

**PROLIFERATION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS ON NIGERIAN
CAMPUSES: KEEPING RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL
INTERESTS ON EQUIPOISE***

Abstract

This paper examined the phenomenal mushrooming of religious groupings on Nigerian university campuses. The paper traced the causal growth of religious groups and their dimensional multiplicity to new fundamentalist fervor and Pentecostal preaching among the youths of Nigeria's two major religious faiths. This phenomenon is a reflection of how religion is becoming more group identity related as well as interwoven into socio-political discuss on the national landscape. The paper identifies the positive and negative impacts of these trends especially with the catalogue of religious conflicts adversely affecting the pursuit of educational interests in Nigeria's higher institutions. The paper concludes by suggesting a clear streamlining of educational and religious objectives being pursued on Nigerian campuses and the adoption of a continuous peace building process cum alternative dispute resolution methods for crisis management on these campuses.

Introduction

The recent proliferation of religious groups on Nigerian university campuses is symptomatic of the endemic plurality of Nigeria's religious landscape. Nigerian society with its remarkable cultural diversity and religious pluralism continues to serve as an important focus of research into the internal and external factors of socio-political and religious crises and cultural or religious change plaguing Africa. This vast country with over two hundred and fifty recognizable ethnic groupings presents a complexity of religious diversity¹ and numerous researchable problems. About fifty years since it attained political independence from British colonial rule and as the country moves through developmental stages of nationhood, religion poses a significant challenge. The challenge is compounded by the country's pluralizing and globalizing religious landscape.

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Apart from the rich complexity of traditional religious beliefs, the dichotomy between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria (both attracting large and dynamic followership), has found particular interest and focus of research. As the country continues to grapple with developmental problems, the crises of religion and its management assume a growing importance in Nigeria's social and political discourse. In the local media, these problems are usually framed in terms of fears that the proliferation of religious groups constitute a threat to cherished dreams of national integration and has become a dangerous recipe for socio-political and economic disasters.²

It is the general perception that young people represent the crucial social factor to watch for religions trends and development in Nigeria. Empowered and mobilized by new fundamentalist messages from both local and foreign sources they demand changes in every sphere of political, religious and educational leadership in the face of moral dislocation, political instability, corruption, and failed economic promises. Youths are frequently at the forefront of popular clamor, civil unrest, political activism or religious

part of their activity plans, lest religious tensions explode into unmanageable conflicts. Some perceive the religious question as the single greatest threat to peaceful co-existence, stability and uninterrupted academic programmes on their campuses.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is an unfortunate phenomenon and a pervasive social process which occurs at every level of human existence. Group conflict, whenever it is fueled by religion, is usually most damaging and destructive to peaceful co-existence and the attainment of noble objectives. Conflict is however a factual reality of human life and society. Wherever there is human society and organisation, conflict may occur. Peace building and conflict resolution is gradually becoming a continuous process in human society and organisation. Conflict may therefore be perceived as part of life and often part of growth and change. Though conflict is unlikely to be totally eradicated, it may be drastically reduced. Peace building efforts must therefore continue unabated.

The campuses of Nigerian tertiary institutions have acquired notoriety as hot-bed for crises all year round, most especially crises strewn with religious undertones. As religious groups proliferate on these campuses (in the wake of the nation-wide socio-religious and political tensions which have heated the polity), school authorities are called upon to re-examine the trends, lest they find themselves engulfed by crisis.

Objectives of the Study

This paper examines the proliferation of religious groups on Nigerian campuses against the backdrop of educational goals which the institutions set out to achieve. Will the mushrooming of religious groups contribute positively to enhancing educational goals? Are the developments in tertiary institutions capable of stemming the escalation of student crisis or will they rather worsen the pervading situation? The **objectives** of this paper include:

1. Restating the educational goals set out for tertiary institutions in

The focus of this study is the examination of the phenomenon of proliferation of religious groupings on Nigerian campuses. The study sets out to analyze and appraise these developments in the context of religious and educational interests being pursued on these campuses. This study was conducted with a view to presenting a prognosis of the bane of religious trends on Nigerian campuses from the writer's own personal experience (spanning about three decades), while hopping from one Nigerian university campus to another either as a student or teaching staff and sometimes on a fact-finding mission. The study is aimed at offering requisite material for further study on the management of crises on Nigerian campuses and is therefore expected to provoke further research in conflict resolution and alternative dispute resolution methods.

Methodology

The study relied on materials gathered from various sources. Information was gathered through personal interview and questionnaire method of approach. Documentary materials for this study include both primary and secondary sources of information. The primary sources include government official documents, policies and directives on education in Nigeria and the Education Sector Analysis funded by UNESCO. Secondary sources include articles, journals, newspapers, magazines, books and reports on Nigerian campuses.

Historical Perspectives of the Development of Education in Nigeria

A clearer understanding of the religious developments on Nigerian campuses requires a cursory look at the socio-political context of education in Nigeria. The history of educational development in Nigeria itself is closely interwoven with the history of the emergence of Nigeria as a country. The historical background of educational development in the country, in other words, involves such historical facts as the migration of foreign peoples into what is now Nigeria. Such migration brought along with it Islam and Christianity. The activities of missionaries, colonization, post-colonization efforts at nation building and other external factors have tended to shape Nigeria.

The Education Sector Analysis (2002),⁸ drew attention to the socio-political and religious factors which have impacted on educational development in Nigeria and notes:

For several decades, indeed, for over a century, the development of education was piloted by foreign agencies. With the attainment of independence the development of education became the full responsibility of Nigerians themselves. Expectedly, various problems emerged in the discharge of this responsibility by Nigerians. These problems often have their roots in the history of the development of the country itself. Many of the problems emerged as a result of the impact of external agencies. Still others emerge in the process of educational development itself.

Thus, the history of Nigeria's evolution and later development has had great significance for the development of education in the country. One cannot fail to notice for instance, the religious underpinnings that have characterized Nigeria's history either during the colonial or post-colonial era. With Nigeria's disengagement from colonialist structures and move towards an entrenched democratic system of government, the place of religion presents a significant challenge. The challenge is no doubt compounded by Nigeria's plural and diversified religious beliefs, ethnic groupings, language, culture and complex legal system.⁹

Broadly speaking, Nigeria is characterized by three major religious outlooks viz: Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. The first two are of foreign origin. Islam came through invasion from North Africa while Christianity came through the coast. The two have come to take firm roots in the native consciousness. The introduction and spread of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, though initially championed by foreign missionaries, has now been domesticated. One may take cognizance of the creative and innovative responses of Nigerians themselves in forming their own religious movements and spreading them even beyond their borders. The main thrust of this religious self-determination began early in the 20th century and after independence gradually took a fundamentalist fervor.

The emergence of numerous religious movements after independence and their remarkable growth speak more of the indigenous and exogenous flavoring attributable to Nigerians. The ways Nigerians themselves grapple with religion have both intrinsic interest and researchable value. Moreover, the way in which questions of religious difference often turn into situations of inter-religious tension and conflicts in Nigeria is a matter deserving some special attention. Nigeria seems to bear out Pope John Paul

II's earlier prediction that the relationship between Christians and Muslims is central to world peace and social stability in the new millennium.

There is the proposition that the reason for the increase in religious tension and conflict in post-colonial Africa may be found in the failure of nation states to meet the essential needs of their citizens which created a vacuum frequently filled by religious groups. It may be observed that religious inclinations and identification have found more appeal and activism in post-colonial Africa than the nationalistic ideologies of the pre-colonial times.

The religious dimensions of African life are complex. Compared to the kind of religion most Americans are familiar with, religion in Africa is less individualistic and more group-related; more materially grounded, and more intimately connected to relations of power, whether beneficent or maleficent. Concepts of power are less differentiated than in Western thinking.

African elites who were once freedom fighters against apartheid or colonialism are now involved in a new kind of politics in which the manipulation of religious symbols, agents and rituals are used to serve their own ends. This point finds a good illustration in Nigeria's national elections which have witnessed an increased politicization of religion since independence. Religion played its part in the Second Republic presidential elections for instance as reported by Enwerem (1995). He said:

In the heat of the 1978 presidential election campaign, the late Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) stormed the Muslim city of Sokoto. Everywhere he went, he raised his hand with his traditional 'V' (victory) sign to acknowledge the cheers of admirers. Given the huge and enthusiastic crowd that listened to him and the paralysis to which the city's streets and highways were subjected for the duration of his campaign, one could have easily concluded that the city, if not the state, would vote UPN. But this was not so, as the results of the presidential election later showed.

Following in the heels of the UPN campaign, Shehu Shagari and his party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), launched their own campaign in Sokoto. The crowd was not as large as the one that welcomed the UPN, even though Shagari is an indigene of the state. Determined to undermine whatever impact Awolowo may have made on the people, Shagari adopted a mode of greeting that was

intended to reach the core of the people's most treasured experience, their religion. He acknowledged the cheers from his audience by simply raising a single finger. This simple gesture caught the imagination of the populace, which soon came to believe that Awolowo was offering two gods to the people - his 'V' sign being interpreted as two. Shagari's single finger signified his commitment to 'One Nation, One destiny, One God (Allah)'. That partly did the trick for the NPN; Awolowo lost the election to Shagari, especially in the Muslim North whose religious or cultural centre is Sokoto."¹²

What the above example indicates is that religion and politics have become so woven together in the national consciousness. It is now fashionable to see religion in the centre of the identity politics all over Nigeria.

Reasons for the religious awakening in Nigeria have variously been linked with the state of the economy. Given the downward economic trends, it is not difficult to understand how religion is linked to the survival of the lives of many Nigerians. In the face of poverty, economic depression, disease and enduring political misrule, it is assumed that Nigerians turn to religion as a coping mechanism with life's contingencies and that they find solace in ways that the average Westerner would not comprehend. Indeed, many historical and contemporary factors have shaped the current overbearing influence of religion on every aspect of Nigerian life: politics, economy, social relationship and education.

With the increased activity and influence of religion in every spheres i

more for their emancipatory doctrines as Nigerians are quick to cash in on innovative approaches to proselytizing.

Indigenous and Islamic educations were in Nigeria before the advent of colonial rule. Western education was introduced by the Christian missionaries from around the middle of the 19th century.¹³ Schools were set up in furtherance of evangelistic goals. Western education through the colonial apparatus eventually gained dominance over the other two educational traditions. It became superimposed on both indigenous and Islamic education traditions (though with varied successes) throughout Nigeria. While Islamic education was closely linked with Islam, Western education tended to be perceived as Christian education in Nigeria especially by Muslims. It has thus received considerable and continuous resistance in the predominantly Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria.

For forty years (1842-1882), education introduced by the missionaries remained exclusively in missionary hands.¹⁴ Christian Missionaries monopolized educational provisions. The priority of education providers was of course evangelism, specifically conversion to Christianity. The curricula of the schools were heavily loaded with Bible texts and religious instructions. The missionaries initially focused on primary education. Education in Nigeria moved from the primary to the secondary level with founding of the CMS Grammar School, Lagos, in 1859. Other mission secondary schools based on the same model were soon established between 1859 and 1914.

Government was the exclusive provider of higher education in Nigeria.¹⁵ The first four older universities established were exclusively owned by government. Moreover, in 1975, the Federal Military Government took over all existing state universities in Nigeria. The policy decision which took immediate effect was validated by Decree No. 46 of 1977. The Decree prohibited the establishment and ownership of universities by any state government, voluntary agencies and private persons. On the return to democratic rule in 1979, the Constitution transferred university matters from the Exclusive Legislative List (reserved only for the federal government), to the Concurrent Legislative List (granting powers to both federal and state governments), not only to legislate on universities, but also with powers to establish and operate their own universities. The same provisions are retained in the 1999 Constitution. The result was

that between 1980 and 1990 the number of federal universities in Nigeria rose from 6 to 12.

By a relaxation of government policy, state governments have been able to establish state universities. Due to pressure from church groups and private individuals, government started yielding to a greater relaxation of the law on the take over of schools to enable private schools exist side by side with public schools. Since the return to democratic governance in May 1999, the agitation for the return of mission schools to their former voluntary agency proprietors has met with partial success. Government is pursuing a public/ private partnership policy in the economy including the education sector.

Objectives of Higher Education in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education embodies in a document the aims and objectives of Nigerian education. Section 1 (5) states categorically that the goals to which Nigeria's education philosophy are linked are:

1. the inculcation of the right type of national consciousness and national unity;
2. the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
3. the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
4. the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Section 32 states that higher education should aim at:

1. the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society;
2. the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment;
3. the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community;
4. the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

Universities are to pursue these goals through:

1. teaching,

2. research, and
3. the pursuit of service to the community.

Given the above stated objectives, it is clear that universities in Nigeria are set up primarily to pursue the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge and at the core of this are teaching, research and service to the community. One of the objectives set for universities by the National Policy on Education is that they are "to serve as effective instruments of cementing national unity". To achieve this aim, the National Universities Commission (NUC) provides guidelines and performs regulatory functions for all Nigerian universities. The admission process into universities is regulated by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. Admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities is done on a broad national basis. University development is planned to ensure even geographical distribution so as to provide a fairer spread of higher educational facilities. Academic programmes are regulated. The NUC conducts periodic accreditation of university programmes. Universities are required to meet the minimum academic standards set under the control, surveillance and supervision of the NUC. Even the quality of instruction in the universities is required to be of such standard as to be enhancing objectivity and tolerance.

In view of its focus on national unity and development and by virtue of the magnitude of its financial support, it is not surprising that the federal government wields a great deal of power in the affairs of Nigerian universities. Nevertheless, universities ordinarily enjoy substantial autonomy. This presupposes that each university has the liberty and responsibility to determine its vision and mission and to plan, organize and manage its activities and academic programmes towards the overall objectives set for higher education in Nigeria.

Religious Trends in Nigeria's Higher Institutions

At the exit of British colonial rule at independence, the various Christian missions and their educational interests were preserved. Similarly, the Islamic socio-political structure already entrenched in many communities in Northern Nigeria, was left intact. The colonial state had merely appropriated and exploited the socio-political ethos of Christianity and Islam to serve its colonial agenda. To sustain itself, the government had relied heavily on the services of the products of Christian education

system, and had also relied on the Islamic hegemony of the emirs to sustain the indirect rule policy. In the place of both Christian and Islamic education systems, government had to initiate and maintain a secularized system of education. As Enwerem pointed out, "it was secularized mainly because religion was made an appendage - something merely recognized 'somewhat tardily' rather than the hub of the colonial state's education policy". It was a secularized higher education system which the colonial state bequeathed that government pursued since Nigeria's independence in October 1960. Secularism which characterized the operation and administration of the premier University of Ibadan was maintained in all the other public universities established in the country soon after independence.

By the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, religious trends in Nigeria began to take a very dynamic dimension. The upbeat of revivalism in Christendom and fundamentalism in Islam (Nigeria's two major religious faiths) gained an unprecedented momentum. Religious politics, whose seeds had been sown in earlier years, took the centre-stage in the national consciousness especially in the wake of the "O.I.C. and Sharia debates" of the 1980s-1990s. Nowhere is this religious awakening better demonstrated than in Nigeria's higher institutions.

A new wave of Pentecostalism in Christendom seems to have swept through Nigerian campuses from the 1970s. The Student Christian Movement (or SCM) was the first and only Christian group introduced in the University of Ibadan in the 1960s. This was followed by the Ibadan Varsity Christian Union (IVCU). The Evangelical Christian Union (or ECU) was introduced in the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in the 1970s. It emerged as a student group out of the established and more ecumenical "All Souls Chapel". The trend was replicated in the other universities and campuses (Lagos, Nsukka, Enugu, Benin, Jos, Zaria, Port-Harcourt, Owerri, Kaduna etc) where student groups began to assert distinct identities from the organized worship patterns hitherto recognized in their institutions. Soon the Christian Unions multiplied rapidly even within the same settings mostly through a process of splitting of the larger groups into smaller factions or units.

It is pertinent to observe how the established churches have responded to this phenomenon. Perhaps in an attempt not to be overtaken by events, the established churches rose up to supplement these groups by duplicating their efforts. The strategy

adopted by the churches is to pitch tents alongside the already existing groups by planting and revitalizing church youth ministry to evangelize the campuses in an already crowded campus religious setting. According to Ojo M.A. (1994):

In recent years, the issue of youths has again come into focus because general observation indicates that the churches are losing young people to the cults and secular ideologies...Until the 1970s, youths in the Anglican Church largely confined their activities to the following organisations: Boys Brigade, Girls Guides, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Scripture Union and the Anglican Youth Fellowship.¹⁹

He noted further that,

AYF (Anglican Youth Fellowship) was generally based in the parishes until early 1970s when an AYF branch was established on the campus of the University of Ife, Ile-Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). By the early 1980s, this branch had largely embraced Pentecostal teaching and practices, and had succeeded in spreading Pentecostal beliefs among some AYF branches in the parishes and some of them have actually embraced these teachings".

Anglican Youth Fellowship (or Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion - EFAC - as it is called in the East) can now be found in almost all Anglican parishes and university campuses throughout Nigeria.

Within the Catholic Church, the flames of Charismatic renewal and Pentecostal revival among the youths have given birth to numerous campus fellowship groups like the Catholic Charismatic Renewal or Charismatic Renewal Fellowship, which can be found mushrooming in many university campuses in Nigeria today. Other established churches (under the umbrella of Christian Association of Nigeria - CAN) have also experienced or promoted the springing up of dynamic new formations by their campus youths. Among the numerous pro-church groups on campuses are: The Apostolic Church Students Fellowship of Nigeria (TACSFON), Christ Apostolic Church Students Association (CACSA), The Redeemed Evangelical Ministry Students Fellowship (TREM), Baptist Students Fellowship (BSF), Christ Ambassador Students Outreach

Fellowship (C \$ S) etc. These groups and numerous others have gained ground and are prominent in many Nigerian campuses. They have devoted themselves to evangelistic programmes, organizing meetings, crusades, prayers, deliverance sessions and other activities almost round the clock on several Nigerian campuses.

Within Islam, the Muslim Students Society (MSS) became a vibrant group on many university campuses. It was founded in Lagos in April 1954 by twenty Yoruba Muslim students. Its first president was absorbed into the elite Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) as secretary and national legal adviser. The MSS is affiliated with the World Assembly of Muslim Youths which was founded in 1972 under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC). The group can be found in many Nigerian campuses today as a fundamentalist Islamic group.

Mushrooming of Religious Sects

The multiplication of religious groupings on Nigerian university campuses has reached such an alarming proportion. There is now what may be described as a scramble for time, space and converts by the various religious groups as they struggle for relevance. Nothing is spared in the ensuring competitiveness: auditoria, office rooms, university facilities have all become objects for asserting religious beliefs and influence. A casual visit to any of the campuses will reveal the myriad of advertisements, posters and attractive invitations to religious meetings e.g. "Christian Law Students Fellowship of Nigeria (CLASFON) holds Concert tagged: 'Law of the LORD is perfect' "; "Muslim Law Students Society holds Jihad Week"; "Christian Medical Students holds Gala Nite"; "Muslim Medical Students holds Nasfat prayers on Sunday"; "Christian Accounting Students Fellowship holds Love Feast"; "Muslim Geography Students Society holds Jumat prayers"; "Christian Pharmacy Students Fellowship holds Night Vigil"; "Muslim Science Students Association invites all to Fund Raising"; e.t.c.

One is tempted to inquire into the prospects (if any) that the unprecedented proliferation of religious groups on Nigerian campuses may portend for Nigerian universities? This phenomenon probably indicates the level of religious freedom that pervades the academia especially since the return of the country to democratic governance. For some, it is a pointer that religion is making a purposeful impact

specifically on the lives of the youths. For others, it is a reflection of the extent to which religion has infused the larger society. Still others view it as a determined effort by religious organizations to eradicate societal evils or repel social vices like campus cultism, delinquency and endemic students' unrest.

Looking at religion from the conceptual stand-point one may define it as "an integrated system of beliefs, lifestyle, ritual activities and institutions by which people give meaning to (or find meaning) in their lives by orienting themselves to what they take to be holy, sacred, or of ultimate value (Corbett 1977)". Religion in this respect is made up of beliefs, lifestyle, rituals and social organisations. "Lifestyle", for instance, has to do with how people live on a daily basis. It is the ethical and moral dimension of religion. It is said to include activities that must be done or other activities that must be avoided. There is no doubt that religion shapes lifestyle. It prescribes what people do, the type of clothing people wear, the type of food they eat and how they relate to others in the society. Religion influences society to the extent that those who adhere to its moral codes and tenets succeed in welding their beliefs and morality into the laws of the land. The positiveness of religion lies in the fact that its activities help people to find meaning in life. The meaning that people gain from religion derives from what they take as holy, sacred and of ultimate value. This relationship with the sacred obviously sets religion apart from other human activities. Religion is seen as having a great contribution to the value system of society or individuals.

Redefining the Goals of Religion

The above scenarios in Nigeria's higher educational institutions bring us to a pertinent question: what are the goals of religion and does it serve any positive purpose in an academic setting? A major function of religion for both individuals and entire societies is the provision and sanctioning of moral guidelines. It is believed that religion plays significant roles in human life and societies. Religion shapes or reforms character. Evidence abound of the reformative value of religion in the lives of persons who otherwise had been prone to deviant behavior. Religion also shapes cultures and societies as is evident in the impact of the Ten Commandments on Roman law and Western culture. For instance, religion, culture and politics have been woven together throughout the history of the United States of America. Religion certainly contributes to

the value system of societies and individuals. The preponderance of volunteer work, philanthropy and charities in the United States of America is attributable to religious values. A commentator has noted that,

Christianity and Judaism, the most common religions in the United States, both emphasize the importance of helping other people, an emphasis that has led to a great deal of volunteer work in our society. Both were also instrumental in the rise of public education.

We have noted earlier the role of Christian missionaries in the development of education in Nigeria. Some religions beliefs postulate a necessary correlation between education and religious ideals. Thus, the "development of the total man" with reference to perceived transcendent realities may be taken as the goal of missionaries in the development of education in Nigeria. Religion plays many roles in higher education. For instance, those who have argued against "secularism" in Nigeria have proceeded on the premise that to make Nigeria a secular state is to have "a nation without a soul" with all the disastrous consequences of such monstrosity. Religion therefore, according to this hypothesis, portrays the soul of any nation. The clamor for the return of government acquired schools in Nigeria to their former "owners" underscores this very proposition that secularism has failed our educational system in Nigeria. Some are of the opinion that the government decision to acquire mission schools in the 1970s was a step in the wrong direction that has left a generation of youths morally emaciated and the country's future drifting precariously towards a fiasco.

Conversely however, one may point to the inter-religious tension and conflicts generated by the campus religious groups as the major disadvantage of their presence on Nigerian campuses. Although there are regulations for the registration of student groups on university campuses, many university authorities have found it difficult to respond to the mushrooming of religious groups through the official and legal processes. Close monitoring of identities, activities and homilies of the groups have broken down given the confused and weird situations within which many of them operate. When crisis do occur, many university authorities are nonplussed on how to nip them in the bud. A good example is the Kafanchan religious crisis of 1987 which engulfed the Kafanchan College of Education.

There are different versions of the report of the Kafanchan crisis. The immediate cause of the riots relates to the plan by the Federation of Christian Students (PCS) at the College of Education, Kafanchan, to hold a weekend of religious activities marking the end of its annual week of Christian activities. This is a common feature of all institutions of higher learning in the country, and it had been going on in the college. But in this case the FCS seemed to have adopted a rather high profile approach which was a departure from its usual style. This time, as part of its initial preparations for the occasion, it had at the entrance of the college a banner which read "WELCOME TO JESUS CAMPUS". Some members of the Muslim Students Society (MSS) took offence at this and protested to the school authorities. The FCS leaders were told to remove the banner and they acted accordingly. However, it would seem that this event somehow sowed seeds of distrust and apprehension among many students. The next problem was that of the guest speaker. The FCS had invited a certain Rev. Abubakar Bako, a Muslim convert to Christianity, as the guest speaker for the occasion. It was in the course of his lecture at the gathering that the said Rev. Bako was alleged to have made certain references to the Quran to illustrate certain points in his sermon. This sparked off reactions among the members of the

offence that the chapel had been cited near a make-shift Mosque. They went on rampage and destroyed the chapel.

The University of Ibadan campus was a volatile arena for religious bickering between the Christians and their Muslim counterparts in 1986 over a cross. A big concrete cross had been erected on the university campus in the 1950s to denote earmarked places of worship. As at that time, since Christians predominated, two prominent churches (one Catholic and the other Protestant), were cited and built on the campus. Later on, a Mosque was erected close to one of the church buildings. By 1985, a considerable number of Muslims had joined the university community. Muslims began to complain that the location of the cross in front of the eastern side of their mosque violated the Islamic requirement that Muslims should not see a cross, idol or effigy during worship. They demanded that the cross be moved or relocated closer to the church. Prominent Muslim leaders who were invited to the Mosque for a fundraising event fueled the Muslims' agitation. Pressure was mounted on the President of Nigeria and Visitor to the university as well as the Minister of Education (a Muslim), to prevail on the university authorities to relocate the cross. The university refused to remove the cross whereupon some identified people gathered a mob and burn down a statue of Christ in the adjoining Protestant church; developments which many members of the university community considered as shocking! As an observer puts it, "even to outsiders, the cause seems like it should have been inconsequential to a community of scholars accustomed to grappling with complex intellectual issues."

In June 1988, violence erupted in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the course of the conduct of the Students Union elections of that year. It was glaring from the students' electioneering campaigns prior to the elections that the elections were being held along religious lines. Three clear candidates emerged for the presidential race. One of them stood on the Muslim platform, the other on the Christian platform while the third stood on an ideologically left-wing radical platform. It was alleged that the Muslim candidate was favored by the university Vice-Chancellor who was a Muslim and who was apprehensive of a radical move against his administration. Many Christian university staff and students, on the other hand, rallied support for the Christian candidate. The Muslims tried to persuade the third candidate (who incidentally had a Muslim background) to step down so that the election became a clear religious context

between the Muslims and the Christians. At the tension-soaked main rally prior to the election, the campaign slogan of one of the candidates was: "A vote for Steve is a vote for Christ". The votes were counted in the university security building. When it became clear from the counting of the votes that the Christian candidate was going to win, the Muslim students mounted the roof, descended on the counting centers and destroyed the election papers. Pandemonium broke out and a religious battle engulfed the entire campus.

A solemn review of these crises within the context of Nigeria's national religious crisis, points to the fact that religion has pervaded every aspect of campus life and as one rightly observed, "the wider implications were that the fathers had eaten sour grapes, and now the children's teeth were set on edge".

Effect of campus conflicts on Academic Goals

The unprecedented proliferation of religious groups on Nigerian campuses has generated some conflicts which are yet to find a permanent solution. Some have tried to locate the cause in a new wave of fundamentalism, Pentecostalism and revivalism in the two major religious faiths. This has brought unprecedented tension in many university campuses and hindered the attainment of academic goals. The cycle of conflicts is already taking its toll on higher education in Nigeria. Writing on the state of higher education in Nigeria, Roy Chikwem (2006) said that, "the recent findings on the state of higher education in Nigeria as conducted by the World Bank and UNESCO had confirmed the degradation of the Nigerian educational system."²⁶

Due to incessant closures and interruptions of academic programmes on the heels of campus crises, Nigerian certificates now remain suspect in the private corporate sector. Many transnational companies and banks (even those operating in Nigeria), will rather prefer Nigerians who have been trained abroad in their staff recruitment drive. These corporations claim lack of trust in Nigeria's educational system. Where Nigeria trained graduates are considered at all, they are placed on a staff development scheme to improve their competence and on a different remuneration scheme. Opportunities for scholarships are being lost by many deserving Nigerian students because of the erratic academic calendars of Nigeria's higher institutions. This is quite unfortunate for a country whose universities had once produced world-class

scholars, a Nobel laureate, and top-rate professionals who have proved their mettle in other parts of the world! Campus conflicts have contributed to the malaise of "brain drain" that has afflicted the universities in Nigeria. The result is shortage of qualified staff, low quality academic output and flight of intellectualism. A lot of scarce time and resources have also been expended on managing crisis on the campuses leading to considerable wastage, loss of energy and economic resources which could have been properly channeled in the pursuit of educational goals. Many academics find the distraction of campus conflicts an unwholesome diversion of human and material resources from the pursuit of noble goals of higher education.

Recipe for Curtailing Religious Crises in Nigeria's Higher Education

Roy Chikwem (2006) while bemoaning the deplorable state of higher education in Nigeria puts the solution at the doorstep of the Nigerian government to salvage the situation. P. Ehi Oshio (2002), on his own part, had propounded a conflict resolution and peace building panacea through non-adjudicatory processes for the crisis in Nigeria's universities. According to him,

The new world order is in favour of non-adjudicatory means of conflict resolution which is essentially pacific settlement through Alternative Dispute Resolution. For instance most characters and instruments of international organisations provide for peaceful settlement of disputes by mediation, conciliation and arbitration. Some writers advocate Consultation, Dialogue, Negotiation, Compromise, Ministerial etc. Whatever nomenclature employed or form it takes; the object and ultimate result of Alternative Dispute Resolution is a voluntary act of court settlement acceptable to the parties" .

So many advantages are attributable to the Alternative Dispute Resolution processes which idea promotes meaningful consultation, constructive dialogue or negotiation and mediation. Apart from fostering community peace, this multi-door conflict resolution approach is said to be preferable to litigation as it ensures a more acceptable standard of justice and, indeed, reconciles the parties satisfactorily. It enhances community involvement, allows for more creative solutions to problems and is less acrimonious, less expensive but is faster and effective in decongesting the ordinary courts that is already bogged down with undue litigants' delay and expense.

There have been some suggestions for the adoption of registration and legal formalities as some form of regulatory and monitoring processes to curtail the mushrooming and proliferation of religious sects on Nigerian campuses. In this way, it is argued, religious groups that are branded as "dangerous sects" will have their registration effectively blocked or reviewed. In Europe for instance, orthodox churches are said to be mounting pressure on some members of the European Union to adopt legal measures that others see as a violation of their commitments to promote freedom of religion. According to Emeka Chianu:

Opposition to proliferation of churches is also evident in Nigeria. Since the early 1990s the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has sought to take over the registration or incorporation of churches which is presently the function of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

In the case of mushrooming Christian religious sects in Nigeria, it was said that CAC "has repeatedly snubbed CAN's request that its consent be obtained before application for church registration is granted". CAC's position is understandably strengthened by the provisions of Nigeria's 1999 constitution which guarantees freedom of religion. In Chianu's view:

Perhaps CAC perceives that if CAN were obliged, it would introduce biased esoteric conditions precedent to the chagrin of the disfavoured. This may create more problems for government and the society at large than the ones CAN intends to prevent or solve. To surrender to a religious association the right to determine which religious group to register and which application to reject would involve it in making a judgment as to which religious beliefs deserve legal protection. Such a judgment will greatly interfere with the religious freedom entrenched in the constitution and will be pernicious. By section 38 (1) of the constitution, Nigerians have chosen not to invade 'the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind'.⁹

In Obafemi Awolowo University for instance, student organisations are expected to register with the Directorate of Student Affairs. Regulations prescribe that organizations shall have staff advisers and renew their registration every academic semester upon the recommendation of their staff advisers. These formalities were to afford the university authorities a periodic assessment of their activities and to promote

accountability and probity among the rank and file. The reality however, is that the rules are more observed in their breach as only about twenty percent (20%) of religious groups existing on the University campus are actually registered in the university record books. Although student organisations are made to be aware of some benefits that are attached to their compliance with such registration formalities, the University has never thought it worthwhile to enforce penalties for non-compliance by clamping down on unregistered religious groups (a case of dangling the carrots without wielding the stick). Perhaps both students and the authorities are more conscious of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom which they prefer to enjoy than restrict on the university campus.

One of the cherished practical solutions to religious crisis on the campuses is the promotion of inter religious fora. Finding a permanent solution too

teaching, research and service to the community. In so analyzing the university as an organisation, it is pertinent to note that it must have some set goals, objectives and purposes which form the coordination of its activities and structure the inter-relationships between it and the outside world or between individual members of its community inter-se. In this respect, as Hugh Livingstone contended, there has to be consistency between the objectives of the university as an organisation, the manner in which its activities are co-ordinated and controlled, the way it impacts values and the orientation of its participants or the environment within which it operates. These factors are linked or interrelated and a change in one will affect the others.

On the other hand, a religious group, as any organisation, is also propelled by a vision or mission with identifiable goals and objectives. Its existence, growth, activities and inter-relationship are coordinated by its already set goals, purposes and aims. Given this background, where educational and religious objectives are to find expression within the same community, it must be at a meeting point where their clearly identifiable goals are the same or correlate with each other. Educational interests can co-exist with religious goals within the same environment given the fact that there are mutual interests to be pursued. That meeting point must provide mutual fulfillment, otherwise the very basis of peaceful co-existence is threatened and crisis will be the inevitable result.

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