

## Effective Implementation of Christian Religious Studies Curriculum for Socio-Economic Transformation in Lagos State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study assessed the implementation of Christian Religious Studies Curriculum for socio-economic transformation among students of Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State. A descriptive survey research design was employed. The study made use of questionnaires to acquire necessary data for the research work. The population used for the study consists of students in twenty (10) selected tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 tertiary institutions. Twenty (20) students were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of 200 as sample for study. Two research questions were raised for the study. The data collected was analyzed with the use of simple percentage, mean and standard deviation statistical tools. The result revealed that religion has some positive functions that can integrate individuals into the larger society in order to lead the society as well as contribute to the economic, social and political welfare of the people. It was therefore recommended that a proposal for the inclusion of liberation theology in the CRS curriculum and refocusing the current one to positively address our contextual needs in advanced.

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### **Background to the Study**

Religion according to Okunade (2009), fulfills certain universal functions such as the promotion of group solidarity as religion is a cultural possession, strengthening moral order, promotion of social control and support for other social organizations like schools, hospitals and welfare agencies. Religion is a force to reckon with in the life of an individual and the nation at large, because it is a tool that can provide inspirations for citizens to unite and fight social upheavals, moral decadence, and political instability and promote economic development through hard work in business. Also, religion prepares both the individual and the society for a good life. Religion as change agent in the society makes people happy and ensures that man attains his ultimate goals and it helps build good citizens who will contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation.

According to Adediran and Atanda (2010), religion is one of the social institutions that have changed the society for better. It prevents such social vices, like political instability, injustice, indiscipline, corruption, nepotism, cultism, materialism, among others. Through its power to change attitude, religion has been able to exert a force and make meaningful contributions in creating new standards, morals and ethics that clean our society from the present prevailing social ills. Religion according to Omidiwura (2010), is a cultivator of positive habits and it provides the standard through societal norms and policies. Religion is a force to reckon with in the task of maintaining and promoting a healthy society, morality and uprightness.

According to Tanko (2008), all religions seem to preach salvation which is not limited to an individual or after life. For example, the Hebrews, salvation has to do with the future well-being of the community, not the everlasting happiness of particular individuals. However, most religions embody the idea that subscribing to, or participating in a certain way of thinking and behaviour moves us towards a better state than the one in which we are now. Certain enterprise such as political movement and liberation theology could also be viewed as aiming at our salvation in the sense that they seek to lead us from our present less ideal state towards a "Promised Land" of affluence, security and justice.

In Christian religion according to Adediran (2009), the Christian message portrays death or dying in Christ as a participation in the boundless, over flow of God's saving power in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. The end of a Christian is not his death but a transformation into a new life. According to Okeke (2014), Paul stresses that Christian death is a desirable event. In fact, a Christian should desire to have contact with Jesus Christ, 'For we know that when our earthly dwelling, our body here on earth, is destroyed, we may count on a building from God, a heavenly abode not built by human hands that last forever'. Therefore, according to Okeke (2014), one should groan and desire to put on this heavenly dwelling, because being clothed, one will not be found naked. As long as one is in this tent, one indeed moans his/her unbearable fate, because one do not want this clothing to be removed from him/her; one would prefer to put the other over it, that the mortal body may be absorbed by true life (2 Chro. 5: 1-4).

Central to religion according to Olabode (2009), will include such things as belief about God or gods, the nature and destiny of human beings and hope for a better future. Religion can command and can lead its adherents to something they can be glad to live and even die for. Religion involves practices such as worship, prayer, meditation and ethical actions, keeping one's promises, charity to others, avoidance of vices, justice, fair play, respect for life and property. It is envisaged that all these contribute to the improvement of the economic and social development of individuals and communities in general. Alghatam (2005), observed that all organized religions have three things in common which are identified as;

- i. Up-holding human beings at high esteem as individuals
- ii. Rejecting the concept of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, colour, among others;
- iii. Seeing the universe as one and intertwined and hence indispensable in entering into co-operative and interactive relationship with all its component parts.

The first characteristic entails caring for that which is precious to God such as human being by means of facilitating a dignified life through satisfying the basic needs and rights of the person politically, socially and economically. The second entails the recognition of equality of everyone in the sight of God, while the third intimates the human persons of the indispensable place of the other persons in the realization of the common good.

Although, more often than not, negative instances of religious adherents involving in certain acts that are inimical to social development. The writer believes that there are aspects of religions that can complement as well as motivate development. It must be kept in mind that typical issues that underlie serious development discourse must have some bearing with human moral choice and values that are conveyed, enforced and sustained by religious weight (York Diocese, 2006). For instance, Nigeria hoping to attain the status of being one of the 20 largest economic in the world presupposes the readiness to beat down corrupt practices in our society to the best minimum; as experience has shown that conscientisation in this direction is a pre-requisite and religion to a large extent moulds the conscience (Ajibola, 2008). An average African is said to be chronically religious. Religion transcends his reasoning and daily activities to the extent that one may conclude that if an event or an agenda has no reflection of a place for the divine it may in fact be considered as good as non-existent (Mbiti in Olabode, 2009). In the same way, the outcome of the Global Civil Society Report 2004/5 also argued that "there is no way, we can understand the logic, strategic and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World unless we bring transcendental dimension back into our analysis, religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements in the South, from Latin America to Africa and South Asia (Dawsey, 2001).

The road map to development as proposed in 20/2020 could be made workable when it is recognized, in line with the ongoing thinking that an average Nigerian, irrespective of his present disposition is basically religious and that reforms and programmes for development must be made workable on the recognition of this premise (Ajibola, 2008). In Nigeria religious practice has served as an effective index to the political and social

temperature of the country. Consequently, there is a political movements and advocacy campaigns drumming up religious motivations and the support of religion leaders to attain set goals. For example, Christians and Muslims have been mobilized in the fight against HIV/AIDS; in getting religious/ political support, creating awareness for mass literacy programmes are indicative of the collaborative role of religion in attaining developmental goals. It is therefore no surprise that even the Millennium Development Goal campaigns are actively collaborating with faith groups to mobilize the faithful for support in attaining their goals.

The current curriculum of CRS at tertiary institutions in Nigeria according to NPE (2004) does not directly address issues of socio-economic transformation in the country. Nearly all the courses do not have direct bearing with serious national issues on CRS curriculum. For example, the objectives of CRS undergraduate curriculum aimed “at providing Christians the opportunity for further intellectual appraisal of their faith biblically, historically and doctrinally with a view to equipping them to be able to take seriously the inevitable challenge of healthy practical Christian living and mission in context”. Consequently, “the course context is blended in such a way as to make provision within the programme, for the training of potential theologians and scholars in the field of CRS, for the ministry of the church in Nigeria and worldwide”.

The above stated objectives of CRS curriculum in higher education are not precisely directed at any socio-political development, therefore making it inadequate at contributing to our developmental goals. If it is fully achieving our developmental goals, the study of CRS at these levels should aim at developing students' knowledge and understanding of Christianity in relation to other religions as well as proffer solutions to human developmental problems. It is only in this way that there can be peaceful co-existence among Christians and adherents of other religions. The afore-mentioned scenario is possible when we are able to explore the various functions that religious education could perform in the task of integral development (Ajibola, 2008). Some of such functions have been identified by York Diocese's Excellence and Distinctiveness, 2006 as follows:

- i. Encourage students to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions while exploring their beliefs and questions of meaning. Through this religious education ensures an atmosphere of peace that encourages investment and facilitates trade and commerce in the country.
- ii. Prepare students for adult life, employment and lifelong learning.
- iii. Enable students to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, especially those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own.
- iv. Promote discernment and enable students to combat prejudice. This serves as a bedrock to fighting for and ensuring justice in the land. It could also serve as a silent voice that instigates a revolution that offers, according to Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*-the “hope of a new alternative world in which God's gifts are shared in a just way and where all human right is respected”.

The foregoing discussion indicates that religion could be used to enhance the socio-economic transformation of a country. What is required is just to create the right and

enabling environment for the set goals. In this way the integration of liberation theology into the curriculum of CRS in tertiary institutions would contribute to our socio-economic transformation. Berryman in Okunade (2009), has defined liberation theology as "an attempt to read the Bible and Key Christian doctrines with the eyes of the poor. It is rooted in commitment to the poor and in realizing the common characteristics of religions as has been earlier identified of religious. For example, caring for and facilitating a dignified life of God's people through satisfying the basic needs and rights of the individual; the recognition of equality of everyone in the sight of God and in facilitating the indispensable place of everyone in the overall good of all. The principles of liberation theology operate on the belief that at present the role of religion in development is relegated to the background. There is deep rooted poverty in the lives of citizens, due to corrupt practices, indiscipline and inoperative government policies among others. Liberation theologians reason that much of these affects result from an oppressive, dehumanizing and enslaving evil in economic system that is very visible in our society. Our road map to transformation as proposed could be feasible if it is viewed in line with liberation theology which presupposes that all human beings are called by God to re-create society and make it more just. This should be done while recognizing that "although institutions make man, it is also true that man makes institutions from the beginning" (Dawsey 2001). The Bible tells us that Moses defiantly opposed the tyrannical rule of Pharaoh and struggled for the elevation of the socio-political status of his men. This struggle became the theme of the Exodus which was resolutely carried out by most of the subsequent leaders. The same message was documented on many pages of the Old Testament as chapter to profound development of the society.

The argument for the inclusion of liberation theology in the curriculum of CRS at the tertiary level of education to readjust the existing one to reflect an all embracing "seed" for integral development should take cognizance of the following concerns:

- i. That the study and practice of religion should not be regarded as a closed ended issue but as a study and practice that should find true expression in the community.
- ii. Religious studies must be done with respect for our cultural diversity and love for other faiths and beliefs.
- iii. Religion should be tasked on its relevance to the social and economic needs of the populace.
- iv. The issue of justice to all and putting an end to corrupt practices should seriously be addressed.

The curriculum should be aimed at the following:

- i. Providing opportunities for engagement in the democratic process and effective participating in the development process.
- ii. Helping students to develop personal moral qualities as imparted through religious teachings.
- iii. Fostering sense of purpose in students by keeping in view the main goals of education in Nigeria as outlined in the National Policy of Education (NPE, 2004).

The writer is of the view that if the proposed liberation theology is included in CRS curriculum and implemented it will, among others:

- i. Better equip the students to use the power of religion to contribute to the social development of their immediate communities and the society at large.
- ii. Easily and readily lead to the resolution of conflicts which militate against the unity of our country.
- iii. Orientate the CRS students to develop the desire to address the right of the needy in the country.
- iv. Relate that programme of development are in collaborating with God's work.

Religion integrates individuals into the larger society and challenges their consciences, leading them into decisions (though not often) that could lead to the general welfare of the society. Religions give individual a sense of identity within the larger community. Thus, it provides a unifying value system as well as legitimacy for social arrangements that promote love, justice, tolerance, unity, charity, care for one another, living in peace with one another, transparency and accountability to the society. It contributes to social and political stability.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this research was to examine the effective implementation of CRS curriculum for Socio-Economic Development in Tertiary Institution in Lagos State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the strategies of CRS curriculum for influencing socio-economic development in tertiary institutions in Lagos State?
2. Examine the Content of CRS Curriculum for promoting socio-economic development in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State?

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the strategies of CRS curriculum in influencing socio-economic development in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria?
2. How can the Content of CRS Curriculum promote socio-economic development in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all the students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 tertiary institutions. Twenty (20) students were randomly selected from each of the chosen school to make a total of 200 as sample for study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contained items on the main title of study. The instrument was given to experts in measurement and evaluation department of Lagos State University, Ojoo, Lagos for construct and content validation. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. This reliability coefficient was considered adequate for the internal consistencies of the

instrument. The result of Cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient for questionnaire is 0.942. This was a confirmation of test of reliability which according to Spiegel in Adegoke (2009); an instrument is considered reliable if its reliability coefficient lies between 0 and 1, and that the closer the calculated reliability co-efficient to zero, the less reliable is the instrument and closer the calculated reliability co-efficient to 1, the more reliable is the instrument. This therefore confirmed that the instrument designed for this study was highly reliable. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation statistical tools.

## Results

**Research Question One:** What are the strategies of CRS curriculum in influencing socio-economic development in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.?

**Table 1.**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D
1.	One of the goals of CRS is to create employment opportunities for its adherents	150 (75%)	36 (18%)	11 (5.5%)	3 (1.5%)	3.67	.78
2.	CRS teaches students to be creative, a knowledgeable to earn a living for themselves.	121 (60.5%)	66 (33%)	9 (4.5%)	4 (2%)	3.52	.77
3.	One of the goals CRS for its students is to be morally upright in order to avail them opportunities of getting jobs.	132 (66%)	59 (29.5%)	6 (3%)	3 (1.5%)	3.6	.77
4.	CRS lecturers should teach their students not to be idle, since the Bible teaches that an idle hand is devil's workshop.	111 (55.5%)	70 (35%)	17 (8.5%)	2 (1%)	3.45	.76
<b>Overall Total</b>		<b>Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>) = 3.53 and STD = 0.77</b>					

Results in table 1 above show the question statement that, what are the strategies of CRS curriculum in influencing socio-economic development in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. This findings indicate One of the goals of CRS is to create employment opportunities for its adherents ( $\bar{x} = 3.67, SD = 0.78$ ), CRS teaches students to be creative a knowledgeable to earn a living for themselves. ( $\bar{x} = 3.52, SD = 0.77$ ), One of the goals CRS for its students is to be morally upright in order to avail them opportunities of getting jobs ( $\bar{x} = 3.6, SD = 0.77$ ) and CRS lecturers should teach their students not to be idle, since the Bible teaches that an idle hand is devil's workshop. ( $\bar{x} = 3.45, SD = 0.76$ ) This reveals that the mean and standard deviation of the items listed above is very high showing the strategies of CRS for influence socio-economic development among students of Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State. The result is in line with the findings of Ajibola (2008) who was of opinion that, Religion integrates individuals into the larger society and challenges their consciences, leading them into decisions (though not often) that could lead to the general welfare of the society. Religions give individual a sense of identity within the larger community.

**Research Question 2:** How can the Content of CRS Curriculum promote socio-economic development in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State?

**Table 2.**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D
1.	Content of CRS should contain ideas and knowledge that will make students think beyond the class.	140 (70%)	36 (18%)	21 (10.5%)	3 (1.5%)	3.87	.79
2.	Some sections of CRS curriculum should involve element of entrepreneurial content	150 (75.0%)	33 (16.5%)	10 (5.0%)	7 (3.5%)	3.78	.76
3.	CRS curriculum content should be innovative in nature that will make students develop ideas of economic business.	121 (60.5%)	66 (33%)	9 (4.5%)	4 (2%)	3.52	.78
4.	Lecturers should orientate the CRS students to develop the desire to address the right of the needy in the country	132 (66%)	59 (29.5%)	6 (3%)	3 (1.5%)	3.65	.76
<b>Overall Total</b>		<b>Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>) = 3.57 and STD = 0.78</b>					

Results in table 2 above show the question statement that, how can the Content of CRS Curriculum promote socio-economic development in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State. These findings indicate that Content of CRS should contain ideas and knowledge that will make students think beyond the class. ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ), Some sections of CRS curriculum should involve element of entrepreneurial content ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ), CRS curriculum content should be innovative in nature that will make students develop ideas economic business. ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) Lecturers should orientate the CRS students to develop the desire to address the right of the needy in the country ( $\bar{x} = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ). This reveals that the mean and standard deviation of the items listed above is very high showing how can the Content of CRS Curriculum promote socio-economic development in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State. The findings is in support with the findings of Tanko (2008) who says that Christian religious studies provides a unifying value system as well as legitimacy for social arrangements that promote love, justice, tolerance, unity, charity, care for one another, living in peace with one another, transparency and accountability to the society. It contributes to socio-economic development and political stability. Providing opportunities for engagement in the democratic process and effective participating in the development process.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, the study attested to the need for effective implementation of CRS curriculum for socio-economic development in higher institutions. It proposes the inclusion of liberation theology in the curriculum and refocusing the current one to positively address our contextual needs; bringing about the



relevance of religion in national development. Some positive functions of religion such as integration of individuals into the larger society in order to lead to the general welfare of the society, contributing to the socio-economic and political stability of the country, among others are highlighted.

### Recommendations

- i. The review of the goals and current CRS curriculum to include the study of liberation theology will lead to bring about a change which aims at the integral development of the individual.
- ii. The review of the goals and current CRS curriculum should reflect conscientious move toward partnership in government developmental efforts.
- iii. The campaigns for needs to be taken to Mosques and Churches for more awareness and better participation.
- iv. CRS curriculum should be incorporated and implemented in all Nigerian Educational system
- v. Entrepreneurship content should be integrated into CRS curriculum for the students to have the idea of economic in order to enable them solve socio-economic problems in the Society

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