

## The Contribution of Quality Religion Education to Development Education in Africa

Mufungulwa Maurice Anakoka, PhD

University of South Africa (UNISA): Pretoria  
anakomm@unisa.ac.za or anakokamm@yahoo.com

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### Abstract

*The contribution of quality religion education to development education in Africa is of great value in such a way that those who gain access to it should be able to make a constructive connection between religion education and development education. The main motivating reason for this study is that there is a general perception from some global regions where religious affiliation has promoted religious intolerance which in turn has promoted conflict, instead of reducing it. In this light the researcher, herein, saw it necessary to promote an idea that quality religion education can help promote development education, thus religion education can be a powerful tool for development, in general. In an attempt to establish a relationship between quality religion education and development education, van Ufford and Schofeleers (1988:293) say that there is a close parallel between the social scientific study of religion and that of development. While religion contributes to development education, it has potential to do the opposite hence Brahm (2005) says that interfaith learning can really contribute positively to development education because the learning process can lead to religious tolerance which in turn contributes to peace-building. In addition to this comment, Smock (2006) connotes that religion education contributes to development education in that peace-making on the African continent has significantly contributed in the solving of conflicts in Sudan, Mozambique, and South Africa. According to Glaeser, Edward, and Sacerdote (2008) good religion education can lead to good development education, though the differences may vary from individual to individual, state education system to another, and faith organization to another, but the fact is there is some relationship that exists between religion education and development education. This paper considers religion education as an adult education programme regardless of it including children in its application. Leaders of religion education structures may have different objectives, but the point in focus, herein, is that regardless of the apparent focus, there is education that has a bearing on people's characters and life styles which affects development status in Africa. With this in mind, the researcher, herein, saw it necessary to advance an idea that religion education structures, or sects, need to have, in themselves, quality assurance mechanisms so as to attend to the degree of quality in their expected outcomes. Religion education, regardless of the quality, has a great influence in the lives of the people. While there are many practicing sects of religion, there are some religious sects that specialize in learning by dominance of music and silence while others focus on learning which is backed by learning support materials. Observation has it that religious sects dominated by use of literature tend to influence religion attendees to engage in education programmes more than those who get dominated by other forms such as music and silence. Preliminary search for the literature for the study has indicated that there is no sufficient literature which is directly linked. Therefore, this study will use the tangential approach to literature review. This study is giving a notion that religion education, if backed by learning support materials like literature, contributes to development in Africa. This study is expected to add value to the following population groups: education development journals, researchers in universities, community development researchers, adult education scholars, religion education practitioners, development education practitioners, and student theologians.*

**Keywords:** Contribution, Quality Religion Education, Development education, and Africa

### 1. Introduction

In the Republic of South Africa, weekends are normally characterized by people going to different religion organizations for different religious purposes, yet all of them get exposed to different qualities of religion education that, in one way or the other, is linked to some form of development education in Africa as a continent due to ecological linkage. Some of these have been known for positively contributing to development processes, as in the example of a Moslem child educated not to eat pork products for health reasons (news 24.com, 2014), while some have been considered detrimental to the society, as in the example of a South African Pastor who made his congregation eat grass (zeHabesha.comm, 2014). From the researcher's point of view there exists a relationship between religion education and development education, as supported by APRODEV (2013:4). In one way or the other it has been observed by the researcher, herein, that religion education contributes to development education in either a negative or positive way. With this view in mind, the researcher, herein, advocates that religion education organizations should be subjected to some form of quality

assurance because they affect the society in many ways. Reflecting on this relationship, Grier (1997:57) says that Protestantism is correlated with growth and development. To understand these two variables of religion education and development education, one needs to understand the meaning of the terms of education, religion and development. According to dictionary.com (2014), education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgement, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. According to Kalman (2009:4), religion is a way of life with a set of beliefs, and development, according to Hantal (2011:192), is a process of improving the quality of general human life that includes economy. In the above stated context, religion education is therefore the process of transmitting information from one individual to another with an intention of empowering and preparing one's future life while believing in something, and that development education is the process of transmitting information from one individual to another with an intention to improve the quality of whole life that includes economy. In this context, education becomes a common denominator between the set of beliefs one has and the quality of life one lives while being informed by the learning processes. The question in this paper is therefore concerned with the contribution religion education makes on the development education, how this process takes place, and finding ways on how to improve the quality of relationship between the two so that people who attend religion organizations should be so benefitted that development becomes a visible reality in their lives.

Cline (2014) reports some challenge from the Islamic religion's intolerance on those who hold extreme opposite views from theirs, and he says it as follows:

One of the problems facing Islam today is its failure to deal with basic human rights. Traditional, orthodox Islam doesn't recognize equal rights for women, the right to convert from Islam to another religion, or the right to criticize Islam, the Qu'ran, or Muhammad. Where Islam reigns, basic human rights are restricted in the name of religious ideology.

This paper discusses the contribution of religion education to development education and concludes on the idea that because quality religion education should contribute to development education, as these two interact in belief and practice (Engen, 2004:3), it is practicable to have systems running religion education sects to be subjected to quality assurance mechanisms so that they can optimally contribute to development education which in turn promotes development in Africa.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The author of this paper has taken time assessing the contribution of quality religion to development education in Africa, and his observation has it that while there is a significant relationship between religion and development, as advocated by APRODEV (2013:4), sometimes the religion education has been of poor quality characterized by malpractices which expose the quality of head knowledge, as in the example of people eating uncooked field grass, as if grazing (zeHabesha.com, 2014), hence it has negatively contributed to development education. The observation of Karl Marx, as reflected by Cline (2014) on religion and spirituality, that religion is opium of the people, makes sense only where religion education do not empower people so that they can get economic freedom for equitable survival, and thus Cline (2014) states it as follows:

According to Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus, problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease, but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. This is the origin of his comment that religion is the "opium of the masses" — but as shall see, his thoughts are much more complex than commonly portrayed.....Economics, then, are what constitute the base of all of human life and history — generating division of labor, class struggle, and all the social institutions which are supposed to maintain the status quo. Those social institutions are a superstructure built upon the base of economics, totally dependent upon material and economic realities but nothing else. All of the institutions which are prominent in our daily lives — marriage, church, government, arts, etc. — can only be truly understood when examined in relation to economic forces.

The author of this paper finds the above thinking as one that needs adjustment in the sense that only where people who belong to religion education have no access to good quality religion education can religion be truly opium of the people, because people will try to survive on scanty amount of knowledge when they are supposed to use the available abundance of knowledge to boost the economic strength of both those religion education sects they belong to and those of societal members. This paper therefore discusses an issue that quality education will promote quality development education, which in turn should improve the quality of economic livelihood of people, thus contributing to the bigger picture of development as a whole. Due to this ideological connectivity, the author introduces the concept of introducing the quality assurance component, as a knowledge progression system check, to each sect of religion education a respective African country.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Due to the connectivity between doing and transferability of knowledge in religion education sects and development education, this paper is informed by Kolb's learning cycle learning theory that states that experience is the foundation of learning, and that learning moves in a cycle format of meeting a concrete experience, followed by a reflection on that experience as reflective experience, then one enters into the stage of abstract conceptualization, and finally, one gets engaged into the active experimentation to solidify the learning (businessballs.com, 2014). The reason for including Kolb's learning cycle in this paper is that all human acts are a result of what goes on in the mind, be it conscious or unconscious. The researcher's observation is that there is much done on earth that is affected by people's belief system. Thus religion education has to do with development education. The religion education aspect is solely based on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor kind of learning reflected by what religion education sects members do, in form of education, health, choices, freedoms expression, and many more. It is deemed as more of a doing kind of learning than theorizing, hence this theory, backed by the works of van Ufford and Schofeleers (1988:293) who say that there is a close parallel between the social scientific study of religion and that of development, inform the basis for the discussion of this paper.

According to Businessballs.com (2014), Kolb's learning cycle theory can best be summarized as follows:

- Concrete experience
- Reflective observation
- Abstract conceptualization
- Active experimentation.

As it shall be observed in the literature review section of this paper, religion education, in any society is influenced by the learning processes which, in turn, have the capacity to make people behave in a particular way, either for good, or bad. Due to this kind of influence, religion education needs to be quality assured if it has to meaningfully contribute to development education.

### 4. Literature Review

The author, herein, claims that there are no direct literature sources linking religion education to development education. Because of this missing link, the author decided to use a tangential approach as a route. This approach, according to this article's author, and in harmony with a notion displayed by Roberts (2012) on tangents, connotes that at the point where the radius of the circle touches the circumference of the same circle, and a line from an external origin meets the radius, forming a right (90 degrees) angle crossing, the radius becomes part of that circle. In literature review therefore, this indicates that whatever is in a circle will have a causal relationship with a tangent at the point of tangency. This means that information that may not directly linked to the information sought after within the circle, becomes directly related at the tangency point. Thus this literature review for this paper, has taken tangential approach by linking religion education to development education, even when such literature does not exist in separate direct links.

### 5. Methodology

Data quality for this research paper demands that qualitative research design be used to collect the data that informs the study. It covers the African continent as an area of focus, but examples are predominantly South African, as a representative of the African continent. The data that informs this study has been collected by using an observation as an instrument tool for data collection. In addition to the observation tool for data collection, the method of document (newspaper and the like media) assessment was applied too. The two instruments were sufficient enough to supply the required data.

### 6. Results and Discussions

From the literature search, it has been established that religious education is the study of religion which aims at helping man to develop (Lane, 1992:16), and that therefore the use of the phrase "religion education" in this paper will cover "religious education" as the latter is a complete subset of the first. Though the use of religion education may be confused by the use of religious education, this paper uses the concept of religion education to cover other religions, like Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Agnosticism, Atheism, Animism, Baha'i, Confucianism, and the like, as highlighted by amazon.com (2014). So, these religions should be in position to have a section that deals with quality assurance as they are educating

quite a large number of people in different ways. With the availability of reference books like Bible (with Apocrypha), Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Haggadah, Quran, Trip taka, Vedas, Bhagavad, Gita, Upanishads, Puranas, Guru Granth Sahib, Tao Te Ching, Christian Bible, and Torah (Kalman, 2009: 8). The presence of standard books of reference is indicative of desire to adhere to quality which in turn can be classified as developmental in nature.

Different religious groupings have different ways of looking at life therefore they respond to stimuli differently. Others promote conflict (Nigeria 2013/2014 war of Boko Haram Islamists) as reflected by Kano in Daily Sun newspaper (2014:10), and others promote peace as has been promoted by William Wilberforce's war against slavery in British Empire in 1833 (BBC @ 2014). Quality religion education, which the researcher believes contributes to development education, has the potential to promote spiritual intelligence which has been defined and described by Center for Spiritual Intelligence (2014) as follows:

Spirituality refers to what is most essential to the heart of human experience. Spiritual Intelligence® refers to various skills and abilities that empower you to live in harmony with your highest values and move unswervingly towards your life goals

- with a Heart that is open and flexible,
- with Enthusiasm,
- with Awareness of your present experience and of the presence of the divine,
- with Respect for and service to others and the world, and
- Guided by the Traditions of your highest values and ethics.

According to Chauke, in the Citizen newspaper (2014:4), there were two girls at George Khoza secondary school of SOWETO of South Africa who were killed due to belief system under a particular occult killing, which is deviation of religion of Satanism. This act found a strong opposition via the media respondents and suggestion was made that the African National Congress (ANC) should restore religious education in schools because it promoted human value and dignity (SAFM news cast, 2014). This indicates that if religion education can be promoted in the right perceived way, then the issue of quality comes into being, but the challenge that remains outstanding is that there certified accredited quality assurance structures in the religion-based organizations fraternity.

According to Cline (2014), with special reference to Nigeria, there have been religion-based wars in Africa as characterized by their presence as indicated in a caption below:

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the continent's leading oil producer. It has the largest Muslim population in Africa after Egypt. In recent years, there has been mounting Islamic militancy and growing anti-Western hostility in Nigeria that makes it fertile ground for extremist recruiters. The unrest is apparently being stoked by radical Arab Islamic preachers and agents of Al-Qaeda. The USA is already deploying small groups of Special Forces throughout the impoverished Sahel region states of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to counter infiltration by Islamic militants moving south from Algeria. With West Africa in danger of becoming the new battleground between the USA and Al-Qaeda, heavier oil-driven US intervention may become unavoidable - a path fraught with pitfalls and one that could have a dramatic impact on US policy in Africa. One of the failures of U.S. foreign policy has been the government's inability to appreciate the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Here, however, it's possible that they have recognized an emerging threat in time. It's important to deal with this sort of thing before it gets out of hand.

It is in the above tone that the author of this paper feels that religion education should be having a component of quality assurance that will link up with development education so that human life quality can be promoted in a peaceful environment, because war starts in the mind before it becomes physical, as Townsend (2014) comments below, though with special reference to swimmers:

The most vital time for a competitive swimmer is in the five minutes before each race. This is the time that makes or breaks a swimmer – often from this time they will end up on the block either mentally prepared or beaten before they start. During this time the mind becomes 'programmed' for a particular result, from being bombarded by a host of positive or negative thoughts – and these determine the quality of the swim to come. These thoughts can come in several different forms – some will be mental images (pictures) which float through the mind, physical feelings, and also a constant stream of inner dialogue (words) which are voicing how you feel about the race to come. It is crucial during this period that the mind is firmly directed to think positively about the approaching race. The conscious mind will always try to challenge the swimmer before a race, it will throw doubts, fears, worries and anxieties at them to test their mettle, but it's their response to these thoughts which decides just how well they'll go in that particular race.

This indicates that since religion education starts in the mind which makes others to be intolerant, the same route can be followed in correcting that behaviour which in turn can promote peace conducive for economic growth and development. For this to happen, the religion organization needs to have quality assurance that helps to promote religion

education which has a bearing on development education.

An assumption is herein made that if religion education was given quality priority, many wars that have been fought would have been done so in a peaceful way as part of the development process. This assumption is based on the notion promulgated by Mayr (1998:25, 83 & 89) that religious education is concerned with improving the quality of livelihood of people by promoting good relationships in families, friends, citizens, and neighbourliness. On considering this kind of contribution religion education makes on development education, Theron (2008:14-17) considers religion education organizations as contributing to development as promote the building blocks of development which are: participation, social learning process, and empowerment.

Some religion education organizations have moved from positions of being worship centres to multiple functional structural centres for education, in form of schools, hospitals, food producing industries, and many more. The Seventh-day Adventist church has been observed for having schools such as Helderberg University College in Somerset West (Cape Town) of South Africa, (GO Global Schools Education Consulting, 2014), Maluti Adventist Hospital in Lesotho (Seventh-day Adventist directory, 2014), and Kafue Riverside farm in Zambia (Riverside farm, 2014). Such can kind of contribution, according to the researcher, should not encouraged to continue operating without adhering to the expectations of the countries they exist, in terms of quality assurance. According to the sources cited above, in this paragraph, there is quite a good number of projects run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in form of Institutions and Industries for worthy goods and services, which are rated as developmental in nature. Considering such enormous involvement in development compels every development skewed individual to assume that there exists in such Institutions sections which are accredited as quality assurance structures.

For the quality religion education to optimally contribute to development education, there is need for the religion education organizational leaders to consider religion to be part of the whole education spectrum. On doing this, the religion education leaders will be able to identify the fact that religion education promotes human capital which is required for industrial development as argued by Tenant (1991:1) which in turn increases the skill levels and knowledge of workforce which increases productivity and stimulate development.

In harmony with the observation that some religion education organizations run distance education programmes, like the Seventh-day Adventist church's Voice of Prophecy done from South Africa's Cape Town, it may be better if they have an accredited sect of quality assurance. By doing this they would be able to contribute to development education through well aligned distance education that would influence individuals to value, have access and succeed in lifelong education and training of good quality as advocated by Human Sciences Research Council (1997).

Since much of religion education is adult education, organizational leaders are expected to observe the fact that improving the quality of religion education is actually promoting development education, in form of adult education, which Okech (2004:21) considers to balance the learning process as touching the areas of eye, ear and hand. This implies that when quality assurance becomes part of religion education organizations, I will lead to whole training that promotes the knowledge, attitudes and skills competences. These are the competences desirable in Africa for development.

When religion education organizations realise their need for quality assurance, with intent to optimally contribute to development education, the leadership, thereof, will see their symbiotic relationship as partners forming private-partnership participation advocated by Delmon (2011). In this way the religion education organizations will contribute to development education because they will see themselves as part of the society that is made of parts that constitute the whole, and value the idea of approaching religion education from an angle of ecological partnership that contributes to development education.

Since observation has it those organizations which are primarily religion education based have, in their operations, sections of visible development education classed as education, health, political freedoms advocacies, welfare services, and equitable wealth distribution, it is advisable that they should have State-based and accredited parts for quality assurance in them.

Active participation in quality religious education activities encourages the participants to view development education as part of development education process, especially in churches which use literature as a back-up to the learning programmes. Therefore, the promotion of quality religion education should ecologically promote development education in Africa which should in turn promote development in general.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

People should be encouraged to belong to churches that promote active participation with intent to develop them. Due to this kind of affiliation, a general recommendation is herein made that there is need to quality assure churches so as to help boost development education in Africa. While it is a good idea for the people to belong to the religion education



sects, people should be able to find the belonging to be developmental in nature. While the formation of quality assurance structure may not be a working practicability, it is recommended, herein, that every country, on registering the religion education organizations, should be demanding to produce evidence that they are able to quality assure their structure, in terms of knowledge competencies related to the Bloom's taxonomy.

The following population groups are encouraged to access this paper for the reasons of optimally contributing to corporate development promoted by development education in Africa:

- Community-based Organizations,
- Faith-based Organizations,
- Churches,
- Governments in both power and authority,
- Theological studies students and practitioners,
- Religion education practitioners,
- University-based researchers, and
- Development education practitioners

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