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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Every century craves for sustainable national development and this is true also of the 21st century . In the light of the above, this article examined the potentiality of Religious Education in attaining Sustainable National Development in the 21st century. The researchers view religious education as a vital tool to driving Sustainable National Development in the 21st century. Again the article found that right values and morals are adequately integrated in educational system through religious teachings. The findings demonstrates that the change of the human person through re-emphasis on moral values is a pre-requisites for the development of the 21st century and reveals that no century can rise above the quality of her educated citizenry . In the light of the above discussion, the researchers conclude that, if there should be Sustainable National Development in the 21st century, it is relevant for the world and Nigeria in particular to look in the direction of religious education.

Keywords: Religious, Education, Sustainable National Development, 21st Century, Educational System.

Introduction

Religious Education has played a significant role in sustainable development in 21st century, this includes: Economic, education and socio/political life apart from its moral objectives. Hence the question of Sustainable National Development is an answer to the cravings of the 21st for all-round national development. Religion is an effective tool which can be used to unite people in conflict and in war situations. Since religion can be used to ensure peace, it will results to security. Security is

important to every century development, a century that is not secure cannot develop, it will erode infrastructures and education will fall.

Pragmatically speaking, any society so described cannot be said to be healthy, hence the 21st century is sick. However, every human societal problem has a beginning. This implies that such problem must necessarily have a possible cure; hence it is plausible to posit here that the development problem of the 21st century have a solution which is not out of sight.

From the above analysis, it is easy to opined that since religion is one of the social institutions in the society and also vital , given the education fostered by it , which is known as Religious Education could be an instrument to the problem of sustainable national development in the 21st century .

Religious Education promotes and sustains religion and it tenets, beliefs and practices .Religious education therefore presents religion as that which unites the human with divine. In the light of this therefore, the researchers posit that to save the 21st century from social decay and persistence lack of sustainable national development despite the developmental strategies in the past, the social functions of Religious Education should positively applied and harnessed to the project of sustainable national development as this will promote and foster development in all ramifications .

The Concept of Religious Education

Religious Education as instruction in religion is a subject of general education. It has been described as an education in a school which places a strong emphasis on the beliefs associated to a particular religion. This article define religious education as the act of teaching people , especially students about the tents , doctrines and values of a religion with the aim of guiding them to imbibe the moral principles and ethical standards which will help them to become well meaning members of the society . Education is a determinant factor for the development of any society. Religious Education implies a type of education which is largely separate from rigorous academia, which regards religious beliefs as a fundamental tenet and operating modality. Mordi(2015), averred that religious education connotes the dominant academic study , and in typically religious terms , teaches doctrines which refine and define social customs and societal norms as law. According to kowino. Agak and Kochung(2012), have shown how religious education develops willingness in students to value diversity in religion and culture . These attitudes,thus, enables the individuals to explore more about other people's religious and cultural beliefs and practices . Religious education has a way of broadening the learner's way of thinking and instilling self-confidence. It provides moral guidance and encourages people to improve their lives. In religious education, individuals learn to become more broadminded, to accept other people's beliefs and faiths and not to let race or religion come in the way of what they see in an individual.

The Concept of Sustainable National Development

The concept of National Development is the capacity of the country to raise the standard of living of its residents. It can be achieved by providing individuals with basic livelihood requirements and supplying them with employment etc. Development is a process that creates

growth, brings in progress and positive change. The Concept National Development also refers to the improvement of a country in all areas including the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material spheres. The capacity of a nation to enhance its citizen's standards of living is an indicator of the nation's level of development.

The concept of Sustainable National Development on the other hand refers to the definitive growth of the society. The most interesting aspect of sustainable development is the fact that it puts into consideration the present conditions of people as well as not compromising those that come later. Therefore, the concept of sustainable national development remains the modern parameter of measuring development. It is in line with this that Mordi(2015), assert that Sustainable National Development means the process of growth in individual and socio/economic levels of progress in a given society . A development that is sustainable is understood to mean the innovational changes that endure the test of time. Kempe, R.(2018), assert that Sustainable National Development is a capability of a particular nation or country to achieve comprehensive improvement or refinement in all ramifications of it existence (economic, political ,cultural, religious etc) and still maintains and continue affairs at that level for a long time . This simply means the ability of a particular country to plan and achieve betterment and improvement in its socio/economic, political, cultural and environmental lives both now and in the future.

Contemporarily, Sustainable National Development has become a password that resonates across all disciplines in today knowledge industry. It is associated with omnipotent capabilities of proffering solutions to all problems of man and the society. It suggests harmonious living and quality growth among individuals in the society in order to secure the well-being of future generations. Craven (2008), views that the concept of sustainable is rooted in a system where quality of life is perceived and appreciated.

Why Religious Intolerance?

1. Lack of knowledge

   We do not have enough knowledge about other religions. People misinterpret religion and the books as per their convenience and this is the foundation of divide and rule which leads to communal violence. When people from a religion think they have an authority on their beliefs and close their minds to others that is where the problem begins .We remain biased and think everyone else on this planet who does not agree with us is wrong.

2. Passion

   Another major cause of this intolerance is the passion people have for their religion. In the bargain, we forget that the other person can also be passionate in the same way. When we talk in favor of our religion and against the others, the other person will for sure get instigated and the arguments start. The passion we have for our religion causes us to shut our minds to others . All that we want to think about is our religion and how different or wrong yours is from ours . Passion for your religion is one of the main causes of religious intolerance

3. We look at the differences Only
   When people start looking at things with a perspective of what is different between them and not what is common, there is a judgment that comes along which leads to intolerance. And this intolerance comes from ignorance and lack of acceptance and this is what we pass to the next generation. And this is what I think we need to stop.
   The basis of ideas of all religions is the same but we only look at the difference. The people who judge others on their religion live with a view *my religion is right and yours is wrong*. Two people in a room can be right because they have their ideologies. If you do not agree with me, it doesn't make me or you wrong. When we look at each religion in a different light and exclusive from the other, it is bound to create conflict.

Causes of Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance has been a thorn in the wheel of progress in the 21st century .Religious adherents that are Christians, Muslims, traditionalist, Hindus, Judaism etc in several instances as reflected in numerous inter-religious crisis have revealed that there are high incidents of religious intolerance in the 21st century. Why should we live like cats and dogs at the expense of national development? Why do people forsake the principles of tolerance?

According to Omotayo(2017), sees religious intolerance as the act of emotional disagreement between two or more religious groups or entities . Provocative utterances, the defense of religion /self-interest, following in the footsteps of religious leaders and the reasons he named for religious conflict and terrorism in the 21st century. According to him, every religion has a method of turning impressionable children minds into stone, impairing their ability to think critically and rationally. The average Muslim perceives everything through the lens of Islam. They therefore, do not distinguish between politics, culture, and religion. It is challenging to separate the three due to the interaction between these crucial social components.

The phenomena have hindered the 21st century effort to reform and develop for the better in several sectors including, security, education, social stability, socio/economic prosperity, democratic transition, and national unity .It is as a results of these challenges that the teaching of religious education is necessary and timely. This is because it will stand in the gap to belittle the religious intolerance phenomena and to give a better understanding of what religion is.

Consequences of Religious Intolerance on National Development

The disastrous implications of religious crisis on the pace of development in any nation or on the victims of such dilemma can never be over-emphasized. The 21st century has seen a lot of religious ethno-religious and communal crisis. Let look at the overview of the consequences of religious crisis in Nigeria. The religious crisis has recently assumed militant approaches they became more disastrous to the Human lives and properties. For instance, the maitatsine riot of kano in 1980 recorded high level of destruction of properties. Uja (2010) as cited by Nqaike(2014) referred to it as a major religious bigotry in Nigeria. The burning of churches in October 1982, observed udiodem (1999) was the first and open violent of religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. The 5th june 2022 owo ondo massacre also claims lives and cause a major setback in development in that region .The Usman Dan-fodio university

religious conflicts (May ,1986).the kafanchan religious crisis(March, 1987).the zango-kataf crisis(1992). And many more religious crisis which claims millions of lives and properties which relegated development. These and more makes individuals to ask question concerning the place of religious education amidst these challenges posted by religious adherents

Religious Education as an agent of Sustainable National Development in the 21st century

21st century can drive Sustainable National Development using religion. This is possible through an extensive teaching of morals, good morals from the grassroots. Good morals will change the individuals. It is a known fact that religious education actively promotes values of truth, justice, and respect for all and care of the environment. It places specific emphasis on individuals valuing themselves and others. For instance, it is through religious education that the individuals learn that he/she has specific obligation to himself/herself, to their fellow human beings and to the society to whom they belongs. It moulds the human character and life in a way that enables the development of the 21st century. It must be understood that the present researchers are not unaware of the fact that religious education is not a new trend in the educational system. But, there is a need for reformation.

Iwenofu(2010) argued that the goal of religious education is for national development ,she observed that the teaching of religious education influences people lives in every time and every place . To her religious education prepare men for life, a perfect man, a finished man in character. She also explains that religious education creates in man the sense of sacred and his purpose on earth and where he will end his life. Religious education helps the individual to understand him as well as their tradition and appreciates the faith and traditions of others. It builds in men spirit of contentment and faith to a discerning encounter with the surrounding culture and seeks for its transformation.

For instance, given the conditions for African religiosity, it is felt that religion must have already played a constructive role in shaping positive attitudes and approaches related to different areas of life. However, from the perspective of religious education, human being has a spiritual nature which is the source of such motivation as showing forth love, seeking truth and desiring to serve others.

Consequently, if one is to approach development from a spiritual perspective, one will uphold the values of co-operation, reciprocity and concern for others rather than competition and pursuit of self-interest. Such behavior in turn would lead to a change in the way Sustainable National Development activity is conceived. Religious Education can give 21st century Africa a well organized and conducive atmosphere for her development.

Even in exile, some Israelites like Nehemiah went to rebuild the fallen walls of Jerusalem. Equally in the time of Jesus while he was on earth, the Jews were awaiting a messiah. This messiah was to be one who would restore the kingdom of Israel. One who would liberate them from the political shackles of the Roman Empire . Christ didn't teach about national development because his kingdom was not of this world …. And not from this world (john 18:36). Thus, he had no army to train or even bodyguard to guard him yet he preached of a kingdom. He said as my father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink in my kingdom, and sit on throne settling the twelve of Israel (Luke 22:29-36). However, Jesus Christ preached, practiced and provides guidelines for development. St.Paul admonished that every Christian should endeavor to build her country in order to develop educationally, economically and socially. (Romans 13:1-7)

Islam as well connotes that, concerning the issue of Sustainable National Development when the Quran clearly stated that national development is an integrated process within which includes the processes to build up a balanced nature of economic, social, environmental and spiritual life.

Conclusion

If there should be Sustainable National Development in the 21st, it is relevant for the world to look in the direction of Religious Education. This is because religious education is a change agent. The change of the human person is identified in this article as a contemporary issue in the development of the 21st century. This change is possible because it is worthwhile and transformative. Moral values are the standard of good and evil which govern an individual behavior and choices, Religion is a major source of moral values. No known religion is devoid of moral and ethical principles.

Indeed religion is a force which has mostly influenced the character of mankind. Mans ethical standard of judgment appears to be products of his religious training. This implies that religious education for sustainable national development is a step in the right direction. This article maintains that Sustainable National Development can be enriched by the insights offered by religion, faith, spirituality and values which are all elements of religious education.

Recommendations

In the lights of what has been discussed so far, the researchers make the following recommendations:

1. Religious education should be encouraged since it is a panacea to the problem of sustainable national development in the 21st century. This is because it brings growth to the society and other humanitarian services.
2. Our school administrators should be directed to allow only experts of religious education to teach the subject.
3. The federal Government should give religious education its rightful place in the UBE programme by specifying the roles it should play in ensuring effective human development that could be used to bring about the needed sustainable national development
4. Moral values should be the guiding principles of lives in the 21st century , meet all levels as the life which will facilitates all round development
5. Religious leaders should review the content of their religious education to reflect the presents needs of the 21st century

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