
RELIGION AND EDUCATION: THE INFLUENCE OF MISSIONARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Evaristus Ifeanacho, PhD

Pope John Paul II Major Seminary, Okpuno
(Affiliate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka)

Abstract

Nigeria has a complex history of traditional religion before the introduction of Islam and Christianity. The early missionaries who brought the gospel to the Africans, established schools at various places to serve the purpose of winning converts. Hence, there have been existence of numerous mission schools in Nigeria till date. The paper examined religion and education: the influence of missionary schools in Nigeria. The paper is divided into sections beginning with an introduction containing the brief history of missionary journey in Nigeria. For the sake of clarity, the concept of religion and education are reviewed. There was also a detailed discussion on influence of missionary schools in Nigeria. Missionary schools have greatly influenced economic, social and political development of Nigeria. It is recommended that Government at all levels should offer grants to mission schools to foster their smooth operations and thereby contribute to national development.

Keywords: Religion, Education, Missionary Schools, Islam, Christianity, Traditional Religion

Introduction

Education plays an essential role in equipping individuals with skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of a nation. There has been a traditional form of education before Western education in Nigeria. Daniel-Kalioi (2018) pointed out that the African Education transfers various skills and knowledge to the members of their families, even though there were no physical classrooms. In a traditional setting, education was delivered orally and through imitation of the elderly. Asadu (2018) opined that traditional education was practical; as individuals watched their coaches and imitated them until they were able to do exactly as the coach. The author added that in traditional education, the young ones were trained to train others, thus there was continuity in matters of culture, religion, economy, arts and crafts. Okediji (2017) argued that traditional education is transmitted through folklore like satire, proverbs, chants and symbolism. In traditional education, storytelling, folklore, songs and apprenticeship were means of passing knowledge from one generation to another.

African traditional education offers opportunities to young men and women to develop their skills in various facets of life. Asadu (2018) asserted that traditional schooling was meant to socialize the individual members of the community and train them for self-reliance through skill acquisition. Daniel-Kalioi (2018) posited that in African traditional education, women were educated in the art of managing the homes, hence they were trained in pottery, cookery, spinning, weaving, as the case may be, while the men were trained in tasks that required physical stamina, such as farming, hunting and fishing, among others. African traditional education lays emphasizes to respect for elders, dignity of labour, justice and fairness in the community. African traditional education prohibits stealing, greed, disrespecting elders, incest, adultery and lies among others.

Western education was introduced in 1842 by Christian Missionaries. Precisely, education of the Western type came into being in Nigeria when Thomas Birch Freeman, the English Methodist Missionary, landed in Badagry on September 24, 1842 (Ajayi&Jayeola-Omoyeni, 2012). Continuing, the authors added that about four years later, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) opened their own schools in Badagry and Abeokuta; in 1855, the Southern Baptist Convention from the United States of America (USA) came to Nigeria and opened two schools, in Lagos and Ogbomosho. In the same vein, Ajah (2015) posited that Wesleyan Methodist missionaries arrived in 1842, establishing a mission and a school, and in 1878, established the first boys' school at Lagos and a girls' school by 1895. Furthermore, Ajah stressed that the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established schools at Abeokuta, Badagry, Lagos and Ibadan from 1846 to 1949. Since the advent of Western education, Christian Missionaries have solely established, funded and controlled the operations of schools. Adedayo and Ogunbadejo (2019) asserted that in the 19th century, Christian missionaries adopted a policy that ensured that the natives who accepted Christianity were allowed to take up leadership roles in the local assemblies. Furthermore, Adedayo and Ogunbadejo asserted that the Christian missionaries employed a strategy that resulted in raising churches that were self-sustaining, self-financing, and self-propagating.

The period of sole control of education by the Christian Missionaries was followed by the era of dual control by Missionaries and the colonial governments, which formulated ordinances to guide the operation of schools. Daniel-Kalioi (2018) asserted that the 1882 ordinance provided criteria for annual evaluation of pupils, methods of granting teachers certificates, a system of the grant-in-aid and the establishment of a General Board of Education with the power to establish

local boards. Continuing, the author noted that as a result of educational ordinances. More foreign teachers were employed, more schools were established and financial encouragements were given to the missions, voluntary agencies and private individuals to establish more schools. The colonial governments also offer grants to schools based on established benchmarks or standards. For almost four decades (1842-1882), funding of education was left exclusively for the Christian Missionaries, which they initially achieved through the collection of offerings, donations from philanthropists, and grants from headquarters of the Missions, but later achieved through grants from the colonial governments and fees (Adesina, 1977; Fafunwa, 1974). Over the years, missionary schools have made substantial efforts in providing education for their citizens to improve the progress of the society. The missionaries used mission schools to raise a godly generation who transformed the primitive society into a civilized one (Asadu, 2018). Furthermore, Asadu pointed out that evil traditions such as the killing of twins, human sacrifice, and nudity were eradicated, and human dignity was restored. Therefore, there has been a close association between education and religion.

Conceptual Clarifications

Religion

Religion is a belief system connecting man and the supreme being. Kamal-Deen (2016) noted that religion means a link or a relationship between man and a being that exists, which is greater than man. Furthermore, Kamal-Deen (2016) asserted that religion is also the consciousness of one's dependence on the transcendent being and the tendency to worship Him. Religion is the belief system that induces worship and prayer to a supreme being. Edara (2017) conceptualized religion as a system of beliefs in a divine power and practices of worship directed towards such a power. Religion as any set of practices of acknowledging supernatural power. Onovughe and Mordi (2017) referred to religion as a relationship between man and the divine. This relationship is sustained by the acts of worship and praise, devotion and sacrifices. Religion denotes association between man and a greater being. Afolabi (2015) asserted that in Nigeria, religion plays an important role in the daily lives of her citizens as they interact with one another, their choice of dressing, food, and politics are mostly affected by religion.

Religion is the belief system based on faith in a superior being. Onah (2017) defined religion as the belief in a supernatural being who has control over the affairs of man. Abu-Alhaija, Yusof Hashim and Jaharuddin (2017) defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. The authors stressed that religion consists of five dimensions, namely: religious affiliation, religious commitment, religious orientation, religious knowledge and social consequences. Religious affiliation is an individual's identification with a particular religious group. It is a display of connection to a precise religious denomination or group. Religious commitment is the devotion to the principles or doctrines of a particular religion. Muhamad and Mizersk (2010) asserted that religious orientation reflects individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in following their religion. Religious knowledge is awareness of principles or doctrines of a particular religion. Social consequences are the outcomes of religious actions and behaviours on others. It is the impact of religious activities on the individuals and members of the society.

The three major religions being practiced in Nigeria are the African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam and Christianity. Ogunleye (2017) noted that ATR is the indigenous faith known to Nigerians before the emergence of both Islam and Christianity in the country. Ogunleye added

that the doctrine of ATR is based on five major structures, namely: Supreme Beings, divinities, spirits, ancestors, magic and medicine. African Traditional Religion believes in the supremacy of a deity. It is an indigenous spiritual belief system of worshipping the supreme being. Islam follows the Holy Quran scripture-based doctrine in the practice of worshipping Allah. Islam encourages Muslims to hold on to its principles by allowing the Holy Quran and the Sunnah to be their guide. Islam is practiced by Muslims who believe in the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Christianity follows the Bible's scripture-based doctrine in the practice of worshipping God. Christianity is practiced by Christians who believe in the teachings and lifestyles of Jesus Christ. Chineke (2016) asserted that the southern regions are dominated by Christianity, while the Northern regions are vastly dominated by Islam. The author added that African Traditional Religions are slightly present across the country, but are more visible in the south-west geopolitical zone.

Education

Education is the process of teaching and learning to develop the skills and knowledge of individuals. Education is a learning experience that enlightens the mind, mould character and develops the talents of individuals. Education is defined by Agumagu (2017) as a system by which the necessary knowledge and understanding are gained through the methods of teaching and learning. The author added that education enables an individual to develop their skills and talents in all ramifications. It is the act of guiding, directing and enlightening individuals in a given setting.

Education is a learning process that enables individuals to develop their full potential in society. Salako (2016) noted that education is a means of socializing people into the community, for upholding customs and traditions as well as modification or changing of the same in conformity with existing ideologies, ideological expansion, or reformation. Education is a process of instilling right beliefs, norms and values of a given society to her younger ones. Taiwo and Ajiboye (2016) noted that education is the means of improving attitudes, beliefs and habits of individuals, which may lead to greater willingness to accept risk, adopt innovations, save for investment and generally to embrace productive practices.

Education involves teaching and learning activities in and out of the school setting. Nsamenang (2011) defined education as the process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and values required to cope and make a positive contribution to the changing world. Education is the means of empowering individuals with problem-solving abilities to face the daily problems of society. Education provides opportunity for developing knowledge and personality of individuals. Education, as defined by Edison (2018), is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits by individuals in a given society through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research under the guidance of a professional known as the teacher. Furthermore, the author averred that education can take place in formal or informal settings to shape the ways that individuals think, feel, or act toward things around them.

Education is the practice of teaching individuals to shape their attitudes and behaviour in society. Sababa, Adamu and Filgona (2017) defined education as a process of inculcating knowledge, skills, character and desirable values in individuals to develop their potentials. Furthermore, Sababa et al stressed that education is a process through which a person acquires knowledge, skills, habits and values that enable him to function effectively as a member of

society. Education enables individuals to make informed choices regarding healthy lifestyles, business ventures and political activities. Ajayi and Jayeola-Omoyeni (2012) described education as a lifelong process of training the body and minds of individuals to enable them to understand the world around them. Education is a deliberate attempt to impart knowledge, norms and values from one generation to another through instruction or study within formal or informal settings.

Missionary Schools

Missionary schools are educational institutions established by members of a religious group to promote their faith and educate the people. Asadu (2018) defined missionary schools as educational institutions owned and operated by the Church. Missionary schools are those learning institutions established and managed by the Christian to promote Christianity and improve the literacy rate of the populace. Ayele (2017) described missionary schools as the learning institutions founded by religious bodies as a means of winning converts and educating the populace. Missionary schools are institutions of learning established, funded and managed by religious organizations or churches.

Influence of Missionary Schools in Nigeria

Missionary schools have exerted numerous influences in Nigeria. Missionary schools played key roles in the socio-economic empowerment and industrialization of Nigeria. Asadu (2018) asserted that the missionaries were also aware that industry is a key to the self-actualization of a nation and therefore, they established industrial schools in Nigeria. The author added that the first industrial school was established in Abeokuta in 1851.

Missionary schools have made a positive impact on the educational sector in Nigeria. Missionary schools have improved the quality of education in Nigeria. Iwuoha (2018) asserted that missionary schools have a stable and standard academic calendar and programmes that improve the quality of education delivery in Nigeria. Most missionary schools have adequate infrastructure, like classrooms, administrative blocks, staff offices, furniture, sporting and recreational facilities, which create a conducive environment for the delivery of quality education in Nigeria. The setup of missionary schools has cushioned the educational demand of the teeming population in Nigeria.

Missionary schools offer employment opportunities to some people in society. Missionary schools employ teachers and support staff who bridge unemployment gaps in Nigeria. Omede (2017) maintained that missionary schools provide employment to a reasonable number of people in Nigeria. Missionary schools recruit, pay salaries and offer welfare services to teachers. The salaries and welfare given to teachers in missionary schools have an impact on their living standards in society.

Missionary schools inculcate morality in the people, which promotes the peaceful coexistence of individuals in society. Missionary schools instill higher discipline in students. Iwuoha (2018) posited that the orientation of students in missionary schools has minimized cultism, sexual harassment, examination malpractice and moral decadence in Nigeria. Missionary schools were renowned for high moral standards that controlled social and economic crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, prostitution, thuggery and drug abuse among youths in Nigeria. Omede (2017) asserted that missionary schools were reputed for moral and academic discipline in Nigeria. The author added that products from missionary schools were men of reputable intelligence and sufficient morality.

Missionary schools contribute to the manpower development of Nigeria. Iwuoha (2018) noted that teachers produced by the missionary schools, as well as their students, became manpower for nation-building. Asadu (2018) asserted that mission schools reshaped the worldviews of the native people and, in turn, brought them out of primitiveness. Missionary schools have exposed individuals to modern ways of life and engaged them in productive activities in society.

Missionary schools have increased the literacy and numeracy skills of individuals that enable them to read, write, speak and carry out basic arithmetic operations. Ajah (2015) maintained that the different Christian missions used school as an organ of religious instruction, character formation, skill acquisition and initiation into the three basic elements of reading, writing and arithmetic. In the same vein, Morris (2018) asserted that the missionary schools have improved the skills of the individuals by teaching them how to read and write, improve their farming skills and standard of health.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, it is concluded that religion and education are closely tied as they both seek to inculcate the right values, build character and help individuals achieve their purpose in life. Historically, religious bodies established, funded and managed mission schools in Nigeria. Missionary schools have greatly influenced the economic, social and political development of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Government at all levels should offer grants to mission schools to foster their smooth operations and thereby contribute to national development.
2. The government and Non-Governmental Organizations should upgrade the infrastructure in missionary schools to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning.
3. Missionary schools should ensure that tuition fees are affordable to the masses to enhance accessibility in the learning institutions.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Alhaija, A.S., Yusof, R.N.B., Hashim, H.B. and Jaharuddin, N.S.B. (2017). The motivational approach of religion: The significance of religious orientation on customer behavior. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 5(12), 609-619.
- Adedayo, A.M. & Ogunbadejo, V.O. (2019). The impact of Christian missionaries on Oyo Empire 1893-1960. *Port Harcourt Journal of History & Diplomatic Studies*, 6(3), 177-193.
- Adeniyi, A.O. (2019). The roles of education in Nigeria: Implication to economic development. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 5(2), 1-9.
- Adesina, S. (1977). *Planning and educational development in Nigeria*. Lagos, Nigeria: Educational Industries Limited.
- Afolabi, O.O. (2015). The role of religion in Nigerian politics and its sustainability for political development. *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 42-49.
- Agumagu, J.E. (2017). History of education, global trends and issues: An analysis. *RSU Journal of Humanities*, 1(1), 164-174.
- Ajah, M. (2015). Religious education and nation-building in Nigeria. *Stellenbosch Theological*, 1(2), 263-282. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2015.v1n2.a12>
- Ajayi, A.I., & Jayeola-Omoyeni, M.S. (2012). Koranic versus Christian mission education systems and uneven educational development in Nigeria, 1842-1977: National policy on education. *Journal of Arts and Strategic Studies*, 4(1), 26-32.
- Asadu(2018).Mission schools in Nigeria: Past and present. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies*, 1(1), 94-104.
- Ayele, F. (2017). Missionary education: An engine for modernization or a vehicle towards conversion? *African Journal of History and Culture*, 9(7), 56-63. DOI: 10.5897/AJHC2017.0371
- Chineke, P.O. (2016). The place of religion in education: A contemporary Nigerian Perspective. *Cultural and Religious Studies*, 4(3), 204-213. doi: 10.17265/2328-2177/2016.03.006
- Daniel-Kalio, B. (2018). Historical analysis of educational policies in Nigeria: Trends and implications. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 11(2), 247-264.
- Edara, I. R. (2017). Religion: A subset of culture and an expression of spirituality. *Advances in Anthropology*, 7(1), 273-288. <https://doi.org/10.4236/aa.2017.74015>
- Edison, L.T.(2018). What is development? <https://iwwwiwhat-is-development.com>

- Fafunwa, B.A. (1974). *History of education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Iwuoha, C.M.A. (2018). The role of the church in fostering sustainable education in Nigeria. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 4(2), 57-67.
- Kamal-Deen, O.S. (2016). Religious violence in contemporary Nigeria: Implications and options for peace and stability order. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 1(1), 85-103.
- Morris, B.E. (2018). Early missionaries' interaction with the African worldviews and cultures. *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*, 4(3), 54-66.
- Muhamad, N., & Mizerski, D. (2010). The constructs mediating religions' influence on buyers and consumers. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 1(2), 124-135. <http://doi.org/10.1108/17590831011055860>
- Nsamenang, B. (2011). Teaching methods. In B. Nsamenang and M. S. Tchombe (Eds.). *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices. A generative teacher education curriculum*. Human Development Resource Centre, Bamenda
- Ogunleye, A.R. (2017). Inter-religious dialogue in conflict resolution: A pragmatic approach towards religious crisis in Nigeria. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(6), 638-643. DOI: 10.36347/sjahss.2017.v05i06.01
- Okediji, H.A.A. (2017). Effect of oral traditions, folklores and history on the development of education in Nigeria, 1977 Till Date. *History Research*, 7(2), 59-72. doi 10.17265/2159-550X/2017.02.001
- Omede, J. (2017). A historical perspective of mission school in Nigeria and its psycho-social and spiritual implications. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(5), 506-520. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.556429
- Onah, N.G.(2017). Religious education, peace and sustainable development in Nigeria. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 1-13.
- Onovughe, S., & Mordi, J.F. (2017). Religious education a vital tool for sustainable development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice*, 3(1), 12-19.
- Salako, C.T. (2016). Education: An instrument of investment in national development *Journal of Research in Education and Society*, 7(1), 44-48.
- Sababa, L.K., Adamu, M.I. & Filgona, J. (2017). Perceived role of women education in national development: A case study of Mubi North Local Government Area, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(4), 510-522. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.438081
- Taiwo, R.O.A. & Ajiboye, J.T. (2016). Impact of education on national development. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research*, 2(1), 1-8.