

RELIGION, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

John Kwaku Opoku, Eric Manu and Frimpong Wiafe

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Religious Studies
Kumasi-Ghana

ABSTRACT: *'Religion' and 'Education' are inseparable aspects in every human society where they are found. Education has most often been considered as the backbone of development. Similarly, many development theorists have expounded the contributions of religion toward development. The responsibility that religions share in human societies are realised in different aspects of national life. Of particular concern is religions' role in education toward national development. This work is discussed from the dimensions of the contributions of Christianity and Islam in education in Ghana. Generally, education is understood to mean to train or mould. In this study, it implies the art of learning, literacy and the process of acquiring knowledge. In the quest to advance the livelihood of members of society through education, it has become important to expatiate the task of religion in the development of education. This is to help stamp out the reluctance to consider the influence of religion in sustainable and authentic human and national development. This paper is primarily purposed to outline the contributions of religion and education to national development in Ghana. The quest for an all-inclusive development model of Ghana and other developing nations, therefore, calls for an insight into the role and responsibilities of religion toward education. In the case of Ghana, like other nations, the impact of religion on (formal) education has immensely ensured the development of individual lives, communities and traditional institutions since the 19th century. A study with an aim such as this will help promote better relationship among states and religious groups.*

KEYWORDS: Religion, Education, National Development, Contributions, Historical Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Religions immensely contribute to the development of every nation within which it is found. Religion is no panacea, but aspects of it can complement as well as motivate development. Though it can undermine and obstruct, the avenues by which religion influences development activities in different aspects of national life are haunting in their complexity.¹ Religion may serve as an advocacy for funding, innovation, education, empowerment, social movement and service delivery.²

In Ghana, like in other nations, religion and education are inseparable from each other. Each has existed to the benefit of the other since the 16th century. A study of the development of

¹ S. Alkire, "Religion and Development". In Clark, David A., *The Elgar Companion to Development Studies* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2007), pp.502–510.

² *Ibid.*

education in Ghana cannot proceed without recognising the pioneering efforts of missionaries (Christian and Muslim) in formal education which initially brought the gates of higher learning to the people along the coast and in the savannah.³ However, before this period (the coming of early European traders and Islam to the gold coast), indigenous religion ensured the impartation of knowledge through ceremonial and informal means established by the society. This is to say that the provision of education (teaching or learning) is not a recent phenomenon in Africa and Ghana, for that matter.

Education took a different dimension after the European advent on Gold Coast soil (Ghana) in the 16th century to the middle of the 20th century. Understood as the wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something, education generally requires instruction of some sort from an individual or composed literature. The most common form of education (formal education) known in Ghana result from years of schooling that incorporates studies of a variety of subjects. The act of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life is a basic component for the development of every nation.

The development of Ghana and Africa, at large, calls for an insight into the impact of religion on modern education. Appraising the impact of religion on formal education to the development of Ghana is central to this paper and an important aspect worth discussing. Development exponents and agencies time and again refer to wars of religions and their attendant consequences as reasons for a total neglect of religion as partners in development. Therefore in discussing issues pertaining to sustainable human and national development, there is a disinclination to consider the power of religion. Their main grounds for this come from their perceived intolerance among religious faithfuls. By going through the text readers will be able to know the concepts of religion and education, their purpose and contributions to national development.

Religion, State and Development

Defining religion is a difficult task and attempts towards that have drawn diverse views from scholars across the globe. Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned.⁴ In simple terms, religion refers to the beliefs and practices based on a conception of the sacred.⁵ Such knowledge to distinguish the sacred from the profane is the essence of all religions. Religion is core to the diverse interactions existing between humans in almost every society. Aylward Shorter,⁶ a lecturer in African Studies at the Catholic Higher Institute, writes that religion is a fundamental mode of cultural behaviour; it is and must be part of the interpretation of life that a culture offers. Shorter considers religion as a cultural system

³ R. B. Bening, *University for Development Studies in the History of Higher Education in Ghana* (Ghana: Public Institutions of Higher Education in Ghana, 2005), p.15.

⁴ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Clays Ltd., 1969), p.1.

⁵ E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965).

⁶ A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (London: Cassell Publishers Ltd, 1999), p.40.

which acts upon cultural data and within the sphere of culture.⁷ Clifford Geertz⁸ considers religion as a system of symbols which acts to establish, powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.⁹ In this sense, religion must be understood as an aspect purposed to influence human life. Central to the institution of religion are beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and religious officants.¹⁰

The term 'development' refers to the act or process of growing or causing something to grow or become larger. Thus, the state of being created or made more advanced. The word is used in this paper to mean the process of growth and differentiation, expansion and progress.¹¹ Understood this way, national development comes to mean the process of transformation and growth that is based on complex cultural, social and environmental factors and their interactions within a state. This implies the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Measures of improvement may be material, such as an increase in the gross domestic product, or social, such as literacy rates and availability of health care.

All religions, irrespective of the fulcrum of its belief imply that humans do not and cannot stand alone, and that they are vitally related with and even dependent on powers in nature external to themselves.¹² There are a number of religious institutions in Ghana. Most people in the Ghana are associated with either one or another of the world's major religions. However, conversion from one religion to another is a common phenomenon. Religious adherents in Ghana include Christians, Muslims, traditionalists, Buddhists, Hindus, and other eastern religious faithfuls. Although most people have some sort of religious affiliation, they are woefully ignorant as to the basic beliefs of their own religion.¹³

Religion-state relations in Ghana have for centuries been cordial. This has arisen out of the fact that in traditional African psychic no distinction is drawn between the sacred (spiritual) and the secular (physical), and for that matter religion and state.¹⁴ Prior to the advent of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, and still in many Eastern countries, no distinction was made between worldly/secular authority and religious/spiritual authority.¹⁵ It is expected of religious groups to take steps which are set to transform the state. For instance, the church, according to this position, must transform the values and morality of the state or society. This position does not call for the rejection of the world or the state nor does it call for the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁸ C. Geertz was among the first social scientists to take religion seriously as an object of study in its own right. For him, it is primarily a system of symbols inherited culturally.

⁹ C. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System". In: Michael Banton (ed.) *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1996), p.4.

¹⁰ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), p.1.

¹¹ The Family Word Finder (New York: The Reader's Digest association Inc., 1975).

¹² J. B. Knoss. *Man's Religions* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969), p.2.

¹³ J. McDowell and D. Stewart, *Understanding Non-Christian Religion: Handbook of Today's Religions* (California: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1982), p.9.

¹⁴ See: G. Parrinder, *Divine Kinship in West Africa*, No.:3: 1956, p.112.

¹⁵ An essay on: "Church and State" (Available at: <http://www.customtermpapers.org/customessay/politicssessay/churchandstate/532.html>: 21/02/2015).

identification of the church with the state in respect of values, morals and ethical principles. It calls on the church to transform the world by being what it is. John Vincent Taylor notes:

The church as well is called to act as a leaven in society. A worshipping, disciplined community, dedicated to Christ's way and honestly attempting to realize his standards in its corporate life, is bound to affect the whole climate of the people among whom it is placed. The church can serve the state best by illustrating in its own life the kind of life which is God's will for society as a whole.¹⁶

This role by the Church is in line with its prophetic responsibility as played during the Old Testament times by the prophets. In this sense, the positive bearing of the Christian faith upon the transformation of human society not only in the private domain of thought and feeling but also in the public domain¹⁷ of law, government, economics and education requires emphasis. Through this involvement, the responsibility of the church (religion) in the area of state development is realised. Religion, therefore, is not supposed to remain aloof from national development if it is accepted that the institution (religion) is not for the individual but for the community as well.

The Concept of Education: Meaning, Scope and Purpose

Etymologically, the term 'Education' in the English language has been derived from two Latin words *educare* (*educere*) and *educatum*. '*educare*' meaning to train or mould. It again means to bring up or to lead out, to draw out or propulsion from inward to outward. The term '*educatum*' denotes the act of teaching.¹⁸ It throws light on the principles and practice of teaching. The term *educare* or *educere*¹⁹ mainly indicates development of the latent faculties of the child. But the individual does not know these possibilities.²⁰ It is the educator or the teacher who can know these and take appropriate methods to develop those powers.

In Ghana, among the Akan, the term '*nimdeE*' which means 'knowledge' represents the search and concern for development through education. Education ('*nimdeE*' or knowledge) in the traditional sense represents a control and discipline of the behaviour of individuals. Therefore, education is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Rabindranath Tagore²¹ has observed that the highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. This makes a human self-reliant and selfless.²² It should develop in the body and soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of. Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops human faculty (mind) so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty.

¹⁶ J. V. Taylor, *Christianity and Politics* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1957), p.54.

¹⁷ T. L. Paolo, *Political Engagement as an Ethical and Religious Question* (Tampere: Research Institute of the Lutheran Church in Finland, 1979), p.12.

¹⁸ The Family Word Finder (New York: The Reader's Digest association Inc., 1975).

¹⁹ <http://teachereducatorselvi.blogspot.com/2015/02/meaning-and-definition-of-education.html> (23/2/2015).

²⁰ N. R. Mikkili, "Value Education and Human Values: Analytical Views". In: *Educationia Confab*, Vol. 3, No. 7, July 2014.

²¹ R. Singh and S. S. Rawat, "Rabindranath Tagore's Contribution in Education". *VSRD International Journal of Technical & Non-Technical Research*, Vol. 4, Issue 8: August 2013.

²² R. Tagore, "Ideals of Education". *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April-July 1929), pp.73-4.

J. F. Herbert²³ describes education as the development of good moral character. Also, John Dewey²⁴ writes that education is not a preparation for life, rather it is the living. It is the process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfil his possibilities. It is clear that education is the complete development of the individuality of the person so that he can make an original contribution to human life according to the best of his capacity.

The field of education is so vast and varied that to give a specific definition of education about which all educationists agree is very difficult. We see that some educationists have defined only one aspect of education whereas the others emphasize its other phases. The reason of this difference of opinions is that different educationists, most of whom are philosophers, have different views about the aim of life. According to Idealists, the aim of life is spiritual development. As such, they regard education as a spiritual process, which aims at bringing together the soul and the creator leading to self-realization. For the pragmatists, education is a process of social progress. As a result of this difference in the philosophy of life, different educationists define education differently.

The different meanings and definitions of education as given above lead us to the conclusion that education should have a comprehensive definition. Thus, education may be defined as a purposive, conscious or unconscious, psychological, sociological, scientific and philosophical process which brings about the development of the individual to the fullest extent and also the maximum development of society in such a way that both enjoy maximum happiness and prosperity. In short, education is the development of individual according to his needs and demands of society, of which he is an integral part.

The above observations by scholars highlight the following special features of education. Education is both unilateral as well as bi-polar in nature. It is a continuous process. It is development of particular aspects of human personality or a harmonious integrated growth. It is knowledge or experience and conducive for the good of the individual or the welfare of the society. It is a stabilizer of social order, conservator of culture, an instrument of change and social reconstruction.

Scope of Education

Generally, education may be formal or/and informal. Understanding the scope of education can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is the narrower perspective and the second, the broader perspective.

- **Education in the narrower sense:** In its narrow sense, school instruction is called education. In this process, the elders of society strive to attain predetermined aims during a specified time by providing pre-structured knowledge to children through set methods of teaching. The purpose is to achieve mental development of children entering school. To make the narrow meaning of education very clear, John Stuart

²³ <http://teachereducatorselvi.blogspot.com/2015/02/meaning-and-definition-of-education.html> ((23/2/2015); J. F. Herbert quoted by N. Ranjan Dash, *Philosophical Foundation of Education* (Utkal University: Vanivihar Bhubaneswar, 2009).

²⁴ J. Dewey, "Experience and Education, Freedom and Culture, Theory of Evaluation, and Essays" Volume 13:1938-39. In: Boydston, A. (ed.), *The Later Works, 1925-1953*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois, 1938).

Mill explains it as the culture which each generation purposefully gives to those who are to be its successors, in order to qualify them for at least keeping up and if possible for raising the level of improvement which has been attained. Education in the narrower sense is regarded as equivalent to instruction. It consists of the 'specific influences' consciously designed in a school or in a college or in an institution to bring in the development and growth of the child. The word school includes the whole machinery of education from Kindergarten to the University. The education of the child begins with his admission in the school and ends with his departure from the University. The amount of education received by the child is measured in terms of degrees and diplomas awarded to him. The school represents formal education as it imparts education directly and systematically. There is deliberate effort on the part of the educator to inculcate certain habits, skills, attitudes or influences in the learner, which are considered to be essential and useful to him/her. The school exists to provide a special environment for the formative period of human life.²⁵ School is a consciously designed institution, the sole concern of which is to educate the child. This special environment is essential to explain our complex society and civilization. Education, in the narrow sense, is also regarded as acquisition of knowledge. According to it, education is a process by which knowledge or information on a subject is acquired. But many sensible educationists have criticized this view. They argue that emphasis on the knowledge is likely to reduce all schools to mere knowledge-shops. The acquisition of knowledge is not the only or supreme aim of education, yet it is one of the important aims of education.

- **Education in the broader sense:** In its wider sense, education is the total development of the personality. In this sense, education consists of all those experiences, which affect the individual from birth till death. Thus, it is that process by which an individual freely develops his self according to his nature in a free and uncontrolled environment. It includes all the knowledge and experiences acquired during infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood or old age through any agency of education. In this way, education becomes a lifelong process of growth; it begins with the birth of a child and ends with his death. It is not limited to the classroom only; it is also not limited to a particular period of life. Thus, education becomes the sum-total of all experiences that a person receives either in the school or outside. Since individuals learn through their experiences which are acquired throughout his life, education does not merely become collection of some information.

Characteristics of Education

Though with different perspectives outlining its scope and purpose, the following features are common among all forms of education:

- Not Limited to knowledge imparted in schools (formal education). Education cannot be confined to the processes of giving knowledge to persons in schools only. Its programme goes on from birth till death.

²⁵ J. Dewey, "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry", Volume 12:1938, *The Later Works*, 1925-1953. (ed.) Boydston, A. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois, 1938).

- Education as the development of individuals' innate power. It is a process of developing the native endowments of a individuals rather than forcing into their minds something from outside.
- Education as a dynamic process. Education is not static but an active process, which develops the individual according to changing situation and times.
- Education as a Tri-polar Process. It takes place in and through the society in which the teacher and the child both live. Thus, it is the society, which will determine the aims, contents and methods of teaching. In this way, the process of education contains three poles, namely: the teacher, the child and the society. These three factors actively cooperate in the efficient and successful working of the educational process.
- Education leads to (good) change. The impact of every education must lead to the positive development and betterment of the human lives which experience it.

Historical Overview of Education in Ghana

Education in Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) was mainly informal before the arrival of European settlers. Knowledge and competencies were transmitted orally and through apprenticeship. The arrival of European settlers during the 16th century brought new forms of learning; formal schools appeared, providing a book-based education.²⁶ Their audience was mainly made up of local elites (mulattos, sons of local chiefs and wealthy traders) and their presence was limited to the colonial forts, long confined to the coasts. The creation of the Gold Coast as a Colony in 1874 by Great Britain brought transformations in its educational system. With it came a growing number of mission (Wesleyan and the Basel) schools.²⁷ While the Wesleyan mission stayed on the coasts with English as main language, the Basel mission expanded deeper inland and used vernacular languages as the medium of proselytizing. With the support of the British government, missions flourished in a heavily decentralized system that left considerable room for pedagogical freedom. Missions remained the main provider of formal education until independence, while, under colonial rule, formal education remained the privilege of the few.²⁸

With independence in 1957, universal education became an important political objective under the new government of Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah described education as the key to the future and announced a high level university education backed by a free universal basic education.²⁹ Therefore, in 1961, the Education Act (EA) introduced the principle of free and compulsory primary education and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology was established.³⁰ The fall of Nkrumah in 1966 was followed by stronger criticisms toward the expansion of education at the cost of quality. Despite the rapid increase

²⁶ See: K. Agbeti, *West African Church History* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ C. K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana: From the Earliest Time to the Declaration of Independence* (F. Cass, 1971), pp.181–185.

²⁹ K. Akyeampong, *Educational Expansion and Access in Ghana: A Review of 50 Years of Challenge and Progress* (Centre for International Education, University of Sussex).

³⁰ C. K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana: From The Earliest Time to the Declaration of Independence*. (1971), pp.181–185.

of school infrastructures, the enrolment slowly declined until 1973.³¹ In 1974, however, education in Ghana saw attempts of reform based on reports made by committees instituted to investigate the decline in education.

The year 1987 marked the beginning of new series of reforms. The Rawlings government had gathered enough funds from numerous international organizations (including the World Bank) and countries to afford massive changes to the educational system. The 1987 Education Act aimed at turning the 1974's (Dozbo Committee) measures into reality: a national literacy campaign was launched, pre-tertiary education was reduced from 17 to 12 years and vocational education appeared in Junior High School. Education was made compulsory from 6 to 14. The reform succeeded in imposing a new education structure, as well as to increase the enrolment and the number of infrastructure. Yet the promise of universal access to basic education and vocational programs were not fulfilled.³²

However, the return to constitutional rule in 1992 gave a new impulse to Ghanaian education by reclaiming the duty of the state to provide a free and compulsory basic education for all. Under this republic, the Local Government Act of 1993 initiated the decentralization in education administration. This was done through the transfer of power to district assemblies.

The Free, Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) provided an action plan for the period 1996-2005, focusing on bridging the gender gap in primary education,³³ while improving teaching by providing materials and better living condition for teachers.³⁴ It was later completed by significant acts, like the creation of the "Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training" in 2006 to promote vocational education and the founding of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) in 2007, among several others under the government of John Agyekum Kuffour. In its 2013/2014 report, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Ghana 46th out of 148 countries for education system quality.³⁵ In 2010, Ghana's literacy rate was 71.5%, with a notable gap between men (78.3%) and women (65.3%).³⁶

Presently, education in Ghana is divided into three phases: basic education (kindergarten, primary school and junior high school), secondary education (senior high school, technical and vocational institutions) and tertiary education (universities, polytechnics and colleges).³⁷ Education is compulsory between the ages of four and fifteen (basic education). The language of instruction is mainly English with an academic year usually running from August to May each year.³⁸

The Role of Religion in Education

³¹ Brief History of State-Organized Education in Ghana.

³² Ghana Education Service (GES), *The development of Education, National report of Ghana* (2004).

³³ "Free Compulsory Basic Education Programme (FCUBE): Ghana, 2007."

³⁴ Ghana Education Service (GES), *The development of Education, National report of Ghana* (2004).

³⁵ <http://resep.sun.ac.za/index.php/interpreting-the-education-statistics-in-the-2013-2014-global-competitive-ness-report/> (23/2/2015).

³⁶ K. Schwab, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2013–2014: Country Profile Highlights* (World Economic Forum, 2013).

³⁷ Ministry of Education, *Brief History of State-Organized Education in Ghana* (<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=54812>: 19/02/2015).

³⁸ Ghana Education Service, *Education: Historical Dictionary of Ghana*, (Accra: GES).

Education indicators in Ghana reflect a gender gap and disparities between rural and urban areas, as well as between southern and northern parts of the country. Those disparities drive public action against illiteracy and inequities in access to education. In recent years, addressing challenges posed by this gap has been the concern of many religious bodies in Ghana. The history of education in Ghana reflects the antique relationship shared between Christianity and education. Similarly, Islam shares great ties with the development of education in Ghana though later than the Christian religion. Religious bodies, as one of their primary service to society have sought for the formation of citizens through schooling (education). The impartation of knowledge to generations has been the primary focus of the two major religious groups present in Ghana.

There are a number of Muslim missions or Islamic groups in Ghana: the Ahmadiyya, Tijaniyya, Sufi turuq, Qadiriyya, Shiite and the Ahlus Sunna Wal-Jama'a. Prominent among them in terms of educating members and Ghanaians is the Ahmadiyya mission. An Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission is to lead his/her life in accordance with the shari'a; motivate, train (educate) and involve the entire *jama'at*³⁹ in the field of missionary effort.⁴⁰ In Ghana, the contributions of Islam to education mostly started from the north. Aside schools set to train and educate Muslim children, there were Missionary Training Institutions that also provided education to Ghanaians. In most Islamic missions were departments that are responsible for teaching and learning. For instance, the *wakalat ta'lim*⁴¹ of the Pakistan mission, among several responsibilities, performs such functions as attending to the educational affairs of the *jama'at* outside the missions mother country. They are also in charge of managing all educational institutions of the *jama'at*.⁴²

An examination of the Tijaniyya mission in Ghana reveals that as a body/unit they are not properly organised with centralised systems. Their socio-religious programs and activities, even though syncretistic, have brought Islam more to the national front in various forms than was the case before Ghana's independence. Tijaniyyans after independence have undertaken changes with the most prominent of it being the adoption of western type of education by its members.⁴³ This course has greatly been supported by other Muslim Missions and non-Muslims missions in the country. Presently, Islam, as a religion, has established hundreds of educational institutions geared toward the development of Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians, Muslims and non-Muslims. These institutions ranging from basic to tertiary levels of education aim at providing knowledge as emphasised by the Holy Qur'an. The very first word of the Qur'an that was revealed to prophet Muhammad was, in fact, 'Read'. Prophet Muhammad once stated that 'Seeking knowledge is mandatory for all Muslims.' With such a direct command to go out and seek knowledge, Muslims have placed huge emphasis on the educational system in order to fulfil this obligation placed on them by the Prophet.

As the first religious group to introduce formal education in Ghana, Christianity, has served several purposes toward the development of Ghana's education. Like Islam, Christianity has

³⁹ *Jama'at*: Islamic congregation within a given locality.

⁴⁰ N. Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects on Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2006), p.156.

⁴¹ *Wakalat ta'lim* is a department or unit responsible for education. They are responsible for educational affairs as contained in the rules and regulations of the mission.

⁴² N. Samwini, (2006), p.152.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.145.

promoted the training of citizens from the basic level to the tertiary level. This was done through the establishment of educational infrastructures and events/activities that are purposed to make education a better one. There are hundreds of educational institutions established by different Christian groups in the country. The history of Ghana's education depicts a high sense of commitment towards the educating of citizens in both secular and religious education. Their contributions to the promotion of knowledge are made real as a result of the inevitable connectivity existing naturally and theologically between religion and education, hence development.

Education in Ghana has come with several positive implications which have aided the advancement of the nation. The Ghanaian education has for several years been characterised as a means that provides direction, adjustment and self-activity. It has also been seen as a means of social change and progress as well as a process of socialization. Among the relevance of education are the following:

- The accretion and storage of human resources
- The formation of mind, personality or character
- Serves as a means for preparation, gender empowerment and mental discipline.
- Developing of democratic citizenship
- Promotion of leadership qualities and vocational efficiency

The Role of Religion in Education towards Development

Religion influences the way people see themselves, each other and the world around them. Especially in developing countries, religion often figures largely in everyday life. This is something that many Western development organisations used to underestimate.⁴⁴ The place of religion in education is significantly realised in the human, social, political, economic and spiritual development of Ghanaian students. Religion in education provides the following significance:

Character formation and moral significance: Character is the cream of life and, as such, it should be the aim of all forms of education. Many theologians and educationists emphasize character building in education. Character formation or moral education is concerned with the whole conduct of man. The Ghana Education Service in their policy framework ascribe their first goal to the provision of a framework for the development of standards, core values and ethics (morals) for the teaching professions in order to make them contribute immensely to student development.⁴⁵ Character education has to be visualized not in a social vacuum but with reference to contemporary socio-economic and political situation. Therefore, it can be concluded that character building should be the aim of every form of education.

Vocational meaning: The vocational aim also known as 'the utilitarian aim' states that the ideals of education are useless unless they (the aims) enable us to procure the primary needs of our life such as food, shelter and clothing. Education must help the child to earn his livelihood. Education, therefore, must prepare the child for some future profession or

⁴⁴ W. Boender, E. Dwarswaard and M. Westendorp, *Religion and Development: Practitioner's Guide* (Utrecht: Kenniscentrum Religie en Ontwikkeling, 2011), p.4.

⁴⁵ Ministry of Education, *Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management in Ghana: Policy Framework* (Accra: Ghana Education Service, 2012), p.9.

vacation or trade. The vocational aim is a narrow aim of education. Therefore, the vocational aim is not a complete aim by itself.

The knowledge or information worth: Educationists who hold the knowledge or information significance of education justify their stand with powerful arguments. They argue that knowledge is indispensable for all right action and it is the source of all power. It is knowledge which makes a realist a visionary successful in any profession. Education in Ghana provides a basic source of modern knowledge which is the foundation of human development in all societies.

The culture implication: The cultural aim of education has been suggested to supplement the narrow view of knowledge aim. The cultural aim of education is no doubt an utmost significance aimed at producing men of culture. Though education in modern Ghana places little emphasis on revitalising cultural heritages of our time, its procedures in outlining the traditional heritage of the Ghanaian society is plausible.

The spiritual significance: The idealist thinkers have opined that the spiritual development of an individual should be the supreme aim of education. Mahatma Gandhi has attached great importance to spiritual values in education. In Ghana, the involvement of religious groups in education has contributed to the spiritual development of both teachers and learners. This suggests a complete living aim. Some educationists have insisted upon the need of an all-comprehensive aim of education. This viewpoint has led to the development of two aims- the 'complete living aim' and 'harmonious development aim' which suggest spiritual and physical/bodily development.

The social and leisure importance: It is clearly evident that no individual can live and grow without a social context. Individual life becomes unbearable to humans, hence the formation of society. While, individual security and welfare depend on the society, individual improvement is conditioned by social progress. Education makes each individual socially efficient as socially efficient individuals are able to earn their livelihood. Also, education ensures the creation of moments for leisure in the life of individuals. This leads to creativity and helps to pursue a personal activity not for earning a living, but to create comfort.

Implication of the Study

In contemporary discussions of ways to attain sustainable and authentic human and national development, there is a reluctance to consider the influence of religion. The reason for this stems from the divisiveness and intolerance among various religious groups. This occasionally results in violent conflicts which hampers, and decline national development. Development institutions and agencies often refer to wars of religions and their attendant consequences as reasons for a total neglect of religion as partners in development. Contemporary development discourse finds itself in a dilemma as to what form their relationship with religion ought to be, in promoting development, especially at the grassroots level.

Since the study has indicated that religion (Christianity and Islam) promotes integral development that goes beyond mere spiritual growth, this study defends the position of religion as very important in sustainable national development through education. It highlights the strong foundation religions in Ghana have provided particularly in education for its advancement. The study further makes clear the responsibilities of religious groups and

their understanding of knowledge through education which is the backbone of all development.

CONCLUSION

Religion as an important institution in the human community has promoted human development through education and knowledge impartation. Religions assist in providing citizens with knowledge needed to enhance socio-economic, political and spiritual development. Religion can be involved in influencing the progress to a better world. In view of its innumerable adherents and its common belief in the dignity of the human person under God, religion is committed to the promotion of the human good so as to provide basic human needs, guarantee protection of human rights and promote integral development of the globe.

The provision of education though the responsibility of the central government, has been the concern of many religious groups since their advent. Even after independence, Ghana still witness major contributions from the religious sector to the development of education. Education over the years has become one major objective of Christianity and Islam, aside their responsibility to ensure spiritual growth. Providing infrastructures to augment that of governments over the years has made their contributions a conspicuous one. Also, moral and religious lessons have imparted in several ways the moral conduct of individuals though much need to be done to improve moral standards in the country. This creates room for more to be done by religious groups in ensuring wholistic formation through education which is vital for total development. As long as secular discourse and development theories continue to exclude religion in its analysis of globalization, progress and development of people, the results of its analysis will always be defective.

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