



Beyond Intolerance: Towards A Paradigm Shift for Confessional Religious Education in Nigeria

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STATUS QUESTIONIS

Three dominant religions exist in Nigeria: Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion

With a population somewhat more than 140 million, Muslims are estimated to be 50%, Christians 40% and Traditional Religionists 10%

In the past, they more or less managed to tolerate one another with occasional bloody conflicts

Since 1999 till present, Nigeria has recorded over 15 major religious disturbances with over 53,000 thousand people dead and over 800, 000 people have been displaced

These struggles have contributed to Nigeria's failure to craft a national, consolidated, federal identity from the quite diverse ethnic and tribal groups within the borders

Religious intolerance is to a great extent the outcome of the way religious education is thought. It has been exclusivistic and indoctrinative in nature.

It is therefore not surprising when we see children growing up very intolerant, exclusive, with lack of openness to dialogue, allowing neither respect for religious diversity, interreligious learning, nor co-existence and collaboration

This situation calls for new ways of handling the age-old quest for peaceful co-existence

In this situation Religious education should offer students the opportunity to identify, describe and clarify concerns about their living environment while they operate as a valuable building block for a new world.

Below shows the map of Nigeria and effects of religious intolerance in the northern city of Jos.



OBJECTIVES

The dissertation intends to develop a new paradigm in the teaching of religious education in response to the crisis of religious intolerance in Nigeria

We would like to articulate a deeper understanding of religious education that can adequately help young Nigerians to confront and participate in open and constructive dialogue towards learning from their mistakes without being trapped in a delinquent trajectory

METHOD

Historical= 'reconstructing' the history of education and conflict in Nigeria

Ethical= search into the contemporary study on the concept of tolerance

Theological= study of models to approach religious diversity.

Pedagogical=evaluation of the different models to teach religion

Hermeneutical= applies to the recontextualisation of the hermeneutical-communicative model in the Nigerian context

RESULTS

The different models of religious education dealing with religious diversity in educational setting

Mono-religious Model

Learning *IN* Religion

Explicit initiation in one specific faith tradition oriented towards full membership

Religion seen as unique: one's own religion seen as the only true religion

It has two variant-exclusive = deductive+ inclusivism= inductive

Inclusivism **CAN LEAD** to a form of monoreligious learning

Multi-religious Model

Learning *ABOUT* religion

which does not require contact with peoples who are engaged in a (radically) different religion and who can communicate this other religion from inside out

Pluralism: all religions and worldviews are considered as essentially equal. Thus, plurality is accepted as a fact and at the same time assumed

Consequence: engagement is considered as an impediment for the objective representation of religious convictions

Inter-religious Model

Learning *FROM* religion

starting point is from an intrinsic commitment to a specific religion and try to understand concepts, ideas, and experiences of other world views and religions as alternative

Oriented towards the development of a proper synthesis of faith

It acknowledges that in a pluralistic multicultural society, unity can be found in diversity. But this unity is not pre-given and has to be brought about

It seeks for commitment from teachers and students without excluding dialogue

Hermeneutical-communicative Model

The hermeneutical-communicative model is the broader form of learning from religion which also incorporates interreligious learning. The points of departure for the hermeneutical-communicative model are the hermeneutical intersections. Hermeneutical intersections are the result of tensions, conflicting interpretations of specific existential themes that refer back to a multitude of presuppositions in the discourse of the class on a certain subject. In this model of faith communication these hermeneutical intersections are traced, laid bare and unraveled in a communicative process. This interpretative way of learning is the result of a confrontation with influxes from various sources, namely the prevailing culture, one's own life story, and the existing narrative religious/ideological traditions

Religious education, using a hermeneutical-communicative model, would help young people to better understand their recent social, cultural and religious situation, and would open the gate into the dynamics of a re-contextualization of Christian faith in dialogue with Nigeria in all its complexities, changes and risk

CONCLUSIONS

From the theoretical analysis of the relevance of the models of religious education, used in Nigeria during the past decades, we concluded that the 'kerygmatic'-doctrine-centred module of religious education is no longer relevant in the present complex cultural and religious situation in Nigeria

We found it necessary, in pluralistic Nigeria, to make a 'paradigm shift' in religious education. Christian (as well as Muslim) belief should not be 'introduced', or 'delivered' through an indoctrination model of religious education

In this situation we found that the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education would be of an indispensable importance in contemporary Nigeria.

However, there are also different challenges and problems with the hermeneutical-communicative model in its implementation in African/Nigerian context such as: violent, poverty, ethnocentrism etc., all these needs to be dealt with positively. In such a situation if one of the tasks of religious education is to understand reality, reality is something other than 'myself' or my specific culture and worldview, then religious education needs to become an intercultural activity.