

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Kennedy Ohazuruike, PhD

Department of Political Science and International Relations
Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja
Faculty of Arts and Social Science
kennedyohazuruike@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Catholic Church is an expert in education. One cannot conceive of the traditions of education in the world today without acknowledging the indispensable role which the Catholic Church has played in their emergence. This paper has studied the role and contributions of the Catholic Church towards education in Nigeria. It observed that the quality of education that the Church is concerned with is about the whole person's life so far as it bears his heavenly calling.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Development, Education, Nigeria

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church is by far the largest worldwide Christian denomination. Looking at its population, it is the majority religion in most countries in the world such as, Italy, Spain, Poland and nearly all Latin America etc. It is the largest individual Christian denomination of about 25 percent of the world's population. Roman Catholic has a structure that is hierarchical, headed by the pope in Rome. Its government is run by a college of cardinals living in and out of Rome, and is concerned with matters of wide significance, education inclusive. The Catholic intellectual tradition is a tradition of rational inquiry that engages the resources of the Catholic faith with the great human questions and situations as they unfold across centuries and civilizations. This tradition was initiated as the early Christians began to reflect upon and engage the Gospels, their experience of Jesus, in a number of new situations. Throughout their history, Christians have wrestled with and drawn upon the best of human knowledge to defend, explain, understand, and better learn to practice their faith (Ilo, 2018).

The role of the Church as custodian of education and from there of freedom is exemplified after the fall of the Roman Empire. It became the lot of the Church and her institutions to preserve human culture. The monastic schools that sprang up developed a culture in which learning was highly cherished. With time this endeavour was spread beyond the confines of the monasteries to the cathedral schools. Between the twelfth and thirteenth century, the cathedral schools developed into universities as we know them today, with the traditional faculties of Arts, Theology, Law and Medicine (Okeke, 2014).

Right from the first days of arrival of the European Christian missionaries into Nigeria, western education was considered as a crucial necessity for the effective evangelisation and conversion of the people. Having accepted the Christianisation of the people as their primary targets in Nigeria, the project of making them better converts, using the words of the Bible, became an area of great concern. With this conception, each mission began to spread the 'Good News.' As the largest non-governmental network of schools in the world, Catholic schools contribute in major ways toward achieving the fourth Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Yet because of the centrality of education in the human rights and development agendas, by providing education to so many children especially in low income countries, Catholic schools are also achieving much more (Wodon, 2020).

The Church has made great contributions in the area of education. There are many mission schools, nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions that produce quality graduates to serve the nation. This is about the greatest contribution of the Church to development, because the greatest engine to growth and development of any economy is human capital development (Jude, 2008; Ezenweke, & Kanu, 2012).

The Catholic Priest who is an integral part of the Catholic Church is an important instrument in the fulfilment of the Church's mission on earth of which education is inclusive. A good parish priest is a pastor, teacher, preacher, amongst others. Priesthood is a vocation to service, and it is a ministry of unity. In order to bring about unity, a priest must have authority. This authority (Wuerl, et al., 1995) falls into two categories: the teaching of truth with authority and the directing of the community in the path of unity. Deriving from the above, the paper examined the historical role of the Catholic Church in the provision and maintenance of quality education in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Church

The church has been defined by Reken (1999) from two perspectives, one as an institution and two as an organism. The Church as an institution has been described by Van Reken as a “formal organization that sets out to accomplish a specific purpose”. According to him, it is an agent which can do things; and can say things because it has its own voice. The Church as an institution has its own purposes and plans, its own structure and officers, and its own mission. It has its own proper sphere. In many ways it parallels other institutions, like governments or schools (Van Reken, 1999:198). Iwe (1979) understands the term 'Church' to mean an organised people of God, a spiritual and moral force to be reckoned with. The Church as an organism refers to “the church as the body of believers, the communion of believers” corroborating this twofold view of the church; Jim Harris' has this to say: “By church I mean both the individual believer and the institutional entity” (Harris <http://thebigpicture.homestead.com/ChurchinPolitics.html>).

According to Kanuku (2007) cited in Clara and Iwuoha (2018), a church is a local assembly of believers as well as the redeemed of all ages who follow Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; it is a community of Christians who believe in and follow Christ without reference to locality or limits. People see the church as a social organization with good moral values and are able to extend a helping hand to the needy. It is a social organisation whose membership is voluntary.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church is a church that was founded by Jesus Christ about two millennia ago, and the bishops who lead the church begins with the bishop of Rome who is the pope and are the successors of Christ Jesus twelve apostles. The pope today is the leader of all the catholic churches in the world. (Allen jr.2014. p.50). The Catholic Church has had a dynamic image. In Latin, the early Fathers of the Church referred to it as the Ecclesia- “the called out ones”. From this perspective it is understood why the Church is spoken of as “the elect”, “the saints” and why Jesus asked Peter to “build my Church” (Mt 16:18). In the wake of Greek neo-Platonism, the Church was seen as “the school of truth and the fellowship of adepts” (Kung, 1981). To Roman Stoicism, the Church is principally seen as “a well ordered community governed by laws”. In the early Church, they were referred to as “the people of God” or “the Church of God “. St Paul speaks of the Church as “the fullness of Christ and of fellowship” (Ephesians 3:19). He also speaks of the Church as “a mystery and sacrament of salvation” (Eph 3:4). The Second Vatican Council speaks of the Church variously, as „the people of God” (Gaudium et Spes, 1965), “Bearer of the message of salvation” (Gaudium et Spes, 1965), “Mystical Body of Christ” (Indulgentiarum Doctrina, 1967). The Church is also understood as the whole body

of Christian believers or any division of this body in professing the same creed and acknowledging the same ecclesiastical authority (Njoku, 2008; Ezenweke & Kanu, 2012).

The Catholic Church is organized and divided by diocese, with bishop and archbishops who controls and set roles for these territories. With certain restrictions and considerations, the pope selects the bishops. Meanwhile, the dioceses are made up of parishes each of which has a priest or priests. The pope is now on his part, an overall controller who controls bishops mainly by general legislation. There are over 1.45 billion Catholics in the world who are ministered to by over 405,000 priests. For majority of Catholics, priests play a central role in their lives.

The Catholic Priest

The Catholic priesthood is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. The Church clarifies the mission of the priest: “Through the sacrament of Holy Orders priests share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. The spiritual gift they have received in ordination prepares them, not for a limited and restricted mission” (Wuerl, Lawler, & Comerford- Lawler, 1995), “but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation to the end of the earth” (II Vatican Council, 1965, p. 882). They are “prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere” (II Vatican Council, 1965, p. 723). Hence, the Bishop ordains the priests for the universal Church to be the shepherds of Christ in the local communities. The goal of the ministerial priesthood of the Church is an attempt to serve as the model of Jesus. Hence, the priesthood is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ that is “to bring good news to the afflicted...to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free...” (The New Jerusalem Bible, 1990, p. 1694; Nellissery, 2003).

The Bishop assigns the ordained priest to serve the parish, which is a collection of families of a specific region. Describing the roles of a parish priest Bishop Dolan (2000) writes:

A good parish priest is a pastor, confessor, hospital chaplain, social worker, administrator, teacher, preacher, financial planner, psychologist, neighborhood activist, health care specialist, organizer, development director, canonist, legal expert, cantor, marriage and family counselor, homeless advocate, gerontologist, baby-sitter, employment agency worker, youth director, sacramental minister, etc. (p. 269)

Priests are called to be co-workers of bishops to share in the priesthood of the bishops in subordinate degrees (II Vatican Council, 1965). By the consecration and ordination, they will preach the Gospel, sustain the people of God, and celebrate sacred rites, especially the Lord's sacrifice. Priesthood is a vocation to service, and it is a ministry of unity. In order to bring about unity, a priest must have authority. This authority (Wuerl, et al., 1995) falls into two categories: the teaching of truth with authority and the directing of the community in the path of unity. Teaching requires that the priest authoritatively interpret the word of God for his people in ways appropriate to his day. The second – directing the community -- is centred in the priest's mission to maintain and build Christian community. “The proper mission entrusted by Christ to the priest, as to the Church, is not of the political, economic or social order, but of the religious order” (II Vatican Council, 1965, p. 942). Yet in the pursuit of his ministry, the priest can contribute greatly to the establishment of a more just secular order, especially in places where there are serious problems of injustice and oppression. He must always, however, preserve ecclesial communion and reject violence both in words and or deeds (Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 1971; Nellissery, 2003).

Education: A Conceptual Overview

The word 'education' is from the verb 'to educate' which literally means 'to rear or to lead out' and is related to the Latin word '*educere*' meaning 'to bring out or lead forth'. It is extensively explained as the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university. The word has often been used to mean; teaching, schooling, tuition, tutoring, pedagogy, coaching, training, guidance, indoctrination, inculcation, enlightenment and development. In other situations, it is used to simply imply the art of learning, literacy and the process of acquiring knowledge (Opoku, Addai-Mensah & Manu, 2014).

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*10 defines education as the process of educating or teaching. To educate is further explained as “to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of...” Thus, from these definitions, we might assume that the purpose of education is to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of students. The central task of education is to implant a will and facility for learning; it should produce not learned but learning people. The truly human society is a learning society, where grandparents, parents, and children are students together. In the general sense, the education offered by a society consists of everything it deliberately teaches; teaching is the activity through which general education is transmitted (Opoku, Addai-Mensah & Manu, 2014).

According to New Catholic Encyclopedia, Education as a generic term has both a broad and a restricted meaning, and an informal and a formal application. In its

widest interpretation, education is the aggregate of all those experiences that enlighten the mind, increase knowledge, foster insight, develop abilities and attitudes, and strengthen the will. In its restricted sense, education implies the systematic acquisition of knowledge through recognized agencies and a controlled environment, particularly that of the school, on an elementary, secondary, or higher level, in order to attain social competence and optimum personal development (Okeke, 2014).

According to Francis Cardinal Arinze (1965) education has to do with “the development of the whole man; soul, body, intellect, will, emotion, and physical well-being.” The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria in 1972 described education as consisting “not only in the aggregate of all experiences that enlighten the mind, increase knowledge and develop abilities, it includes moral and religious education which help to develop attitudes and strengthen the will.” Afe (1995) cited in Clara and Iwuoha (2018), sees education as a tool used for the integration of individual into the society so that he can achieve self-realisation, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress. Education involves the process of teaching and learning and for it to be qualitative and sustainable, basic infrastructures must be provided and put in place. The Role of the Church in Fostering Sustainable Education in Nigeria It is in view of this that the role of the church in this regard cannot be overlooked.

The purpose of Education

The purpose of education is to aid man to attain the purpose of existence and the purpose of man's existence with God. Pope Pius (XI) affirmed this purpose of education when he stated that “there is no true education which is not totally directed to the last end since the whole purpose of education is to shape man in this mortal life that he will be able to reach the last end for which his Creator has destined him.” (Clara & Iwuoha, 2018). Education is to teach a student how to live his/her life -by developing his mind and equipping him to deal with reality.

Education no doubt is a means of perfecting the individual for life, perfecting society and leading the individual to God. Therefore, religion should be the core and the center of the education of the child. In other words, since the Church is the custodian of theological truths and the moral values which follow from them and which is the purpose of education to inculcate in man, it follows that the teaching of the Church should constitute the basis of any education of the child. Core to the purpose of education is the acquisition of skills necessary for man to effectively exploit and explore his environment (Clara & Iwuoha, 2018).

The role of education in development remained a key point of every discussion on development. This is not surprising, especially given the amount of investment some countries put into education. The reason for this large investment is the link between education and development. According to J.F. Kennedy “our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education”. In other words unless the rate of learning in an organization is equal to or greater than the rate of change then that organization is doomed to failure; that organization will not survive. Therefore the reason why education is so strongly linked to national development is not farfetched. Educated population as a whole contributes more to socio-political and economic development. Again, education contributes a lot to the well-being of the individuals (Okeke, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Our discourse in this paper is anchored on structural functionalism as propounded by August Comte, Herbert Spencer, developed further by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parson. Structural Functionalism as a sociological theory gives explanation for the evolution and dynamism of human society. Functionalism views society as a system that is a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. Its basic unit of analysis is society, and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole (Nguveren, 2020). Emile Durkheim's perspective of Structural Functionalism gives the best explanations for this work because; he maintained that there is a necessary prerequisite for the survival of the society, if it should be kept alive and healthy enough to reproduce. To ensure this, role differentiation becomes essential such that food production, health, leadership. Low maintenance, education and religion will be maintained to ensure the welfare of members of the society. Thus members of the society also need to be mobilised and encouraged in order to perform their various duties. In view of this, the functional analysis tends to examine the parts of society in order to investigate how they contribute to the integration of the social system (Ritzer, 2008; Haralambos, 2004).

The Church has adherents who are part of the social system, and operate according to the belief and practices of the Church (Nguveren, 2020). The Church also participate in the operation of other institutions like Schools, Hospitals, business centres among others. This makes the Church a structure that is functional and important to the smooth running of the society, the functional nature of the Church has therefore sustained its existence over time within the society. The theory has therefore successfully offered adequate explanations for the existence and sustenance of the Church and its impact on the development of education in Nigeria and the world at large.

The Catholic Church and Educational Development

The Catholic School

The word catholic means universal and therefore the fundamental purpose and good news of the Catholic school sector is that it provides a values-led education to all children and young people of all faiths and none. Catholic schools are linked in a special way to families and the wider community through faith formation, shared aims and values, supportive interactions, charitable acts, prayer and sacramental practice. The Catholic school is a community of learning and nurturing teaching where, through a network of support, learners are encouraged to be the best they can be by ensuring that: The sharing of facilities, resources and the expertise of the school is available to the local community.

Catholic schools are founded on the ministry and message of Christ which speaks of good news for all. The Catholic Ethos informs all aspects of the school curriculum. The learning and teaching environment respects and upholds the dignity of all its learners, with Catholic Social Teaching at the core (Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, 2022).

The Catholic family of schools promote the core gospel values of faith, hope and love. They equip young people with the skills, attitudes and values to become confident, capable, critical and discerning thinkers who are ready to contribute to and shape their world and contribute to the Common Good. Catholic schools offer a view of the world that integrates the often fragmented areas of human learning. This focuses on the value of the individual, shared values that promote community and the universal vocation to holiness (Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, 2022).

Catholic schools constitute a unity of vision and purpose – that of educating and enriching the lives of all in their wider communities. Far from being segregated, exclusionary spaces, Catholic schools stretch outward with a common goal of creating a better world for everyone. The ethos of care for the individual, faith formation and education of the whole person is fundamental to Catholic Education. Catholic schools globally enable learners not only to realise their own personal gifts but also value the contribution made by others (Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, 2022).

While recognising the immense task of educating the young in an environment that is sometimes critical of the role of the Catholic in education, Poupard (2001) noted that such challenges help renew and re-invigorate the convictions of the Church.

...to be able to ensure that its members, as they mature, a human development inspired by Christian principles, and to invite those who did not share faith in Christ to seek only calmly and joyfully to become open to the good and loving news of the Gospels, news which is always young and fresh, particularly for our youth at the dawn of the third millennium (p.2).

Poupard (2001) further noted that the true mark of the Catholic school is no longer to protect young Christians from influences harmful to their faith, but rather to be the place dedicated to the positive proposal of faith integrated into human culture (Inyanwachi, 2007).

Cook (2001) claimed that Catholic school identity encompassed three aspects: academic excellence, religious mission and multiculturalism. He stated that “the commitment to academic excellence, which fosters the intellectual development of faculty and students, is an integral part of the mission of the Catholic school” (p. 17). Cook (2001) further described the identity of the Catholic school as a Gospel culture with characteristics that include the synthesis of faith, culture and life.

The Catholic school will be concerned with the development of students as responsible, inner-directed individuals of Christian virtue, capable of free choice and of making value-judgements enlightened by formed Christian conscience. Catholic schools seek to help students develop a total commitment to Christ. Greater detail of the Catholic vision of the human person is found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. To be Catholic, a school must recognise that the History of Salvation continues today, and that its community has a particular role in the 'Today' of that History for students' lives. To fulfil this role, the school must continue its efforts to offer evangelisation to all within its community, especially its students. Within this context, it must also contribute to God's reunification of the human race through the Church. To offer evangelisation, the Catholic school needs to teach students to integrate faith, culture and life. In this way, it helps form them as individuals who can contribute to Christ's restoration of the original state of holiness and justice created by God (Catholic Education Centre, 2009).

Catholic Education

In the Encyclical Letter of 1929, probably the most authoritative document on Catholic education; Pope Pius (XI) defined education as the sacred task of forming the character of the child and aiding him/her to attain the purpose of existence. It is stated in CAN.795 of the Code of Canon Law that “education must pay respect to the development of the whole person so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society.

Catholic education is the process through which people are socialized into the Catholic intellectual heritage in its diverse representations in the universal and local contexts of Catholicism (Ilo, 2018). This intellectual heritage contains, “a vast repository of theological thought; philosophizing; devotional practices; works of literature, visual art, music, and drama; styles of architecture; jurisprudential principles; social and political theorizing; and other forms of cultural expression that have emerged in vastly different parts of the world in the course of 2000 years of Christian religious experience” (McQuillan, James & Muldoon, 2018)

While describing the purpose of the Catholic school, the Congregation for Catholic Education (1977), further observed that the Catholic school is a privileged place where integral formation occurs through a systematic and critical assimilation of culture (Inyanwachi, 2007). Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian. The integration of faith and culture ensures that the Catholic school through the ministry of teachers is “in an excellent position to guide the pupil to a deepening of his or her faith and to enrich and enlighten his or her human knowledge with the data of the faith”. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) agreed that the Catholic school is a pastoral instrument whose specific pastoral service consists in mediating between faith and culture. The Catholic school is “faithful to the newness of the Gospel while at the same time respecting the autonomy and methods proper to human knowledge”. Its justification is based on the educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. “Through it, the local Church evangelises, educates and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound life-style among its members” (Inyanwachi, 2007).

Deriving its inspiration from the mandate of Christ to his Church to teach all nations, Catholic education is not driven exclusively by the imperative of acquisition of knowledge, skill and aptitude. While giving proper weight to scientific and technological development, the ability to be adaptable to the conditions created by this development; and their role in the real world, it goes beyond this to pay special attention to the human person (Okeke, 2014).

Every graduate from a Catholic school in Africa will not only have a deep sense of history, but also will pay attention to his or her experience and the experience of others, especially the poor and the marginalized, and be equipped to become agents of change in the society. A sense of history also means that denominational battles which

informed the establishment of some church-owned universities must constantly be revisited, and a more open cross-cultural, and inter-cultural conversation can begin to flourish in Catholic universities which will encourage mutual learning and “a commons of Christian exchange” (Ilo, 2012; 2018). Catholic education also gives rights and obligations of the civil society in the education of its members. Among these are; Promotion of the Education of the Youth, Recognition of the Duties and Rights of the Parents, Application of Subsidiarity in Education, Providing Parent with Requisite Assistance, Establishing its Own Schools, Provision of Universal Access to Education, and Safeguarding Standard.

The Jesuits Priests and Educational Development

The Jesuits Priests are a special breed of the Catholic Priest who has distinguished themselves in the area of education and human capacity development. In 1548, ten members of the then recently founded Society of Jesus opened the first Jesuit school in Messina in Sicily. Within a few years after that, the Jesuits had opened some thirty more primary/ secondary schools, but also the so-called Roman College, which soon developed into the first real Jesuit University (Gregorian University). In 1585 they opened in East Asia a school in Macau that also soon developed into a university; and about the same time they founded in Japan a remarkable arts school and workshop in which local painters were introduced to Western techniques. In Rome they hired Palestrina as the music teacher and chapelmaster for their students, and later in Paris they did the same for Chapentrier. They were the teachers of Descartes, Moliere, and, Voltaire. In Latin America they had constructed magnificent schools of stone and brick, with huge libraries, before any serious school of any kind had been founded in the British colonies (O'malley, 2000).

The Jesuits did not begin because of some mandate from above or even because they wanted to deal with institutional issues besetting sixteenth-century Christianity, but because each of them sought peace of soul and a more deeply interiorized sense of purpose that they hoped to share with others.

Juan Alfonso de Polanco, executive secretary of the Society from 1547 until 1572, at one point drew up for his fellow Jesuits a quasi-official list of fifteen reasons for the schools, in which, it is interesting to note, opposing Protestantism and reforming the Catholic Church are not even hinted at. Among Polanco's reasons are that poor boys, who could not possibly pay for teachers, much less for private tutors, will make progress in learning and that their parents will be able to satisfy their obligation to educate their children. The final reason he gives is the most encompassing and reveals the social dimension of the whole undertaking: "Those who are now only students will grow up to be pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice, and will

fill other important posts to everybody's profit and advantage"(O'malley, 2000). Up to this day, the Jesuits Priests have not rested on their oars as they keep expanding the network of schools and helping the Church to meet its ultimate goal of both developing the body, the mind and the soul through preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and providing of quality education.

The Catholic Church and Educational Development in Nigeria

Catholic missionaries came to work in colonial Nigeria in the early 19th century; the pioneer Catholic missionaries were Fathers of the Society of African Missions (SMA). This group was founded in Lyon in 1856 and began the mission of evangelization at Dahomey in 1861. Then, the superior of the Dahomey mission made a visitation to Lagos, Nigeria in March 1861. According to Omenka (1989), he was given a warm reception by a group of about 200 Catholics who were predominantly ex-slaves from Brazil. Among the fruitful results of his visit was the generosity with which the British welcomed the possibility of a future Catholic mission in Lagos. Land was acquired for both a Church and a school, but it was not until 1868 that a Mission was finally established in Lagos. By 1872, the existence of an active Catholic community conducting services in the Portuguese language became "a source of consolation and a cause of optimism for the missionaries" (Omenka, 1989, p. 18). Omenka remarked that, "the success of the Society of African Missions in Lagos was a source of great inspiration for future missionary endeavours in the whole of Nigeria" (p. 19).

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest non-governmental provider of educational services in the world (Agnew, 2010) and particularly in Africa where missionary activities notably went hand in hand with education in terms of establishment of schools, ranging from kindergarten to University (Corey-Boulet, 2013; Katunga, 2008; Nduku, 2011). As far back as 1874, Pope Leo XIII describes the Church as mistress of the world's educational enterprise. In this light, the Catholic Church from the beginning of her existence saw her evangelizing mission as having both a spiritual and educational agenda (Osei-Bonsu, 2010). In line with the promotion of the educational dimension, the Church through the ages has put a high premium on education (including health care and other pastoral services), resulting in laudable achievements which have facilitated personal and corporate human development (Eze, Lindegger & Rakoczy, 2013). Since its inception in Africa, the Church at great cost and sacrifice established schools which appear alongside religious houses, cathedrals and parishes. In all the colonies, be they British, French, Portuguese and German to mention but a few, religious missions were instrumental in introducing western type of education (Osei-Bonsu, 2010; Eze, Lindegger & Rakoczy, 2013).

In canon 794, it is stated that "the Church has in a special way the duty and right of

educating, for it has a divine mission of helping all to arrive at the fullness of Christian life". Truly the concern of the Catholic Church for education arises from the life and mission of Christ and the mandate he gave to the Church before his ascension. "Go therefore and teach all nations..." (Mtt. 28:19), informs the teaching and evangelization efforts of the Church. Again, the gospels tell us how Jesus began to do and teach. Thus is embodied the maxim that examples posed by concrete acts are great and effective means of instruction. Actions speak louder than words, says the old adage. In the proclamation of his mission the Lord left no doubt that he had come to show the way by teaching not just the pristine ways of living, but the type of knowledge that leads to salvation. "I am the light of the world, whoever believes in me will not remain in darkness".(John 12:46). His mission is thus to enlighten the world and by so doing dispel its debilitating darkness. This is done in a very special way by witnessing to the truth. Hence he came to give his people knowledge of salvation (Okeke, 2014).

Deriving from the above, the Church has continued to have a positive influence on the development of civilization. Not only did ancient monks save and nurture the remnants of ancient civilization during the Barbarian invasions, it promoted learning and science through its sponsorship of many universities in Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries. The Church's priest-scientists have written their names in gold in the field of genetics, astronomy, meteorology, geomagnetism and solar and astrophysics: the Augustinian Abbot Gregor Mendel, was a pioneer in the study of genetics, Georges Lemaitre, a Belgian priest proposed the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe. Among the lay members of the Church, we have Henri Becquerel, who discovered radio-activity, Lavoisier, the father of modern chemistry, and Vesalius, the founder of modern anatomy. The Church is making impact in virtually every field of human development (Ezenweke & Kanu, 2012). The idea of a formalized education in the West was started by the Catholic Church. Thomas E. Woods in *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* gives a well-researched data on the work of Catholic education in the West beginning from the innovative work of the Jesuits who pioneered the formalization of the primary, secondary and university system of schools in the 16th century (Woods, 2005; Ilo, 2018).

In Nigeria, formal education came with colonialism. Two forms of education were in existence before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria: indigenous or traditional and Islamic education. Traditional education was predominant in the southern region and other parts of the Middle belt of Nigeria. This form of education was characterized by informal training in agriculture, artisan, cultural norms, e.t.c. In the same vein, Islamic education was practiced in the northern and little parts of South-Western Nigeria as informed and articulated in the Quran. Islamic education was first

accepted in Nigeria by Kanem Jimi between 1085-1097.

It is very important to note that Catholic Portuguese were the first Europeans to make attempt towards western education in Nigeria. This was championed by Henry the Navigator and the Catholic Priests who landed Benin in 1472 and established trading ports. With the support of the Oba of Benin, the priests built several Churches to serve the Portuguese (Ogbunkwu, 2018)

Western education armed new converts with the ability of reading the Christian Bible and preaching it to others, as a prerequisite to understanding more clearly the word of God. Fafunwa (1974, p.73) argued strongly that, “irrespective of denominational label, the early Christian schools in Nigeria were conceived by all the Christian denominations as the most important instrument for conversion.” It would not have been possible to implant Christianity successfully into Nigeria, if western education was left out of the scene (Iwunna, 2006).

Education equipped new converts with the ability to read and study the Bible on their own, read the church doctrines, and recite the hymns and catechisms, without necessarily depending on the missionaries. It made the converts develop critical thinking minds, and placed them in better positions to determine good from evil, putting into consideration the several Igbo and Nigerian cultural and traditional practices which were typically inhuman and ungodly. At that, they became conscious of their positions in the sight of God, irrespective of colour differences, race, economic dispositions, or educational backgrounds. Such converts were able to make the word of God their guiding principles, in their daily relationships and dealings with one another (Iwunna, 2006).

Since then, the Church has made great contributions in the area of education. There are many mission schools, nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions that produce quality graduates to serve the nation. This is about the greatest contribution of the Church to development, because the greatest engine to growth and development of any economy is human capital development that is achieved through proper and quality education. The reduced activity of the Church in the area of ownership and management of schools has impacted negatively on the quality of graduates available to serve national development (Jude, 2008).

Examples of these schools are: Veritas University Abuja (Vuna), Patrick's College, Calabar, Tansian University, Awka, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, The Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) etc. In the promotion of education, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria issued the following documents: Education in an Independent Nigeria, October 1960, Educated Catholic Laity, October 1960,

Catholic Contribution to Education, February 1972, Struggle against Illiteracy-Adult Education, February 1972, Education for All, February 1983, The Crisis of the University System, September 1996, etc (Ezenweke & Kanu, 2012).

The introduction of western education in Nigeria, would be incorrect, if the dynamic role of the various missionaries of which the Catholic Church was and is still an important members, are not duly acknowledged, putting the contexts and prevailing circumstances within which they operated, into consideration. It is quite a fact that they built a good number of primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training colleges, women training centres, and other educational institutions. That they were able to establish these educational institutions, even in the remotest of places, which could not have been covered by the colonial authorities, speaks a lot about their contributions in the development of education.

In addition, these missionaries were the foremost trainers of teachers ever used within the school system. It was the missionaries too, who foresaw the need for post-primary education, which necessitated the initiation of the secondary school scheme in most parts of Nigeria. The missionaries also built training schools for nurses, doctors, and other health workers. Through their evangelisation projects, they touched and saved the lives of many, from deprivation, want, premature death, diseases, hunger, and so on. Through their education too, people's economic powers improved, while families and converts picked paid jobs. As well, improved agricultural skills were taught to school attendants, while foreign food crops were introduced too (Iwunna, 2006).

It is significant to note that beyond the government, the Catholic Church is the single largest provider of education in post-colonial Africa. According to the preparatory documents for the Second African Synod, as at 2009, the Catholic Church in Africa had 33,263 primary schools, 9838 high schools, and more than 53 universities and teachers' institutes. Through her institutes, especially higher educational institutes, the Catholic Church is uniquely positioned to positively influence the transformation of African societies, cultures, and nations. With appropriate reforms, Catholic education in Africa promises to be a significant instrument for alternative approaches to human and cultural development (Ilo, 2018).

Catholic Education in Nigeria

The Church as a religious institution found its feet on the Nigerian shores as early as in the 15th century when the Portuguese traders were used by the Catholic Church as the first Missionaries to visit Nigeria. Okori, Adejo, Ueven, Ada and Tor-Anyii (2011) are of the view that, these Missionaries apart from preaching the gospel, saw the need to improve the lives of the adherent through education to enable them read the Bible. As a result of this, a School was established in Badagry (the Nursery of the

Infant Church). Gradually, the church in Nigeria has now spread to many parts of the country in such a way that in some states, it has become difficult to travel a distance of ten kilometres without coming in contact with one denominational Church building or the other. The sustainability of the Church in the rural areas is also greater than other developmental organisations due to availability of unpaid volunteer church workers who usually stay longer within the community than hired community developers sent to stay just for the purpose of completing some developmental projects (Deji, 2012; Nguveren, 2020).

As religious institutions, Catholic schools based their leadership on the theological and philosophical principles. That is, its basis of authority is the ethics of care and service, and theologically, has its basis on man's relationship with God (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2015; Jacobs, 2002). Catholic priests and religious sisters managed most Catholic schools in Nigeria. Catholic schools are major providers of qualitative education service in many countries of the world, Nigeria inclusive (Cardak & Vecci, 2013). In Nigeria, 24% of Nigerian children attend Catholic schools, and Catholic school provides quality education for the country (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2015). There are situations where low-cost Catholic schools are established in poor villages to serve the needs of low-income families and poor children (Tooley, Dixon, & Olaniyan, 2005; Itaman, 2017).

In 1970, the Federal Government took over mission schools as education was regarded as a huge government venture and no longer a private enterprise. Part of the reasons for the take-over was 'to provide stability, satisfy people's basic educational and national needs, combat sectionalism, religious conflict and disloyalty to the cause of a united Nigeria' (Fagbunmi 2005:1-7; cf. Imam 2012:187-190). By 1976, when the states of the Federation were increased to nineteen, each state promulgated an edict for the regulation of education, and its provision and management. Each state also amended the Federal education law when necessary, which resulted in all the states' edicts having common features, such as state take-over of schools from individuals and voluntary agencies, using similar curriculum and the establishment of school management boards as well as a unified teaching service (Fagbunmi, 2005, pp.1-7; Ajah, 2015).

The purpose for the taking over of the schools according to the law was to make the schools functional by rehabilitating and reconstructing the schools after their destruction during the war. The government equally took over the school to control, manage and supervise the schools in order to secure central control and an integrated system of education which will guarantee uniform standards and fair distribution of educational facilities and reduce the cost of running the schools (Gbenga, 2018).

The takeover of school by the government was not essentially a bad idea because of the initial successes registered. But the failure of government to adequately fund education and improve the condition of the schools created burden, including the failure of moral standard and discipline. New private schools were opened by individuals and religious groups, and they were no law working against it, and somehow introducing a complexity in the school system in Nigeria. Interest groups mounted pressures on the States to return schools to their former owners (Ajah, 2015).

Successive governments and administrations have found out that they cannot do the job of providing education alone hence the policy of handing over of missionary schools to original owners as well as liberalizing the licence for the establishment of private universities. Since then, Nigeria has witnessed tremendous increase in the establishment of private institutions of higher learning such as Redeemer University, Madonna University, Covenant, Veritas, Caritas, Gregory and Evangel Universities to mention a few. In spite of institutions of higher learning, a number of nursery, primary and secondary schools have been set up to cushion the educational need of the Nigerian teeming population. Hardly is there any church in Nigeria without a school or more (Iwunna, 2006).

Challenges facing Catholic Church in providing Education in Nigeria

- The challenge for Catholic education in Nigeria is the same which hasfaced Catholic education across the ages. It is about embracing, upholding, celebrating, communicating and living faithfully, authentically, and credibly an inculturated Catholic identity and mission. **Maintaining Catholic Identity:** Maintaining Catholic identity and mission in Catholic higher education has become even more challenging given the need to recover the evangelical ideal of a Catholic university, imbued with a religious dimension rooted in faith.
- **Rising spate of Insecurity:** Rising spate of insecurity in the country has seen the shutdown of schools due to incessant attacks by terrorists and bandits who have killed, maimed, and kidnapped both students and staff of these schools while demanding for ransom which in most cases run into hundreds of millions which is always very difficult to raise.
- **Corruption:** Endemic corruption that has permeated every sector of the country causing disarticulation of the economy and the political system with its attendant effect on the development of education in Nigeria.
- **Funding:** It is clear in the document that the Government has the responsibility of the major funding of mission schools. Just as the adage says *“he who blows the piper dictates the tone”*. So far the government funds mission schools, they have certainly influence the decisions of the school in the areas of; amount to be used, when to provide it, how much fund is to be used, manners of

disbursement, and contractors to be used in carrying out projects.

- **Role conflict between the manager and principal:** A situation where the Manager is a Catholic Priest appointed by the Church while the Principal employed by the Government is a Pentecostal Pastor whose belief doesn't work well with the Catholic Church is a recipe for conflict that may obstruct the goal of the church in providing quality education.
- **Employment, Transfer and Appointment of Principals and teachers/staff:** The government does the employment and appointment of a new staff and sends them to mission schools. This also applies to Transfer of staff. They only apply government criteria which most times are wrong. Example of such criteria include; quota system, federal/state character, man-know-man. This is done at the expense of "most qualified candidates", or transfer as a result of punishment.
- **Instability of Government Policy:** Government policies especially when it relates to funding, has been unstable. Even when it seems to be stable, the government lacks faithfulness.
- **Payment of fees in School:** The government regulates the fees students pay to the school management, even when subvention from government is not forthcoming, this brings about delay in funding some projects as well as poor/inadequate funding (Asiegbu, 2019).

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) in 2014 summarised the challenges faced by the Church in her effort to provide quality education when it noted that, the church and the state is confronted with the common challenges of the modern society such as; corruption, abuse of power, insecurity, poverty, and discrimination. These are some of the vices that can be solved with the provision of quality education. According to CBCN (2014), quality education has religious content, because it aims at integral growth of the human person able to live with others and advance a common good. The CBCN further noted that quality education is compromised when things like facilities, teaching and learning materials, and teachers in schools are not adequately provided (Hausiku, Piliyesi & Anyona, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Catholic Church is an expert in education. One cannot conceive of the traditions of education in the world today without acknowledging the indispensable role which the Catholic Church has played in their emergence. As John Elias and Lucinda A. Nolan propose, Catholic educational tradition is both rich and varied. It is a living tradition which continues not only as a body of work, but as a way of doing things that is the outcome of centuries of experience, prayer, action, and critical reflection. Included in this tradition are works of history, theology, sciences, architecture,

literary oeuvres, and the social and medical sciences. Also included are works on astronomy, drama, and the rich treasure of human intellection and creativity stored in many Catholic libraries, archives, and museums.

The Church is concerned with the whole person's life so far as it bears his heavenly calling. Hence the Church understands quality education as that education which aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and the good of the society of which, as man, he is a member and in whose obligation as an adult, he will share.

The church has shown over the years that in the face of incessant strikes by government owned institution, it is capable of providing a stable, qualitative and accessible education in order to discourage Nigerians travelling abroad seeking for quality education. The Catholic Church has also shown that it has something to offer to raise the quality of education in public schools through its philosophy of education that has proven effective in its schools, so if it is extended to public schools, it is believed that the outcome would lead to a more efficient and qualitative education that would meet the Catholic standard.

Good performance comes because of good discipline, good management and excellent facilities. A well-designed partnership between government and church in the provision of quality education would bring about quality education in all schools if it was considered. Therefore, there is need for the state and church to combine their resources and invest in education.

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