

# Assessment of Religion and Moral Studies Education Curriculum as an Instrument for National Integration

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**Abstract:** *The study assesses the religious and moral studies education curriculum as an instrument for national integration. This study employed descriptive survey research design where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Population comprises of all tertiary institutions in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 5 tertiary institution students which were randomly selected from each of the chosen institutions to make a total of 100 as sample for the study. Two (2) research questions were raised and answered in this study. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. The research findings revealed that religion and moral studies education are the determinant of student's characters and behaviour that either influence their academic ability positively or negatively. The study therefore recommends that teachers should create an atmosphere of trust and act as role models in order to encourage and motivate students to learn values of honesty, trust and good behaviour that will make them to behave morally in the society*

**Keywords:** *Religious, Moral Studies, Integration, Instrument, Curriculum*

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious Studies has been an important subject in helping students to be aware of what it means to live morally in the community where they found themselves. It has been known to help them understand and respect the beliefs and practices of others and thereby strengthen social cohesion (Eric, 2006). Its evolution as a discipline could be traced in Europe and particularly in Britain from the 19th century. The report further notes that this period had the scholarly and historical analysis of the Bible flourishing, while Hindu and Buddhist texts were first being translated into European languages (Oliver, 2005). He further explained that moral education is preferably adopted rather than instruction or training because moral education is a continuous and lifelong education and it cuts across all the activities of an individual. The concern of moral education is to ensure the belief system satisfies all moral standards and the manner of transmission the

child also to be regarded as an active person who is to be entrenched into the teaching of education aspects moral lesson

Mbiti in Mogbo (2002) continues to note that religious education bore the responsibility of inculcating in each generation those forms of knowledge, values and attitudes which the society needed in order to prosper. He further observes that religion provides mankind with moral values in the society. His candid remark on religion went as follows: ...part of any religious system is its moral values which regulate and harmonize human life. It is religion which tells us what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, what a virtue and what is vice. Chesaro (2003) supports this when he notes that no society can exist without morals and discipline for its welfare and that of the individual. He observes that it was morals which build relationships between people and the

world around. Stanfield (2005) stated that, formal teaching of Religious Education held a central position since the coming of early missionaries who opened the first school in 1846. Formal Education began through the work of Christian missionaries whose main aim was to convert Africans to Christianity (Barret, Mambo, Janice and Mcveiph, 2002). According to Sifuna (2014), missionaries used schools as a means of recruiting people in the church especially children. He observes that the Bible which emphasized the doctrines of the church was the main text for teaching Religious Education. After 1911, the colonial government began to get involved in education of Africans. It joined the missionaries and gave financial support to mission schools. There were however, some missionary societies which would not accept government aid for fear of losing control of their mission schools and thus, failing to achieve their religious goals. The schools which were controlled by missionaries became famous for good quality education (Wanjie 2009)

These goals of Religious and moral studies education curriculum included: fostering national unity, promoting national development, promoting individual development and self-fulfillment, promoting social equality and responsibility, promoting respect for and development of cultural heritage and promoting international consciousness. Religious Education curriculum tried to achieve these goals by promoting positive attitudes of mutual respect which enabled the youth to live in harmony. Precisely, the commission recommended that RE should be handled as an academic subject in educational curriculum dissociated from the objectives of any church. This in turn, changed the face of Religious Education completely. It was for instance, no longer taught for converting pupils, but like the other disciplines in the school curriculum, had unique objectives. This helped fulfill the above primary stated goals of education (Olori, 2003 & Articlesbase.com, 2011).

The history of Nigerian education has been tied with colonial education, which in the first place, emphasized moral education as a core curriculum and it is still reflected in Nigerian education. Various courses such as religion, general studies, civic and social studies form the bedrock of moral education. The various concepts that treat moral aspects are spread in the curriculum designs. Before the advent of colonialism, the indigenous system of education has been loaded with elements of moral education since it is a well-known fact that no society has regards on any person that deviates from the ethics established by the society, Osokoya (2002) postulated that character training is the corner stone of African education. He stated that "the parents participate in the education of the child. Everybody wants him to be sociable, honest, courageous, humble, persevering and of good report at all times".

Education involves the process of acculturation which is the act of learning to live in the society and to

interact with other people. Religion and moral values are set to achieve the above. Religion and moral education has its foundation in the National Policy on Education. Government support for religion for over 150years period was even more pronounced within the public schools. Especially in the schools of the mid-nineteenth century, a non-denominational protectionism was heavily promoted in the schools, through such practice as scriptures recitation and the use of curricular materials heavily influenced by protestant sensibility. This evangelical literature comprises a complete religious system touching on the relationships between man and God, and nation. By the mid-twentieth century, the evangelical nature of the basic curriculum had waned and become more secularized, but public schools continued to open the school day with a religious ceremony comprised of reading from the holy books and a prayer because they realized the purpose of God in the lives of the pupils and the teachers (Osokoya,2002).

Religion which is an institution built over a period of time by common belief has been proved to be one of the institutions within communities that build and strengthen community capacities to cope with various problems of life. Although a small segment of individual propounds atheism, Suniti (2007) noted that majority of people are born into and brought up in an environment that believes in religion. Furthermore, religion, according to Suniti (2007), has contributed to human development, structuring the lives of men and women through different codes. This code often evolves in the absence of secular and other penal codes and played important roles in enforcing societal discipline. Nevertheless, religion is taught in schools in order to adopt and impart its moral values into the lives of the students. As a result, if one goes to school to be educated and has not learnt morals then one is not educated. Education and moral values are closely knitted together, they are inseparable, this is why the aims and objectives of both religion and moral education with that of education in their real context are interwoven.

In advanced countries, courses in morality and ethics are very central in almost all studies. Some organizations have even gone so far as to incorporate moral elements into their prime values, such as respect for the individual. The fact is therefore, if Nigeria will fare better in all its dealings, there must be renewed vigour in pursuing religious and moral education. For example, employees have commitment and energy drained from them by inappropriate leadership behaviour. Most people would not question that leaders at all levels and in all organizations should be ethical or moral in their actions. Morality is mainly about how we relate to and deal with others but it also includes how we interact with ourselves, the respect with which we engage ourselves. Actions towards others do not have to reach the level of stealing from them or sexually harassing them to be immoral (Wharton, 2005). In simple terms, it has to do with the fact

that many people including leaders appear unaware of the motives underlying their behaviour and of the impact of that behaviour on others. Hence, they cannot adjust their behaviour to reflect this knowledge. And many of those who are aware lack the will to make changes in their behaviours.

The role of religious education to the development of a Nigerian Child cannot be over emphasized. As earlier stated, for a child to live a meaningful life and contribute positively to the development of his society, he needs religion and moral education to achieve this dream. Religious and Moral Education provides in-depth teaching and educate its members on the need to be law abiding, having spirit of faithfulness, dedication and spirit of strong commitment to work; loyalty and fair play in all circumstances R & ME enables citizen to be able to obey the rules and regulations guiding the society. It makes a citizen to be more dedicated and faithful to his work and duty (UNESCO, 2009; Wharton, 2005). Mogbo (2002) defined the term "curriculum" as encompassing the content, structure, and processes of teaching and learning, which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values. This includes the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students acquire as well as the factors that inform the ethos and general environment of the school. Mogbo saw curriculum as all planned experiences, opportunities, and activities provided by a school to assist the learners attain the designed learning outcomes and desired change in behaviour. Mogbo (2002), the way in which the curriculum is defined, planned, implemented, and evaluated crucially influences the quality of education provided.

Religious and Moral Education encourage the sense of group participation for peaceful coexisting in the society. This is more pronounced through the celebration of rituals and ceremonies like Easter Festival, Christmas, Idel Filtri, Idel Kirbir and other religious festivals (Whitehurst, 2004). This will promote good fellowship and encourage solidarity among adherents. It should lead to cultivating the spirit of team work and co-operate with others in all circumstances (UNESCO, 2006). It helps in the transmission of values, beliefs ideas and patterns, of behaviours pertaining to the generation. Through the teaching of moral education in schools, the individual is made to realize the importance of others, respect their views and ideas, understand government programmes, see the need to pay tax regularly for the provision of social amenities, maintain the government properties as well as obey the laws as an obedient member of the society. It fosters in the individual those values, which make for good citizenship such as honesty, tolerance, selfishness and dedication, all which provide the rich soil from which good leadership spawned, for good governance, which is the root of national integration (Ochard, 2008).

Religious and Moral Education help to develop in children positive attitudes of togetherness, and

cooperation towards a healthy nation, and play a major contribution to the development of the nation. With the acquisition of religious knowledge, individual imbibes the spirit of honesty for others, relate to and interact meaningfully with other individuals in the society and appreciates the importance of effective organization for human progress. No progress or development can be made without love and cooperation with others. No single individual can do everything alone (Nwabusi, 2010). The greatness of any nation depends on the ways in which the people conduct themselves. For any nation to be great there are some altitudes and values that her citizens have to cultivate and cherish. Nigerian is known all over the world for her religious crisis, ethnic clashes, corruption and indiscipline both at national and international level. To fight against these social ills that have eaten deep into our society, religion and moral education should be one of the instruments to be used. We should through moral and religious education inculcate in the Nigerian child the right values that will help in the progress and development of our country. To inculcate these values in our children, the parents and indeed the teachers need to demonstrate practically these values in their attitudes to life. They should not do anything that will negate the societal values. To inculcate the habit of honesty, we should also try to be trustworthy. If every Nigerian child through the teaching of religious and moral education, inculcates the values cherished by the society, we will have our country a better place to live. It is in the realization of these goals that religion education with responsibilities is taught in our school curriculum (Moody, 2009; Ochard, 2008; Illiot, 2008).

Religion and Moral education enable the Nigerian child to cultivate the habit of discipline. This involves the training of the mind and character to develop self-control habit, right social conduct and right attitude to life which are essential for survival of any society. This training is very important for it produces the orderly behaviour and organized life on the part of the Nigerian child and the society. When the Nigerian child is disciplined, then the entire nation will be disciplined. When the society is constituted of disciplined citizens, every member sees his duty as contribution to the upliftment of the society and therefore takes the job serious with high sense of commitment and dedication. People then will not see their work as a means of getting rich quick at the expense of others. This is the biggest problem confronting Nigeria as a nation today. And this must be changed in the lives of our youth who are the leaders of tomorrow. Such desirable social attitudes like honesty, faithfulness, hard work, cooperation as well as mutual trust and understanding are important the life of every citizen for any meaningful development and the sustainability of that development in our society (UNESCO, 2009).

The social vices and criminal acts are so rampant in the society today that if care is not taken, we cannot talk of any meaningful development in Nigeria in the

nearest future. In fact, from general observation in the country; it seems that an average Nigerian is unpatriotic to the activities and efforts of the governments. Many Nigerians are not honest to themselves and the nation. The stakeholders of religion education should do more to eradicate those social ills that are bedeviling our country. The society expects much on the religion education to sanitize the society of these ills so as to restore sanity into the Nigerian social life (Viederman, 2005). It is through the acquisition of religion and moral education that the Nigerian child will see the need of doing away with those vices that do not help an individual or the society to grow. Religion education provides answers to certain phenomena like myths, supernatural behaviours, e.t.c. Thus, religion education important not only for spiritual and moral development of Nigerian children and society but it as well provides patterned ways of overcoming some life problems. Religious and Moral Education helps to develop the best qualities in the Nigerian child so as to make him an assets and a pride to himself, to the family and to the society at large. Religion education is fully concerned with the teaching of sound morality in the society among Nigerian children by connecting them with the world beyond the senses, which is "supernatural forces". This idea will promote cohesive and functional society. It also serves as guidance, security and motivation for the citizens. It motivates one towards hard work (Ivorgba, 2006; Illiot, 2008). Therefore, this study assesses religious and moral studies education curriculum as an instrument for national integration.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to assess religious and moral studies education curriculum as an instrument for national integration. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the influence of religious and moral studies education curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria
2. Examine the significance of religious and moral education curriculum in instilling moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria

### Research Questions

The following research questions were posited in this study.

1. What are the influence of religious and moral education curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

2. Will religious and moral education curriculum instill moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

### Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all tertiary students in Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 students 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 and educationists for construct and content validation. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage statistical tool.

### Presentation of Data Analysis and Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the influence of religious and moral education curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

Table 1:

RQ1	Items	SA+A		SD+D		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Teaching of religious education will help to create in citizens the fear of God and promote peaceful co-existence and national integration	76	76%	24	24%	100	100
2.	Moral education is a designed moral value that guides people and in teaching them towards their eventual role in the society.	80	80%	20	20%	100	100
3.	Moral education is the inculcation of desirable values, norms, attitudes approved by the society in order to have good citizens in the future.	81	81%	19	19%	100	100
4.	Teaching of religious and moral education are the keys to the general sustenance of national integration and social orderliness.	91	91%	9	9%	100	100
5.	Religious and moral education teach core moral values, such as honesty and responsibility, care, etc and helps to raise morally responsible and self-disciplined citizens.	89	89%	11	11%	100	100
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>417</b>	<b>83.4%</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, the study revealed that the cumulative data of “yes” response on the the influence of religious and moral studies curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria was 417 (83.4%) while cumulative data for “no” response on the influence of religious and moral education curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria was 83 (16.6%). This showed that yes responses

were more than no response. However, it implies that there will be positive influence of religious and moral studies curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** Will religious and moral education curriculum instill moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

Table 2:

RQ 2	ITEMS	YES		NO		TOTAL	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Teaching of religious and moral education in school will help in revealing all the negative actions that can lead to immoral behaviour.	79	79	21	21	100	100
2	Moral behaviour to be strongly influenced by the nature of the specific situation in which people find themselves require constant teaching of religious and moral education	71	71	21	21	100	100
3	Religious and moral education teaches how to respect, calm, thoughtful and tolerate individual differences in the society	82	82	18	18	100	100
4	Adherence to moral lessons or teaching will help one to boost his or her life’s performance positively	79	79	21	21	100	100
5	Religious and moral studies teach total form of transforming morality which deals with the (right) or immorality (wrong) of actions.	81	81	19	19	100	100
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>392</b>	<b>78.4%</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>21.6%</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>



From the table above, the study revealed that the cumulative data of “yes” on the statement that says “religious and moral education curriculum in instilling moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria” was 392 (78.4%) while cumulative data for “no” data to negate the statement was 108 (21.6%). This showed that yes responses were more than “no” response. This implies that the religious and moral education curriculum instill moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

### Discussion of Findings

From the table 1 above of the study, it was deduced that there will be positive influence of religious and moral education curriculum as an instrument for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria and it was revealed from the study that 417 (83.4%) respondents agreed by ticking on “yes” while cumulative data for “no” respondents based on the study was 83 (16.6%). Therefore, the finding was supported by the UNESCO (2006) which says that religious and moral education encourage the sense of group participation for peaceful coexisting in the society. This is more pronounced through the celebration of rituals and ceremonies like Easter Festival, Christmas, Idel Filtri, Idel Kirbir and other religious festivals. From the table 2 above, the study considers a questions that says will religious and moral education curriculum instill moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria? However, from the items above indicated yes response 392 (78.4%) which supported the statement above and 108 (21.6%) disagreed with the statement that “religious and moral education curriculum will not instill moral values and social order for national integration among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria”. Therefore, the finding supported the statement that says these goals of Religious and moral study education included: fostering national unity, promoting national development, promoting individual development and self-fulfillment, promoting social equality and responsibility, promoting respect for and development of cultural heritage and promoting international consciousness. The study was in support of Olori (2003) that says Religious Education tried to achieve these goals by promoting positive attitudes of mutual respect which enabled the youth to live in harmony so as to achieve national integration in Nigeria as a whole.

### Conclusion

Arising from the findings, religion and moral studies education will bring about sound moral judgement, fair play, justice, sense of belonging, unity in

diversity which will call for national integration in the country.

### Recommendations

In order to ensure a well-developed curriculum on moral education for national development, the following recommendations are made;

1. School heads should supervise the teachers to make sure that religious and moral studies education are taught on the assembly ground for the students.
2. Teachers should make sure students behave morally and imbibe the teaching of religious lessons in the classrooms, this will make them avoid the societal ills.
3. Parents should create conducive environment for the child’s upbringing through moral lessons that will enhance their proper behaviour in anywhere they found themselves.
4. Continuous assessment should be improved especially on all domains; cognitive, affective and psychomotor.
5. Parents and elders should instill moral value and good character as example so that the young adults can emulate worthwhile moral values and character from them.

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