

## **The Challenges of Teaching Christian Religious Education in Nigerian School and the way forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century a Position Paper**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the challenges of the implementation of the Christian Religious Education in Nigeria schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Christian Religious Education is one of the earliest subjects in Nigeria school curriculum. It has made positive impact in the nation education system at all level but in spite of this achievement the teaching of the subject is still face with challenges in the implementation. These include inadequate funding, inadequate facilities / infrastructure, use of auxiliary teachers and students attitude among others. The paper use research approach which relies on argumentation that adheres to the rule of logical slogism. The paper posit that in view of the important attached to the subject in the school curriculum, there is need to address these challenges so as to achieve the positive goals. The paper concludes by making useful suggestions on the way forward. The paper observed inconsistency in government policy on Education inadequate funding inadequate facilities, use of unprofessional teachers, student's attitude appear to be the major challenges facing the teaching of the subject in Nigerian Schools. The set objective reveals that to attain the set objective of teaching CRS, the challenges must be addressed. The authors concluded by recommending the way forward.*

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### **Introduction**

The Christian Religious Education has emerged as a subject of prime importance in Nigerian schools. Its value in the school curriculum is unique among other subjects. The teaching of Christian Religious Knowledge in Primary schools in Nigeria can be dated back to the first half of the nineteenth-century when the Christian missionaries established the first school in Badagry in 1842. This form of education spread to the North in the early 19th century and CRK was taught in the schools. At the early period, proprietors of schools were the Christian missionaries (Methodist, Church Missionary Society (CMS), and Roman Catholic who considered CRK as an important subject to be taught in schools. Since then, Christian Religious education has occupied a prominent position in Nigerian school curriculum till date. The view was asserted by Onovughe 2008.

In recognition of the value attached to the subject the subject was not only offered in the primary school alone but also in all levels of institution in Nigeria. Religious training and moral instruction was considered as fundamental to the development of sound education. The essence of teaching Christian religious education includes academic, moral; civil and spiritual objectives. In Christian religious education it is obvious that pupils are taught the way of life. Thus the teaching of the subject instils discipline and obedience in the products. The study of CRK will enable pupils to learn the tenets of the faith and to live a life that is that is pleasing to God. CRK

therefore is aimed at producing (training) persons who will be fit or equipped for religious and social responsibility. Thus the focus of CRK curriculum among other things is for pupil's moral training and academic pursuance.

From the above observations, it is understood that Christian Religious Education is not only a subject to learn, but also a way of life, but what is not clear, is whether the teaching of this subject has made any meaningful impact on the students who learn it and on the Nigerian society as a whole. Moreover it can be seen that there is little relationship between what is learned in C.R.K classes and the C.R.K. graduates' lives at home, as now one hears of so much evil, indiscipline and moral decadence in Nigerian society. C. M. 2000 lament on the Moral decadence in our institution as a result of religious Education.

A look at Christian religious examination as if the Objective in the subject are of shows that these objectives are not achieved. Parents are misguided with the belief that any teacher can teach CRK, the authority concerned does not bother to recruit qualified CRK teachers. The pupils too were misguided with the assumption that CRK is simple to pass since they are Christians and can read Bible. This has adverse effect on Religious in Nigeria. This is mostly the practice in Primary and Secondary. This is why pupils will be non chalet.

The goal of teaching CRK as a subject in our schools is to develop the morals of the individuals and the society as a whole. In other words, the aim of teaching CRK in Nigerian schools is to develop the pupil's character and moral training which will enable them to have sound attitude. In Nigerian society, many parents and educationists have aired their views on the respect for moral decadence of their Children. This has made some parents to doubt the credibility of CRK in the Primary school's curriculum as an agent of moral-upbringing. It is in the light of this, that the author attempts to find what could have been the problems of implementing the curriculum.

### **Objectives of Teaching Christian Religion Education in Nigeria**

Hon (1992) like other scholars have classified the behavioural objectives of teaching and learning CRK into three categories they are cognitive, affective and psychomotor. These are explained thus: objectives in the cognitive domain emphasize recall or recognition of facts, and the development of objectives of affective domain are concerned in changes in interest, attitudes and value, and the development of appreciation and judgment. Psychomotor domain objectives have to do with physical skills, manipulation of materials and objects. It summarizes the overall objectives of teaching and learning CRK in Nigeria schools wider; Religions, Moral, Social, Civics, Academic, Spiritual and personal objectives. Religious Objective: This means intimating the learner pupils on how God's deals with His people as contained in the Holy Bible, as the Loving Father who cares for His children and who needs His children's commitment to Him in Worship, faith and obedience to His will.

**Moral Objectives:** In the ethical teaching of the Bible to the learner, the teacher should let the learner see it as the directives from God the Father to guide the lives of the learners that they can live a proper human life without being forced to do so.

**Social Objective:** This could be summed up as the promotion of harmonious human relationships in schools, in the family and in the local community. **Civil Objective:** CRK helps the learner to grow up to be alert, responsible, tolerant, both courageous and patriotic citizens of a democratic and diverse nation.

**Spiritual and Personal Objectives:** The personal spiritual development of the learner is centre to all the other. Objectives in that it deals with inward activities of the learner. Having led the learner to understand the Christian faith responsibility and his relationship with God in Christ Jesus, the teacher has to encourage the learner to continue to grow in faith until he get to majority.

**Academic Objectives:** This involves “memorizing and inwardly digesting a body of factual information from the Jewish and Christian scriptures it also makes the learner to acquire knowledge in order to reach on academic height.

The researcher agrees with the above objectives as the teaching CRK in primary school. In shared the same view as stated in the National Policy on Education as per the objectives for teaching CRK schools is in line with the objectives of primary education as stated in the National Policy on education 2004 section 3 (14) D pp. 12 on Religious Education. “To develop the pupils” Character and moral training to enable pupils a sound attitude”.

Hon explained the factors as follows:

1. **The nature of the objectives:** In most cases, it is the objective or the aims of the lesson that will determine the method to be used. If the objective is to develop skill course through practice or for the learner to acquire knowledge, the method of problem solving should be used. A thought provoking questions asked by the teacher is a good form of problem-solving.
2. **The Maturity of the pupils:-** The age of the learner should be put into consideration when choosing a method to he used so that it may neither be too low nor too high for them. Adoption of methods should he made in terms of the capacities and interest of the pupils and other demands of the situation.
3. **Attitudes of pupils towards learning:** The teacher needs to be very sensitive to pupils attitude and set select methods accordingly. Pupils who are bored and uninterested must be handled in a careful different manner from those that are alert, interested and ready to learn.
4. **Previous Study in the same field:** Previous knowledge of the learner should be considered first by a good teacher, so that he can at his teaching from known to unknown. However a pupil who has exceptional advantages in some field of social interest should not be dealt with in the same way and manner as those pupils who have had no opportunity to do work in that field.
5. **Nature of Materials:** It is very important and necessary that the teacher studies carefully the contents to be taught before selecting the method to be used for the teaching. The best method used for one content may be the worst method for content. Incidents from a well known Bible characters are usually presented in form of a story.
6. **Physical equipment and Facilities:** The type of building, classrooms, board supplies and so on, has bearing in choosing the method to be use. For instance, in a situation was several students must meet in the classroom, general discussion may be impossible. Where there are no chalkboards, talk and illustrations cannot be used. Map exercise cannot he carried on if maps are not available.
7. **Time for teaching:** It is best to just select methods that make for greatest and yield best result at shortest time possible before going into activities that might be very desirable as a teaching method. It will be unwise to start handwork or a project that the pupils may be obliged to stop doing, just when their interest is at its highest.

- 8. Skill and Qualification of the Teacher:** Each person has his talents, his strong point, and his weaknesses. No teacher can use every method with equal success. Most teachers may use only one or two most effectively. The wise the teacher is he who uses the method that bring best results. No good method is the best result of some clever inventions.

There are several methods that can be used effectively. These include both old and new methods. The methods are storytelling, lecture, discussion, the question and answer, the study trip, the panel discussion, debate, the forum discussion, dramatization individualized, discovery, mimicking, pantoming and role play and role play.

### **Instructional Materials Recommended for teaching Religious Education in the Curriculum**

In order that teaching may be successful, a teacher needs to use teaching aids to support his method of teaching Religious Education. Joshua (1995) stresses that pupils remember, 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they hear and see, 70% of what they say and 90% of what they see, hear, say and do. This information goes with the Old Chinese saying that “What I hear I forget; what I say I remember; what I do I know and understand”. This means that seeing and doing things will make a person know, understand and remember things learned best. This is the essence of learning with Visual Materials. Visual aids are very important in the teaching of CRK in the primary school. It makes learning permanent in pupil’s memory.

### **Projection and Non-Projected Visuals**

- a. Non projected Visuals:** - are simply visuals which do not require projection viewing. They are use more extensively in the classroom than any other visual medium of instruction because they are so abundant and easily obtained. Still pictures are photographic or photograph like representation of people, places and things. This still pictures most commonly used are photographs, illustrations from books, periodicals, catalogs, etc Graphic materials are non-photographic, two dimensional materials designed to specifically communicate a message to the viewers. They often include verbal and symbolic cues. Graphic demands special use by instructors because their images are usually symbolic rather than fully representational. Realia are real things, objects such as coins, tools artifacts plants, animals even human being etc. models are three dimensional representatives of the real objects which may be larger, smaller or same size as the objects they represent. Display format include chalkboard, multipurpose boards, peg boards, bulletin boards, cloth boards or flannel graphs, and magnetic boards. Flip charts may also be used for display format. Mobiles are wall chart with a difference.
- b. Projected Visuals:** - Refer to media formats in which still pictures are projected into a screen e.g. overhead transparencies, slides films and filmstrips. Opague projection is also in the category Opague projection works by directing a strong in candencent light (typical about 100 watts) down into the materials. Other audio visual materials are Radio, computer tape recorder, television, etc. These are some improvised visual Aids such as dramatization, pantomiming ministry and role-played. Student, Pupils could be taught to act play or an episode in their lesson. Entertainment in itself makes a lesion lively and active pupils would always like to participate in such lessons. Other names for audio visual are instructional Technology, Instructional materials, instructional media teaching aids, verbal or no-verbal materials, visual education etc. One of the problems of teaching

Religious Education is the none-use of audio-visual materials by teachers. The importance of visual Aids in the teaching of all subjects especially Religious Education cannot be over emphasized especially in the primary school. That is why Marvin (1973) agreed that if education is to keep pace with ever increasing knowledge with new technology, with new ideas and with new skills, an educational pattern, an educational pattern which will emphasize the use of instructional media (i.e. sophisticated and local type materials should be provided.

### **The Qualification for teaching CRK in the Curriculum**

The Executor of any curriculum innovation in the schools is the teacher. Williams and Wilson (1967) acknowledged teachers as the key figure in making any type of curriculum significantly successful. Farrant (1964) opined that teachers should be knowledgeable or qualified than the pupils he guides and instruct Jesus as a teacher, know his disciples as he guides “where I go; you do not know”. That shows the disciples or learner/pupils must be guided, and that is why Jesus is the great teacher.

Digga (1991) noted that, schools may suffer training process if the teachers are lacking behind. He also affirmed that on CRK teachers status, he observe that very little emphasis has been made on teaching professional in this area, this is largely as a result of the misguided belief that any believer can teach/guide CRK pupils in primary schools without professional studies in CRK.

This has been acknowledged in this paper. This is why Hendricks (1987:14) lists qualifications of CRK teacher as thus:

- i. Because the teacher’s the communicator of truth, he must be openly and boldly be a Christian. Christian education demand Christian teachers. Any less will not result in Christian education.
- ii. Every CRK teacher must know the Bible. Because it is the word of God and is relevant to all subject. This principle must be applied to CRK
- iii. The CRK teacher must communicate in every aspect of his life and work, and work in all his being to the truth including ordinance honesty.
- iv. The teacher must seek excellence. This is seeking after intellectual excellence to the glory of God and a CRK teacher should be contented with nothing less than superiority in this area. The teacher should strive to meet the requirements of demanding world, according to the sin of mediocre.
- v. The CRK teacher must truly love his pupils, seeking their highest good even when at times they may be hard, not only should he love them but also genuinely like and understand them. A God given likeness is essential in effective teaching.
- vi. True CRK teachers should exercise complete submission to the one great teacher (Jesus Christ) “This is my beloved son” (Lk. 3:36) Every CRK teacher must listen to the Lord for his lessons and never should he think that; he does not need to be taught about him.
- vii. Affirming to the above listed qualifications of a good CRK teacher, Billy (2002: 36) quoting Orinva (1991) stated that “If a religious teacher is to continue to teach in our schools, he got to teach well”. The work (teaching profession) should be left in the hands of specialists. Indeed, there is need for high degree of skills in teaching Christian Research Knowledge

There many teachers who are well qualified to teach CRK but who refuse to do their work as they should do it. Such people are not teachers but cheats. Teachers’ interest is another

problem affecting teaching of CRK in schools. Some people become teachers by accidents and they find themselves teaching CRK because they feel the Bible is the easiest subject to handle. In discussing the lack of interest on the part of the teachers, Olusola (1975:20) expressed that there was abundance of evidence that over the years, many people have made teaching a stepping stone to other more lucrative professions. According to him:

*Some had entered and enjoyed under the delusion that teachers worked for few hours and enjoyed longer holidays than other workers. Thus, a good percentage of those which answered to the calling of teachers are in the profession not because they are dedicated and imbued with high ideals or services and sacrifice but entered with motives which consequence make their teaching fall short of ideals.*

Kay (1980) however identified this lack of enthusiasm with gift and drift. In his opinion, many teachers are not enthusiastic about their job because some of them who entered the teaching profession are less academically gifted children, while the gifted seen to just drift into it". What do you expect such people to do on getting to the actual performance of the job? He is going to be non-dedicated and non-committed.

Furthermore, Babin (1967:22) on Religious Education, teacher's prestige said:

*A teacher's personal commitment brings prestige to his religious lesson. Prestige, however rested on the teachers sense of Christian values, it grows out of his interest, fidelity and generosity in the service of youth.*

Lekwat (1984:18) on the other hand regretted that some religious education teachers suffer inferiority feelings and not command prestige because, "they do not pull their weight in their communities, also they do not demonstrate the social and spiritual responsibilities which go with the calling of becoming a religious studies teacher. Therefore their conscience does not allow them to feel equal to other people".

Ozigiand Canbol (1975) wrote that a good teacher should have the following qualities Viz, Sympathy, care, patience, orderliness and willingness to learn and ability to set good example. While Foley (1974:16) added that "the CRK teacher is a good listener, a resource person, a motivator and a good story teller". Billy (2002:15) expresses his concern when he says:

*The problem of teachers ranges from poor qualifications in the primary schools to lack of devotion to teaching in other levels of our educational institution. What explanation can one offer for a lecturer v'ho attends lectures for only three times in a semester? What of teachers who has no enough time to prepare his/her lessons well before leaching them? Therefore, the attitude of many teachers in the school setting calls for appropriate Guidance and Counseling, for such teachers, so that they know what they have accepted to do and do it well or else, find an alternative.*

If teachers' attitude to work should be so deplorable to such level, who will redeem this nation and her educational programmes from collapse? What will happen to the future generation if sets of unproductive professionals handle them? Will they not copy and do the same as they grow?

If the Federal Government can intensify her efforts by employing high handed supervisors from time to time, they would sit up and laxity would cease. I could remember that things were not like these when school were controlled by the missionary because there was

thorough supervision from time to time, and any teacher caught not doing his work effectively would be disciplined either by not giving him a month's salary or by sacking him out rightly if he was not productive.

Lack of sufficient professionally trained teachers is another problem affecting the teaching CRK in schools. According to Lekwat (1984:33), "in every paper or in every meeting, the problem of lack of sufficient professionally trained teachers is being raised. The causes of the shortage are, numerous and one major cause is the problem of policy implementation by the appropriate government". This is true and supported by Akinpelu (1975) on the quality of teacher intakes.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the Challenges affecting the implementation of the Christian Religious Education in Nigerian School the following conclusion where drawn.

- Most of the Primary Schools in the country were not sufficiently staffed with qualified CRK teachers.
- Auxiliary are still teaching in the primary schools.
- Christian Religious Knowledge teachers in the Primary Schools lack professional competence in using various teaching methods during lessons. Most of them have not been keeping abreast with the new trends in the teaching of the subject.
- There are inadequate instructional materials in all Primary Schools in Nigeria still exist.
- Most CRK teachers do not seem to use appropriate simple methods or techniques of evaluation such as easy question, objective in assessing their pupils.

From the forgoing it can be concluded that the problem affecting the successful implementation of the CRK Curriculum lies with the methods of teaching Christian Religious Knowledge, use of unqualified CRK teachers and in adequate facilities in the schools.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the above, the following recommendations are therefore put forward:

1. Priority should be given to qualified teachers in the field to teach the subject in the primary schools.
2. Untrained Christian Religious Knowledge teachers who are teaching the subject should be encouraged to go for training in CRK. This will guarantee the level of competency expected of teachers within the field.
3. Christian Religious Knowledge teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops, seminars to broaden their knowledge in the subject.
4. The Study reveals that the common instructional strategies that were mainly used by CRK teachers in the primary and secondary schools are not yielding the desired result. It is therefore recommended that CRK teachers should use a diverse instructional strategy that is learner centered such as field mp, discovery method; inquiry method, problem solving method, in the course of their teaching as these will improve pupil's performance in the subject.
5. Government on its part should provide all instructional materials' equipment lacking in the primary and secondary schools for the teaching of CRK in the primary schools.
6. Teachers should always make use of authentic continuous assessment method such as essay test, objective test, etc. in their lesson this will give the teacher the feedback of the performance of his pupils.

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