

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION: A PARADIGM TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the role of religious/moral education in sustainable economic growth in Nigeria. Many developmental programmes have been adopted by both past and present administration in Nigeria with the aim of bringing a sustainable development in the country but proved abortive. Survey methodological framework was used and observed that the neglect of religious/moral education in our national development plan is responsible for the inadequacies of economic growth. Some of these programmes put in place in order to boost the economy of Nigeria include Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), Operation Feed the nation (OFN), (NDDC), Niger Delta Development Commission, (WAI) War Against Indiscipline, (NHO) Non Governmental Organization and so on. These programmes were geared towards a sustainable economic growth in the country but have not yielded meaningful results because the root cause of the problem has not been adequately addressed due to the nations peculiar problem of corruption at all levels. For economic growth to be actualized in Nigeria there is need for moral re-awakening. The bane of our economic woes is inefficiency, nepotism, ethnic crises, leadership problems, misplacement of value, mismanagement which is caused by neglect of religious/moral education. The paper argued that for any society to be fully developed, religious/moral education has a key role to play in the lives of the citizenry to ensure meaningful economic growth.

Keywords: Religious/moral education, Economic growth/Development.

INTRODUCTION

It is a well known fact that Nigeria is naturally endowed with vast human and material resources that can guarantee a sustainable economic growth and development. The growth of any nation is determined by number of socio cultural and economic factors which at times are inter-related and interdependent. Based on this, Ibezim (2001) asserts that government, economic network, education, political leadership and religion/moral are factors that can enhance social change and development in the society.

Nigeria has suffered and is still suffering from a continuous fall in economic growth rate and economic boom since the years after independence in 1960. At independence, Nigerian economy was mainly based on agriculture but after a decade of independence there was a shift towards the oil sector. This, analysts have found out that the low turn in national money or economy was due to non-challant attitude of some important sectors of the economy like agriculture. Onimhawo and Ottuh cited Jike (2001) agriculture once occupied an exalted place in the Gross National product (GNP) as the pre-eminent occupation of Nigerians in the years before and immediately after our political independence in 1960. However, the discovery of crude oil in Nigeria land brought about some problems that affected the Nigerian economy. Thus, led to the desertion of the young able bodied men who would have been very useful in the agricultural sectors now moved to the urban areas in search of crude oil and related oil businesses.

In addition, the social anomalies, corruption and bad effects in the whole Nigerian society for which insecurity, economic, moral decadence, misplacement of value, mismanagement and political instabilities are the consequences of low economy till date. Despite the efforts made by both past and present leadership administration to revamp the economy of Nigeria by the introduction of developmental processes failed because of the weak moral laxities found in our homes today.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION

Religious and moral education according to Iwenofu (2010) states that though distinct, they are harmoniously related and connected. The main objectives of religious and moral education is to help the

child to engage in a process of personal search for values, meaning and purpose in life, which helps in the development of a nation.

The Word Religion:

The word religion is difficult to define. According to Ukala (2006) many English dictionaries derive the meaning from Latin "religio" which means "good faith", "rituals", and other similar meanings. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* opines that "religion is the service and worship of God or the Supernatural". Ukala went further to say that different religions and beliefs define religion differently to suit their own purposes. This notwithstanding, for the purpose of this work religion will be seen as a belief and worship of a supernatural Being that sees all human endeavour and is interested in them. In Nigeria, such beliefs include Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR). These religions have control on the lives and actions of the believers.

However, for the interest of this paper, religion has a framework on which many individual qualities commence and progress. According to King (2003), "Religion intentionally offers beliefs, moral codes and values from which a young person can build a personal belief system". This personal belief system enables the young person to build an identity. The living up to this expectation is the draw line for the struggle to live up to a standard of life worthy of this behaviour. In other words, religion helps in the development of the society. The society made up of well trained products will no doubt experience a national growth which eventually leads to the economic growth of the nation.

Education:

Education can be defined as an instruction used to socialize people to be able to cope with life challenges by providing them with skills that will make them productive, Whawo (2011). It is also a means to empower children and adults alike to become useful participants to themselves and the entire societies they find themselves. Thus, religious education is the effective organization of individuals religious experience such that tenderness and power may develop in a way satisfactory to God, the individual and others through the growth of socially desirable knowledge, attitude and skills Nowrie (2000). **Religious Education** is chiefly concerned with building the sense of sacred in man, teaching him of where he comes from, why he is here on earth and where he is going Morgan (1974). In other words, it involves the forming of every human being to be a true child of God, a perfect man and to be a finished man of character. Mulin (2005) states that **Religious Education** educates students on religious matters such as belief and customs which teach morality and shapen character.

MORAL EDUCATION

<http://archive.libMsu.edu> (2009) states that moral education is the process through which an individual develops proper attitudes and behaviours towards others in the society, based on social and cultural norms, rules and laws. In other words, it nurtures in a person, thus developing his thinking skills of moral judgment about what is right and wrong and rational judgment about difficult matters <http://www.encyclopedia> (2009). Consequently, the moral phenomenon of human behaviour is based on what action is right or wrong. For the efficacy of this, it is pertinent to teach people on how to make the right judgments/decisions from on set of their lives and help them to exercise their freedom in a good way. Iwenofu (2010) sees moral education as that that helps people appreciate common values such as honesty, liberty, justice, fairness and respect for others. Moral education then helps children acquire those moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and simultaneously become productive to the nation. It therefore, contributes not only to the students as individuals but also to the social pulling together of a nation (<http://dspaceWric.ot/bitstream> 2009).

ECONOMIC GROWTH

In economics, "economic growth" or "economic growth theory" typically refers to growth of potential output that causes the production possibility frontier to shift outward. The economic growth which increases the market value is as a result of one's self-empowerment (Okoroji, 2015/2016).



According to Onimhawo and Ottuh (2001), economic growth is the foundation for human life improvement and a prerequisite of social progress and social stability. Since growth/development concerns of human life improvement, no wonder Ukala (2006) cited Ajaegbo who sees development equally as "a concept, which implies conscious and progressive transformation of the society. What this entails therefore is that a determined effort should be put in bringing about significant transformation of the society in a desired direction, making use of the available resources". Also, in the words of Echekwube (1993) "development is a notion which is very much associated with the goal of civilization. This aims at the production of the needs of the people; feeding, clothing, housing, health and happy life". In order words, economic growth/development could be seen with the improved education, modern knowledge and technology, employment opportunities and so on.

Development

According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, development is the gradual growth of something, so that it becomes bigger or more advanced. It is also the act or result of making a product or design better and more advanced.

Chine (1994) refers to development as "any deliberate effort to transform society in terms of modernization through government activities or its agents, interest groups or community efforts". This has to do with planning, organizing, co-ordination and implementation. While Onimhawo and Ottuh cited Seer in their article on Religion and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria as "the elimination or drastic reduction of three interrelated socio-economic problems namely: poverty, unemployment and inequality (Seers, 1993). They also state that others see development as a process by which a society's economy, political and social-cultural institutions are transformed in order to improve the standard of living of the members of the society. Therefore, absence of religious/moral education not inculcated into human beings will not foster the phenomenon development even though development is seen by majority as the sum total of everything good that man has started right from time immemorial to establish.

THE CHALLENGES FACING THE ECONOMY OF NIGERIA

The Nigerian economy continues to be faced with a number of challenges that has hampered efforts at economic transformation. First, is the leadership problem. Nigeria, because of her multi-ethnicity and religious shuvinism has been experiencing setbacks in her development stride. She has not been able to elect a good leader/president, governors and chairmen of local government councils in the country. Because of self-centredness and personal aggrandizement, will not be focused on how to fund the system, man power for technical know how; rather looting and siphoning the money and building many companies abroad. Sequel to this, Achebe (1983) concluded that "The problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigeria's problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility; to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmark of true leadership". Therefore, for any economy to grow and for businesses to thrive, the institutions responsible for human capital development should be properly funded, equipped and managed to enable the people produce advanced skilled man power to help in the day-to-day activity of the nation.

The economy also is beset with problems inform of dilapidated and badly non-infrastructure. The decay in the country's infrastructural base reflects decades of poor technological base as a result of low research and development abilities and unconnection between research findings and industry. The private sector too is not left out. They are also weak and full with poor response record to industrial benefits. Bad roads, poor power supply, limited access to potable water and basic healthcare and much more.

Corruption challenges: Though corruption is a worldwide phenomenon, Nigeria seems to suffer the most from it because those in helm of affairs are deeply rooted in the corrupt practice and everybody



seems to believe that "corruption" is one of the cultures of Nigeria. For decades of years, Nigeria has earned huge amount of money from crude oil but has gone down due to this corruption exercise. For example, in an article, "oil giant that runs on grease of politics", Nigeria was described as a rich nation floating on oil wealth "but almost none of it flows to the people" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, March 11, 2007). Senior public servants are also very rich because they too have the notion that government money belongs to no one as such embezzle public funds to the extent of building institutions and industries abroad.

Moreso, is the educational background/human development problems. Nigeria should orientate and design their educational policy for human productivity because human resources play a vital role in the success or failure of any organization. In Nigeria, most of the challenges facing the economy are as a result of poor quality of human development and management for the education, which could have played an important role in human development and the economic health of the nation, has been relegated to the background for years. Therefore, one has to acquaint himself the problems facing the educational sectors to actually acknowledge the much challenges besetting the Nigerian economy.

Yet, another challenge facing the Nigerian economy is that, there is no checks and balances in the system as to curtail the excesses autocratic tendencies in government and to hold offenders accountable for their misconduct. Again, the dead conscience politicians lack ethical politics and their ways and actions lack morals and values to the system. In order words, lack of 'ethical politics and values' and politics of hatred and destruction add to economic and political problems in the society.

Finally, it should be known that the wrong use of religion/moral in Nigeria by the educated personnel's have contributed to the Nigeria's economic failure. Nepotism, materialism, laise affair attitude to work, misplacement of values, mismanagement and the much more contribute seriously to the economic woes in Nigeria.

RELIGION AND MORAL AS A MEANS TO PROFFER SOLUTION TO ECONOMIC GROWTH IN NIGERIA

Religious/moral education has played and is still playing an active role in a nation's development in areas to economic growth, health, education, management of natural resources, peace building and governance to mention but few. Without the coming together of religion/moral development in the past, some countries would have drawn lines and therefore taken a different course and maybe, have a slower rate of development (<http://www.bluecoat> 2009). Religion/moral therefore acts as an agent, have great influence on the affairs of the society. It could also be said too that the way and manner in which power is shared in the society is a contributory factor to wealth distribution. This is to say that when economic and political power are highly placed in the hands of a few ruling group, then morally sound clergymen should be put in place in order to checkmate or participate fully in the income of the society. To make these classes of people not to have a greater grip of the income, the use of religion has to come in. In this situation, religion serves as a medium in the distribution of wealth in a society through its values. That is, certain personal behaviour or attitude such as work ethics, thrift, honesty, compassion and openness to people. These behaviours in turn may make people more or less economically productive.

A religious friendly method of government policy is one of the prominent characters in the Nigerian economy if they want to succeed. The tie between the government and religion is that the government should be friendly with religion and religion needs government's incentives. Thus, the skillful growth of most developed countries in the world today includes substantial government involvement in religious matters resulting in government directed investments and government guided bank lending, government subsidies and tax incentives, also including capital – friendly policies aiming at encouraging foreign direct investment with the indirect and direct contributions of religion. Therefore, religious teachings promote hard work and most religions have it as norms and values that hard work is a responsibility to God and one should put more effort in his work. To Christians, "work not only helps them to abstain from evil acts but also as a means of glorifying God. Hence one must avoid idle conversion, unproductive recreation or oversleep in order to have maximum time for work"



(<http://www.uziglobal.edu> 2009). If this is practiced, certainly there will be increase in productivity, social and economic growth or development in the nation.

Religious and moral education develops people's social skills, qualities and features such as respect, tolerance, forbearance and a willingness to get involved. With these attitudes, people are enabled to relate themselves successfully through an understanding that they are one entity, one nation. For example, this Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of Nigeria. By destroying lives and property will not contribute or promote or increase in productivity. Thus, a morally conscious being will not engage himself in this evil act.

Religious and moral education promotes economic growth and development by establishing a good behaviour towards honesty since the notion of truthfulness is one of the trait of religious practice. Religion makes people to adopt a good behaviour when interacting and dealing with one another in all human endeavour. This enhances increase in trust and reduces levels of corruption and criminal tendencies. It deals with careful and necessary planning which will lead to savings, investments and eventually to economic growth. In spite of this, religion proffers to better health level by abstaining from sinful acts such as over eating, alcohol, drugs, gambling etc.

In terms of education for example, outside government process, religion and moral education played and is still playing the role of welding together the different ethnic nationalities through its educational instrument. Hence, Ekandem (1993) asserts that "Through its system of education and propagation of the gospel (especially Christianity) it has helped in no small way to remove obstacles, which the multi-tribal structure of Nigeria can use to the all round economic development in Nigeria". Moreover, to facilitate economic expansion locally and internationally, continued hostility and ignorance of the society is not important measured in facilitating economic expansion locally and internationally. To enhance effective governance and economic prosperity of government, the citizens are expected to receive an all round oriented western education especially religious/moral education so that they could be gainfully employed to contribute meaningfully to national economic growth or development.

Religious and moral education enables people to have an increase thought of knowledge to discern between good and bad in order to acknowledge the needs and importance of others. Religion helps people to develop a good behavior and these enable them to reflect on the efficacy of living in ways that respects the well-being and rights of individuals. For example the politicians; if they are morally conscious and knowing fully well that all belong to one entity will not be living as they are, killing of people unjustly, siphoning of public funds, have no respect for one another, destroying lives and properties will not boost the economy of the nation.

Based on this, Osajie (2014) cited Adewole that an individual who increases consciousness of himself as a person with the awareness of the needs, problems and aspiration of others is an agent of progress in his society.

When there is a destructive plagues that affects the crops in the society for a good yield of productivity, it is with the aid of religious rituals and sacrifices that enables the people to ward off these evil in the land. Therefore, religion and moral put in place enhances in-group trust and co-operation that assist in abhorring collective action challenges. Trust built by religion leads to interactions which contributes to more co-operate behaviour in the system. This type of behaviour helps the economy to grow in spheres of trade and investments. For this reason, globalization becomes a panacea because religion itself is one of the ways in which rapid growth of economy can be disseminated.

CONCLUSION

For a proper, good and well-being of the citizenry to achieve economic growth, religion/moral as a factor through the preaching of non-violence especially with Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of Nigeria where properties and lives are being wasted, religion can teach them the right ways of bringing about the urgent need of change capable of creating an enduring and good atmosphere for national economic growth. To promote economic growth in Nigeria, there is need for peace to reign through reconciliation propagated by religion and good government policy should be of paramount in order for the

country to move forward. Thus, for Nigeria to attain or enjoy this economic growth must heed to the government policy to enable the populace create and maintain full or high employment thereby improve on high standard of living. This government policy can equally control or limit inflation or achieve some measure of price stability and have a satisfactory balance of payments usually defined as the avoidance of external deficit which might create exchange rate problem.

Nigeria, too, making use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure will make the economy improve rather than depending on industrialized international community.

Finally, religious/moral education as a paradigm for economic growth in Nigeria devoid of corruption in line with Nwankwo's view (2000), states that "God will save Nigeria through divine intervention in the country's development process". Thus intervention will come through moral re-orientation of the leaders, people and friends of Nigeria towards firm commitment to the values of honesty, love, equity and social justice, transparency and human rights, democracy and unity despite cultural, ethnic and ideological differences.

Therefore, religious/moral education remains a potent factor in the Nigerian society and in this capacity remains a social tool of achieving economic growth in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the factors that may bring break through towards achieving much economic growth in Nigeria is that Nigerians should shun materialism, corruption and embezzlement of public funds, laise affair attitude to work. The politicians, government officials and the citizens should change their attitude from nepotism, taken bribe, embezzlement of public funds to acquire fleets of vehicles and other material wealth. If these behaviours could be dropped by Nigerians, Nigeria will be one of the best economy in the world.

The government of the federation, states and local governments should provide needed infrastructure facilities to sensitize or stimulate industrial development. For example, adequate power supply, roads and railways to link the urban and open-up rural areas, industrial estates be established. More labour and less capital intensive method should be adopted to reduce unemployment in the country.

The leaders of this country should adopt a sincere attitude in their administration. Nigeria should make use of available data/information in her planning strategies. That is, considering the past and evolving and formulating new policies.

For Nigeria to be great in economic growth, our cultural heritage should be preserved and improved. Nigeria should develop our cottage, small scale and medium scale industries. Nigerians woodwork, carving, textile industries should be encouraged, expanded through loans from Nigerian industrial development Banks with little collateral security. The federal government should monitor and supervise these cottage industries to avert collapses of these basic industries and misuse of fund/loan.

Nigeria, in order not to depend on mono-cultural economy relying solely on petroleum sector, the federal government should explore and develop agricultural sector, tourism and recreational centres to generate income for the country. The government should subsidize agricultural equipments and fertilizers in order to ginger production of food and industrial raw materials in the country. Moreso, enculturising the citizens of Nigerians will help us develop indigenous technology that will help us become an industrialized nation.

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