

**Content Analysis of *The Catholic School and Religion and National Values, Primary 1- 6: Implications for Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools within Calabar Archdiocese - Cross River State***

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**ABSTRACT**

The secular character of the Nigerian state should not impede collaboration between the Roman Catholic Schools Management Board and the Government of Cross River State (Nigeria) in the area of religious education. Based on the above claim, this paper is an exercise in content analysis of *The Catholic School* (1977) (the document regulating Catholic principles of education in schools) and *Religion and National Values: Primary 1- 5* (text on curricular contents of religious education at the primary school level in Nigeria) in view of highlighting its implications for religious education. This work is focused on bringing out some points of convergence and divergence, if any, in these two documents. Content analysis technique is the *modus operandi* used in this research paper. The research findings of this paper show that Catholic primary schools can adopt the curriculum for religious education but should be wary of some of its doctrinally watered-down contents.

**Keywords:** Religious Education, Moral Values, Primary Education, Roman Catholic, *m&The Catholic School*

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper aims at assessing how Roman Catholic principles of education as contained in a document entitled: *The Catholic School* (1977) agrees or disagrees with *9 Year Basic Education Curriculum: Religion and National Values, Primary 1- 5* (2012), the government document on religious instructions for primary schools in Nigeria. These two documents are published by the Roman Catholic Church and Federal Republic of Nigeria respectively. Here after Federal Republic of Nigeria is abbreviated to FRN. It is pertinent to note that throughout this work, *'The Catholic School'* designates a book, while 'the Catholic school' refers to an institution; the former is written with initial capital letters and abbreviated in the paper as *TCS* but the latter is not. In addition, in this paper, the

government document on education: *9 Year Basic Education Curriculum: Religion and National Values* is abbreviated to *Religion and National Values*. Primary education covers the first six years of the 9-year basic education curriculum in Nigeria. Some concerned citizens are worried that the contemporary religious and political landscape in Nigeria might influence curriculum on religious education in schools to the disadvantage of Christian faith and its adherents. Among these concerned citizens are Catholic Christians who fear that their children might not receive proper Christian religious instructions (as outlined in *Religion and National Values*) at the primary school level. This fear is partly rooted in politicization of religion in contemporary Nigerian society to the advantage of the other major belief system in the country (Onwumah, 2008). Thus this paper examines the curricular contents of religious education in the Nigerian curriculum for primary schools and the Catholic principles of education in view of assessing where their contents are divergent or convergent as well as determining if the above misgiving by some concerned citizens is credible.

In view of achieving the aim of this research, the paper will be divided into the following sections: (i) introduction, (ii) primary school education, the missionaries and national development; (iii) Catholic principles on education in *The Catholic School; Curricular Framework on Discipline and Religious Dimensions of Education in Religion and National Values: Primary* /-d;modus operandi, thematic analysis of contents: percentage of convergence and divergence, the implications of the above content analysis on discipline and religious education for primary schools in Catholic Archdiocese of Calabar, significance of this study, and conclusion.

## **PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION, THE MISSIONARIES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Primary school education is the bedrock for integral development of a child which is crucial to national development. This is because the progress of every nation depends on the process of inculcating the minds of children with values such as honesty, hard work, respect, religious tolerance

and patriotism. Charity organizations, like Christian churches, have contributed immensely towards the moral formation of human persons so that well-disciplined citizens are reintroduced into the society. There is no gainsaying that foundational steps for arriving at this goal are laid during primary school years. In this regard, some authors, like Jusuf (2012), aver that Christian missionary education in Nigeria has been associated with moral and intellectual formation together with tangential conversion of wards to Christianity. The 'confusions' as regards state of value systems in Nigeria calls for a re-evaluation of how primary school education run by charity organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria, is contributing towards the moral formation of young Nigerians.

***THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL: A DOCUMENT OF SACRED CONGREGATION  
FORCATHOLIC EDUCATION***

For Roman Catholics, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education is an equivalent of Federal Ministry of Education in secular rendition. This office formulates and regulates policies concerning Catholic education. It released a document titled: *The Catholic School* (1977) which contains the principles of Catholic education and religious instructions. From hence, the text *The Catholic School* is abbreviated to *T C S*. This book comprises 93 paragraphs designated with numbers and is outlined as follows: introduction, seven sections, and conclusion. *Section One*, No. 12 of this document states that the mission of schools

established by the Catholic Church is to:

insure strong character formation. Her [church] children, then, will be capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism. It also stimulates her[church] to foster truly Christian living and apostolic communities, equipped to make their own positive contribution, in a spirit of cooperation, to the building up of the secular society.

The above mission statement shows that Catholic education is primarily an instrument for living out baptismal life, bearing witness to Christian values and improving upon the condition of the secular society. The formation of conscience is very crucial to the success of this mission because it develops in children and the young a sound criterion for judgment as they live in contemporary society

characterized by cultural pluralism, moral relativism, and sometimes indifference to Christian values. A Catholic school is therefore an educational institution wherein values of the Gospel of Christ are planted in the minds and lives of children taking seriously the cultural conditions of contemporary society. Furthermore, in the same Section One of *TC S* the mission of Catholic school and its educational aims are to:

perform an essential and unique service for the Church herself. It is, in fact, through the school that she [church] participates in the dialogue of culture with her own positive contribution to the cause of the total formation of man. The absence of the Catholic school would be a great loss for civilization and for the natural and supernatural destiny of man (No. 12).

This integral formation of humankind starts from the primary school and culminates at tertiary or specialized institutions. Therefore, the basic principles of Catholic education can be processed from one level to another and be adapted to each age group: from primary to tertiary level. Consequently, the content of *T C S* can be applied to pupils and students alike for the transformation of the human person. In the same vein, Wells (1999) argues that this transformation "constitutes the major forms of activities in classrooms at all levels from kindergarten to University" (p.51).

In view of arriving at the aforementioned goals, the Catholic Education Board in Calabar Archdiocese, Cross River State, should have established many nursery/primary schools so that the integral formation of humankind at a very tender age may be maximized. This means that the current 23 nursery/primary schools in the Archdiocese of Calabar is not enough for this educational service (Oral Interview, Chairman, Catholic Education Board, 12/07/2016). This is because Catholic Archdiocese of Calabar spans through 6 local government areas in Cross River State with a landmass of approximately 7,754 km<sup>2</sup> (Online source: [www.gcatholic.org/dioceses](http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses) accessed on 18/07/2016). Considering this geographical span, more than 50 primary schools can be established by the Archdiocese of Calabar for the purpose of achieving some of the above-mentioned objectives enunciated in the Catholic principles of education. In addition, the Calabar Archdiocesan Catholic Education Board can equally assist Religious Institutions and stakeholders in education and/or

proprietors of nursery/primary schools to improve upon the teaching of religious education. Since Catholic schools in Calabar Archdiocese operate within the prescriptions of *National Policy on Education* and Curricular Framework on Discipline and Religious Dimensions of Education in 9 Year Basic Education Curriculum Religion and National Values: Primary 1- 6, it is pertinent to turn to what these documents say on religious and moral formation of pupils.

**CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK ON DISCIPLINE AND RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF  
EDUCATION IN 9 YEAR BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM: RELIGION AND  
NATIONAL VALUES: PRIMARY 1-6**

*The National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2004), describes primary education as integral formation given to children aged 6 to 11 plus concerning discipline and moral education of the young. This document indicates that primary school formation should: "(c) give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; (d) mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child" (Section 4). Consequently, the success of moral education and inculcation of discipline at this level is a *conditio sine qua non* for integral development of young people and the future of Nigeria.

*The National Policy on Education*, Section 4 (FRN, 2004), resonates with the mission of the Catholic Church policies on education because two of its goals aimed at the formation of character and development of the society are emphasized in *T C S* as mentioned above. However, it is important to observe that while the Catholic mission statement on education declares that the teachings of Christ is the fundamental resource for the formation of character, the *National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2004) remains silent on this matter, but points to human origin of resources for secular education. It is the function of curriculum developers to spell out these resources as regards secular education and this is done in *Religion and National Values* published by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2012) for Federal Ministry of Education.

The value contents of *National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2004) are aimed at injecting moral and national values into the society from the primary school level. This is clearly manifested in the

education policy. The fact that *the Nigerian Constitution* (1999 Amended, Section 10) describes Nigeria as a secular nation-state does not mean that religion has no important roles to play in the formation of character and the socialization process. In the same vein, Duke (2014) argues elsewhere that "religion informs, forms, shapes the values that are foundational to institutions that determine the ways that each society is organized" (p. 50). For this reasons, religious institutions should use their value systems to mould pupils in virtue habits and citizenship education towards a value-based socialization of young people.

The Heads of primary schools in the Archdiocese of Calabar should be well informed on what *Religion and National Values: Primary 1- 6* says concerning religious and moral education. This will help them to oversee how the religious and moral formation of pupils is carried out. On a related note, values are normative patterns of behaviours accepted by the society that take seriously peaceful co-existence among its members. They are very important for social interactions and peaceful co-existence. Blake and Binko (2000) insist that within the ambit of educational process, "values are basic, necessary qualities of human growth, and are existentially forged within the ambiguities and conflicts of societal living, of which schooling provides a paramount example" (p. 194). However, in a multicultural society like Nigeria, wherein absolutisation of values are constantly challenged, the presentation of Christian values as the *only* normative patterns of behaviours is problematic (Kekes, 1993). This notwithstanding, the plural condition of cultural values should not in any way dissuade charity organization, like the Roman Catholic Church, from its core mission of enlightening humanity with its religious values.

*The National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2004) acknowledges the importance of religion as regards character formation and national development. Consequently, this paper is needful as regards the reposition of Catholic education process in a millennium characterized by cultural and religious pluralism. Since this repositioning takes place within the curricular framework provided by the State, it is necessary to have a look at what the government prescribes concerning formation of character and inculcation of values in children and how they aid in national development. So that quality character formation and instilling of discipline in the lives of children might be achieved,

the Federal Ministry of Education came up with *Religion and National Values: Primary 1-6* (2012) as curricular exposition of what the *National Policy on Education* laid down as the aims of primary education. *Religion and National Values* "is the umbrella embracing the previously autonomous subjects of Religious Studies, (Christian Religious Studies and/ Islamic Studies), Civic Education, Social Studies and a new addition, Security Education" (p. vi). This means that religious studies (Christianity or Islam) is infused into social studies, civic education and security education on the premise that its transcendental values would lead to integral transformation of the young.

Among policy-makers, there are two unique justifications for religious education in schools. First, religion equips pupils for life in a multicultural society because the values they imbibe will help them to communicate and negotiate with others who think differently in their efforts to live in harmony. Secondly, the moral wisdom, moral teachings and the exemplary lives of people in religious narratives will assist pupils to make sound moral judgements even when they may not profess faith such a religion (Hand, 2003).

This paper limits itself to relevant sections in the two volumes that treat Primary 1-3 and Primary 4-6 respectively. The document *Religion and National Values: Primary 1-6* gives an integral approach to moral and civic formation of primary school pupils. Given that many virtues have civic and non-civic applications, one can hardly draw a sharp distinction between civic responsibilities and ordinary/religious morality. For this reason, things taught about moral behaviour have implications for good citizenship; hence teachers are expected to make the pupils know the relationship between religious and societal values (Greenawalt, 2005). An instance is indicated in *Religion and National Values: Primary 4 to 6* (2012) where in, for example, the Decalogue is applied to civil order (cf. p.3). The next section shows how this work will arrive at showing the percentage of convergence between *the Catholic School* and *Religion and National Values: Primary 1-6*.

### **MODUS OPERANDI**

Once again, the main research question of this work is: to what extent are the topics and themes in *The Catholic School* reflected in *Religion and National Values: Primary 1 - 6*? In order to arrive

at this task, the research method for this work is content analysis- this is an aspect of survey research design. It is a method of classification applied to categories with similar meanings: written or oral. In doing this, a section of a text that is in itself comprehensible is viewed alongside another text(s) that has similar yet differentiated concepts (F. Moretti Moretti, L. van Vliet, J. Bensing, G. Deledda, M. Mazzi, M. Rimondini C. Zimmermann and I. Fletcher, 2011). In their critique of this method, Richards and Schmidt (2002) posit that even though this method has been criticized for its simplification and seemingly distorted meaning because it breaks down text into quantifiable units in the analytic process, it cannot be gainsaid that content analysis tabulates the frequency of occurring topics or opinions thereby facilitating a better comparative understanding of a particular subject matter. As a systematic comparison of text content, this methodology establishes content validity concerning closely related texts.

Social sciences and humanities depend on careful reading of written materials in their researches. This reading involves techniques of collating information based on the subject matter of the researcher in view of differentiating and highlighting the percentage of concept frequency (Holsti, 1969). Since this paper equally focuses on a comparative view of curriculum for moral education and the Catholic education especially as it relates to character formation and integral development, content analysis of relevant documents will lead to a fuller appreciation of the main subject matter of this paper. With this *modus operandi*, it will be possible to assess the extent in which curriculum contents of *Religion and National Values, Primary 1-6* converge with or diverge from the contents of moral education *mTC S*. It renders possible the contents percentage of Christian religious education in the national curriculum on religion and national values that are in or implicit in Catholic educational principles

**THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS: PERCENTAGE OF CONVERGENCE  
AND DIVERGENCE**

S/N	THEMES IN RELIGION AND NATIONAL VALUES (PRIMARY 1 TO 6)	INSTRUCTIONS IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL	CONVERGENCE	DIVERGENCE
1	Goodness of God ( <i>Primary 1-3</i> , p. ix). Divine benevolence is seen in creation and God's care for creation.	On the Good news (n. 59). The human experience of God is full of the goodness received from the Creator.	YES	
2	On Who is Jesus ( <i>Primary 1-3</i> , p. ix) The sub-theme analysis on pp. 3 & 4 says nothing about the divinity of Jesus). However, it is stated under themes on Islamic Studies and the sub-theme Sirah and	On Jesus Christ (nos. 5,8, 11,33&93. These paragraphs affirm the divinity of Jesus Christ as that which illuminates Christian education as knowledge that should lead to salvation.		YES
	Tahdhib that Prophet Isa known to Christians is not the son of God and that Jesus was not crucified (p.46).			
3	Who is a Christian: criteria for being a follower of Christ are examined ( <i>Primary 1-3</i> , p. ix).	On Christian character (nos. 11, 12, 19,22, 33-37, 42-44). Those things that distinguish Christian from other are highlighted.	YES	
4	Prayer is explained as means of getting to God ( <i>Primary 1-3</i> , p. xii).	Prayer is lived out •* through the gospel values (nos. 49-51).	YES	

		purpose for this is the salvation of the world.		
6	Jesus the way to the Father ( <i>Primary 4-6, p. ix</i> ).	Christ is the salvation of humanity mediated through the church (no. 5).	YES	
7	Knowing God through relationship with others ( <i>Primary 4-6, p. ix</i> ).	On relationship with God and others. This is basically possible through relationship with Jesus Christ (no. 6, 32, 53 & 84).	YES	
8	God's plan for us: God the Father has the final destiny of creation in his hands ( <i>Primary 4-6, p. xi</i> ).	On divine plan: in Christ, a better understanding of the purpose of humanity is made possible (nos. 5 & 10).	YES	
9	God saves his people through various events and interventions ( <i>Primary 4-6, p. xi</i> ).	The saving mission of God was achieved in Christ and continues today through the church (no.8).	YES	
10	Holy Spirit is working in human beings: the fruits of this operation are manifested in peaceful coexistence, <i>Qtc.</i> ( <i>Primary 4-6, p. xii</i> ).	The work of the Holy Spirit in schools and their founders are fruits of divine love ( no. 89).	YES	
11	Paul the Apostle: the missionary activities of this man are recorded in the New Testament. He encouraged respect for civil authorities, harmony among peoples, etc ( <i>Primary 4-6, p. xiv</i> ).	NONE	NO	YES
12	Getting ready for responsibilities: religious education serves the formation of pupils who are ready to assume their duties	The formation of organizations to enhance sense of responsibility in people is needed. Hence, education	YES	

	as citizens of Nigeria ( <i>Primary 4-6</i> , p. xiv).	should lead to the spirit of cooperate responsibility (no. 80).		
13	Living a Christian life: authentic Christian life benefits the society ( <i>Primary 4-6</i> , p. xiv).	Christian life and commitment should lead to the service God. This service of God is also manifested in honesty and patriotism (no. 45).	YES	
			89.5% CONVERGENCE	10.5% DIVERGENCE

The above content analysis shows that 89.5% of the curricular contents of *Religion and National Values (Primary 1-6)* are found in *TC S*. Yet some serious questions arise as regards the approved curriculum for religious education for primary schools in Nigeria: (i) why the ominous silence as regards a core Christian belief such as the divinity of Jesus Christ and; (ii) why should Islamic Studies and the sub-theme Sirah and Tahdhib (*Religion and National Values: Primary 1-3*) distort and twist basic doctrines of the Christian faith, namely, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the creedal belief in his resurrection?

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ABOVE CONTENT ANALYSIS ON DISCIPLINE,  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CATHOLIC  
ARCHDIOCESE OF CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE**

1. There is foundational connection between authentic Christian belief and moral formation (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2009). Hence, the ambiguity enshrined in *Religion and National Values (Primary 1-3)* as indicated above with regard to the divinity of Jesus Christ should be resolved in the spirit of respect for religions. Consequently, there is need for update or revision of the curriculum and children should be taught the true Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ is God and the Christian creedal belief concerning the resurrection of Christ.

2. There are many areas of common interests between *The Catholic School* and *Religion and National Values: Primary 1-6* on character formation and discipline. These should be explored by stakeholders in religious and civic education.
3. Religious and secular objectives of moral development at the primary school levels are similar in *T C S* and *Religion and National Values: Primary 1-6*. However, when the latter proposes values that are not theistic, *T C S* differs by proposing theocentric foundations to moral and human formation linked to the theme of God's covenant in Christ with humanity.
4. *The Catholic School*, nos. 78-9 recommends well planned pastoral care for the Head Teachers and other staff in the school since these will go a long way to helping all in the school environment. With this, moral development of school management will improve upon the effective and integral learning.
5. Moral educational programmes, like: quiz and debates, should be organized in nursery/primary schools with specific goals in view, such as: integration of faith and culture, religion and citizenship, etc.
6. Integration of faith and life in the pupils should not be aimed at converting them to the Roman Catholic faith but their holistic formation as indicated in *Religion and National Values: Primary 1 to 3*.
7. Workshops on developmental psychology and moral formation should be organized periodically for the Head teachers, teachers, and non-teaching staff. The benefits of these workshops are innumerable: better learning environment, effective management of personnel, etc.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY**

The value of this work lies in the significance of this study as it is beneficial to the following: schools, educationists/teachers, pupils, parents/guardians, curriculum developers, textbook writers and

government.

- Catholic schools should always see their social service in the area of education as one of its primary means of socializing the society in values and morals. However, it should not always result in conversion of pupils to the Catholic faith but transformation of their mind, intellect, and heart.
- Catholic educationists and teachers should have copies of these two documents as teachers' manuals which will help them in teaching religious instructions in schools with conviction. This is because they have at stake in the deepening of morals and value based integral formation within the education system. Their experience in the field of education should be tapped and brought to bear with current curricular developments.
- Sound moral upbringing for pupils cannot be fully achieved without the collaboration of their parents and guardians. Hence, educational service should be seen as ancillary to parental responsibilities. Consequently, parents should be made to see copies of the two documents: *The Catholic School* and *Religion and National Values* in view of ascertaining the contents of religious formation of their children/wards. This can be done effectively through the Parent-Teacher's-Association (P.T.A).
- The pupils will benefit from these documents by learning the art of co-operation, teamwork, civic education, virtuous life as stipulated in *T C S* and *Religion & National Values*.
- Catholic Christians curriculum developers are needed in the development of religious education for primary schools. This is because their assistance is also needed in the reconciliation of themes in *T C S* and *Religion & National Values*, especially the question bordering on the divinity of Jesus Christ and his resurrection.
- The textbook writers should highlight the richness of various Christian traditions in Christian Religious Education in view of appreciating pluralism of the Christian faith.
- As part of funding civic education, the government needs to give financial support to moral

development programmes that foster corruption-free Nigeria and instill discipline from primary school level. There is an urgent need for this as the nation is on path of moral revitalization.

### CONCLUSION

Content analysis of *T C S* and *Religion and National Values: Primary 1 to 6* shows that the points of convergence between these texts are significant (89.5%). But the fact that 89.5% of *Religion and National Values (Primary 1 to 6)* on religious studies converges with *The Catholic School* has not assuaged the fears of those Roman Catholics who were worried that doctrinal beliefs and religious values of their wards will be watered down with the current curriculum on religious education. This is consequent upon the non-inclusion of **vital** sub-theme<sup>^</sup>) on the divinity of Jesus Christ (as indicated in 'Who is Jesus' - *Primary 1-3*) as well as teaching children in Islamic Studies and the sub-theme Sirah and Tahdhib {*Primary 1-3*) that Isa (Jesus) is not son of God and did not resurrect from death. These two items remain serious omission and contortion of the Christian belief in an important national document on religious education like this.

**From the foregoing, the worry of some concerned citizens as regards integral and true religious education formation of their children at the primary school level is credible.** Therefore there is need for co-operation between the government (beginning from Cross River State) and charity organizations, like the Roman Catholic Church, so that a meaningful dialogue among stakeholders will lead to a correct interpretation of the Christian faith as contained in *Religion and National Values*. Christian pupils at primary and foundational level of education need to know the truth concerning their faith and National curriculum of education in Nigeria can foster this process.

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