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Challenges in Studying Religion in Tertiary Institutions: The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract

Religious study is a vital concept in Nigerian society since it has much to do with the perception and the people's way of life. Study of religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions has become the last option for students and not really a priority due to notable factors that really received critical attention in this research. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, high value is attached to another course of studies but such value is not in any way accruing to the study of religion. Exploring the above concept, is the extremism of religion as a course actually at an extreme from other courses of study in Nigerian tertiary institutions? This is the problem that prompted this research, which has been resolved. The study is designed to investigate challenges that have been discouraging students from studying religion in Nigerian schools. In this research, data are gathered majorly from secondary sources. The theory of religious pluralism was used in this research while the method of analysis of the data is documentary analytical. Findings from this research expose many factors that constitute the problem of studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It also enumerated the various reasons to embrace religious studies in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was recommended that if the effective appraisal of studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions will be made, it will boost development, peace, and unity in Nigeria. This forms the major contribution of the study.

Keywords: Challenges, Studying, Religion, Tertiary Institutions, Studying Religion, and Nigerian Experience.

Introduction

In the modern time, young people who are looking for admission into high institutions are moved to make a choice of course of study based on the lucrative nature of the course. Some people as a result of this kept repeating exam upon exams just to be sure of what they are going to study for the sake of future. Among Nigerians seeking for admission into tertiary institutions, religious studies are not into consideration unlike other courses of study. This is not because of its name and lifestyle of those who graduated with the certificate; rather it is as a result of people's perception and concept about religion. It is vital for one to know that religion is an elusive and imprecise concept. Religion denotes "a set of symbolic forms and acts relating man to the ultimate conditions of his existence."^I "Religion has been variously conceived as a body of truths, laws and rites by which a man is subordinated to a transcendent being."^{II} "Religion is man's recognition of the existence of a power beyond himself, who as it were, created the universe, sustains preserves and provides for this universe."^{III} In other words, "it is difficult to define with precision and objectivity because it is emotion-laden."^{IV}

^I R.N, Bellah, "Religious Evolution," *American Sociological Review* 29, (1964):361, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2091480>.

^{II} Adeniyi, M.O.. Religion and politics: An eye-bird's view of development in Nigeria (1993) in Aleyomi, Michael B. "Ethno-religious Crisis as a Threat to the Stability of Nigeria's Federalism," *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 14, no. 3 (2012):129.

^{III} J. E, Madu, *The paradox of the one and the many in religion* (Nkpor, Globe, 2003); 46.

^{IV} S. G, Egwu, *Ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria* (Jos, PS: St. Stephen Inc. Book House, 2011); 54.

In the present contemporary society, issues pertaining to religion have become the order of discussion to the extent that in every sphere, it is the subject of matter like suicide, drugs abuse, women subordination, child trafficking and lot more. In contemporary time, there is a paradigm shift from the study of religion whereas religion forms the totality of human activities.

Despite the claims that religion forms the major causal factor of socio-religious conflict in Nigeria that by the way can be attributed to the lack of standard teaching of various religions. However, religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions need an academic appraisal to deform negative impressions it has created in the psyche of students. Challenges of studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions cannot be over emphasis. "Graduates and students of religion are not many in Nigeria."^V Due to how irrelevance religion is considered to be in society. "Those who study religion do so as the last option when every other opportunity for admission into higher studies fails."^{VI} The paucity of students in the religion department gives both the students and their lecturers who would not like to be out of job serious concern. In Nigerian tertiary institutions, there are divers names given to the department of religion. For instance: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, initially bears "Department of Religion" but now has added "cultural studies" to answer "Department of Religion and Cultural Studies." In Nigeria, a few other institutions will prefer to merge religion with other departments just to keep the course active in the university. University of Jos is a good example that merged religion with philosophy. However, N.A.U.A (Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka) also fascinated the same attention of adding Human Relations to the department of religion to bear "Department of Religion and Human Relations". All these attractive changes are geared towards making religious studies in Nigeria look important mostly in harnessing the challenges of studying religion in Nigerian institutions. It is highly interesting to know that Nigerian's Universities, graduates of Religions are strongly pressing towards using the knowledge of religious studies in making things different in Nigerian politics, economy and otherwise. Students of religious studies in various schools in Nigeria are less in number compare to other departments, yet they are already shooting into Nigeria's socio-political and economic orbit. In this, active religious departments of some universities in Nigeria without minding their less population have made a lot of impact in solving social problems in the society.

Therefore, the problem that prompts this research is exploring the concept of religions studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions, is the extremism of religion as a course actually at extreme from other courses of study in Nigerian tertiary institutions? In Nigerian schools, there are various confrontations discouraging students in studying religion. The study of religious studies in Nigeria receives lesser attention unlike other courses of studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Though it seems so mimicking that practising religion in Nigeria is hilarious per se, but the citizens give less attention to studying it. It is quite obvious that over 98% of Nigerians practice the religion they do not know anything about. Their ability to cope in a particular religion is based on the level of conviction mounted on them, and not really, they have a detailed concept of what they believed.

"Religious studies inculcate unique cultural sensitivities among students. Since it straddles the boundary between objective evidence and subjective experience, religious studies are methodologically diverse, globally aware, and academically progressive. Religious studies are rigorously and playfully open to a multicultural and international way of being that bursts the boundaries of the conventional and every day."^{VII}

The objective of this research is to investigate challenges that have been discouraging students from studying religion in Nigerian institutions. A good number of students claim that studying religion as a course is irrelevant and a waste of time due to various reasons that will be given attention in this research. Even when one claims that studying religion is a waste of time and also for lazy ones, yet no one can do without religion. For a better solution to the intense global religious crisis in the world today, the approval of religious education in the tertiary institution will drag so many into embracing the knowledge of religion concept.

^V B.A.C, Obiefuna, & U, Amara, "Studying Religion for Sustainable Development in Nigeria," *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 13, no. 1 (2012): 135.

^{VI} *ibid*:135.

^{VII} M, Wallace, *Why is it Important to Study the World's Religions in the College and University Curriculum?* (Swarthmore, PA: Fortes, 2005),1.

It is obvious that Nigerian students seem to pay less attention to the study of religion due to the fact that approval of religious studies in Nigeria's institutions is passive and partial. This research adopted a document analytical method. Data collections were obtained from a particular source, the secondary sources. In this secondary aspect, written materials published were consulted. These materials include textbooks, academic journals, conference/seminar papers and internet materials among others. The mentioned sources were used because of their power to provide close information for the work of this type.

In tertiary institutions in Nigeria, they are visible notable challenges of studying religion. Nigeria as a nation in ranking can be said to be highly religious above other countries in Africa continent. Nigeria also is among the highest complicated country, though tri-ethnic identities make up two-thirds of the population: Igbo people, Yoruba people and Hausa people. However, Religious studies in Nigeria tertiary institutions simply represent the best chances to benefit through world recognition, deeper and better behaviours. It will also enhance the teachings and belief of various religious groups.

Theory of Religious Pluralism

The theory of religious pluralism focuses on the fact that all the religion in the world is all salvific and is leading towards similar transcendent reality. John Hick is an important figure both in terms of philosophy and theology that has to do with religion. He is considered as an exponent of religious pluralism in American scholarship. His influential ability is doubted, yet it is considered that his opinions and ideas about religious pluralism are touching. Comparatively, no religion is considered most salvific and most important than the other; all religion has a particular goal and intent for their adherents. For more emphasis on this fact,

All religions of some kind are the same in some valuable respect(s). While this is compatible with some religion being the best in some other respect(s), the theorists using this label have in mind that many religions are equal regarding the central value(s) of religion."^{VIII}

Legenhausen view of religious pluralism is obviously clear in comprehension as the sentiment in the leadership of Nigeria made a study of religion to be totally off from the curriculum of some Nigerian tertiary institutions. In other words, some tertiary institutions in Nigeria, instead of incorporating religions in their curriculum will decide to approve only a particular religion of their own choice, then taking others to be irrelevant in Nigerian society. Sometimes, such oversight occurs as a result of the assumption that the particular institution is interested in studying a particular religion. For more highlight on religious pluralism,

"Religious pluralism is almost always used for a theory asserting positive value for many or most religions. But one may talk also of 'negative religious pluralism' in which most or all religions have little or no positive value and are equal in this respect. This would be the view of many naturalists, who hold that all religions are the product of human imagination and fail to have most or all of the values claimed for them."^{IX}

Theory of religious pluralism attached value to all religions holding to the fact that every religion in Nigeria has particular teaching(s) that encourages peace and harmony in the society, and if by knowing the teachings of various religions in Nigeria, then religious study in Nigerian schools holds much importance. This theory is used in the research because its emphasis is centred on the valuable nature of all the religion as they have a specific approach to encourage conflict resolution and accommodation of all languages in Nigeria. This approach cannot be learned at a distance rather by giving careful attention by studying it.

Social learning theory

This is one of the most popular explanatory theories enunciated by Albert Bandura. This theory is a guiding framework for this research. This theory is facilitated through concepts like modeling and observational learning.

^{VIII} H.M Legenhausen,. "On the plurality of religious pluralisms," *International Journal of Hekmat* 1, (2009):7.

^{IX} P, Byrne. It is not reasonable to believe that only one religion is true, *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); 5.

Social learning theory is a theory of learning and social behaviour which proposes that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others. "Learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement."

Religion as a Course in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Religious studies are a field of academic, devoted to research mainly: The religious beliefs, behaviours, and institutions. Religious studies also describe, make comparison, exegete, and explain religion with a systematic emphasis on history, practice and cross-culture. Religious studies have a better way of preparing students of religion to be valuable in all dimension of life. Religious studies aim at the impartial description of the origination and transformation of religious traditions as possible on the basis of empirical findings that students of the course are expected to analyses and investigate for their historical and contemporary relevance. Religious Studies does not inquire into the truth or rightness of religious tenets, it concerns itself rather with the role that religious people play in the culture and history of the age they live in. As such, Religious Studies today is one of the key diagnostic disciplines for the resolution of pressing socio-political, socio-religious issues and problems.

The study of religion to a greater extent provides students with an avenue to know more about the way of life of other people in the world. The greater number of students of religious studies made choice of religion as a minor selection and not major. In Nigeria, some leaders, graduates and civil servants and top leaders are seen to be useful and valuable in the national development due to the traces of religious education in them. Distinctiveness accrues to them is solely confided. This means that any student engaging to study religion will not be in a position to be engaged in any other thing than a ministerial assignment, lecturing opportunity which rare to find in Nigeria and few positions in the political position. It is interesting to know that "Religious studies alumni can be found in a wide variety of fields, including business, education, government, law, medicine, and social services. Religious studies enhance any career path through developing intercultural competence and higher-level thinking skills."

"Religious studies enable the development of crucial aptitudes, critical thinking, communication competence, interpersonal awareness, and intercultural literacy necessary for success in a global society. The aim of liberal education, healthy, holistic education is about gaining wisdom, not the accumulation of knowledge as such. Practically speaking, religious studies can enable students to better practice the task of selfhood by both building self-esteem and making possible the acquisition of competencies crucial for one's well-being in increasingly diverse world cultures."^x

From the position of Wallace, it is quite clear that appraisal of religious education in Nigerian tertiary institutions will be of huge success in getting the mind, soul and body of the citizens ready to better national development. It is indeed very sad to see religious studies as an ordinary course for ordinary people. Religious studies are not only useful in ministerial work of the church, mosque or shrine but also needed in the federal and state government services. It vital to know that if they are people to be trusted in the government ministries to work as civil servants, then you talk about those that studied religion. These are people that have been enlightened on the norms and ethical rules that help for good behaviours in a given society. At every institution in Nigeria, religious studies demand high appraisal as most behaviour exhibited by human every day and other human activities has religious connotations. It is impossible to rule out the tenet of religion in human daily activities/ living.

Challenges Facing Studying of Religion in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

There are reasons discouraging students from studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

1. Religion as Indefinite Science

^x M, Wallace, *Why is it Important to Study the World's Religions in the College and University Curriculum?* (Swarthmore, PA: Fortes, 2005),3.

Religion as indefinite science is one of the notable factors discouraging students from studying religions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The fact that religion is indefinite science is also the reason that answers to issues pertaining to moral judgment are not adequately given when the need calls for that. Religion as indefinite science permits those that study it to base their beliefs, ideas and knowledge on an individual level. This gives room for the individual to go into dialogue or debating on issues but will never come to a concluding point of getting an answer to the subject matter that is free from further deliberations.

2. Religious Studies is a Philosophical Stationed Course

A religious study is most importantly a philosophically stationed course which is tasking and demands deep researches and consistent reading. Religious studies are not for those that hate constant quest to know more. Religious studies drive the mind of the students of religion to the level of realizing the solution to critical subjects that address the societal norms. To decipher further, on this,

"In the work of the social researcher, there is always the presence of moral dilemmas which need urgent attention. This plight has the very real potential for violating the conditions of human freedom and is that it takes place at an intersection of ethical and epistemological systems, thereby posing unforeseen moral dilemmas for the anthropologist."^{XI}

For a critical observation of Appell's view, the applications are not only accredited to the field of anthropology rather, but a lot is also to be said concerning religious studies via socially based investigations. Also, considering further the critical issues related to religious studies, "Religion is fundamental to humans' life and living, thinking pattern, attitudes and relationships. Religion is, therefore, considered critical for any meaningful, total and sustainable development in any human society."^{XII} Study of Religion in Nigerian tertiary institution will be more effective if only if the study will aim at correcting the societal menace.

Other notable challenges in studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions are as follows:

3. Lack of Employment

The inadequate employment in Nigeria is also a contributive factor to why students are paying less attention to the study of religion in Nigerian higher school of learning. Religious studies in Nigerian have only be limited to almost ministerial engagement, teaching and optional opportunity in the government houses. Students of higher learning are full of fear concerning what there will gain from studying religion as a course. "There should be no discrimination against graduates of religion in Nigeria's economy. In fact, the more they have employed the more the opportunities they have to formally and informally build bridges for religions in Nigeria, especially between Islam and Christianity."^{XIII} On the lecturers' side, some are already perplexed by the kind of depressive impression received by the nature of religious department in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Indeed, the discrepancies found in the study of religion should be considered a thing of the past, as what has been the norms and concept of applicants and religion students are now going though evaluations and reformations. It is quite obvious to us that religious studies are consummately and admissible via the dominant course of study, yet some students, lecturers and schools refrain as a result of fear simply for the sake of unemployment for a graduate of religious studies.

4. The Notion that Religion Studies is Only for Church Administrators

This rumour that religion knowledge is only for those going into ministerial assignment has been hovering over places especially in tertiary institutions. It is hard in Nigeria to see a student with a strong intention to study religion as a course. The majority in the field of religion are those who later changed their intent since universities denied admission.

^{XI} G. N, Appell, *Ethical dilemmas in anthropological inquiry: A case book*: (Waltham, MA: Crossroads, 1978), np.

^{XII} B.A.C, Obiefuna, & U, Amara, "Studying Religion for Sustainable Development in Nigeria," *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 13, no. 1 (2012): 133.

^{XIII} B.A.C, Obiefuna, & U, Amara, "Studying Religion for Sustainable Development in Nigeria," *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 13, no. 1 (2012): 156.

As soon as people start moving with false information concerning a particular course or department, it appears hard to erase it from the mind of the incoming students. Religions study is allowed in schools in Nigeria yet some schools have not gotten approval due to lack of students and qualified lecturers in the field of religion. What cannot be permissive in the study of religion is to give special credit to a particular religion as the only true religion. "It is generally accepted that there are many religious systems in Africa."^{XIV} "It is therefore impossible to talk of one type of religion as being uniquely Africans."^{XV}

Considering the importance of embracing religion by other tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it is very simple and clear to know that they are several ways religious studies can be included in the school calendar. Religious studies can be studied as a historical discourse; it can be studied as literature or as a discourse to contemporary issues.

5. Inferiority Complex

In spite of the facts that religious studies are permissible, it is not enough to draw a conclusion that religious studies are void of challenges. It is not only applicable to study of religion rather in the study of other courses like music, Language courses, psychology and guardian and counseling. Majority of the challenges encounters in the cost of studying religion do not really come from the subject rather it comes from most classroom discussions. The greater number of students anticipates religion supposed to be out from the list of tertiary institutions courses. Therefore, students of religious studies in most cases feel so inferior in telling others their specialization due to the notion of people that religious studies have no place in solving the problem of a contemporary religious specialist. Religion is not as already registered in the mind of people that is why this research will aid in righting the wrong impression of people about religious studies.

Students' Attitude, Institutions and Studying Religion in Nigeria

Religious studies at schools teach students to understand different viewpoints of people's belief, also religion taught valuable skills, but it is still not taken seriously in Nigeria schools. It is undervalued and unappreciated. Religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions are still experiencing a force that keeps it out completely from other course or discipline. Religion as a course sharpens and sharp the mind and attitude of students both in the school and when out from school. Religion in schools is very simple to be dropped and some does not have it in curriculum and do not intend to do so due to non-qualified instructor factor. Every day human beings are faced by factors that need be given adequate attention from the view of other people around them; this is exactly what is achieved in studying religion. Religious studies idea enables one to think rationally so as to be able to tackle problems that emanate from human daily activities. The extent people have gone in underscoring religion as an unfortunate course; those that study it are regarded as less busy ones in the academic environment and society at large while the course itself is inconsequential. All the knowledge acquisition in religious studies seems to be vital and highly valuable in future as the exposure will help the students to meet with different people from different belief and cultural background. The underrated substantiality of Religious Studies remains that it aids in overwhelming discrimination and other social vices in society. By studying religion, every citizen will be encouraged to live right in a given country. However, people should take away their mind from the concept that religious studies are for unfortunate students who could not be favoured in admission or that religion is for those only focusing on ministerial assignment. If there should be an effective leader in any organization or society, then religious education should be at the climax to direct it. In an environment that the people focus much on religion, the life and attitude of the people are highly coordinated with moral values. Religious education promotes justice, equity, stability, honesty, good morals and another lifestyle that are highly welcomed for the good and wellbeing of the society. Nigerian tertiary institutions can as well help in promoting the study of religion in her tertiary institutions by giving it high standard preference. It is not only giving it high standard preference, rather the institution in Nigeria can find a bold space for religious studies in her curriculum. It is by so doing that the attention of student's intention will be drawn to the vitality of the course.

^{XIV} J.S, Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*, 2nd edition. (Oxford, EN: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1990), 1.

^{XV} Magesa, L, *African religion: The moral traditions of abundant life*. (Maryknoll, NA: Orbis Books, 2002), 16.

The relevance of Studying Religion in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

The study of religion in tertiary institutions will proffer solutions to most questions and worries of mankind. It is from the concept of religious studies that one is made to move into research on the issues that centered on human condition or situation. Most time people long to change from one form of life to another, it is only religion that will give a solution on how, and what to do in order to realize that. What about the issue of corruption that is the concept of everyday news in Nigeria? Religious studies have much to contribute if corruption is to be eradicated to an extent in Nigerian society. Study of religion gives an answer to how people behave the way they do and bring forth a directive on how-to live-in harmony with people of different religious belief.

Every field of studies usually claims to be the only true one that can offer a student better employment after graduation. Now, the relevant of religious education after graduation is the ideal and ultimately the trust of what majority of students want to know before endorsing a paper to study it. This relevant to studying religion could be the fear and question of students in a different tertiary institution in Nigeria.

"At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a casual glance at world affairs would suggest that religion is at the core of much of the strife around the globe. Often, religion is a contentious issue. Where eternal salvation is at stake, compromise can be difficult at or even sinful. Religion is also important because, as a central part of many individuals' identity, any threat to one's beliefs is a threat to one's very being. This is a primary motivation for ethno religious nationalists."^{XVI}

In Nigeria today, religion plays an important role in the daily lives of her citizens; both in character, in leadership, in dressing lifestyle, and in the manner of eating. Meanwhile, religion and political activities in Nigeria are two sides of a coin. Religious bodies in Nigeria are the target and focus of the political leaders and political leaders are usually the hope of some religion adherent. With reference to the extent religion has gone in adding values in Nigerian politics, it then means that religion needs to be given a high preference in Nigerian tertiary institutions. For instance, in case there are areas that the relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria are experiencing deformity, by encouraging the study of religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions, then corrections can be mated on the areas of deformity. It is good to know that with the help of religion; people are identified in Nigeria most time. So, religion is important in the lives of individuals in Nigeria, as that has much to do with the norms of the people. So far, the study of religion will aid to an extent in understanding among different religious groups, ethnic groups, national development, the unity of the nation and its sustainability. In Nigeria, religion has become a necessitous actuality. The study of religion works best in the development of the human mind and to respect the value of humanity in society.

Religion and education go hand in hand in the enlightenment and proper formation of the human mind. They have a substantial affinity that one might lose its meaning and place in the society when detached from the other. Their essences, values and impacts on any society are dependent upon the extent to which they are approached simultaneously. Religion and education are vital tools which, when fully harmonized, could liberate the contemporary man from irrational propagation of false ideologies."^{XVII}

Peter maintains his argument on separating between religion and education which intersected on the dominant role of religious education to the citizens and national development. Other importance of studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions includes the following:

Studying Religions Aid in Peace Building

Among all the courses offered in Nigerian tertiary institutions, religious studies made a difference as it has targeted goal in the area of peace building. It is absolute ignorance to think the teaching of some religion is war while the other is for peace. All religious studies opine towards the execution of peace. To support this view about religions to people's conception and its value to mankind,

^{XVI} E. Brahm, *Religion and conflict*. (Colorado, CO: Colorado University, 2005), 1.

^{XVII} Peter, O. C. "The place of religion in education: A contemporary Nigerian perspective" *Cultural and Religious Studies* 4, no. 3, (2016):210. doi: 10.17265/2328-2177/2016.03.006.

"No religion preaches violence and conflict or militancy. Every religion advocate and preaches peace and peaceful co-existence of all citizens. In Christianity Jesus Christ is known and referred to as the prince of peace. He taught, commanded and demonstrated the significance of peace and "his names will be called wonderful, counsellor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace (Isaiah 9: 6-7)."^{xviii} Religious studies aim towards the enhancement of peace among people in contemporary society. Peace building is an attribute and result of total and accurate religious education.

In Nigeria, the level of peace and harmony so far between the people of a different religious background for some decades now is as a result of strong teaching and education among the people. For the good of the contemporary society, encouraging the younger citizens to embark on a study of religion will go a long way in helping for a balanced understanding of the value of religious education in the peace building and national development. Meanwhile, in the history of religious violence in Nigeria, some Nigerian citizens who encountered opposition from the nominal adherents of opposing religion were able to overcome the pressure due to their high level of enlightenment about religion as a medium for peace and unity. Promoting the study of religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions will aid in the minimization of incessant religious violence among contemporary Nigerian socio-ethnic groups. This will actually help to guide the citizen on the norms and way of life of people of other religion different from their own. Making reference to the role of religion in conflict resolution and peace building in Mali,

"Before the conflict escalated in 2012–2013, religion did not appear to play a particular role in the conflicts and in peace building in Mali. With the rise of Islamic extremist movements in northern Mali, however, religion came to shape the dynamics of conflict and of peace processes. The implementation of Sharia law in northern Mali from March/April 2013 to January 2014, on a scale not previously experienced in the country, led to a massive and rapid deterioration of the human rights situation."^{xix}

Looking critically to the view of Silvestri, and Mayall, one will realize that religion aim towards the maintenance of peace and unity in any given society. It is the misappropriation of function and role that some religious organization appears to be violent and disastrous. But it is obvious that every religion plays a role in ensuring peace and unity in every society. In another sense, it is on this note that the study of religion should be given a priority in our tertiary institutions to enable radical sensitization through educating the young once about the tenet of every religion. "The peace building power of religion has created important elements of resilience within the Malian population and has contributed to peace building efforts, although additional efforts could be made to fully exploit its beneficial capacities to create sustainable peace."^{xx} The level of enlightenment about the position of religious bodies in Nigeria is very low due to less attention to the study of religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions by the education bodies. Religious violence in Nigeria will come to its minimal if only if the Nigeria education bodies will deem it feet to encourage the study of religion and give high priority to it in all level of education in Nigeria.

The study of religion will help to Educate Students the Different discrepancies in the Contemporary Society functions: Education is indeed a power to transform and change situations. Encouraging the study of religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions will go a long way in educating the young people about the ripples in society. The ripples here are those discrepancies and uncoordinated activities that make up the society's daily norms. In our contemporary society, there are so many issues that are seen every day which an ordinary mind may overlook, but a religious enlightened mind will capture it, and bring it up to the platform where it will receive adequate attention for a way forward. If there is any level most evil practices and culture in our various societies have taken its shape today, it is as a result of religious enlightenment that individuals, groups and organizations were able to cry out for help. It is through education of the young people about the ripples that they will begin to understand the need to cry for help."The first step to empowering people through education is to recognize that there has been a paradigm shift.

^{xviii} K, Sulaiman, O, & M. Y, Ojo, "The roles of religious education to peace, security and Sustainable development in Nigeria," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no.6, (2012): 3.

^{xix} S, Silvestri, & J.F, Mayall, *The role of religion in conflict and peace-building* (Carlton, HT: Team, 2015):59.

^{xx} *ibid*:60.

Thomas Kuhn describes paradigm shift as a time when an earlier belief is no longer working, and a new one has begun to replace it, bringing with it new theories and new understandings of the underlying realities."^{XXI} Suffice it to say that an ordinary mind cannot see and understand the ripples in the Nigerian political system. It is only a keen mind that will see and at the same time comprehend it. There are so many societal and national issues the study of religion will expose one into, which will be for the good and for the development of the society to a large extent. "Religious education has a central role to play in the restructuring of Nigeria, and in the current democratization process."^{XXII} Indeed if religious education has a role to play in Nigerian democracy, restructuring of the nation, and in other spheres that has to do with national development, then there is hope for Nigeria which is dependent on the level of religious study appraisal in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Religious education aids in extermination of injustice, dogmatism and extreme dislike that is eating deep the fabric of Nigerian government administration. It will be very hard for one to concur with the fact that studying religion helps in elimination of injustices, dogmatism, extreme dislikes that is the order of the day in both leadership and every other sphere in the society. It is very obvious that the factor responsible for the positive performance of a leader is dependent on the level of the leader's perception about the good and wellbeing of the followers. It does not matter the religion one belongs; all religion preaches good governance, good leadership and good followership. Any leader that is doing outside the tenet of his or her religion objectives is doing that based on personal interest and gain. The tenet of religions of the world is to stand on the truth, love, justice and good and healthy relationship with others. "Claims are fought among the adherents of religions who are seeking for guidance to live in peace and harmony and also to have a mutual understanding for living together."^{XXIII} The position of Nur-Farhana and Khadijah can be referred to the norms of religion in the past and not in the present time in which education has done much in helping people to understand the importance of studying religion, especially in tertiary institutions. If not for any other thing, the study of religion to a greater extent has helped in upholding the dignity and human value in society. Attention should not be given to the adherents of some religion whose action is negative against another as such is not religious teaching. The different perception of some religious group outside religious teaching has it that:

"Tens of thousands of people have perished in Nigeria over the last five years due to violence between Christians and Muslims. The worst of the violence has occurred in Plateau State. The most recent Christian-Muslim conflict in Plateau State occurred in Yelwa-Nshar, in the Shendam local government area, where nearly 1,000 were killed in May 2004. When I visited Nigeria in November 2004, I witnessed several mass graves for Muslims and one for Christians, with each grave containing 100 bodies. The killings in Yelwa-Nshar provoked reprisals in both Kano State and Southeastern State. To subdue the unrest in Plateau State, 25,000 soldiers and security personnel were deployed. The administrator of Plateau State convened a peace conference that resulted in recommendations for resolving the conflicts, but the Muslim community rejected them."^{XXIV}

Nigeria is a peaceful country until the period of negligence to the importance of religion in both leadership and governance. That Nigeria is known by its socio-religious violence is mainly as a result of laxness to give priority to religion in peace building. By giving priority to religious education in Nigeria and by adhering to its tenet, the unity and peace of Nigeria will come to stay. Since all the religion encourages peace and unity and not war as some think, priority is to be given to the study of existing religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions to enable the teaching of the religious concept to the young people. It will be disastrous and dangerous to give priority to one religion and subservience to other religion in a multi-religious country like Nigeria. Even claiming to combine the teaching both religions in Nigerian schools since they aim towards achieving a particular goal, is more dangerous like annihilating a particular religion to appraise the other.

Role of Religious Studies in the curriculum of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

^{XXI} U, Rose Nkechi. "The National Christian Religious Studies Curriculum and the imperative for Change in an Era of Globalization," *Article in Asian Academic Research Journal of Multidisciplinary 1, no.16 (2013): 542.*

^{XXII} Job, Oluremi Okunoye, *Effective religious education as a mechanism for sustaining Democracy in Nigeria*, a conference paper presented at the 36th Annual Conference of National Association for the Study of Religions, September 8-11th, 2015, 2.

^{XXIII} A. R, Nur- Farhana, & M.K, Khadijah "Religious tolerance in Malaysia: Problems and Challenges" *International Journal of Islamic Thought 3, (2013):81.*

^{XXIV} David. R Smock, *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking*. (Washington, DC: United State Institute of Peace, 2006):17.

The study of a different religion in the world is important to be included in the curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions. The purpose of making religion part of Nigerian institutions curriculum is to help encourage the younger generation to grow with the knowledge of the benefit of studying religion. To study religion is beyond sole dependent on a particular religion dominant in a particular country. To study religion is to have a wide knowledge of the various religions in the world and its comparatives. It will be easier to deal with injustices, nepotism and other social vices in a given country through embracement of the teachings from different religions. The presence of religious studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions curriculum will to a greater degree, send a signal to the citizens about the dominant nature of religious studies to the national development. The aim of teaching Christian religious knowledge is “to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens.”^{xxv} What is applied to Christian Religious Education is also applicable to the positive value of other religion?

The presence of religious education in Nigerian tertiary institutions’ curriculum makes the objective of studying religion in Nigerian schools more apt and accommodative to the extent that one can easily broaden his/her mind to study religion without any form of prejudice. Studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions need to be driven by the concept that will sustain ones belief-system. It is because of this fact that studying religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions should stand as a panacea to the socio-religious conflict in Nigeria. In another dimension on the role of religious studies in the curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions, religious studies bring into existence the consciousness on the value of human life. Obviously, almost every religion in the world has much to contribute to the dignity of human life in society. Religion studies in Nigerian tertiary institutions create much awareness about the trends in contemporary society and as well as proffer solutions to most social societal menace. Teaching religion in Nigerian tertiary institutions open more employment opportunities for the citizens. Also, the inclusion of religious studies in the curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions signals the completeness of the curriculum of an institution. No tertiary institution claims effective study outline without religion studies included. It will interest one to know that religion studies add credit to the quality of a given institution; it also affects positively the moral life of students in an institution. Considering the positive value of religious studies in learning and education, "The goal of liberal learning including and especially religious studies should be wisdom, not knowledge for its own sake. It was not simply knowledge about the world, but wisdom about right relationships within the world, that propelled many agents for change in every generation."^{xxvi}

The position of Wallace is in the actual sense one of the major problem challenging socio-religious peace in Nigeria. It is obvious that the majority of Nigerians take religion to heart even when the need arises for one to use the wisdom of religion to solve problems in society. The wisdom of a concept is far beyond the knowledge of the same concept. The wisdom of a concept brings one to the level of living out the tenet of the concept, but the knowledge of a concept only limits one to think differently from the major ideas and target of a particular organisation. No wonder things are falling apart in Nigeria and some other African countries, leaders with spiritual intelligence are urgently and demandingly needed for total emancipation of mankind from human suppression and subordination.

Conclusion

The major objective of this research is to discuss the various factors militating against the study of religion in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Broad areas discussed include the fact that religion is not a definite science, religion is a predominantly theory-based course, lack of employment, the perception that religious studies are for those going into the ministerial assignment, an overwhelming inferiority complex of students of religious studies. Considerations are important to be according to the system and principal essential features of the neighbourhood to whom principles are aided and streamline in religion. It has been discovered from this research that studying religion in tertiary institutions cannot only end in the head knowledge but will go as far as upholding the dignity and values of the society.

^{xxv} E. Eluu, Patrick, "The Role of Religion in Value Education in Nigeria," *British Journal of Education* 4, no. 9, (2016):74.

^{xxvi} M, Wallace, *Why is it Important to Study the World's Religions in the College and University Curriculum?* (Swarthmore, PA: Fortes, 2005),3.

The moral functionality of a given society is dependent on the level of religious knowledge acquired by the people. Religious education helps in the moral coordination of a given community and society at large. In Nigerian institutions, the study of religion is less of an option to students and to teachers. Majority of Nigerian tertiary institutions regard religion as a minor course due to the concept of people about the less and rare opportunity to graduates of religious studies. Actually, this is a whole lie as graduates of religion cannot be at the edge in the circular world.

This concept is a rebirth of false thought that is unverifiable. The magnitude of inferiority to one's profession is based on the extent of negligence by the practitioner. The graduates of religious studies have a position in the federal ministries and as well as at states level. The quest for the study of religion has been fairly systematically neglected in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This has been for some reasons, which this research has been able to point out due to its intensely complicated mode. In a lighter mood, the Nigerian system of education still needs a higher degree of adjustment to be favourable for the people in the environment. But it is important in many situations of potential and actual conflict to have a more thoughtful and rigorous analysis both of religion as a contributory factor to conflict, and also a potential factor for conflict prevention and resolution.

Recommendations

- The department of religion should see it as a need to embark on massive research to righting the wrong already in the mind of students in the higher school of learning about studying religion.
- Religion department can as well initiate religious studies to circumference the scientific field of studies.
- Department of religion in various schools of high learning should aid the enablement of scholarship to a best graduating student to encourage others into the field of religious studies.
- Scholarship in religious studies should focus more on her research on the self-establishment of students of religion other than lecturing and ministerial engagements.
- Nigerian tertiary institutions should as well encourage quality learning from qualified sources (lecturers).
- Mass academic evangelism should be embarked on to re-sensitize the young ones that Religious Studies are not only about pre-professional training, rather is also for every individual personal development.
- Religious Studies could be re-dressed towards addressing the questions of purpose and value along with developing important life skills to those studying it.
- To acknowledge the relevance of studying religion, it is important to understand religion's various functions in a given economic system or situation. In other words, the religious scholarship should endeavour to investigate the place of religion in correcting economic deformity via reception, especially in Nigeria situation.

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