

Social Reconstruction through Religious Education: A Survey on Nigeria

Rosita O. Igwe, Saheed A. Rufai and Adepoju G. Olufemi

Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract: There is a growing concern for social reconstruction in Nigeria where successive governments have employed various strategies in a bid to achieve social reconstruction. Yet, the rate of social malaise in the country grows at an alarming proportion every day. The implication of such an experience is that the various measures adopted by the government have neither been effective nor productive. This paper is aimed at articulating the possible role of religious education as a tool for social reconstruction in Nigeria. Using a sample of 300 teachers and students in Lagos State on a ratio of 1:2 (teachers to students) who were randomly selected, the descriptive survey employed the questionnaire for data collection and the chi-square as a statistical tool for data analysis. The study found that religious education has a place in social reconstruction of Nigeria, thereby confirming a number of earlier studies and makes some recommendations for possible implementation.

Key words: Social reconstruction • Religious education • Anti-corruption crusades • Value-laden education • Potentials of religious orientation

INTRODUCTION

The history of Western education is synonymous with the history of religious studies. In a bid to get the converts into the new faith (Christianity), missionaries formally went into the establishment of schools, on a large scale. Religion, according to [1], is identified and studied through six principles which he called "Dimensions". One of these six dimensions is the Ethical dimension to the study of religions. Other dimensions are Ritual, Doctrinal, Mythological, Experiential and Social.

This Ethical dimension to the study of religions focuses on the Ethical teachings of religion. Smart contended that, there is no religion without its ethical teachings. This includes code of conduct and standard of behaviour that is in conformity with the social norms. Religion often sets the pace for any society about its (societal) norms, mores and moral values and how it goes about teaching it through religious education with the aspect Smart called Ethical Dimension. According to Bidmos [2] the essence of religion from the Islamic point of view, has to do with life in its totality beginning with the issue of creation (Q2:25). The implication of this is that there is a religious interpretation or understanding of life. That probably explains why Adesina [3], quoting Ferrant [4] argued that Religion takes its place in the context of the social pressures that influences personality, because it is the force which has mostly influenced the character of mankind. Man's ethical standards, man's moral behaviour and man's standard of judgment are all products of religious training. This implies that any education which attempts to train children without the religious aspect is grossly inadequate. [3] observed that [4]'s view is that Religion is the cohesive force behind any sound society.

Corresponding Author: Saheed A. Rufai, Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: +234-803-307-7359, E-mail: ahmadrufaisaheed@yahoo.com.

The society comprises the physical environment and all its inhabitants including living and non-living, animate and inanimate objects and in mental structure and cautiousness of the society. Meanwhile, the educational sector is the bed rock under which every social structure is rooted. Students are the sub-culture that influences the dictates of the larger society and if proper and adequate information and culture are not transmitted to this sub-culture, it affects the entire society either now or in any tomorrow. Many writers have proffered arguments and identified the various nuances associated with various social ills. However [2] had succinctly captured the religious interpretation of the causes of social ills when he posited that, (i) non provision of an enabling belief system (ii) dearth of relevant information and (iii) the lack of understanding of the effect of secular principle on our education system are responsible. In a bid to revitalize, re-engineer a society already bedeviled with various ills that can be said to have degenerated to a level of "amoral" society Religious education becomes our focus.

[5] posited that Educational planners and administrators have consistently expressed the view that education is not only a costly venture but also that no nation can rise above the quality of her educated citizenry. The implication of this assertion is that education is a determinant factor of the development of any nation or society. However, it should be stressed that if the right values, more and morals are not adequately integrated in the educational system through religious teachings, such a society or nation is bound to produce educated vandals or criminals. As in the more you learn, the more skilful you become. An imperfect rogue can be made perfect through education. Considering a society that is already polarized with various ills, crimes and corruption, vandalism, nepotism, selfishness and immorality; a society devoid of security of life and property, where the major population are living below poverty level; where all sorts of wickedness and evils are not only condoned in the official circle but have become virtually officials in themselves; where law enforcement agents are no longer serving the interest of the society but their personal and a cabal's interest calls for an urgent redress. One is tempted to say that reconstruction can be carried out through religious education. The authors of this paper are not ignorant of the fact that the most constant factor in life is change of which Nigeria is in dire need owing to the pervasive nature of corruption therein.

Corruption in Nigeria: Perhaps an elementary description of corruption that is known even to the most ancient of all men is any dishonest or illegal behaviour especially of people in authority [6]. It is an immoral behaviour and of course any conduct that smacks off cheating, indecency and/or violation of normative values of society. Yet, [7] looks at it from a juridical angle and posits that it is the "abuse of public or entrusted power for personal gain or for the benefit of a group to which one owes allegiance." He further elucidates that corruption means the use of public office or power for private benefit as for example when a public officer in the discharge of his official duties collects bribe to enrich his own pocket or to show favour to a bribe giver or bend the operative rules and regulations to gratify oneself or confer undue advantage for a fee.

One cannot but subscribe to the consideration that corruption is a very broad term which encompasses fraud which means theft through misrepresentation and embezzlement which means misappropriation of corporate or public funds as well as bribery which means payments made in order to gain an advantage or to avoid a disadvantage." If these in truth are the implications of corruption, this paper wonders why Nigeria was named the World's second most corrupt nation for the year 2003 by the rating of Transparency International. Yet it does not wish to contend that ranking at this juncture that there may be no digression from the focus of its discourse. And this leads us to the next question i.e. the place of corruption in Nigeria.

Effects of Corruption on Nigeria: The effects of corruption on Nigeria are not too dissimilar to its consequences on some other countries of the world. During the inauguration of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), on the 29th September, 2000, President Olusegun Obasanjo had the following to say:

With corruption there can be no sustainable development, nor political stability. By breeding and feeding on inefficiency, corruption invariably strangles the system of social organization. In fact, corruption is literally the antithesis of development and progress [8].

President Obasanjo had spoken sweetly here. Yet the loot recovery process under him was soiled by subdued accusation of insufficient transparency. For instance, it was reliably reported that although \$300 million was recovered from the Chagouri Family, only \$280 million was paid into government coffers. That factor prompted the Senate Committee on Public Accounts to request the Central Bank Governor to confirm the actual amount recovered and deposited in the treasury. The discovery was alarming! [9] Notwithstanding, one must not fail to acknowledge the efforts of Obasanjo regime in, at least, initiating the war against corruption.

Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Executive Governor of Lagos State, observes that:

There is a linkage between a society's degree of accountability and transparency and its rate of development. Those societies, which have achieved meaningful economic progress, are also those in which the abuse of office for private gain, through outright plunder and other dishonest practices, have been reduced to the barest minimum. are those societies where the rule of la people realize that without strict adherence to constitutionalism, the arbitrary rule of a man will prevail and create a favourable environment for corruption to thrive [10].

The former Chairman of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Hon. Justice

Mustapha Akanbi, in a presentation at the National Seminar on Corruption held under the auspices of Nasrullahil-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) in Lagos, in 2004, itemized the effects of this national malaise on the nation, as follows [7]:

- Corruption destroys the socio-economic life of the society generally.
- It makes economic planning difficult if not impossible
- It creates political instability and undermines the integrity of the State.
- It concentrates wealth in the hands of a few corrupt individuals.
- It promotes inefficiency, incompetence and breeds nepotism and unhealed in government administration
- It stunts growth and development
- It promotes wide spread of poverty and large scale unemployment.
- It promotes inflation and destroys the efficiency of public institutions, electoral process resulting in prime offices and positions being held by charlatans jobbers.
- It promotes inequality in the distribution of wealth perferments and largesses
- It destroys ethical and democratic values.
- It creates unfair, unjust and inequitable environment in which the Rule of Law is undermined.
- It encourages and promotes crimes and large scale fraud.

Apparently, this much has corruption jeopardized the entire system in Nigeria.

Fighting Corruption in Nigeria: Having identified corruption as capable of militating again progress and development in any society, successive administrations in Nigeria have employed various devices in bid to tame the malaise. The first ever military coup in Nigeria masterminded in 1966 b Major Kaduna Nzeogwu had corruption as its rationale and the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Decree of 1966 w immediately promulgated. Yet the administration that took over was later accused by General Murtala Ramat Muhammad of substandard performance as evident in its inability to fulfill "legitimate expectations of our people" [11].

Fellow countrymen, the task ahead of us calls for sacrifice and self discipline at all levels of our society. This Government will not tolerate indiscipline. This Government will not condone abuse of office. I appeal to you all to cooperate with the Government in our endeavour to give this nation a new lease of life.

Thus did Government Murtala Muhammed indict General Yakubu Gowon's administration which had promulgated the Corrupt Practices Decree in 1975.

The Buhari/Idiagbon administration formally commenced its own War against Indiscipline (WAI) programme on the 20th of March, 1984. The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal act (cap 56 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990) was a brain-child of Babangida administration. This amended under General Abdul-Salami Abubakar 1999 as the Recovery of Public Property (Special Military Act Cap 389, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria. General Sanni Abacha's administration witnessed the germination of the seed of the Failed Bank (Recovery of Debt and Financial Malpractices in Banks) Decree 1994) and amended in 1999. It is interesting to note that Hon. Justice Mustapha Akanbi, in the presentation cited earlier did not equivocate in saying that all these laws did not succeed in curbing corruption " Despite the draconian character of some of the legislations, corruption continued unabated," [7] remarks.

The question has arisen about the contradictions in a President with a claim to a high moral profile who would have an anti-corruption Commission watching over lower level officials while the and the State Governors were insistent on the shield of Immunity conferred upon them by a constitution with a dubious origin [12]. Given that bribery and corruption are extremely difficult to detect at their present pervasive state in this country, it would be ridiculous to punish one person for the offence when many others including possibly the enforcers are guilty. For a good result, all laws, according to [13] must be applied fairly and equitably otherwise such laws will cease to have legitimacy or any deterrent effect. An important force in winning the fight against corruption is divine guidance in the form of religion and there is no substitute for it.

Religion as an Agent of Change: The various types of indiscipline perpetrated in schools is a function of religious laxity. For example it used to be a crime and disgrace not only to the individual perpetrator of an immoral act but to the entire family of such a perpetrator. The concept of "fact findings" before giving consent to marriage to a particular family is a testimony to this fact among major ethnic groups in Nigeria. As such any member of the family that indulged in any anti-social act or activities before is denied of being given consent to marrying another family's daughter or son as the case may be. But this concept is not so much regarded again especially as the law of the nation permits an intending couple who are 21 years of age and above to take their own decision as parents consent are not necessary here [14]. Moreover, our society has drifted to a state of what Robert Melton [15] called "Anomie" or Normlessness. This is because equal emphasis are not been given to "means" and "achievements" rather more emphasis are being placed on achievement rather than the means, a situation that promotes and encourages achievement at all cost, even when such is at the detriment of others. This, no doubt lends credence to the Machiavellian philosophy "the end justifies the means".

Statement of Problem: There is no doubt that both the government, individuals and agencies have been putting /making a lot of efforts to bring about the much desired change(s) in Nigerian society; that will guarantee an atmosphere of peace, tranquility and security but all seem to no avail. To emphasize the need for social change, the present government has made "Reform" its corner stone and in fact pursuing it vigorously. The government has even gone as far as increasing the security budget allocation, establish panels to try the various culprits, yet the much desired success from these exercises have not yielded appreciable dividend. Hence there is need to review the role of religious education in Nigeria with a view to helping the government, society and individual in the dreams of bringing changes to social, economic and political life of its citizenry.

Purpose of the Study: This paper attempts to:

- Establish the role of religion in nation building;
- Explain the role of religion in character formation;
- Elicit the views of respondents on the need for social reconstruction;
- Draw attention to the importance of religion to social reconstruction.

Research Questions: The following research questions were addressed in the course of this write up.

- What is the role of religion in nation building?
- What is the role of religion in social reconstruction?
- How does religion help in social reconstruction?
- What is the relationship between religion and social reconstruction?

Hypotheses: In order to probe further into these questions, the following hypotheses were formulated for testing.

- There will be no significant difference between the opinions of students and teachers on (1) the meaning of social reconstruction (ii) the need for social reconstruction
- There will be no significant relationship between religion and social reconstruction.
- There will be no significant relationship between family and society in promoting social reforms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design for this study was descriptive survey.

Population and Sample: The population covered all the teachers and students of SS2 and 3 classes in Lagos State, while the sample comprised 300 respondents of teachers and students in the ratio of 1:2 (teachers to students) in Lagos State. These were randomly selected teachers (100) and SS2 & 3 students (200). The reason for chosen the – S S 2 & 3 is premised on the assumption that they have at least a better understanding of the society than the younger ones in any class below this.

Instrumentation: The instrument for this study was the questionnaire: This was group into two main sections. Section A. was on personal or demographic data such as age/class, sex and qualification, while Section B. was to elicit information with regards to issues raised.

Description of Instrument: Questions were raised specifically on causes of social evils and the role of religious education as to promoting social reconstruction through an improved moral life.

The respondents were asked to rate responses on a three point scale of agreed, disagreed and No comment.

The questionnaires were validated using item analysis of the various variables.

Administration and Return of Questionnaire: The questionnaires were filled in the presence of the researcher and this afforded the respondents opportunity to ask question on any item that they felt the need for an explanation. Information were elicited mainly from secondary school teachers and students in senior secondary schools (SS2&3) returning 62% and 38% of their surveys respectively.

Validity and Reliability: The questionnaire was both valid and reliable. It is valid because it measure what it was intended to measure. The criticisms and questions raised by experts and respondents helped to improve the quality of the instrument. It is evident that there exist both construct and content validity. Its reliability was proven through a test -retest technique. The questions were structured in a simple language to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation which might occur if technical jargon were introduced.

Analysis of Result: The majority of the informants (teachers) shared the following characteristics

- 31-40 years old -79%
- Female teachers only 76%
- First Degree and NCE holders - 82%
- With 10 or more years experienced 45%

The implication of this breakdown of respondents is that it stands to justify its adequacies. That is, they made relevant and effective contributions to the study. Other result of the research questions and the hypothesis are presented as follows:

The chi-square test revealed that significant differences exist between the teachers and students understanding of the meaning of social reconstruction as presented in Table 1 shown below.

At this degree of freedom using the 0.05 significant leve. 1 from the above table it was found that the chi-square calculated was significant for:

$$X^2C < X^2t \\ 3.96 < 5.99$$

From the table result the hypothesis which states that "there will be no significant difference between the opinions of students and teachers on the meaning of social reconstruction "is therefore rejected."

The response to this hypothesis shows that the understanding of the teachers is different from that of the students as far as "social reconstruction" is concerned. It can be assumed that "there is a significant difference between the opinions of teachers and students on the understanding of the meaning of social reconstruction. It can be said that (i) the experience and, exposure of teachers gave them a better understanding of the concept "social reconstruction" unlike the students who in terms of understanding and experience, are really very insignificant (ii) the sense of values and appreciation of the teachers had been lifted higher than their students counterpart owing to learning and experience. Also, students seemed too limited.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant relationship between religion and social reconstruction.

The degree of freedom is 0.05 significant level and in the above table, it was found that the chi-square calculated is significant.

$$X^2C < X^2t \\ 19.5 > 5.99$$

From the above table it is evident that there is a significant difference in the number of respondents who tend to have a very urgent need for social reconstruction on the path of students than teachers. Therefore we reject the Null hypothesis which states that "there will be no significant relationship between religion and social reconstruction." We would then have alternative hypothesis that says "there is significant relationship between religion and social reconstruction."

Table 1a: The Understanding of Teacher/Student of Social Reconstruction

Respondents	Agree	Disagree	No comment
Teacehr	120	60	20
Student	70	22	08

Table 1b:

X ² c	X ² t	Df	P
3.96	5.99	2	70.0

Table 2a : Relationship between Religion and Social Reconstruction

Responses	Very Urgent	Urgent	Not Urgent	Total
Teachers•	90 (45)	70 (35)	40 (20)	200
Students	50 (50)	30(30)	20 (20)	100
Total	140	100	60	300

Table 2b:

X ² c	X ² t	Df	P
19.5	5.99	2	70.05

Table 3:

X ² c	X ² t	Df	p
17.52	3.84	2	70.05

Hypothesis 3: There will be no significant relationship between family and society in promoting social reforms.

At this degree of freedom, using the 0.05 significant level, the above table has found that the chi-square calcul ed is significant.

$$X^2c > X^2t$$

$$17.5 > 3.94$$

Using the above table, it is glaring that there is a great disparity between X2c and X2t. The implication of this is that there is a relationship between family and society in promoting social reconstruction. In variably, the hypothesis that states that there will be no significant relationship between family and society in promoting social, construction is hereby rejected. One therefore can be poised to say that "there is a relationship between family and society in promoting social reconstruction.

DISCUSSION

The findings on the study actually confirmed that religious education has a place in the social reconstruction of Nigeria. This confirms [3]'s position that, "the purpose of religious education therefore is the giving to pupils a good foundation of newness of life" This means that religious education gives the following attitudes:

- That man is one part of the whole complex of creation.
- That man is the most highly developed and sensitive part of creation and that he is bound up with all part of it.
- That the individual person has a duty to live and interact among his fellows who have to be accorded the same consideration the individual person gives to himself [16].

A positive change of attitudes, value, mores that is brought about in the youth through religious education, will subsequently transform the society as the youth began to interact with the society. The implementers of the religious teaching are religious education teachers who according to [17] "are in the midst of character training of the youths". Likewise; this position was corroborated in [18]. Therefore "the Nigerian teacher must be concerned with developing in his students a sense of moral responsibility and a belief that moral behaviour is worthwhile." The consensus of opinion of respondents lend credence to supporting the idea that some religious education will bring about a social reconstruction, although, of this consensus, they realized that family, government and other stakeholders will have a significant role to play in the teaching of religious education. It is believed that the family is the first point of contact and "parents are supposed to give their children a sound moral, spiritual and intellectual background." [19] Though [16] may not subscribe to this view as he argued that "the idea of parental blame for child's personality, intelligence and character creates in the parents an unnecessary sense of guilt over a wayward or retarded child and also promotes a sense of betrayal. This no doubt may hold substance in the western culture of course, but to the Africans especially the Nigerians the concept of responsible parenthood still holds. As [20] as quoted by [21] reiterated that "having children is not simply a right to be taken for granted, it is a heavy responsibility. This is the position of the consensus in this finding.

Government on the other hand is expected to promote the sound teaching of religious Education, making it as much as compulsory as it does for sciences, so that a new improved citizenry can evolve thereby producing a reconstructed society. People (Society) should equally promote religious education. The implication of this submission is that, to realize a reconstructed society through religious education, concerted efforts of all stakeholders is inevitable.

CONCLUSION

This paper analyzed the various measures employed by successive government in Nigeria, in a bid to achieve social reconstruction. The critical examination of such measures in this paper revealed that they are neither effective nor productive. Consequently, the paper articulated the potentiality of religion to play some role in social reconstruction in Nigeria. It confirmed that religion cannot be divorced from the day to day activities of the society. To attempt to do this is tantamount to inviting lawlessness. Religious Education helps in disciplining the mind, life and character of any being including the youth, therefore its proper place should be accorded to it in the school curriculum. Every player or stakeholder should be available to promote the teaching of religious education. To jettison this is to further promote educated or literate criminals. Government should promote the teaching of religious Education through a more effective policy.

Recommendations: As a result of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- Qualified and quality religious teachers should be injected into the school system by the government by way of employment:
- Religious teachers should be informed that they are people "living in a glass house that must not throw stone" and to whom much is given, much will be required. This means that every form of unethical and antisocial attitude or behaviour should not be found with religious teachers.
- If it becomes evidenced that a teacher of religion exhibits anti-social behaviour, such should be punished without further hesitation.
- Parents, Pastors, Imam and other arms of the society should see religious teachers as kin, who are truly complimentary in this character and societal building and as such must be treated with high courtesy.
- Religious teachers should be well remunerated and given the due recognition in the society.
- Religious education should be made compulsory from primary to tertiary institutions.

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