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CHALLENGES FACING ADMINISTRATION OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract: This article discussed the challenges facing Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from print material and online publication by recognized institutions and individual author. This article identified; inadequate funding of Christian religious programme, inadequate Christian religious lecturers, inadequate instructional materials of Christian religious studies, poor research in Christian religious programme, negative attitudes of students to the study of Christian religious programme, poor development of Christian religious lecturers and inadequate infrastructural facilities are challenges facing the administration of Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions. To solve these challenges, the paper

suggested that adequate funding of Christian religious programme, provision of adequate instructional, provision of adequate research fund for Christian religious programme, employment of lecturers with specialization in Christian religious programme, effective staff development for lecturers in the department of Christian religious studies, students should be motivated to study Christian religious programme and adequate infrastructural facilities should be provided in the department of Christian religious studies.

Key words: Administration, Challenges, Christian, Religious Studies, Programme

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education as the Post -Secondary Section of the National education system, which is given of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology including courses as are given by the Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training colleges, Correspondence Colleges and such institutions as may be allied to them (NPE,2014,Ogunode&Abubakar 2020,Ogunode&Isaac, 2020). Adeyemi (2001), viewed higher education as a system which embraces much of the country's research capacity and reproduces majority of the skilled professionals that are required in the labour market. Peretomode (2007) sees higher education as the facilitator, the bedrock, the powerhouse and the driving force for the strong socio-economic, political, cultural, healthier and industrial development of a nation as higher education institutions are key mechanisms increasingly recognized as wealth and human capital producing industries.

The objectives of higher education in Nigeria include the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and societies; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community and the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2004)

The Nigerian higher education is the largest in Africa. Noun (2009) submitted that from a global perspective, economic and social developments are increasingly driving the advancement and application of knowledge. Education and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations. Thenation looks up to higher education to through its traditional functions of teaching, research and

community service to develop manpower and disseminate necessary knowledge that are needed in industry and other sectors. The Nigeria higher education system comprising universities, polytechnics, and colleges offering programme in teacher education and agriculture. Higher education is a community of scholars, free to pursue knowledge without undue interference from anywhere.

Programme offered in the Nigerian higher institutions which include the universities include Christian religious studies under faculty of Arts. The National Universities Commission in its Bench Mark academic Standard (2007) listed academic disciplines offers in the Nigerian universities to include: i) Administration; Management and Management Technology; ii) Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Home Economics; iii) Arts; iv) Basic Medical and Health Science v) Education; vi) Engineering and Technology; vii) Environmental Sciences; viii) Law; ix) Pharmaceutical Sciences x) Medicine and Dentistry; xi) Science; xii) Social Sciences; xii) Veterinary Medicine. Christian religious studies or programme is under the arts programme in Nigerian higher institutions. Faculty of art is one of the largest faculties in the Nigerian higher institutions. Faculty of art host many programme and courses. Faculty of art offers degree programme, post-graduate programme and PhD programme with core and electives courses. One of the prominent programme or course in the faculty of art is Christian religious studies or programme. This article is aimed to discuss the challenges facing the administration of Christian religious studies or programme in the Nigerian higher institutions.

II. MAIN PART

Concept of Christian Religious Programme

Christian religious studies remain a programme designed for the study of Christian beliefs, faith, and practices. The major aims of inclusion of CRS in the education curriculum is to raise a generation of

people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, appreciate dignity of labour and those moral values specified in the broad national aims as good citizens. While at the secondary school level the subject is meant to prepare learners for useful living through inculcation of Christian attitudes and values, and to prepare learners for higher education (Akubue, 1992). To this effect, CRS is designed to achieve many goals in the lives of the pupils ranging from teaching the pupils about God to the teaching of moral values which is geared towards shaping human behavior. These values are embedded in the stories and events recorded in the bible (drawn from the life of Christian and other mystical beings). The aims of CRS, studies by Ali and Akubue (1988) showed that learners' moral attitude has not improved especially in this era. Meanwhile, an appraisal of CRS curriculum contents revealed that the subject has the potentials required to build one's moral character. The aims and objectives of the programme agree with those set out in the preamble to Arts courses. The programme is also to achieve the following: 1) To acquaint students with the main contents of the major religious traditions commonly practiced in Africa, namely Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion. The programme does not present any religious system as a sui generis exclusivist system; hence it also delves into other world religious phenomena such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism and Jainism. 2) To equip the products of this programme for the teaching career, administration, social work and offer them solid academic background for professional degrees in Journalism and Law. 3) To orient students towards developing minds of a broad spectrum conducive to a pluralistic society such as Nigeria. The realization of the objectives of Christian Religious Studies depends on the effective administration of the programme in the higher institutions level.

Concept of Administration

Administration is the application of organizational resources to achieve the objectives of the organization. Administration is the organization of institutions resources to implement the institutions; programme with the aims of realizing the objectives of the institutions. Administration takes place in different institutions, such as education. School administration refers to the use of both human and materials resources of the school for the realization of the school objectives. The objectives of school administration include: (a) to realize the objectives of educational system (b) to ensure proper coordination of human resources (c) to ensure effective and efficient application of both human and materials resources in the management of education (d) to eliminate wastages in the management of education (e) to promote accountability in the management of education (f) to ensure effective plan action for implementing of educational programme (g) to ensure quality policies that will aid the management of educational programme (Ogunode, & Agwor, 2020). Higher institutions administration in Nigeria takes two dimensions. These are external and internal administrations. The external administration deals with supervision of the institutions through the agencies established by the government such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities, colleges of education National commission for colleges of education (NCCE) while the National Board for Technical Education for the polytechnic (NBTE). These agencies ensure quality, standard, effective programme accreditation and supervision in all the higher institutions in the country. The internal administration is handled by the school administrators who are appointed by the government to coordinate the activities of the institutions with support from management team and governing councils (Ogunode, & Agwor, 2020).

The non-academic staff and academic staff required for the administration and implementation of Christian Religious programme, according to National University Commission Bench Mark (2007) is the ratio of 1 lecturer to 10 students. Well trained Religious Studies Scholars with M.A; and Ph.D qualifications are required in the department. For the Non-teaching Staff, it requires the departmental Secretary who would be Computer literate, Staff Assistant, (Messenger) and Cleaner; Laboratory technicians to handle the technical aspects of the language laboratory and the Departmental driver and the Clerical Officer.

The infrastructural facilities requirement for the administration of Christian Religious Studies include adequate lecturers' offices, classrooms, functional and well-equipped language laboratory, soundproof rooms and studios, audio-visual rooms. The instructional materials include Language laboratory is needed for the teaching of Hebrew, Greek and other languages. Please note the requirements stipulated in the Faculty requirements and well stocked Religious Studies books, journals, reference books in the main and departmental libraries and internet connectivity facilities. Others are tape recorders/players, public address system, computer units/ and other IT facilities.

Challenges Facing the Administration of Christian Religious Programme

The Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions is facing many challenges and these challenges include: inadequate funding of Christian religious programme, inadequate Christian religious lecturers, inadequate instructional materials of Christian religious programme, poor researching in Christian religious programme, negative attitudes of students to study Christian religious programme, poor staff development for lecturers of Christian

religious programme and inadequate infrastructural facilities.

Inadequate Funding of Christian Religious Programme

Inadequate funding is one of the problems facing the Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions. The annual budgetary allocation for the administration of the Christian religious programme at the higher institutions is inadequate. The inadequate funding of the Christian religious programme is responsible for the shortage of professional lecturers in the department of Christian religious studies, inadequate instructional materials, ineffective supervision and poor research in Christian religious programme. Inadequate funding is also responsible for the poor administration and coordination of the Christian religious programme in the various higher institutions in the country. The Nigerian higher institutions are facing the challenges of inadequate funding (Ekundayo, and Ajayi, 2009, Ibukun 1997, Ajayi and Ayodele 2002, Oyeneeye (2006) and Adegbite (2007). The Nigerian government over the years has not been meeting the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recommendation of 26% of the total budget allocation to education sector (Ekundayo, and Ajayi, 2009, Ajayi and Ekundayo 2006). Aina (2007) and Ekundayo, and Ajayi, (2009) submitted that government priority to education is still very low. These revelations expose the extent to which the government itself is a contributing factor to the financial imbroglio of the university system. The apparent shortage of fund available to the university system has been responsible for declining library, social and laboratory facilities in Nigerian universities in recent years. This in no small way makes the governance of the university system a herculean task (Ekundayo, and Ajayi, 2009).

Inadequate Lecturers in Christian Religious Programme

Another challenge facing the administration of Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions is the problem of shortage of lecturers in the Christian religious departments. Many higher institutions do not have lecturers that specialized in Christian religious programme. Many universities and colleges of education depend on visiting lecturers from other institutions or theology colleges. The inability of schools to employ adequate lecturers is affecting the administration of the CRS programme. Shortage of qualified teachers in Nigerian universities is well articulated in the reports of the Federal Government's needs assessment of Nigerian public universities carried out in 2012. According to the reports, only about 43 percent of university lecturers have PhD qualifications. The remaining 57 percent have qualifications below PhD. Only seven universities have up to 60 percent of their teaching staff with PhD qualifications. There are universities with fewer than five professors. For instance, the Kano State University of Science and Technology, Wudil, established 11 years ago and has been turning out graduates, has only one teaching staff with a professor ranking and 25 lecturers who are PhD degree holders. Similarly, the Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, established in 2006, has only two teaching staff in the professor category and five lecturers who have PhD qualifications. The understaffing of universities in Nigeria has serious implications for quality instruction and academic productivity in the institutions. The situation has led to an increasing culture of visiting lecturership in the system. The few available qualified lecturers are recycled as visiting, adjunct, sabbatical and contract lecturers to work in many universities at the same time. Many of them are always on the road travelling from one university town to another and unable to meet their primary obligations with their tenure-employer (Federal Ministry of Education, 2012). In the tertiary level,

the subsector of colleges of education experiences a very acute teaching staff shortage in disciplines such as special education and early childhood development, while the polytechnic subsector reported a very acute shortage of teaching staff in health technology (NEEDS, 2014). Ogunode & Musa, (2020), NEEDS, (2014) observed that inadequate lecturers is a serious problem facing all the higher institutions in Nigeria. Many higher institutions do not have adequate lecturers to deploy for teaching in the various institutions. The shortage of lecturer is responsible for the poor quality of teaching and learning in most Nigerian higher institutions.

Inadequate Instructional Materials in Christian Religious Programme

Instructional materials are educational resources employed or used in teaching and learning process with the aims of making the student understand the concept better. Instructional resources are educational resources that aids the teacher teaches well and make the students comprehend the concept. Many universities and colleges of education in the country do not have adequate instructional materials for the teaching of Christian religious programme in their respective institutions. There are limited textbooks, journal and resources materials on Christian religious programme in many Nigerian higher institutions in the country. According to the Students' Union president of Ahmadu Bello University, Mallam Rafindadi Abubakar Aliyu, lack of basic facilities in the Nigerian Universities is a significant setback to conducive learning activities. Rafindadi said the fundamental problem facing students in the universities is congestion in classrooms, dilapidated hostels and lack of modern laboratory equipment. You see a class that accommodates only 30 students in those days, over 200 students use the class today. Many of us hang outside by the windows to receive lectures. Students had to seat on bare floor to receive lectures in the

lecture theater in Political Science department; here, we have 312 in my class. You can imagine one lecture teaching 312 students, marking 312 scripts and each of the scripts, in an examination, none of them is less than 10 pages. Some students seat on the podium where the lecture is standing. Most of the seats are broken so you put your books on your lap to write. There is no functioning fan in many of the classrooms and when it is hot, students are would be forced to use the same book to fan themselves as well taking down notes concurrently. During the rainy season, the roofs of the classrooms leaked. The books in the libraries are outdated, the equipment in the laboratories are outdated. You will see a large number of students lining up to use one microscope in the laboratories. The hostel accommodation is one of the challenges facing students of higher institutions in Nigeria. There are no enough beds in the hostels and the students put mattresses on the floor to sleep. In addition, the hostels are overcrowded with over eight students in a room that was initially meant for two students. Those students are exposed to many health problems because they also use the rooms for cooking and washing in front of their rooms as there is no laundry where they can wash. The toilets are bad; they have no doors and students have to queue to take their bath or ease themselves (Ebehikhalu, & Dawam 2017, Thisday, 2013).

Poor Research in the Christian Religious Programme

Poor research in the Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions is another problem facing the teaching of Christian religious programme in the various departments. There is poor research on the development of Christian Religious programme. Due to poor funding of Christian religious programme in most Nigerian higher institutions, there is no emphasis on research on the programme. Researching funding generally in the Nigerian higher

institution have not been encouraging. Charles, Ijeoma & John (2010) did a study that investigated the sources of research funding available to lecturers in Nigerian Universities, the challenges faced by lecturers in accessing the funds and strategies for improvement. Result of the study revealed self-funding as a major source of research funding in Nigerian Universities, followed by government sector and foreign agencies. Self-funding was also identified as the most potent source of research funding accessed by University lecturers. The study showed that a greater percentage of lecturers, 246(76.35%), had not benefited from research grants for many years. Inadequate funding of research and stringent conditions attached to research grants were identified as two major constraints for accessing research funds by lecturers. Saint, Harnett and Charles, Ijeoma & John (2010) and Strassner (2003) submitted that Nigeria's low research output is probably a reflection of the low priority accorded research and development by government decision-makers and that Nigeria's federal University System spends only 1.3% of its budget on research. This shows that research funding in Nigerian Universities is directly linked with government allocation to education and the priority accorded it in policy. Donwa (2006) also observed that the average annual allocation to federal universities for recurrent expenditure is 0.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 5% of this allocation is to be used for research. This report shows that research funding by government is less than 1% GDP and this is grossly inadequate for meaningful research. Thus, the amount of research funding by government is a function of the total funding for recurrent expenditure in the Universities (Charles, Ijeoma & John 2010).

Negative Attitudes of Students to Study Christian Religious Programme

The negative attitude of people towards the study of Christian religious programme is another big problem affecting the administration of Christian Religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions. There is a negative attitude of students toward the Christian religious programme in many Nigerian higher institutions. Many students don't want to offer the Christian religious programme. They believe the programme is too voluminous and boring. Many students did not see any relevance of the Christian religious programme, while others complain of lack of textbooks and journals to aid their further reading.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural facilities are very important in the administration of Christian religious programme. Infrastructural facilities are social capital that every higher institution must have in adequate to be able to implement the Christian religious programme effectively. Ogunode (2020) refers infrastructural facilities to include classrooms, offices, exam halls, laboratories, tables, chairs, desks, power supply, water, good roads network within the schools etc. Noun (2012) observed that physical plants are required for teaching, learning and research. They include classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices and libraries. Others include hostels (in residential institutions), staff quarters, students and staff recreational facilities, sports and games facilities. In Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Ebehikhalu, & Dawam (2017) submitted that the number and capacities of lecture halls are grossly inadequate. The number and size of the laboratories are inadequate. Almost all the equipment in the laboratories and machineries in the workshops are obsolete. The university has commenced no form of automation in any of its libraries. The hostel accommodation for both undergraduates and postgraduate students are grossly inadequate and the sanitary conditions very deplorable. Facilities for

students use like common rooms and kitchen are not available. The walls of some hostels have severe cracks and are not safe for habitation. Rooms officially meant for eight (8) students' house not less than fourteen (14). Even the official eight (8) students per room are still very much on the high side since the rooms are very small and poorly ventilated. Kitchen and common rooms have been converted into rooms for students and so overcrowded that the students sarcastically call it zoos fit only for animal habitation. On the average, about twenty-eight (28) students share a toilet in the university. The university is connected to National Grid but power supply is epileptic and irregular. The water supply is not regular and highly inadequate.

Poor Staff Development

Poor staff development is another problem facing the lecturers in the department of Christian Religious department. Many lecturers teaching Christian Religious studies in most of the higher institutions in Nigeria have not benefited from their institutions' staff development programme. Staff development programme is very important for the development of lecturers. Peretomode, & Chukwuma, (2007) observed that the central idea underlying manpower development in any sector, including the education sector, is how best to keep employees current, vibrant and versatile so that they can continuously perform their roles effectively in this age of rapid socio-economic, political, scientific and technological changes and globalization. In the higher institutions, manpower development is very important. Lassa (1992) submitted that in education, teachers are the foundation of quality; they hold trust for the implemented curriculum of formal education and therefore, are at the centre of the educative process. In fact, no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Peretomode, & Chukwuma, 2007, NERDC, 2004). This is even more important with the institutions of higher

learning whose mission includes research - the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge, teaching and community services. In tertiary institutions, lecturers' development programmes are very critical. They are planned activities which focus on increasing and enlarging the capabilities, improving the technical and conceptual skills of lecturers so that they can possess the abilities to handle complex situations and better perform their job. Through renewal activities, lecturers avoid becoming rustic (Peretomode, & Chukwuma, 2007). It is unfortunate that the authority does not expose many lecturers in the department of Christian religious studies to staff training programme and staff development programme. Poor staff development programme for many lecturers in the department of Christian religious studies is very poor. Inadequate funding has been identified as one reason for poor staff development in the higher institutions in Nigeria.

Ways Forward

To solve these challenges, the paper suggested the following adequate funding of Christian religious programme, provision of adequate instructional, provision of adequate research fund Christian religious programme, employment of lecturers with specialization in Christian religious programme, effective staff development for lecturers in the department of Christian religious studies and students should be motivated to study Christian religious programme and adequate infrastructural facilities should be provided in the department of Christian religious studies.

Adequate Funding of Christian religious programme

Government should fund Christian religious programme by allocating higher funds for the administration and implementation of the programme in all higher institutions in the country.

Provision of Adequate Instructional Materials

The school administrators should provide the department of Christian religious program with

adequate instructional materials. More textbooks, journal and other legal educational resources should be provided for the lecturers and students offering the Christian religious programme in all the Nigerian higher institutions.

Provision of Adequate Research Funding for the Christian Religious Programme

The government should increase the research fund for the Christian religious programme in all the higher institutions in the country. This will make effective research possible in the institutions.

Employment of Lecturers with specialization in Christian Religious Programme

More lecturers with specialization in Christian religious programme should be employed in all the higher institutions where the Christian religious programme is offered. This will help to reduce the large class size. The government should also encourage lecturers to specialize in the Christian religious programme by providing the lecturers with full scholarship through in-service programme.

Motivate Students to Study Christian Religious Programme

Students should be motivated to study the Christian religious programme at various higher institutions across the country. Students should be given scholarship to study the Christian religious programme.

Provision of Adequate Infrastructural facilities

The government should provide more infrastructural facilities in higher institutions across the country.

CONCLUSION

Christian Religious Programme is one of the programme Nigerian higher institutions (Universities, Colleges of education, polytechnics) are offering. There are challenges facing the administration of the programme in the Nigerian higher institutions (Universities, Colleges of education, polytechnics). The article discussed the

challenges facing Christian religious programme in the Nigerian higher institutions. The article identified; inadequate funding of Christian religious programme, inadequate Christian religious lecturers, inadequate instructional materials of Christian religious programme, poor researching in Christian religious programme, negative attitudes of students to study Christian religious programme, poor development of lecturers of Christian religious programme and inadequate infrastructural facilities. To solve these challenges, the paper suggested the following adequate funding of Christian religious programme, provision of adequate instructional, provision of adequate research fund Christian religious programme, employment of lecturers with specialization in Christian religious programme, effective staff development for lecturers in the department of Christian religious studies and students should be motivated to study Christian religious programme and adequate infrastructural facilities should be provided in the department of Christian religious studies.

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