

THE IMPERATIVE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the imperative of Christian Religious Education for good governance in Nigeria because religion contains a moral code that governs the conduct of individuals which helps leaders to be transparent, accountable and credible which enhance good governance. The problem of Nigeria is the problem of bad leadership who failed to show good example and govern selflessly which hinder national development. Therefore, the acquisition of the right moral virtues such as integrity, justice, common good and responsibility will enhance good governance and promote national development, as the resources of the country will be equitably distributed to all sectors in the country. Leaders with integrity and good moral virtues should be elected and government should initiate programmes that will eradicate poverty and unemployment in the nation.

Keywords: Christian, Religious educators, Good governance and National development

Introduction

Since the Nigeria independence in 1960, the problem of leadership and good governance has continued to hinder national development in Nigeria. According to Chinua (1986), the problem with Nigeria is the failure of leadership as the leaders are unwilling to rise to the responsibility of personal example which is the hallmark of good leadership. Successive governance in Nigeria had adopted several measures to raise both the moral and living standards of the societies through different programmes which failed because of bribery, corruption, nepotism and social injustices. Hence, instead of the people benefiting from government programmes of development; poverty, unemployment, insecurity, decaying infrastructure in all sectors, power tussle, kidnapping, conflicts, election malpractice, arm robbery and ritual killing prevail. Hence, the need for Christian religious education which inculcates the right moral into the citizens to check the excesses in human behaviour and enhance good governance and national development

Conceptual Framework

Christianity

Christianity started on the day of Pentecost and it spread to Nigeria in 15th century through the activities of the catholic missionaries, but had a permanent footing in the 19th century, through the activities of different Christian missionaries such as the Methodist Church Missionary Society (CMS), Baptist and Catholic. It is a monotheistic religion believing in the worship of only one God. It is a highly populated religion in Nigeria especially in the South, and it is a religion based on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ (Hornby, 2005).

Religion

Okafor, Okobia and Osajie (2016) define 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.

Religious Education

Suleiman (2012) defines religious education as a process through which a person learns something which his society believes is related to God. He further defined religious education as those processes designed to induct each new generation into attitude, beliefs as well as the practices of religious faith in order to provide for the individual a unifying center for his life. Religious education can be seen as the education that develops and brings to maturity the powers, skills, attitudes and capacities of an individual.

Governance

Anwuluorah and Udah (2015) States that the word governance means to steer, drive, guide and pilot. World Bank states that it is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. It is also the traditions and institution by which authority in a country is exercised. Arubayi and Egbule (2015) define governance as the establishment of policies and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation, by the members of the governing body of an organization. It includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members, and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity of the organization.

Good Governance

Nweneazizi, Egwuelu and Asabor (2016) state that good governance is used to describe how public institutions ought to conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Anwuluorah and Udah (2015) state that good governance goes with democracy, civil society participation, human rights and sustainable development. In the last decade it has been closely associated with the public sector reform. Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is

participatory, consensus, oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient and equitable and follows the rule of law. Okebukola (2012) states that good governance is the entire process involved in realizing the purpose of government providing the abundant life for the people guaranteeing happiness for the people, administering justice and peace and promoting overall developmental well-being. Good governance entails the respect for the dignity of the human person and human rights.

Adebayo (2014) states that good governance transforms both the leader and the followers to higher levels of motivation and morality resulting in positive outcomes. It is service to the people, and a resolute responsibility to empower, defend and fend for followers. Good governance encourages social justice, equity, fairness and collective participation which enhance peace and development.

Nweneazizi, Egwuelu and Asabor (2016) state that since independence in 1960, civil war and military government have created an unstable political environment which jeopardize Nigeria's democracy. There has been a constant lack of rule of law on both the government and the followers. There is lack of management of the public fund, government instability and lack of maintenance of social amenities and infrastructures in the nation. The issue of corruption in Nigeria is endemic because it permeates every sector in Nigeria which has resulted in the neglect and deterioration of public services. Kew (2006) state that Nigeria the giant of Africa was brought to her knees by 20 years of brutal and corrupt military rule which left a legacy of executive dominance and a political corruption in the hands of Nigeria's powerful political bosses who view the government through the lens of their own personal enrichment. Lieholm (1970) avails that since oil boom of the 1970s the nation's economy has been in crisis despite continued expansion in oil production, because of lack of proper accountability in the country. Adejimi (2005) in assessing the leadership situation in Nigeria states that most of the policy makers as well as those involved in decision making are engaged in bribery, egoism, mismanagement, power and trade liberalization and forget the policies aimed at improving the standard of living in the nation.

The Challenges of Leadership and Good Governance in Nigeria

According to Aleinferinwa (2015), Nigeria's experience of leadership and development has not been very impressive. It is quite worrisome to note that more than five decades of political independence has brought no substantive improvement in economic conditions and the people's general development. The standard of living is deteriorating on daily basis as high unemployment, inflation, civil strife; poverty, corruption, diseases, malnutrition, illiteracy and insecurity have remained as clear indicators of the low level development in Nigeria. A crucial explanation of the above situation is the leadership

problems, a situation that has dominated the political landscape of Nigeria since independence in 1960. Ethnic affiliations and primordial sentiments became one of the most important features in the elections campaigns and in the selection or appointments of leaders at various levels. The implication of this is that with the exit of the colonial power and their divide and rule tactics, their structures of exploitation have remained entrenched. Useful development plans which could have transformed the country from an underdeveloped to a developed national economy have been distorted by both the political and military class alike. The ascendancy of military into power made the country to face political instability and poor leadership, as the military leaders were incapable of organizing the nation for its development. The long years of political misrule and bad governance exemplified the years of military dictators left Nigeria demobilized, underdeveloped and economically subjugated with poverty and unemployment as clear evidence. When in 1999, a democratic governance was elected, the tide hope was that with the new wave of leadership and democratic governance in place, the tide of development in the nation must escalate with improvement. Unfortunately, this democratic leadership, which advocates transformation, governance and development in Nigeria has done little or nothing. In governance, the leadership must have a collective vision of the future, its goals and the path to the achievement of these goals must always inspire, direct and carry the people along.

Nweneazizi, Egwuelu and Asabor (2016) posit that, it is only in Nigeria that politicians would promise the people heaven on earth as manifesto without doing anything to actualize it. Accountability is the last thing most Nigerian politicians would ever consider necessary as far as good governance is concerned. It is quite unfortunate that the average Nigerian does not know what good governance is all about, though they complained, but their grievances never moved the government an inch. Therefore, most citizens suffer lack and deprivity in the midst of plenty. Hence the need for Christian religion which shuns selfishness greed and wickedness. Poor leadership is the cause of poverty, unemployment, suffering and underdevelopment in Nigeria. Swart (2015) asserts that the problem of poor leadership in Nigeria has continued to exist because of corrupt political leaders who are incompetent, selfish and incapable of satisfying the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians. Unfortunately, the behaviour of the leaders often reflect in the behaviour of the followers, therefore Nigerians are what they are because, their leaders are not living up to expectation. He also avails that every society needs committed leaders for its wellbeing. Therefore a leader should be flexible, direct, innovate, motivate, make choices and initiate changes that will enhance development.

The Importance of Religion

Religion teaches morality and contains moral code that governs the conduct of individuals and shapes character. It is a process of guiding the character and development of an individual in the society in order for him/her to do what is right. Religion inculcates moral discipline into individuals and provides inspirations required by Nigerians to be united and fight against bad leadership. Religion permeates every aspect of human life. It lays emphasis on moral consciousness which is the life wire of any society. It brings about desired changes in human beings and criticizes the existing corrupt system and creates strong revolutionary force that calls man and unjust society to order.

According to Afolabi (2015) Christian religion brings about sustainable development through the inculcation of higher sense of morality, such as sense of duty, selfless service public accountability, respect for human lives, sense of humanity abhorrence of violence and corruption, love for peace and contentment with what one can legitimate have in the citizens and the leadership. Adherence to Christian Religious tenets by the leaders and followers will greatly enrich political activity. Embedded in Christian religion are the beliefs, practices and ethics that serve as check for excesses in human behaviour. Thus, value in this religion are viable mechanism for development as it influences every aspect of human lives and services as a basis for human existence.

The Role of Christian Religious Education in Enhancing Good Governance in Nigeria

Christian religion inculcates good moral virtues that are essential for good governance in Nigeria. The virtues are selfless, service, justice, accountability, transparency, protection of human rights, democratization, integrity and common good.

Accountability: Religion makes the leaders to be accountable. This entails that decision makers in both the private sector and the civil society must be accountable to the public. Okoroda (1990) states that accountability is the process of diligent or careful recording and reporting of activities that were executed by leaders in a given assignment in the society. It is the leaders systematic report of their stewardship to the nation which employed them in terms of how much was given to them and the various practical and judicious way that public income has been spent. Once accountability is promoted in every sector, Nigeria will become a discipline nation. Arubayi & Egbule (2015) posit that accountability is answerability, blameworthiness, reliability and the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities. It is the expected or required account for one's actions. Accountability is the obligation of an individual to accept responsibility, and disclose the results in

a transparent manner. It also includes the responsibility for money or other entrusted property. They also state that without accountability, trust will be lacking between government and those it governs. The result would be social instability and an environment that is un conducive for economic growth and development. Accountability is an important pillar for democratic governance in modern societies. It also play important role in the maintenance of good governance in our society.

Transparency: Religion enhances good governance through transparency. Agidi (2013) posits that transparency is the cornerstone of good governance as information about decision making and implementation are made available to every one concern. There is free flow of information and everyone has easy access to it. It is the condition of being transparent, an honest way of doing things that allows other people to know exactly what you are doing explains transparency as operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. It is simply “the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a leader which religion encourages. Augustine (2005) state that transparency as an act of being transparent, honest and upright. Transparency ensures that information is available that can be used to measure the authorities’ performance and to guard against any possible misuse of power. In that sense, transparency serves to achieve accountability, which means that authorities can be held responsible for their actions.

Democratization: Religion will make the state and the nation to follow the line of democracy by making people to be well represented in the governance of their country. There will be free and fair election without rigging or election malpractice and people will be allowed to vote for a person that will represent their interest (Agidi, 2013). A democratic government allows the citizens of the nation to elect who they want to lead them by voting their conscience not being forced or bribed to vote for someone they don’t want to vote for just like what is happening now in Nigeria.

Rule of Law: Okeke (2013) avails that the constitution is supreme binding on every citizens and every resident of the country. The rule of law is equality of all persons before the law of the land. The principle of the rule of law is that it appears to the high official or a private person. It confers on every person fundamental human rights which Christian religion preaches man equality before God. Agidi (2013) posits that there should be enforcement of the law in impartial form so that human rights will be protected and there should be fair legal framework which is rested on the independent of the judiciary and incorruptible police force; which will guarantee the protection of human rights in all ramifications.

Integrity and Responsibility: The leader will maintain his integrity by being morally upright and doing what is right all the time. He acts by following moral principles by saying no to fraud, bribery, corruption, greediness and keeping promises made. The leader performs his duty or obligations to the state or country willingly and carry his subjects along. Religion will make the leader to carry his subjects along by given them the opportunity to participate in decision-making of their country either direct or indirectly by giving them freedom of speech association and access to information.

Justice

According to Bird (1997), justice is a habit whereby a man renders to one another his due by constant and perpetual will. It is also rendering to each what is his own by right. Justice occupies a place of emergence in every human setting and religion emphasizes on justice and speaks against any form of injustice. It also places premium on justice, encourages peaceful co-existence and good human relations. Therefore justice is a value which every human relation solely depends on. It is needed for national development. Obiefuna and Izuegbu (2016) state that justice is the hallmark for harmonious existence as well as national development, and a basic requirement for social relations and action. Religion condemns lying and injustice and uphold truth and justice as John 8:32 states that “you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”. Truth is life and, it is only when it is told that justice is done. It then implies that truth is connected with social order. While justice includes, fairness, harmony, honesty and goodness which are essential for national development. A just person is straightforward, upright, honest, predictable and impartial, while a just action is action performed as it should be. Justice is thus conceived as a straight course to which every human being and every human action should conform, which will enhance national development. Religion encourages human beings to shun cheating, oppression of the poor and the weak. Therefore, if Nigerian leaders can imbibe the principles of justice, good governance would be achieved. Many states of Nigeria today are stagnant and people are suffering because the leaders and some of the led find it difficult to give what is due to whom it is due. The act of injustice and selfishness can be stopped only when the right morals such as honesty and transparency are inculcated in the lives of individuals. Nigerians have in most cases witnessed a set of representatives that represent their pockets and not the people, which leads to the negligence of the people. Therefore, Nigerian leaders need to carry the people along and make adequate consultations before making and implementing any decision to enhance national development because peace and unity promote progress and development. Therefore, the enthronement of justice will help to stop injustice and various practices of inequality in the nation and promote national development.

Common Good

Religion remains the conscience of the nation and a moral tool that is capable of directing the affairs of individuals, groups and nations. Izuegbu (2013) posits that common good is a call for equity and justice in Nigeria. Patriotism which is needed for national development depends largely on how the affairs of the nation are conducted to carry everybody along. Where the affairs are conducted in utmost fairness which the common good demands, there will be high level of patriotism. Therefore, common good remains a strong call for those in authority at all levels to embrace the good of all so that each person may have every cause to contribute to the national development. Government at all levels must work towards the common good if the nation wants to reach the height she works towards. Ehusani (2012) states that government exists in society to promote the common good and therefore it must strive to ensure the best possible good for everyone. Our leaders must put in place such laws that will guarantee the rights of individuals to private property, but also checkmate the acquisitive instinct of individuals. In this way, our government will ensure just and equitable distribution of national resources and protect the vulnerable poor from the excesses of the powerful who are often tempted to sell the poor and the weak for a pair of shoes.

Selfless Service

Afolabi (2015) posits that religion breeds an ideal heart in man to be able to be conscious of the need to have a clean heart. By this, he will grow to have a philanthropic or patriotic thought before venturing to lead or represent his people in government of the state. In another words, religion will prepare the mind of man to be a good politician who will constantly fall back upon his religion to guide him. The teachings or tenets of religion are expected to guide him to be able to lead his people aright as a politician with fear of God in him. He will never consider himself first, rather he knows that he is the servant of the electorates, that is – his people. Religion in an idealistic set up, therefore, serves as oil to lubricate politics. This is to say that religion bears peace and love, both of which are vital ingredients that can sum the interest of societies together for an ideal and a very healthy and purposeful politics and good governance. Therefore, in achieving good governance and political stability, religion should serve as a guiding factor in all political activities that the country engages in. The impact of religion on politics can enhance sustainable development.

Conclusion

Poor leadership in this country has led to mismanagement of the national resources, poverty, unemployment, violation of human rights and justice which hinders national development. Therefore, for good governance to take place, Christian religious education which inculcates positive moral values such as integrity and fairness should be enthroned in the society to bring

sanity into the political system and enhance good governance and national development.

Recommendations

1. Leaders with integrity and good moral virtues should be voted into different offices in Nigeria.
2. There should be accountability and transparency in the use of national resources
3. There should be respect for fundamental human right and rule of law.
4. Leadership must rise to the responsibility of personal example and be development oriented.
5. Government should initiate programmes that will eradicate poverty and unemployment in the nation
6. The national resources should be shared equitably to all sectors in the country
7. The basis of gaining political power must be based on the ability to perform with good moral standard.
8. Religious leaders should act as watchdogs to political office holders by guiding against evil practices that can jeopardize national development.

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