

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

To promote quality and effective teacher education in Nigeria, there is the need to ensure that teacher trainees in the education institutions are trained to be professionally competent and morally sound. The essence of religious education is to impart moral values in students for effectiveness in teacher education. Religion is embedded in the heart of human behaviour, hence it is the foundation of a just national transformation. Teacher education is currently faced with numerous challenges such as lack of hardwork on the part of teachers and students, corruption, examination malpractice, poor funding and lack of infrastructural facilities. These coupled with moral decadence in Nigeria, have grossly affected the standard of education in the country. The paper therefore highlights the goals of religious education and teacher education as well as the influence of religious education on teacher education for national transformation. Recommendations were made among which is the inclusion of Religious Education in the General Studies in tertiary institutions.

Key Words: Religious Education, National Transformation, Teacher Education.

Introduction

Religious Education is an indispensable instrument for national transformation in teacher education. This is due to its unique roles in the lives of individuals and the society at large. Mulin (2005) conceives of religious education as the teaching about religion in general and its varied aspects – its beliefs, doctrines, rituals and customs as “laws” and the violations of which as crimes or misdemeanour

requiring punitive correction. It is also the inculcation of religious values through the process of dissemination of knowledge.

The essence of religious education is to impart moral values in students for effectiveness in teacher education and to enhance national transformation. To promote quality and effective teacher education in Nigeria, there is the need to ensure that would-be teachers in education institutions are trained to be professionally competent and morally sound. The reason is because education without morality will produce a morally degenerated nation (Okafor 2013). Okwueze (2003) states that the institutions charged with the responsibility of training the teachers are faced with many problems ranging from moral laxity, inadequate funding, lack of hardwork, favouritism, nepotism, cultism, terrorism, bribery and corruption to examination malpractice. This has grossly affected the standard of education and the quality of teachers produced.

One of the goals of teacher education as highlighted in the National Policy on Education (2004) is to "produce highly conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system. The essence of teacher education therefore is to prepare or develop a teacher –trainee to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, the right type of attitude, habits and competence needed to be able to fit into the teaching profession and to become a resourceful, effective and efficient teacher. It is only a morally transformed teacher that would be conscientious in his duty and that is the role of religious education.

Naturally, religion is embedded in the heart of human behaviour due to its emphasis on relationship with the supernatural beings that control human affairs. Thus, (Agang, 2007) rightly asserts that religion is that aspect of human culture constituting the response of individuals (groups) to the prevailing concepts of the supernatural. This includes what people believe about the supernatural and how their beliefs directly affect their actions and practices.

Certainly, religion is the foundation for a just national transformation. it provides the needed ingredients for sustainable human relationships in the world such as love, justice, hard work, peace and unity. (Agang 2007). Since every person in the society is consciously or unconsciously religious,

religious education has the capacity to renew their minds through the inculcation of sound moral values consequent upon which they would imbibe good character and ultimately affect the nation positively.

This paper intends to particularly consider the roles of religious education in facilitating national transformation through teacher education.

Concept of Religious Education and National Transportation

Okwueze (2003) defines Religion as the feelings, and experience of individuals in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider divine. Education can be defined as an instrument 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 active participants in the transformation of their societies. Thus, Religious Education is the effective organization of individuals; religious experiences such that tenderness and powers may develop in a way satisfactory to God, the individual and others through the growth of socially desirable knowledge, attitude and skills (Nworie, 2000). Mulin (2005) asserts that Religious Education educates students on religious matters such as beliefs and customs which teach morality and shapen character.

According to Deming (1993), Transformation is the creation and change of a whole new form, function or structure. To transform is to create something new that has never existed before and could not be predicted from the past. It is a change in mindset. It is based on learning a system of profound knowledge and taking action based on leading with knowledge and action.

National Transformation occurs when leaders create a vision for transformation and a system to continually question and challenge beliefs, assumption, patterns, habits and paradigms with an aim of continually developing and applying management theory, through the lens of the system of profound knowledge (Marcial and Sheil, 2007). National transformation happens when people managing a system focus on creating a new system that has never existed, based on continual learning and new mindset, and apply various methods for its realization. In other words, national transformation

is a change in mindset that affects every individual and segment of a country positively. A change in teacher education, invariably, is a change for the nation because education is a key segment of every society.

Nwanekezi and Ifeonu (2010) define Teacher Education as a preplanned articulated set of events and activities which are appropriate knowledge, skills, the right type of attitude, habits and competences needed to be able to enter the teaching profession and to become a resourceful, effective and efficient teacher. It is an educational process/Programme put in place for a specified duration by different institutions to train teacher trainees for an ideal teaching job performance.

Moreover, Afe (2003) views Teacher Education as that component of any educational system designed for the education and training of teachers to acquire the competencies and skills of teaching for the improvement in the quality of teachers for the school system.

Goals of Religious Education

Religious education is vital for national transformation because it is the groundwork of the entire education process. Some of the goals of religious education are to:

- ❖ Inculcate a body of knowledge of moral standards recommended by God, necessary for value clarification and behavioural re-orientation which are considered as vital ingredients for the survival and well-being of the individuals and the nation (Okorodudu, 1996).
- ❖ Provide opportunity for the Nigerian youths to learn more about God and thereby develop their faith in him.
- ❖ Make individuals to appreciate and develop truthfulness, fair play and sincerity, clothed with humility, patience and industry.
- ❖ Develop good citizens who will be obedient to God and his commandment, the nation's laws and family laws that are in agreement with God's provisions.
- ❖ Develop standards of personal character and ideas, that is to develop morally autonomous individuals who can make up their minds on matters of moral principles rather than being mere consumer of moral dicta.
- ❖ Develop the students' capacity to discipline themselves, to work, study and play constructively.
- ❖ Develop a moral and ethical sense of values, goal and process of free society (Nwaomah, 1998)

Objectives of Teacher Education

The basic objectives of teacher education as highlighted in the National Policy on Education (2004) are to:

Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient class room teachers for all levels of our educational system.

Encourage further, the spirit of enquiry and creativity in our teachers.

Help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national objectives.

Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignments and to make them adaptable to any changing situation, not only in the life of the country, but in the wider world and Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession

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The Influence of Religious Education on Teacher Education

Religious Education has the ability to positively influence teacher education because it offers opportunities for personal reflection on man's relationship with the supernatural beings as well as spiritual development. This is in accordance with Agang's (2007) assertion that the faith, ethic and theology of a people are formed by the religious narrative (story) that shapes their moral values and social practices.

Religious education is relevant to teacher education because it produces people with high personal morality, great sense of duty and obedience. Teachers are the most important factors as well as the largest most crucial inputs of the educational system. This is because they are concerned with students' achievements and what promotes it.

Thus, Efedì (2013) posits that teachers are the chief implementers of the curriculum for the production of effective and efficient manpower needed for national transformation. Based on this fact, religious education will impart in teacher trainees the right moral virtues that will propel them to work conscientiously while in the field. Akin to this, religion has the capacity to encourage educational and social order, freedom and justice. It also instills value system, particularly character virtues such as honesty, truth – telling, hard work, moral rectitude, integrity, God-fearing, love and justice James (1997).

Religious Education will greatly influence teacher education because it enhances national unity. The unity of Nigeria is currently being threatened due to tribalism and political self-aggrandizement which have generated insecurity. However, through religious education, would-be teachers will be encouraged to imbibe the spirit of unity and peaceful co-existence. According to Huntington (1998), religious education allows for human flourishing and harnessing of a social and economic lifestyle which fosters the reverence for God in every aspect of the community's polity, truthful dealing with one another, trust and dependence on each other, respect for the God-given human dignity and human right of each other and the pursuit of love, justice as well as peaceful co-existence.

As a matter of fact, a misplaced religious perspective makes people see and treat others as less than human beings. In other words, they deprive their victims of the basic goods of life by reducing their self respect and their sense of dignity to nothingness.

Religious education discourages corruption. Corruption is endemic in Nigeria and a major obstacle to national transformation, but through the knowledge obtained from religious education, it can be curbed. According to Okorodudu (1996) the prevailing circumstances in the country seem to be promoting corrupt practices. But religious education helps people to acquire moral views about wealth, certificates and positions acquired through corrupt practices. Besides, all acts of social misdemeanors will be condemned, ridiculed and discouraged in the society.

More so, religious education helps to promote moral regeneration in the society. The reason is because corruption of various types is found everywhere and among students. Thus, Omoregbe (1993) observes that the moral sickness of a society is the moral sickness of the individual members of the society, and the cure has to start from the individual members. Invariably, for national transformation to be meaningful in teacher education there is need for a true and unadulterated religious education.

With the teaching of religious education to teacher-trainees, they would be ethically and morally adjusted and ultimately become hardworking and patriotic to the nation. In Africa and Nigeria in particular,

religion is the hope of the people. On this note, James in Agang (2007) is of the opinion that Africans and Nigerians are very religious. Their religious convictions are their most cherished assets. It is a matter of life and death, hence religion should not be ignored in teacher education for national transformation

Conclusion

The moral standard of Nigerians today, appears to be in constant degeneration. The adverse effect of this problem is manifesting in every facet of the nation's life. As potential teachers, if the moral lives of would-be teachers are not improved and the decaying aspects eschewed, the nation would end up deeply enmeshed in chaos. However, through religious education which is a great resource for national transformation in teacher education, teacher trainees would be transformed and stand out as effective citizens that are productive in the society.

Recommendations

- ❖ Religious Education should be made compulsory in the school curriculum and included in the General Studies in the tertiary institutions. This will expose all students to moral values that will transform their characters and enable them to affect the nation positively.
- ❖ Teachers should show high level of integrity and dedication in their relationship with students and in the discharge of their duties.
- ❖ Religious education should be accorded a prominent status and regarded as fundamental to the development of sound education.
- ❖ Teaching aids and other educational materials that will enhance education for national transformation should be provided for easy teaching and learning.
- ❖ Government, parents teachers, religious bodies and students should endeavour to bring sanity into the educational system and societal life in general by imbibing good sense of morals and fear of God in words and actions.
- ❖ Government should provide adequate fund for effective teacher education to promote national transformation.

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