

# Effective Implementation of Religious Education Curriculum at the Primary Education Level for National Development

**Theresa E. Dorgu**

*Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University,  
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria*

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## Abstract

The study examines the effective implementation of religious education curriculum for the development of primary education in Lagos State. This study employed the use of a descriptive survey research design where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Population comprises of all primary schools in Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) primary school teachers which were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of 150 as sample for study. Two (2) research hypotheses were raised and tested in this study. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and data collected were analyzed using chi-square statistical tool. The research findings revealed that religious education in primary school curriculum help young children develop understanding of religion. Religious education from all angles and from all areas of research has shown without any doubt that its significance on children and society cannot be ignored. Religious Education has proved to make available openings for spiritual expansion in the course of helping pupils to think about and act in response to questions of meaning and function in life, and questions about the scenery of morals in human society and to experience stillness and moral development through helping pupils to consider and respond to areas of morality using their knowledge and understanding of religious and ethical teaching. Therefore, it is highly recommended that religious Education should be taught in all primary schools across Nigeria due to its power of moral lessons to reduce frequency of disciplinary cases in schools.

**Keywords:** *Implementation, Religious Education, Curriculum, Development, Stillness*

*Corresponding Author:* Theresa E. Dorgu

### **Background to the Study**

There is an extraordinary disconnect between the education offered the young people and what they need in order to cope with an increasingly violent, materialistic and selfish world of today. The target audiences for instruction are usually the pupils who are to be adequately prepared for adult life through the instrumentality of schooling. The need for the projection of an ideal society through the curriculum cannot be over emphasized. Formal education at all levels is organized based on a curriculum that requires the inculcation of the right types of values needed in that society. Education in essence, involves the upbringing, training and instruction of children according to acceptable standards of the society. It is therefore the process of learning and of preparing an individual, from birth and all through his life through encouragements and participation, for happy and useful membership of the society in which he lives and helps to advance its good value system.

Religion, like many concepts, has multifarious definitions, but suffice it to say that, in agreement with Adua (2012) who submitted that, religion is a system of recognition the existence of a supernatural controller of the universe -God- who is the object of worship, obedience and love, that ultimately results in practical piety and morality. There are so many religions in the world with their varying religious traditions. According to Agunwa (2017), "Through religion virtues of obedience, humility, meekness, love for one's neighbour, forgiveness can be inculcated in individuals. All these virtues are important for social integration and societal development. For Onah, (2017), "Man learns through his religion that certain actions are good or bad and this directs him towards living a virtuous life. This is needed for good relationship among individuals and for national development".

On the other hand, Okeke (2001), saw education as a society's contrivance for transmitting to its younger generation the totality of the way of life of that society. Education as a development agent, is valued by all nations of the world because it has brought total liberation to man. It has transformed man from ignorance and misery to knowledge and happiness. It has made man useful to himself, his generation and beyond. As rightly observed by Umoh (2006), education helps the individual to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and emotionally by providing suitable environment, teaching him new knowledge, attitudes and skills that will enable him to be useful to himself and his society. Religious education is the instruction on the teachings of a particular religion as contradistinguished from moral education which is wider in scope and is not confined to a particular religion and whose parameter of assessment is the consonance to rationality. Ezeanya (2015), stressed that religious education is mainly concerned with instilling the sense of the sacred in man, and reminding him that human life has a terminus a quo (point of departure) and a terminus ad quem (point of arrival). This helps for an ordered and guided outlook to life, which instigates development.

Primary education is the foundation on which all other levels of education are laid. Such foundation should therefore be strong, reliable and capable of withstanding all forms of pressure – atmospheric, socio-cultural, ethnic and economic pressures. Jackson (2014), states that primary education refers to education given to children aged 6 to 11 plus in primary

schools and that the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system since the rest of the education system is built upon it. Also, it is a period of character formation in children and thus the period must be adequately utilized in shaping the right attitude, behavior and character in learners while imbibing in them the desirable societal values, norms and beliefs.

Religious education is one of academic subjects taught in primary schools in different countries. According to Kowino, Agak and Kochung (2012), the teaching of Religious Education is a critical component that enables the school going adolescence to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes for social obligations and responsibilities in the society. Musongole (2010), stated that Religious Education deals with emotions, values, and feelings and leaves room for learners to make concrete decisions. It is viewed in Nigeria, as a subject that helps to streamline students' thought, character, morality and aspiration. It fosters morals among students, teaching them to live in the world guided by moral ideas of loyalty to God, charity and justice to their fellow human beings. It inculcates in students positive attitudes and moral values such as humility, respect, love, kindness and spirit of forgiveness (Ilechukwu and Gwuozor, 2014).

In Nigeria, Religious Education is regarded as a core subject that shapes the students into ideal personalities in the society. It is a subject that goes beyond the classroom, leaning more on character formation rather than knowledge acquisition. The main objectives of Religious education in Nigeria, among others, is to enable learners to gain insight into the unfolding of God's self-revelation to humankind and use the acquired social, spiritual and moral insights to think critically and to make appropriate moral decisions in a rapid changing society (Kidakwa and Obonyo, 2004). Religious Education prepares learners to be morally upright and influences them to fear God and respect fellow human beings. It is a possible solution to morality issues like corruption, injustice and unfair treatment to the poor in the society, giving learners practical ability to discriminate between right and wrong and to choose what is right in day-to-day life.

The study attempts to illustrate the role of Religious Education in Primary education, and its aims and contribution to early adolescent social and emotional development. Therefore, the consideration is how religion and education can be brought into a relationship which reflects on why and how students benefit from the study of religion, and what methodologies, aims, and content would enable knowledge and learning outcomes in terms of the constructivist approach to knowledge (as a human construct which is a consequence of the way in which individuals and communities order their experience) (Grimmitt, 2000). Subsequently Religious Education is totally based on knowledge procedures (Kalantzis and Cope, 2012) and has a more person-centered approach, being in the service more of education than of religion and recognizing the highest priority of the method rather than the content.

Scholars agree that, Religious Education plays a more significant role than most other subjects in preparing young people to live and work in a diverse society (Conroy, Wenell, and Lundie, 2013) while sharing the belief that diversity is a value leading to tolerance and openness to

dialogue regardless of their faith or no faith. Indeed, religious students feel that they are not less open to dialogue on religious issues than non-religious students and that is a component of designing RE's curriculum (Beraud, 2009). Above all, religion is a factor of social development and behaviour as it has a strong influence and mostly positive outcomes (Regnerus, 2003), on early adolescents' personality and their perspectives of life and reality (Saroglou, 2014).

Conclusively, every religion aims to teach the adherents (within the confines of its intellectual, moral and practical-living repertoire) how to be good, responsible and mature human beings that are equipped with skills and competences to contribute positively to the all-round growth and development of self, one's family and society in general. Christian religion is a classical example in this matter. For Eluu (2017), "Christian religious knowledge trains the students morally and instills in them the desire to do good and be virtuous". The aims and objectives of Christian education in Nigeria, for Obilom (2016), are "to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens"

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the research is to examine the effective implementation of religious education curriculum for the development of primary education in Lagos State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Find out the significance of religious education in primary schools curriculum.
- ii. Examine the importance of including religious education in primary school curriculum.

### **Research Hypotheses**

- i. There is no significance effect of religious education in primary schools curriculum.
- ii. There is no significant important of including religious education in primary school curriculum.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all primary school in Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) primary schools' teachers from each of the chosen school to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) as sample for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contained items on the main title of the study. The instrument was given to experts in the measurement and evaluation department for construct and content validation. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using chi-square statistical tool.

## Presentation of Data Analysis and Results

**Research Hypothesis 1:** There is no significance effect of religious education in primary schools curriculum

**Table 1.**

Variables	Respondents	Calculated Value ( $X^2$ )	Table Value	Degree of freedom	Level of significance
A & SA	457	35.86	9.49	4	0.05
D & SD	293				
TOTAL	750				

From the chi-square contingency table above, the calculated value, ( $X^2 = 35.86$ ) at degree of freedom of 4 and 0.05 level of significance is greater than the table value of 9.49, as a result of this, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significance effects of religious education in primary schools curriculum is rejected. This indicates that there is a significance effect of religious education in primary school curriculum.

**Research Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant importance of including religious education in primary school curriculum.

**Table 2.**

Variables	Respondents	Calculated Value ( $X^2$ )	Table Value	Degree of freedom	Level of significance
A & SA	557	176.66	9.49	4	0.05
D & SD	193				
TOTAL	750				

From the chi-square contingency table above, the calculated value, ( $X^2 = 176.66$ ) at degree of freedom of 4 and 0.05 level of significance is greater than the table value of 9.49, as a result of this, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant importance of including religious education in primary school curriculum is rejected. This indicates that there is significant importance of including religious education in primary school curriculum.

## Discussion of Findings

Research hypothesis 1 stated that there is no significance effects of religious education in primary school curriculum were rejected. Therefore, there is a significance effect of religious education in primary schools' curriculum. This finding corroborates with the findings of Kowino, Agak and Kochung (2012), who reported that, religious education is one of the academic subjects taught in primary schools in different countries. Teaching of Religious Education is a critical component that enables the school going adolescence to acquire morality by instilling the right attitudes for social obligations and responsibilities in the society.

Research hypothesis 2 stated that there is no significant important of including religious education in primary school curriculum is rejected. Therefore, there is significant importance

of including religious education in primary school curriculum. The finding is similar to that of Ezeanya (2015), who stressed that, religious education is mainly concerned with instilling the sense of the sacred in man, and reminding him that human life has a terminus a quo (point of departure) and a terminus ad quem (point of arrival). This helps for an ordered and guided outlook to life, which instigates development.

### **Conclusion**

It was discovered from the findings that, religious education in primary school curriculum helps young children develops understanding of religion. This has helped students to make articulate and knowledgeable decision on religious and moral issues; collective progress through helping pupils to develop their sense of character and belonging, preparing them for life as citizens in a multi-cultural society like Nigeria.

This study has seen Religious Education as a subject that deals with the religious and ethical attitude and values that strengthen individual choices and behaviour such as relationships, social policies and practices (e.g. offense and penalty), and the notion and outline of health (e.g. the application of drugs). Religious Education looks at the voluntary and charitable activities that make up a healthy society and provide opportunities for the development of lively citizenship and involvement in society. Beliefs about the nature of humanity and the world influence how we systematize ourselves and communicate to others in the vicinity both nationally and internationally. Matter in religious education therefore contributes to social and political responsiveness.

### **Recommendations**

Based on conclusions of this study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations with regard to the role of Religious Education:

1. Religious Education teachers should effectively teach the subject in relation to education rather than religion which can function to interconnect the members of the community regardless of their faith.
2. Religious Education should be taught in all primary and secondary schools across Nigeria due to its power to reduce societal ills
3. Nigeria government and other related agencies should trains more Religious Education teachers as the increase of Religious Education teachers will make it possible for the subject to be taught across all the nation educational institutions.
4. Parents and teachers should encourage students to be morally upright by having the fear God and to respect fellow human beings.
5. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and other relevant authorities should treat Religious Education like any other academic subject, and ensure its considering as a required subject for Higher Education Admission.

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