and principles to its adherents.

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Education, in the words of Adeyemi & Adeyinka is the ‘process of cultural transmission and renewal, the process whereby the adult member of a society carefully guides the development of infants and young children, initiating them into the culture of the society’. (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Education has to do with the transmission or inculcation of ideas from the informed/enlightened one to an individual who is less knowledgeable in the subject matter in order to leave the person better informed at the end of the day.

The task of this work is to look at the contributions of religious traditions and culture to the Nigeria’s educational development taking into consideration, the three dominant religions in Nigeria. Attempts will be made to X-ray the three religion concepts of education and from there deduce its impact and contributions to national development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Religion Defined

In the words of Metuh, “Religion is a very elusive concept to define. This is partly because the object of religion for the most part is invisible and immaterial beings who are not subject to observation and are conceived in different ways by different people. Besides the study of religion interest people such as theologians, anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists, in which each of them sees it from different perspective”. (Metuh, 1987)

The above statement by Metuh points to the fact that there is no generally acceptable definition of religion but for the purpose of this work, we will go with the definition of Madu 2006, who assert that “Religion means man’s recognition of the existence of a power or powers beyond himself, who as it were created the universe, sustains, preserves and provides for this universe”. (Madu, 2006)

Education

The word ‘education’ from diverse dictionaries and perspectives has been accepted to be “the act or process of acquiring knowledge, especially systematically during childhood and adolescence; the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the power of reasoning and judgment; the act or process of impacting or acquiring general knowledge of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life”. (Colins, 2003)

Educational Development

Educational development in Nigeria has traditionally focused on studies carried out in the cities. Statistics available on educational development are mainly on enrolment in schools in the urban centers. A substantial literature focuses on the nature of educational provisions in the urban towns in the country. It is easy to talk of the number of primary and secondary schools in towns like Yenegoa, Calabar, Benin city, Kaduna and Kano, to mention but a few. Such statistics are hardly available about educational development in the rural areas. In contrast to the traditional approach of using the provided educational statistics about schools located in the urban centers in Nigeria to generalize for the urban and rural areas, whose figures are never really available, there has arisen therefore the need for a broader conceptualiza-

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