

Justice and Development in Africa: The Role of Religious Studies

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Abstract

The study focused on how justice can influence development in Africa with multi-sovereign states, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic dimensions that has exerted on the polity and policy implementation with democratic and multi-phased governance in Africa. The study specifically aimed at finding out if the objectives of religious studies could help in justice and development in Africa? Two research questions guided the study and a hypothetical statement was raised. The population of the study consists of all the religious educators in both federal and state universities within the South-East Geo-political zone of Nigeria made up of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states out of which 100 educators were selected using sample random sampling techniques. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data was analyzed using mean while hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Keywords: Marginalization, corruption, oppression, injustice, politics, fair play, rule of law, ethnicity, religion, interest etc.

Introduction

The formation of most African states by colonial masters including Nigeria in 1914 and her independence in 1960 along with others independent African nations shade light to societal development in Africa. Colonialism has become a pre-condition for the development of the emergent nations of Africa. The light of development in the emergent nations was a shift from attitudes of traditional society to foreign elements of development of the western world.

Tiongco intones that development has been seen in purely economic terms, levels of national income, generation of savings, growth rate of industrial output, availability of public utilities or rate of illiteracy, infant mortality and life expectancy as “indicators” by which a country’s state of development could be measured (1996:20). Human resources and capacity building, transportation system, network of roads, technology and scientific awareness are other factors of societal transformation.

According to Ugwueye, justice is one of the essential pillars in development that enhances respect for other people’s rights, positions, allocations, appointments and avoidance of sharp practices (2004:100). Kasedende (2007) asserts that development has become problematic in Nigeria in view of the fact that Nigerian financial system has remained shallow while Honoham (2007) opines that the degree of financial development is determined by its depth. In other words, strengthening rural access to financial services underscores the depth of financial development in any economy of any nation. Usuman (2009) averred that socio-economic transformation has become a problem of Nigerian economy on development as financial sector has not been well developed.

Nwoba (2009) underscores that economic blue print reforms of successive administrations in Nigeria were either aborted mid-way or were never implemented exemplified in Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), National vision 2020, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) 2003, and House for all 2000. Accordingly, Igbuzor (2003), in historical perspective intones that there were unwillingness on the part of foreign trading companies in colonial Nigeria to embark on capital intensive projects. Adigun (1991) asserts that public enterprise budgetary provisions are often diverted, embezzled and, or out rightly misappropriated which affects justice in development in Nigeria.

The problem of justice in development led to the quest for social policy and balanced regional growth in establishment of public enterprises even though vast rural areas remain under developed. The effect of rural communities being left out in development generated problems of income disparities and poverty levels within Nigerian populace. Ezeani underscores that the greatest problem of justice in development could be accessed by the performance of public enterprises. Ezeani states that:

economic insufficiency in the production of goods and services by the public sector, with high cost of production, inability to innovative, and costly delays in delivery of the goods produced, ineffectiveness in the provision of goods and services, such as failure to meet intended objectives, diversion of benefits to elite group etc, rapid expansion of bureaucracy, severally straining the public budget with image deficits of public enterprises becoming massive drain in governance resources, inefficiency in government, poor financial performance of public enterprises, reflecting a history of huge financial losses, over staffing and burden of excessive debts (2005:222).

McGrew in Njoku (2015:71) agree that public enterprises have attracted much criticism especially since the 80s encumbered by micro-economic policies arising from the global economic crisis for which public enterprises operations reflect a history of huge financial losses, over staffing and burden of excessive debts to development initiatives. Instead of public enterprises fostering development has become a cog in the wheel of progress in Nigeria.

According to Nwali (2004), Nigeria is good and brilliant in formulating good and interesting policies but the problem has been premised on poor implementation, political influence, cultural barrier and corruption at the highest order that has been the bane of justice in development in the country.

Okigbo (1989), sees the lack of discipline manifested in the infusion of partisan and ethnic politics, in the location of government projects, in the administration of projects and in the application of policies associated with development initiatives while poor performance of plan is largely attributed to lack of commitment and political will on the part of the leadership and, one wonders whether justice could be attained in development initiative of the nation.

Obilo (1995) summarized specific aims and Njoku agree that:

religious studies intends to transmit the values of one's nation's heritage to the next generation, foster the spirit of respect for human dignity and awareness of life; train those who can contribute towards realizing a peaceful international society, nurture individuals who in turn will form and develop a democratic society where freedom, truth and peace rule. Train individuals who can make independent decision and foster a sense of morality and nurture those who can endeavour to inherit and also develop traditional culture and develop culture that is rich (2015:71).

Religious studies transmit great traditions, norms, customs, and ideals to individuals that foster justice, fair play, and engineers sound judgment that leads to the development of an egalitarian society.

Religious studies are therefore geared toward inculcating insight, initiative, self imposed discipline along with the spirit of social conformity to individuals which enrich such individuals to initiate independent action for the common good of human beings and human society.

Justice and development has been threatened by politics of ethnicity, corruption, perversion, indiscipline and religious bigotry and with parochial policies of government.

Accordingly, Benoist intones that "a government can only be strong when it is legitimate" but also driven by values of justice as well as reason (1999: 24-35). Policies of government should be based on improving the lives of the general populace. Moyo and Mdongwa intone that Robert Mugabe adopted the policy of "look east or look least in Zimbabwe in 2005 (2005: 76). The look east policy was skewed politics that broke ties between Zimbabwe and western nations, enshrined politics of coercion, abuses of labour laws, exploitation of mineral resources, dumping of cheap goods and the Zimbabwean and local industries were disadvantaged while China benefitted more. Moyo and Mdongwa further intone that the policy of look east or look least generated discourses on "reengaging the west" in Zimbabwe and modern day foreign policy of any country should never be to look south, east, west and north but "everywhere" in view of the values of justice and that everywhere ought to be developed as interest of all are involved in a global village (2015: 77-82).

Obert Gutu in Moyo et al argues that one should be wary for "continuing to look east without also looking west, north and south. At any rate, if you continue going east, you will inevitably come to the west because east and west are now two sides of the same coin (2015: 77)". In other words the world is spherical that has become a global village which calls for the values of justice to be extended to all parts of rural areas in development to enhance human capacity building and economic recovery as well as reduction of poverty along with access to financial facilities at all levels of human environment.

Statement of the Problem

Much has been said about challenges that confront justice and development in Africa especially multi-sovereign states with multi-ethnic groups, diversities of cultural cleavages, linguistic variations, religious groupings, beliefs and practices. The major challenge confronting development in Africa is how justice can influence development to sustain unity, peace and stability of sovereign African states, in order to enhance human capacity of building, economic recovery and reduction of poverty along with access to financial facilities and also public utilities at all levels of human environment in Africa. The research is limited to Nigerian environment and is posed with the findings and ways religious studies can help justice influence development in Nigeria. Therefore the problem of this study posed in a question: what is the place of religion in justice and development in Nigerian environment for better tomorrow?

Research Questions

The two research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the challenges confronting justice and development?
2. In what ways could religious studies help justice and development?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female educators in the role of religious studies in justice and development in individual Nigerians.

Methodology

Survey design was adopted in the study. The population of the study is the federal and state universities in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The researcher sampled 10 (ten) persons in each university. The ten educators were randomly selected out of ten (10) universities. This brings the target population to 100 religious studies educators. Questionnaire was the instrument of data collection and face validation was carried out by five experts in educational measurement and evaluation. Hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to a corresponding number of religious studies educators in the sampled schools.

Mean was used to analyze the data. A decision rule was derived by adding the assigned values and dividing it by the number of scores. Therefore any score below 2.5 is interpreted as rejected and any score above 2.5 interpreted as accepted. The assigned scores = 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10

The number of scales = 4

$$\frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

Data Presentation

Table 1: Mean Scores on Challenges Confronting Justice and Development (N=100)

S/No	Items	\bar{x}	Remarks
1	Corruption	3.8	Accepted
2	Injustice	2.9	Accepted
3	Oppression	3.5	Accepted
4	Perversion	3.7	Accepted
5	Indiscipline	2.8	Accepted
6	Illiteracy	3.3	Accepted
7	Religious beliefs	2.5	Accepted
8	Religious practices	2.5	Accepted
9	Poverty	2.5	Accepted
10	Ethnicity	3.8	Accepted
11	Greediness	3.0	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.1	

Table 1, shows that items 1-11 are challenges confronting justices and development obtained mean above 2.5. The result with a grand mean of 3.1 indicates that the respondents agreed with above listed items in the table as challenges confronting justice and development.

Table 2: Mean Scores on Various ways Religious Studies could help in Justice and Development

S/No	Items	\bar{x}	Remarks
12	Building up good sense of judgment in individuals	3.5	Accepted
13	Cultivating in the individuals the habits of hard work and obedience to rule of law	3.8	Accepted
14	Developing in the individuals sympathy for people marginalized, oppressed and in felt need	3.7	Accepted
15	Developing in the individuals skills and talents	3.0	Accepted
16	Inculcating in the individuals good conscience	3.6	Accepted
17	Providing good sense of discipline	3.5	Accepted
18	Enabling individuals develop self imposed discipline	3.0	Accepted
19	Predisposing individuals to the golden rule of reciprocity	3.4	Accepted
20	Enabling individuals develop insight, initiative and independent action	3.5	Accepted
21	Develop in the individuals the spirit of social conformity	3.5	Accepted
22	Inculcate in man right ego and respect for other peoples' right	3.1	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.4	

Table 2, shows that items 12-22 fall within the limit of agreed with the grand mean of 3.4 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5. This indicates that the items are ways in which religious studies could help justice and development not only in Nigeria but also in Africa.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female educators on the role of religious studies in individual Nigerians.

Gender	N	X	SD	DF	t-calculated	t-critical	Decision
Male	58	3.35	0.49				
Female	42	3.30	0.37	98	1.71	1.96	Accepted

The hypothesis underscored that the t-critical value of 1.96 is greater than t-calculated value of 1.71, in other words, the null hypothesis was accepted. It showed that there is no difference in the mean responses of male and female educators on the role of religious studies in individual morality of the Nigerians.

Findings

The findings of the study are summed up as follows: those indexes like ethnicity, corruption, injustice, oppression, indiscipline, perversion, beliefs, practices, poverty and greediness along with illiteracy affect justice and development. Those religious studies are a veritable tool for justice and development.

Discussions

Results of the study in table 1 showed that the respondents agreed with the items 1-11 on challenges confronting justice and development of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. It was evident in the results that emphasized corruption, diversion, injustice, oppression, ethnicity and greediness which are factors that affect justice in development of Nigerian Society. No wonder Ezeani (2005) decried public enterprises becoming massive drain of governance resources, diversion of benefits to elite groups, poor financial performance of financial enterprises that reflect a history of huge financial losses, over staffing and burden of excessive debts that has affected development initiatives and Nwoba (2009), added that economic blue print reforms of successive administrations in Nigeria were either aborted mid-way or were never implemented as a result of international debt burden.

Dwindling economy frustrates development, retards growth and the society stagnates. It is then understandable why Federico (1975) and Njoku (2011) agreed that ethnicity affects justice and development when majority discriminate against minority in employment, education, citing of projects and inequalities in appointive positions. Ethnic partisan politics has caused minority groups to suffer broken promises and violated treaties and also had become the bane of justice and development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The resultant effect is that vast rural areas have remained either under-developed or undeveloped.

However, results of Table 2 showed that the respondents agreed that listed items 12-22 on various ways religious studies could help in justice and development. This has been underscored by Ugwueye that saw justice as one of the essential pillars in development that enhances respect for other peoples' rights, positions, allocations, appointments and avoidance of sharp practices (2004: 100).

In the same vein, religious studies would help justice and development for future progress and societal transformation. According to Peschke, justice connotes principles and values embedded in religious studies which Plato and Aristotle postulated as "firm and constant will to give to each one his firm due" while Thomas Aquinas in Peschke extended justice beyond the duties of strict right to the obligations of gratitude, obedience, respect of persons, even friendliness and worship of God (1996: 236).

Eduardo (1989:125) says that development made Alexandria a city of wealth and luxury where no one is unemployed. In other words, justice and development is a convincing proof for the truth that, from the common human nature endowed with reason, free will and equal dignity, common rights and duties result for all. Paul Tillich says that justice and development "leaves for people what is their own and attributes to them what they really are" (1954:63). In other words, justice and development guarantee's proportionate and equitable distribution of the national wealth among the multi-ethnic and multi-regional groups and Ezeani (2005) agrees that it led to the quest for social policy and regional balancing in the establishment of public enterprises in Nigeria. In as much as justice and development are basic requirements for social coexistence and human development their violation cannot be tolerated but calls for reparation of the injury inflicted. Justice and development empowers the people's right to maintain and promote their bodily and mental life as well, improve on the conditions of their existence. Otto A. Bird in (1967) added that justice is rendering to each person and human community what is their own or due right. The inclusion of human community underscores that not only individuals but also community are subjects of rights in justice and development.

In line with the above, religious studies would sustain justice and development for future progress and all round development of humanity and environment. Obilo (1995), Ugwueye (2004) and Njoku (2015) agreed that religious studies are geared to inculcate in the individuals' social and moral values that would engineer right ego and respect for other peoples' rights, spirit of social conformity, insight, initiative and independent action, good conscience that would accord due rights for people marginalized, oppressed and in felt needs as well as a sound sense of judgment needed in justice and development not only in Nigeria but Africa as a whole.

Conclusion

In view of the findings of the study, it could be concluded that factors militating against justice and development would be ameliorated through religious studies. It is equally established that there would be wealth creation, reduction of income disparity, access to financial facilities and ordered existence, self-realization and progress in justice and development. Furthermore, that concerted efforts towards religious studies would impact more greatly on the individuals, promote enacting of just laws, implementation of government policies and concerns of Nigerians and the society would experience the needed progressive change.

Recommendations

The findings of the study guided the recommendations made:

1. Religious studies should be given equal opportunities with science, technology and ICT courses to project its importance in nation building, human capacity development and management of inter and intra-conflict for peaceful coexistence.
2. Religious educators should aim at impacting on their students those values, norms and standards that reshape individuals to make meaningful contributions to the society through exemplary life style.
3. Religious studies should be made compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools to empower adequate orientation and re-orientation of value to impact on the life of individual child.
4. Individual parents should be involved in orientation and re-orientation of value system in order to build dynamic and virile families and combat negative values that confront justice and development not only in Nigeria but also Africa.
5. Religious educators and religious courses should be incorporated in general studies (GS or GST) in tertiary institutions as both university wide lecturers and courses of studies that would impact veritable values capable of reshaping individual undergraduates to make needed contributions for societal progress.
6. Religious educators should employ versatile strategies to impact positively on the individuals on the values and benefits of justice and development of humanity and environment.

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