

Students' Response to Curriculum Review of Undergraduate Religion/Education Programme

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Abstract

This paper examines the imperative and students' response to curriculum review of undergraduate Religion/Education programme in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. The study was a survey type and a fifteen (15) item questionnaire was designed to elicit response from the respondents. The population of the study comprised all the second (200 level), third (300 level) and fourth (400 level) year students' who offer Religion and Education numbering fifty (50). Five research questions were posed to guide the study. The findings revealed that out of seventy - one (71) courses offered, forty (40) were accepted as relevant, twenty - one (21) were marked to be merged and ten (10) were to be deleted from the curriculum to give room for the introduction of new ones. The implication therefore, is that the curriculum should be reviewed to reflect current societal needs and challenges.

Keywords: Students' Response, Curriculum Review, Undergraduate and Religion Education

Introduction

What is taught in our school is one of the most important decisions of any given nation, be it developing or developed. The knowledge passed on from one generation to another, the skills and abilities that are considered necessary for children to adulthood, the attitudes and values that ought to be instilled in the children are all at the core of the curriculum, and can shape our society and economy for years (Qates, 2011).

Curriculum according to Offonna (2005) and Esu, Erukoha and Umoren (2007) is the process of determining and pursuing the societal objectives in knowledge, activities and experience formally or informally, planned and guided by the school for the benefit of the learners. Curriculum planning and development according to Mkpia (1987), is the bedrock of any education system because, it lays solid foundation for the building up of the human and material resources in the society. However, every planned curriculum is subject to change and review to reflect current societal needs and challenges. This means that curriculum should be reviewed to suit the global demands for useful knowledge and skills.

Olaitan and Ali (1977), are of the view that curriculum should be reviewed from time to time in order to prepare younger generations for the task of developing scientific and technological as well as communicative skills, which are required in a changing world. This should be done by deleting irrelevant information, knowledge, or skill and substituting them with more relevant and most valuable ones in order to keep in tune with the global best practices.

Teaching Christian Religion in Schools

Christian Religious Knowledge according to Eluu (2012) is a subject concerned with the upbringing, instructing and informing students on Christian beliefs and practices as found in the Holy Bible and Christian traditions. This probably informed the attitude and philosophy of Christian Missionaries who introduced this as a core subject in their curriculum aimed at training theft converts with the Bible as the main textbook and the three (3) R's - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic which according to Fajana (1978, P.34) "were principally aimed at promoting the knowledge of the Bible".

The emphasis on the curriculum was to make converts who will be nurtured and groomed for Christian Service, but today, it is to make the students useful to themselves and the society (FRN, 2004). It is therefore true that the curricula of Christian Religious Knowledge are the experiences which are derivable or obtainable from Biblical personalities, Biblical Virtues and great church leaders who had devoted theft lives to the work and ministry of the church and humanity, (Eluu, 2012). Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum therefore seeks to inculcate in individuals how to become useful to themselves, their community, the nation and the entire human race. At the university level, the curriculum is designed for three and for year programme. For students who come into the programme with N.C.E, the programme lasts between two and three years depending on the ability of the student. From available records, students admitted with NCE/Religion graduates within three years. For most of the other students who are admitted through J.ME, graduate in the course after four years. Some students who were offered admission into single honours Degree (B.A) in Religious studies change to Educationf Religion because they feel that it is easier to get a teaching job. Those who get teaching appointment with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Religious Studies register for a postgraduate Diploma in Education (PUDE) to qualify for teaching appointment in order to retain their jobs.

Statement of the Problem

The curriculum of the ordinary level Christian Religious Knowledge offered and covered by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) greatly differ from what obtains at the tertiary level and most of the students in Religion / Education came in through Joint Matriculation Examination (J.M.E), this suggest that their experiences are still very low having finished fresh from the secondary School. In reality, as these fresh students are exposed to the curriculum at the tertiary level, they tend to fear and most times complain that it is not what they expected. The problem of this study therefore, is to find out those areas of the curriculum that need to be changed for the purposes of improving the teaching and learning of the course. This is in view of the fact that the curriculum must have relevance to the needs of the individual and the society at large (FRN, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out students response to curriculum review of undergraduate Religion/Education programme. Specifically, the study sought to determine.

1. The relevance of Religion Education Curriculum to the social, moral and religious development of the student and society.
2. The topics that should be deleted;
3. The new concepts/ topics that should *be* added to the curriculum;
4. The prospects of Christian Religious Education programme to students and
5. The strengths and weaknesses of lecturers who teach the course in terms of methods.

Research Questions

The following five research questions guided the study.

1. How relevant are the content of Religion/Education Curriculum to' the social, moral and religious life of the individual and society?
2. Which Christian Religious Education topics should be deleted from the curriculum or merged?
3. Which new concepts/topics should be added to the curriculum?
4. What are the prospects of Christian Religious Education available to the students?
5. How do you assess your lecturer's methods of teaching Christian Religious Education?

Methodology

They study is organized under the following sub-headings: Research design, Area of study, population of study, sample and sampling Technique and instrument for data collection.

Research Design

The research was a survey of students' response to curriculum review of Christian Religious Studies. According to Nzewi (200t), a descriptive survey research design is mainly concerned with describing events as they are without any manipulation of what is being studied.

Area of the Study

The area of the study was Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. MI the final year students, third and second year students were involved in the study.

Population of the Study

The final year students of Religion/Education were 25, third year students were 11 students while second year students were 14 respectively. These students were admitted through the supplementary admission since there was none on merit list. A total number of fifty (50) students formed the population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was adopted because the population is relatively small and manageable. All the 50 students of Religion Education programme were involved in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A fifteen (15) item structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher. Section 'A' deals with the curriculum of Religious Education programme from 100 to 400 level. Section "B" indicated courses that were to be deleted and courses to be added to the curriculum. Section "C., deals with the prospects of Christian Religious Education and section "D" focused on the methods used by the lecturers in teaching Christian Religious Education. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation while the reliability was calculated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics, which yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.97 and 0.96. A three point rating scale was provided for the respondents to express their opinion on the relevance of the curriculum and this was weighted as follows: Very Relevant (VR) - 3; Relevant (R) - 2; Not Relevant (NR) - 1.

Data was analyzed using simple percentages. Responses above fifty (5 0%) were accepted as relevant while percentages of responses below fifty (50%) were used to determine the courses to be merged and courses to be deleted from the curriculum as the case may be.

Table 1: The Curriculum of Religion/Education 100 level (Year One)

Course Code	Items	Unit
EDU 101	Historical Foundation of Education	2
EDU 111	Introduction to Educational Psychology	2
REL 111	History and People of Old Testament	2
REL 103	Introduction to African Traditional Religion	2
REL 115	The Background of the New Testament	2
EAS 121	Introduction to the Teaching of Pentateuch	2
REL 107	Introduction to Islam and Sirah	2
EDU 100	Introduction to Teaching Profession	2
EDU 102	Sociological Foundation of Education	2
REL 118	Tradition of Jesus	2
REL 116	History of Christianity in West Africa	2
EAS 122	The Synoptic Gospels	2
EAS 108	Foundations of Arts and Social Science Edu	2
REL 102	Introduction to the Qumran and History of Islam	2

The Curriculum of Religion/Education 200 Level (Year Two)

EDU 201	Philosophical Foundation of Education	2
EDU 211	Human Development	2
EDU 221	Curriculum and Instruction II	2
EAS 223	Ancestor ship in Africa Traditional Religion	2
EAS 221	Teaching History and Religion of Israel	2
REL 201	Introduction to Religion	2
REL 203	Elementary Biblical Greek OR	2
REL 207	Elements of Hebrew Grammar	2
REL 211	Christian History and Doctrine I	2
REL 209	Critical Introduction to Old Testament	2
REL 289	Philosophy of Religion	2
EDU 212	Human Learning	2
EDU 224	Educational Technology	2
EDU 222	Special Methods	2
EAS 208	Classroom Organization and Mgt in ASSE	2
EAS 222	Teaching Interaction to Religion	2
REL 252	Religion and Human Values	2
REL 204	Critical Introduction to the New Testament	2
REL 258	Problems of Religious beliefs and History	2
REL 212	Christian history and Doctrine II	2
REL 224	Traditional Religion in Africa	2
EDU 223	Teaching Practice I	2

The Curriculum of Religion/Education 300 level (Year Three)

EDU 311	Special Education	2
EDU 321	Curriculum and Instruction II	2
EDU 331	Research Methods and Statistics	2
EAS 301	Project Methodology in ASSE	2
EAS 323	Teaching the Prophets in Ancient Israel	2
EAS 321	Teaching History of the church Reformation	2
REL 317	Earliest Christianity: the beginning	2
REL 319	New Testament Theology	2
REL 321	Traditional Religion in West Africa II	2
REL 383	Sociology of Religion	2
EDU 322	Teaching Practice 11	3
EDU 332	Educational measurement and evaluation	2
EAS 308	Supervision and inspection in ASSE	2
EAS 324	Religious Dialogue in pluralistic Society	2
REL318	Literature in the Old Testament	2
REL 374	Themes in major Asian Religions	2
REL 312	Old Testament Theology	2
REL 316	Earliest Christianity :The life and work of Saint Paul	2

The Curriculum of Religion/Education 400 Level (Year Four)

EDU 401	Educational Management	2
EAS 421	Exegesis of the Gospel of St. John	2
REL 415	New Testament Text I	2
REL 469	Religious Ethics	2
REL 411	The close of the New Testament Era	2
REL 413	Christian Theology in Africa	2
REL 485	Independent Churches in Africa	2
REL 417	Christian History and Doctrine III	2
EAS 439	Seminar in Religion Education	2
REL 425	Phenomenology of Religion	2
EDU 412	Guidance and Counseling	2
EDU 498	Research project	4
EAS 422	Teaching Acts of the Apostles	2
REL 484	Religion and Culture in Contemporary Society	2
REL 412	Literature of the Old Testament	2
REL 464	Christian Ethics and Contemporary Society	2
REL 446	Religious interpretation of society	2

Results:

The researcher organized the results according to the stated research questions.

Table II: Simple percentage of respondents on the relevance of the curriculum of Religion/Education.

Course Code	Items	No	%	Decision
EDU 101	Historical Foundation of Education	50	100	R
EDU 111	Introduction to Education Psychology	45	90	R
EDU 100	Introduction to Teaching Profession	50	100	R
EDU 102	Sociological Foundation of Education	48	96	R
REL 111	History and People of Old Testament	45	90	R
REL 103	Introduction to African Traditional Religion	46	92	M
REL 105	The Background of the New Testament	50	100	R
EAS 121	Introduction to the Teaching of Pentateuch	50	100	R
REL 107	Introduction to Islam and Syrah	47	94	M
REL 118	Tradition of Jesus	48	96	R
REL 116	History of Christianity in West Africa	50	100	R
EAS 122	The Synoptic Gospels	45	90	R
EAS 108	Foundations of Arts and Social Science Edu	50	100	D
REL 102	Introduction to the Qumran and History of Islam	46	92	M
EDU 201	Philosophical Foundation of Education	48	96	R
EDU 211	Human Development	46	92	M
EDU 221	Curriculum and instruction I	47	94	M
EDU212	Human Learning	45	90	M
EDU 224	Educational Technology	50	100	R
EDU 222	Special Methods	43	86	R
EDU 223	Teaching Practice I	47	94	M
EAS 223	Ancestor ship in Africa Traditional Religion	46	92	R
EAS 221	Teaching History and Religion of Israel	42	84	R
REL 201	Introduction to Religion	50	100	R
REL 203	Elementary Biblical Greek	50	100	D
REL 207	Elements of Hebrew Grammar	50	100	D
REL 211	Christian History and Doctrine I	45	90	M
REL 209	Critical Introduction to Old Testament	48	96	R
REL 289	Philosophy of Religion	46	92	R
EAS 208	Classroom Organization and Mgt in ASSE	40	80	D
EAS 222	Teaching Interaction to Religion	42	84	R
REL 252	Religion and Human Values	45	90	R
REL 204	Critical Introduction to the New Testament	43	86	R
REL 258	Problems of Religious beliefs and History	48	96	D
REL 212	Christian history and Doctrine 11	50	100	M
REL 224	Traditional Religion in Africa	47	97	M
EDU 311	Special Education	45	90	D

EDU 321	Curriculum and instruction 11	46	92	M
EDU 331	Research Methods and Statistics	50	100	R
EAS 301	Project Methodology in ASSE	50	100	D
EAS 323	Teaching the Prophets in Ancient Israel	43	86	R
EAS 321	Teaching History of the church Reformation	46	92	R
REL 317	Earliest Christianity the beginning	48	96	M
REL 319	New Testament Theology	42	84	R
REL 321	Traditional Religion in West Africa	46	92	M
REL 383	Sociology of Religion	43	86	R
EDU 322	Teaching Practice II	46	92	M
EDU 333	Educational measurement and evaluation	50	100	R
EAS 308	Supervision and inspection in ASSE	42	84	D
EAS 324	Religious Dialogue in pluralistic Society	50	100	R
REL 318	Literature in the Old Testament	40	80	R
REL 374	Themes in major Asian Religions	47	94	R
REL 312	Old Testament Theology	46	92	R
REL 316	Earliest Christianity :The life and work of saint Paul	45	90	M
EDU 401	Educational management	46	92	R
EDU 412	Guidance and Counseling	48	96	R
EDU 498	Research Project	50	100	M
EAS 421	Exegesis of the Gospel of St John	48	96	M
REL 415	New Testament Text I	45	90	M
REL 469	Religious Ethics	43	86	R
REL 411	The close of the New Testament Era	45	90	D
REL 413	Christian theology in Africa	48	96	R
REL 486	Independent churches in Africa	46	92	R
REL 417	Christian History and doctrine III	48	96	M
EAS 439	Seminal in Religion Education	45	90	R
EAS 425	Phenomenology of Religion	47	94	R
EAS 422	Teaching Acts of the Apostles	42	84	M
REL 484	Religion and Culture in contemporary society	45	90	M
REL 412	Literature of the old Testament	42	84	R
REL 464	Christian Ethics and Contemporary Society	48	96	M
REL 446	Religious Interpretation of Society	43	86	D

KEY: R = Relevant
 M = Merge
 D = Delete

Table III: Courses to be Merged

Course Code	Title	Rating	Decision
REL 103	Introduction to African Traditional Religion	92	M
REL 224	Traditional Religion in African	94	M
REL 321	Traditional Religion in West Africa	92	M
REL 107	Introduction to Islam and Sirah	94	M
REL 102	Introduction to the Quran and History of Islam	92	M
EDU 21 1	Human Development	92	M
EDU 212	Human Learning	90	M
EDU 221	Curriculum and instruction I	94	M
EDU 321	Curriculum and instruction II	92	M
EDU 223	Teaching Practice I	94	M
EDU 322	Teaching Practice II	92	M
REL 21 1	Christian History And Doctrine I	90	M
REL 212	Christian History and Doctrine II	100	M
REL 417	Christian History and Doctrine III	96	M
REL 3 17	Earliest Christianity the beginning	96	M
REL 316	Earliest Christianity the life and works of St. Paul	90	M
EAS 422	Teaching Acts of the Apostles	84	M
EAS 42I	Exegesis of the gospel of St John	96	M
REL 415	New Testament Text I	90	M
REL484	Religion and couture in contemporary society	90	M
REL 464	Christian ethics and contemporary society	96	M

Table IV: Course to be deleted

Course Code	Title	Rating	Decision
EAS 108	Foundations of Arts and Social Science Ed	100	D
RE; 203	Elementary Biblical Greek	100	D
REL 207	Elements of Hebrew Grammar	100	D
EAS 208	Classroom organization and management in ASSE	80	D
EAS 308	Supervision and inspection in ASSE	84	D
EDU 311	Special education	90	D
EAS 301	Project methodology in ASSE	100	D
REL 411	The close of the new testament Era	90	D
REL 446	Religious interpretation of society	86	D
REL 258	Problem of religious beliefs and history	96	D

Table V: Students Assessment of the Performance of their Teacher's in Teaching Skills and Application of Relevant Methodology.

Items	Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Teaching, Skills, Experiences and Methodology	30	60	12	24	5	10	3	6

Table VI: Prospects of a Count in Religion/Education

Items	Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
B.A.Ed Degree holders in Religion Education have no difficulty getting teaching appointments in secondary schools and can also secure other appointments	35	70	13	26	2	4	0	0
B.A.Ed holders in Religion Education has the opportunity of going in for higher degrees in other Education course options	37	74	10	20	2	4	1	2

Discussion

Table II: Indicates that forty (40) courses were marked (R) Relevant while twenty one (21) were marked (M) Merged and ten (10) were to be deleted.

Table III: shows a list of courses to be merged to give room for the introduction of new courses. EDU 221 and EDU 321 are courses in curriculum *from* the second year to the third year. It was the opinion of the respondents that these courses could be merged to have only one course instead of two as the case may be and more valuable are the improvement, which the content of the curriculum would receive. Thus for the curriculum courses of year two and three, the opinions ranged from 94% and 92% for EDU 221 and EDU 321 respectively.

From the Table III above, it was also observed that some courses in Religion and Education were on the opinion of the respondents to be merged. For example, REL 103 - Introduction to African Traditional Religion, REL 224 -Traditional Religion in Africa and REL 321 - Traditional Religion in West Africa. The opinions are that since their contents are similar, they can be reviewed and merged to form two courses for the purposes of reducing the content and for better instruction.

In the same vein REL 107- Introduction to Islam and Sirah and REL 102- Introduction to the Quran and History of Islam are courses in Islamic religion. The opinions are that since their contents are similar, they can be reviewed and merged for better instruction. In a similar manner REL 21 1-Christian history and doctrine 1, REL 212- Christian history and doctrine 11 and Rel 417 Christian History and Doctrine III could be merged to form two courses for the purposes of reducing the content. The third part of this course REL 417 - is better taught at the higher levels. Also recommended to be merged includes REL 317 - Earliest Christianity: the beginning, REL 316 - Earliest Christianity: the life and works of St Paul and EAS 422-Teaching Acts of the Apostles Could be merged to form one course, Since their contents are similar. EAS 421-Exegesis of the gospel of St. John, REL 415 - New Testament text 1, REL 484 - Religion and culture in contemporary society and REL 464 - Christian ethics and contemporary society. These courses could be merged to form two courses for the purposes of reducing the content and for better instruction.

Similarly EDU 211 - Human Development and EDU 212 - Human learning could be merged to from one course. EDU 221- Curriculum and instruction 1 and EDU 321- curriculum and instruction II could also be

merged. Also EDU 223 - Teaching practice I and EDU 322 Teaching practice II could also be merged to form one course as the case may be for the purposes of reducing the content.

From Table IV, it is observed that ten (10) courses have been recommended to be deleted from the curriculum of the programme of Religion Education cutting across 100-400 levels and these courses should be replaced with new ones.

EDU 311 - Special Education is not offered by some Departments in the Faculty of Education. Also EAS 108, EAS 208 and EAS 308 are no longer offered by some course options in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education. In order that there is equity and fair play, the students were of the view that these courses should be deleted from their curriculum. The six other courses - REL 203, REL 207, REL 411, REL 446, REL 258 and EAS 301 should be deleted and replaced with other courses most relevant to the students who will be teachers in secondary schools.

Table V Shows the rating of lecturers by the students. The lecturers were rated very highly. 84% of the students indicated that the lecturers teaching skills, methodology and experience were satisfactory and commendable.

Table VI: Prospects of a course in Religion/Education 96% of students expressed their opinion that the most available opportunity open to the students is a teaching job. This is because most of those who had a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion/Education have no difficulty getting teaching appointments in secondary schools. They also indicated that the programme afforded them the opportunity of going in for higher degrees in other Education areas as well as in Religion

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on students' response to curriculum review in undergraduate Religion /Education programmes. The response showed that out of seventy one (71) courses, forty (40) were relevant, twenty one (21) were to be merged and Ten (10) were to be deleted to give room for the introduction of new ones. The courses to be deleted were those considered to be more suitable to be offered at the post graduate levels and theological schools respectively.

The implication of the study is that the review is necessary to reflect current societal needs and challenges; hence the needs of the learner and the society lies at the base of curriculum planning and review. The students who graduate in Religion/Education as a combination can find profitable employment anywhere in the country and beyond, particularly in the ministries, government parastatal/agencies as well as commercial ventures amongst others.

Furthermore, the review should take into consideration the relationship between Religion and other courses in the Humanities and social sciences with a view to harnessing more relevant links, which would be of benefit to the students in view of prevailing opportunities in the globalized labour market.

It is however recommended that the government should particularly show positive attitude towards the study of Religious Studies by making it compulsory at the secondary school level because of its relevance in moulding pupils' character and shaping the national image and culture. Government should as well encourage regular curriculum review in all other courses to enable these courses keep in tune with current realities of life.

Government should regularly organize seminars, conferences and workshops to re-orientate and update the teachers knowledge on the reviewed curricula and on appropriate selection and use of varieties of techniques and methods in their lessons delivery and thus enhance efficiency in the educational sector.

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