Effects of Post-Modernism on Religious Education Practice

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Abstract

The world is becoming more and more complex due to postmodernism ideologies penetrating almost every aspect of human life. This research therefore delves into postmodernism issues that are not only affecting the world system but also religious ideologies and practices. With obvious understanding that religious education is one of the means by which Christians' faith are being built, the research describes characteristic of postmodern world and religious education (Christian Education). The paper further reveals how religious education can be well practiced despite challenging postmodern ideologies. The concluding aspect of the paper reveals that postmodernism has both negative and positive effects on religious education practices.

INTRODUCTION

The world is presently facing the powerful influence of post modernism ideologies on various aspects of human life and the educational sector is not exempted. Some of the new discoveries in science and technologies and in other fields are greatly impacting general education and religious education. Religious education being one of the tools for developing faith in its adherents has been over years subjected to different philosophical ideologies born from modern world view.

This paper therefore aims at describing Postmodernism with it characteristic nature, explaining the nature of Religion Education and its Practices and conclusive elucidate some impact of Postmodernism on general education and religious education. It is important to note that both Religious education and Christian education are used interchangeably in this paper. Also, the researcher tends to dwell more on the adverse effect of Postmodernism ideologies on Religious Education and how agents of Religious Education can respond to them.

CONCEPT OF POST MODERNISM AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There seems to be difficulty defining post modernism due to the fact that it holds different meanings to different people. Postmodernism calls one's attention to the fact that there is a period called pre-modern and modern. It should be noted that all of these periods are linked with the history of Western cultural development particularly in Europe (Olaniyan 2013, 100). Furthermore, according to Gilley, Garry E., in the words of Olaniyan, the pre-modern era is described as a period in which the western world believed in the supernatural and domination of an individual by tradition and authority was normal and unquestioned.

The period spanned from the medieval times until the French revolution of 1789. This was the era when the western world believed in the supernatural and domination of an individual by tradition and authority was normal and questioned. There was no doubt about the existence of God, Spirit, demons, and other beings that existed beyond human sense. However, modernism is characterized by the regulated nature of science, foundationalism owing to the fact that knowledge is absolute among others according to John Herman in the word of (Adegbola 2015, 68). Olaniyan (2015, 68) alluded by asserting that "modernism was a revolt to pre-modern philosophies as it rejected tradition and authority in favour of reason and

natural and it assumes that individual is autonomous and the sole source of meaning, and truth should be the individual who through enquiry and rational means come to position of good."   Hence Postmodernism has been defined by a French philosopher, sociologist, and literary theorist as an "incredulity (a product of progress in the sciences toward meta-narratives (this mean that progress in turn presupposes it, yet facts change from time to time, therefore, there is no meta-narratives)"   Banjo   (2015,   104).   Thus,   in postmodernism, intellect is replaced by the will, reason is replaced by emotion itself becomes a social construct.

Etymolologically, to educate is "to lead out or bring out," educare or educere" to form or train. This has to do with bringing out the potential in the child for the fulfillment of his desires and to train the child to live as a useful and desirable member of society (Ayeni 2003, 3).   There are various definitions for education from different scholars, but the definition given by Ayeni that was drawn from its etymological meaning is preferable in this paper. Therefore, talking about religion education, it has to do with process of teaching and training all age group how to develop potential that will make them a better citizen of this world and of the kingdom of heaven using Bible as major textbook. Ayandokun Esther (2015, 26) further described Christian Education as "a type of international education aimed at teaching the norms and standards of the Christian faith." When norms and standard of Christian faith are taught by its agents which are teachers, priests, Christian homes; it will result to a better family, society and world at large.   One can therefore state that Christian education assist in achieving a holistic growth of men in the society.

BASIC FEATURES OF POSTMODERNISM

Understanding the world around us calls for evaluating and analyzing the patterns of thought informing its culture. These

are some basic features of post-modern world according to Ishola-Esan (2015, 56-59).

The Anti-Foundation: To a post-modern man, knowledge is uncertain, history is dissolved, no distinction between the truth and fiction. Anti-foundationalism also projects that there is no transcendent mental or spiritual approach to pure reason or ultimate reality, nor is there unchanging internal essence within the individual except from physical law (Ishola-Esan, 2015, 56). Banjo Samuel Oyekanmi (2015, 103) corroborating this, posits that "postmodern" world questions texts by maintaining that texts historical, literary, or otherwise have no inherent authority or objectivity in revealing the author's intent, nor can they tell us "what really happened." This informs the reason for discrediting histories which did not support the opinions or philosophies of the post-modern scholars. Thus, individual can write to support his position on matters of sex, gender, academic or etc. In a nutshell postmodernism disagreed with history that is against their philosophies.

Deconstruction of Languages: For a post-modernist, language does not reveal meaning, it only constructs the meaning. Hence, words according to Wells in the word of Ishola-Esan (2015, 57) means 'only whatever we wish them to mean." The deconstruction is done, firstly by analyzing the metaphors inherent in scientific language and secondly, interrogating the text to uncover its hidden political or sexual agenda. This gives room for individuals to express their view. Post modernism prefers to talk about "plurality of voices" more than "singular voice" on subject matter because they unashamedly deny existence of objective truth (Ojo 2015, 33). Therefore, in postmodern world, words mean whatever we mean wish them to mean. Thus, deconstruction is done by analyzing the metaphors inherent in the scientific language and by interrogating the text to uncover its hidden political or sexual agenda.

The Denial of Truth: Truth is said to be relative. Thus, what is truth to me may not be truth to another person. This gives room for various opinions over a matter that is already settled in the Bible. Truth is perceived by every human community is that community's interpretation of the world. Explaining further Olaniyan (2015, 96) asserts thus:

There is no absolute truth, and the definition of truth is connected more by considerations for pragmatic concerns hence, what makes one feel good, solves one's problems, attracts one and works is the truth. But if what works for an individual is the truth; the result will be confusion and chaos within society since there would not be a criterion to ascertain what a general and objective truth consist.

Virtual Reality: Postmodernism questions realities as more fiction which did not exist or was not practicalised. Hence, they opt for what they can rather see and feel to what they can only think of. This gives rise to technological advancement which is affecting every aspect of man. Today, people experienced the feelings simulated by computers, televisions and video games (Ishola-Esan 2015, 58). Corroborating this, Ayandokun (2015, 50) opines that "There is a sense of feeling in all that is counts, because, in the end, feeling is all there is." Thus, postmodern attitudes become "if I can feel it, if I can touch it, then it must be true."

Disoriented Self: Ishola-Esan (2015, 58) asserts that "postmodernist suggest that human beings can make themselves whatever they wish to be since they are shaped by endless cultural and social factors that makes it impossible to know who the real "me" is. Hence, the postmodern world totally abandons the search for the inner self simply because there is no inner self to find, no essence from which to be alienated. It also denies that humans are the most imported thing in the world. Thus, people are no better or no more important than anything else in the world. The consequence

of this is reflecting on the acceptance of infanticide, abortion and any other means of population control.

Summarily, Postmodernism is characterised with the following ten (10) essential principles according to Ogundapo (2015, 27-28):

1. Post-modernism believes that there is no absolute truth

2. Post-modernism believs that truth and error are synonyms.

3. Reliance or opinions to embrace facts.

4. Post-modernism speaks out against the constraints of religious moral and secular authority.

5. Post-modernism claims that collective ownership would most fairly administrate goods and services.

6. Post-modernism rues the unfulfilled promises of sciences, technology, government and religion.

7. Post-modernism subjects morality to personal opinion (morality is defined as each person's private code of ethics without the need to follow traditional values and rules.)

8. Post-modernism claims that national boundaries are hindrance to human communication and that nationalism causes wars. (They push for internationalism by uniting separate countries).

9. Post-modernism believes that all religions are valid. (They denounce exclusive claims of Jesus Christ as being the only way to God).

10. Post-modernism defends the cause of feminist and homosexuals.

NATURE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian Education as described by Ayandokun (2013, 26) is "a type of intentional educational aimed to teach the norms

and standards of Christian faith."   Christian Education is intentional in the sense that it is mandated by God.   God Himself compulsory education in His instruction to Christian household so that the principles that guides His relationship with human being can be passed from one generation to another. Talking about the textbook for Christian Education, Bible becomes the major text from which Christians' norms and standard are clearly written.   As regards those who are expected to be agents of Christian education, teachers, priests, Christian homes are expected to be agents of teaching Christian Education to all age groups being a member of Christian community.

The purpose of Christian community is to promote the Christian faith which is done by teaching Christian education to the member of the community.   Groome gave three dimensions of Christian faith in the words of Ayandokun (2013, 28) in the following way:

Faith as believing: To have faith in Jesus Christ is to believe in, trust in and confess His Lordship over our lives and culture. His Lordship must permeate every area of our lives.

Faith as Trusting: This has to do with person's life of trust and confidence in God. This kind of trust affects one's loyalty, love and commitment.

Faith in Doing: Doing aspect of Christian faith complement the other faith mentioned above. In fact, the originality of one's faith is determined through demonstration of believing and trusting faith. The Bible also says that faith without work is dead.

Aims of Christian Education

Christian Education is aimed at achieving holistic growth of an individual, community, society and world at large. Through teaching of God's principles, an individual grew in the

knowledge of God and they in-turn affect their society positively. According to Ayandokun (2015, 29), the goal of Christian education is to meet needs of person. These needs in the words of Tidwell (1996, 42-43) are:

1. Experience Christian conversion.

2. Vital membership in a New Testament church.

3. Experience of Christian worship.

4. Growing knowledge and conviction.

5. Developing attitudes and appreciation.

6. Growth in Christian living.

7. Engage in Christian services.

There is no gain saying in the fact that a detailed Christian education curriculum has the capacity to make an individual experience all these needs. Also, the place of a Christian instructor in achieving those needs should not be underestimated. The instructors here are agencies of Christian education which are parents/family, church and community (society), and school (Ayandokun 2015, 31-33). From another perspective, Olaniyan (2015, 104-105) sees all the needs mentioned by Tidwell as the reason for which the church was established. Hence, Christian Education is a means to achieve the purpose of the church. Olaniyan further buttress this by asserting thus:

"An examination of Jesus, teaching ministry showed it was characterized by three objectives which are proclamation of the kingdom, instruction on the nature of the gospel, empowering the disciples in mind and heart to carry on the ministry that Christ has done in their midst. Students are encouraged to seek to come into right relationship with Jesus Christ, grow in mature discipleship and became able to take spiritually "strong meat". They equipped for the work of the ministry through sensitization to relevant

issues, acquiring appreciate skills and motivated by commitment to Christ."

EFFECTS OF POST-MODERNISM ON EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The following are probable identified effects of postmodernism on both general education and religious education:

There is a change in methods and program of education.

Christian educators are now employing different kinds of methods and programs which are not necessarily spiritual, soul enriching but interesting, exciting and entertaining to gain attention and patronage of church members. This does not only water down Christian values, it has greatly affected the quality of Christian principles and doctrines which we are passing to the incoming generation. Olaniyan (2015, 107) corroborating this opines that "Programs like cultural day, dancing competition, "Suya" night in which roasted beef meat is freely served are introduced" to enlist church membership," of course, such methods will be sustained in the church in other to keep their membership. This can be said to be the resultant effect of anti-foundationalistic ideology of postmodern world.

The post-modern world has made "education not to be a merely transmission of a discipline or knowledge that lies prior to the educational experience, rather, it should encompass the active production of (as well as deconstruction of) meaning" according to Grenzis in the words of (Ishola-Esan 2015, 62). This has consequently led to experiential ways of learning, where different experiences are set side by side and all are appropriate. This has been compared with differences between empirical science and art. As rightly observed by the educationist in some decades ago, the combination of two polarities, the cognitive-rational and experiential view, has

become increasingly popular. Hence, postmodernists believe that teaching methods should be multi-dimensional.

There is a problem of curriculum falsification and adulteration.

Since postmodernism is no respecter of history and religion which are essential to sustainability of both general education and Christian education, postmodern philosophers are attempting removing history and religious education from school curriculum. This they do to accommodate pluralistic ideology. Reacting to this challenge, Ishola (2015, 64) posits that:

> "It is vital Christian educators and pastors mindful of two vital issues. Firstly, they must avoid allowing enlightened grandchild - Postmodernist - to influence education as it affected colonial education. Secondly, they must realize that they cannot serve the needs of culture and the needs of the church in a single way."

As regards the extra-curriculum activities in the School Curriculum, post-modern educationist attempted and succeeded in banning daily morning assembly/devotion where pupils can have opportunity to interact, worship, and be inspected by teachers before daily commencement of class work.   The aim of post-modern educationist is to totally separate religiosity from the academic. This is to achieve their aims targeted at proving

There is a problem of deconstruction of language on both secular education and Christian education.

This is what Olaniyan (2015, 107) calls "marriage of convenience" between the church and the secular world. On increasing measure, pastors, church, society measure, individuals, tend to explain scripture as it pleases them and in as much as it is in congruence with their tradition. Thus, they make scripture which is the major textbook for Christian

education says what they mean and not exactly what the scripture meant to say.

This has resulted in little or no preaching and teaching on some Christians' salient issue that a growing Christian should be aware of. Teaching on hell, sin, unfaithfulness, adultery, second coming of Jesus, rapture is becoming scarce on church pulpits and even in the curriculum of Christian education. If by chance, post-modern educator attempts to teach them, they ended up giving their opinion of the matters rather than what the Bible teaches.

Having discussed effects of Post modernism on education and Christian education, the following prospective steps should be taking to averts negative effects on both secular and religious education

The church being one of the agents of Christian education has to be sensitive to the deceptive methods through which post modern views are slowly but steadily creeping into forming patterns and ideologies that propel different methods in achieve its objectives (Olaniyan, 2015, 108). There is a need for church to discuss contemporary social issues going on in the society. Concerning this, credence should be given to the present CAN President/NBC President who consistently speaks against some bad changes in the educational curriculum of Nigerian and which has yielded positive result in some quarters.

The church should develop critical thinking abilities among teachers and facilitators of her educational programs to challenge erroneous postmodern ideologies (i.e., relativity of moral value and practices, religious pluralism, rejection of biblical teachings e.t.c). Olaniyan opines that this development can be better achieved when curriculum materials of theological institution feature contemporary social concern and purposes for evaluating new ideas. These curriculum and development will definitely challenge the mind to:

- Think integratively and coherently with all pieces of information.

- Think of terms of larger and weighty questions of life in the light of theology

- Understanding the epistemological uniqueness and importance of revelation.

- Be assumption sensitive.

- Think through the ontological implications and philosophical extensions of one's formational theological commitments (Ishoal-Eshan, 2015, 65).

There is need for a church's coordinated approach to respond to social issues that challenge the variety of the very fundamental basis of Christian religion and practices (Olaniyan, 2015, 109). Christian body needs to address issues such as body care, corruption, abortion, early marriage, lesbians, homosexual etc. because with various opinions and teaching in Christendom. The church in order to achieve this will have to bury individual preferences for this sake of the Gospel. Collective effort of all agencies of Christian education is needed in teaching the truth to counter postmodernism wrong ideologies.   Ayandokun (2015, 52) emphasizing the importance of teaching biblical truth states thus:

> "Teaching the biblical truths and helping believers grow in it is a remedy to the world that is denying God. The crises of knowledge that postmodernism is engaged in has solution in Christ and His truth. Jesus Christ declared in John 14:6, "*Jesus answered; I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.*"   All who seek meaning and peace in other means cannot but be confused but accepting God's truth (that) can set them free from the confusion of the mind."

There is a need to differentiate between tolerance and compromise (Ayandokun, 2015, 32).   With different ideas, beliefs, teaching promoted in the postmodern world, Christian education should teach tolerance and not compromise.   The reason being that Christians cannot have the world of their own separate from this only one world.   Christians are expected to relate well with other people owing on to belief system different from theirs.   But this does not in any way suggest compromise of their faith.   This type of tolerance according to Olaniyan (2015, 110) is referred to as "Holy tolerance" which enables church to maintain a new compromising stand with regard to fundamental truths that distinguishes faith.   This knowledge will also well help in confronting religious pluralizing ideology of postmodernism just as Enyubara (2018, 45) posits that "...no pluralism is more startling than religious pluralism."

Younger generations are to be given attention by answering their questions (Ayandokun, 2015, 53). Since postmodernism highly affects younger generation which are predominant secondary school age and undergraduate in Colleges, Polytechnic and Universities, there should be intentional approach to answering probing questions which they often ask as a result of their misconception/doubt over issues that post-modernism raised. Christian Educators needs to be sensitive to the "teachable moment" in their class. Teachable moment is a period when an individual student or corporate body vehemently asks questions for clarification over a matter of interest.   The period serves as an opportunity to teach the truth.   If the younger generation could not find answers to their questions, they might be led astray. Corroborating this, Ayandokun further explains that "No question from the younger generation should be considered absurd but should rather be given attention to help the young minds understand that God is real in a world that struggles with the existence of God.

Christian parents and Christian Teachers are to remain Godly Models (Ayandokun, 2015, 54). The validity and potency of Christian Education can be felt when her agencies maintain and practices what they teach. Most especially, parents and Christian teachers who facilitate Christian education at home schools and in the church, Ayandokun buttressing this asserts that "moral values are almost lost at homes in schools and worst still in some Christian gatherings living nothing for the younger generation to imbibe" not because the truth are not taught but majorly because the lives of some parents and teachers is contrary to what they profess.

CONCLUSION

Effect of Postmodernist on education and Christian Education as can be seen in this paper cannot be over emphasized. The reason is due to the fact that most of the Postmodernism ideas on education, marriage, godly morals, and social life are contrary to biblical injunction. Thus, Education that is targeted at making things known for the development of individual and benefit of the society cannot but critique some of the Post-Modern ideologies so as to sustain morality and soundness in academic. Christian Education on the other hand is targeted at developing holistic being by building peoples' faith in God who they believe has answer to all situations. But post modernism denies the existence of God and do not see God having answers to all situations since human being can reason things out. Whatever case may be, Christian Education is expected to criticize and reveal falsehood and imbalance in post-modern world so that the truth can continue to prevail, and that society will not be rob of morals. The mandate to challenge/respond to the ideologies of Postmodern world is also explicitly stated in the book of Colossians 2:6-8, "*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, … See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and*

the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than of Christ." as it charges to reject all deceptive philosophies that are born out of human tradition because they possess power to makes Christian education and Christian faith ineffective.

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