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## **The Challenges of Teaching and Learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria** (Pp. 424-440)

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### **Abstract**

*The teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria face some grave challenges. As an academic discipline in religious studies, many who teach this specialized discipline are not experts. This makes Sociology of Religion anybody's game which does not promote sound scholarship, creativity and intellectual stimulation in the teaching and learning of the discipline. Similarly, the study of the whole society from the perspective of religion calls for a disciplined study, comparable knowledge and systematic relationships between the various groups and their effects on institutions in Nigeria. It is the purpose of this paper to identify the challenges, analyze them and suggest functional ways of re-positioning and improving the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion. The practical involvement of religion in societal functions is open to the complementary role of primary and sociological approaches. Sociology of Religion has a clear scope, scientific methodology and identifiable challenges such as lack of specialists, basic texts, instructional materials, and funds. However, proper training, registration and membership of the proposed National Association of Sociologists of Religion (NASOR), floating and subscribing to the Journal of Sociology of Religion and dialogue are brief statements of recommendation*

*aimed at improving the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.*

### **Introduction**

The teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion are faced with serious challenges in Nigeria. These challenges make the goals of specialized discipline difficult to realize in Nigeria. Sociology of Religion ought to be understood as a disciplined study of the whole society carried out from the perspective of religion. It needs therefore specialists who have undertaken proper learning, training and research in Sociological theories, Research Methods in behavioural sciences, social theories of Religion, Religious interpretations of Social institutions and Religious conflicts. Beyond proper and adequate training and learning, specialists and learners must have written extensively on social issues in Nigeria and beyond. In this way, they must have impacted positively on learners. Thus, specialists in Sociology of Religion are resource persons who ought to maintain continuity with the social trends and realities on ground in Nigeria.

A little historical resume on Sociology of Religion will help introduce the challenges of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. In Comte's social theory of religion, it was observed that he launched a serious attack on religion which he believed was an illusion, a collective delusion, a symbolic thinking, an understandable behaviour, an imagination and powerful emotion. Dzurgba (2002) says that Comte maintained that the foregoing were the foundations of religion which made it meaningless. Uche (2007) opines that beyond Comte's attack on religion, he proposed a Religion of Humanity; similarly, Comte's followers especially Karl Max's theory (1818-1883) of alienation blamed the socio-economic predicaments of man in Europe on religion. Dzurgba (1991) maintains that in Comte's view,

Religion was seen as a dying factor in an increasingly circular society. Sociology was a feature oriented subject and therefore sociologists had no need to study religion. This explains why the Sociology of Religion is yet to receive serious attention in developing countries (p.22).

It is twenty years since the above assertion was made and there is ample evidence concerning the social realities of religion in society which Emile Durkheim (1856-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920) articulated by bringing

out the positive and functional picture of Sociology of Religion. The integration and socializing functions of religion made sociologists to develop greater interest in religion. This sentiment led to the independent academic discipline called Sociology of Religion. Personal communications with key informants and resource persons point to the negative perception of religion despite the persistence of faith, rituals and their pervasiveness and powerfulness of religion in the permeation and mediation of Nigeria's cultural and social structures. What then is the nature of the challenges of teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria?

The importance of a religious factor is undertaken by scholars other than sociologists of religion. They seem to lack the basic sociological tools, inadequately grounded in sociological theories and interpretations of social issues and they are therefore prone to misrepresent social issues, concepts, ideas and opinions on subject matters of Sociology of Religion being analyzed. Other challenges may include poor adherence to the academic guidelines on the teaching, learning and research in Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

There is a compelling need to articulate succinctly problems encountered in the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. These grave contemporary challenges are man-made and are approached with a view to gaining deeper insight that may go a long way in proffering functional solutions that would probably stand the taste of time in repositioning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. Before delving into the challenges of teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion, it is necessary to define some concepts that go with the title of this paper.

### **Conceptual clarification**

There is need to shade light on the basic terms used in the title of this paper. They include challenges, teaching, learning and Sociology of Religion. The desired insight will improve the understanding of the various challenges in teaching Sociology of Religion and proffer functional solutions to them.

**Challenges:** According to Mairi (1998) challenges refer “to cast doubt on something or call to question” (p. 230). There is this idea of questioning or doubting of something. It seems more appropriate to see challenges as difficulties encountered in doing something or problems associated with a thing or action.

**Teaching:** The crucial need to define the concept of teaching is informed by what Hirst (1979) says is due to how teachers understand teaching very much affects what they actually do in the classroom. Onwuegbu (1979) sees teaching as an environmental arrangement which inevitably involves an organism in a set of organized activities and facilitates those activities in accordance with its goal by furthering its behaviour generally. Teaching in this paper refers to giving instruction, causing a person(s) to know or be able to do something, giving knowledge of or skill in. It is used in this paper as giving knowledge to someone, to instruct someone in a skill or help them to learn.

**Learning** is defined as a “relatively permanent change in an individual’s potential behaviour as a result of experience”. It is observed that only observable changes in behaviour seem to justify the inference that learning has occurred. Hilgard (1962) in Ukeje (1979) defines learning as the process by which an activity originates or is changed through reacting to an encountered situation provided that the characteristics of the change in activity cannot be explained on the basis of native response tendencies, maturation or temporary states of the organism. Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour as a result of experience. Learning is concomitant to teaching. Training is related to learning and needs clarification. Training is within education, but not synonymous. Training involves consistent, concentrated practice; it implies exercise or repetition as when one is drilled in an activity.

**Sociology** is the science which studies the development and organization of human society. Sociology is the scientific study of the nature and development of society, human social behaviours and of the aspects of human life that derive from “living in society. This human web explains those aspects of life of man that results from his membership of the society. The central concern of Sociology is the social relationship of mankind. It is observed that under central concern of sociology is the social institutions, organizations, the interaction of social groups, and inter-relationship. Dzurgba (2002) is of the view that “Sociologists have agreed that every definition of society has to take account of people, relationships and institutions” (p. 6).

### **The concept of sociology of religion**

**Sociology of religion** is difficult to define. Scholars seem more descriptive and this has captured its characteristics more than the meaning. Sociology of

Religion is an attempt according to Maduro (1982) to analyze religion as one dimension, element, and aspect of the dynamics of a society. Sociology of Religion is the study of the whole society from the perspective of religion. Dzurgba (1991) says that “the sociology of religion is a part of a more general study of cultural knowledge” (p. 28). It is an area of sociological enquiry into religion, exploring its universal functions in human society. The place of religion in individual membership of the human society forms the study. It is more interested in group aspects of religious life.

It gives an overall explanation of the role of religion in society, also explained include the inner dynamics of religious life, social self-understanding of the churches, global accounts of Religion and Society or secularization. The Sociology of Religion attempts to place religious phenomena in their social context to examine the effects of that context on the shape and direction religion takes, and to analyze the social impact of religion. Sociologists of religion are expected to take seriously their own religious stances, religious commitment at the outset and to allow them to guide one’s choice and critical comments on methods on the social dimensions of faith and practice are invaluable.

Sociology of Religion entails the study of the place of religion in the society. Religion cannot be disassociated from the society. Religion is studied from its social context or Sociology of Religion is concerned with variables of religion in its social nature. It tries to know how and the way religion influences society and how society influences religion. Thus, Sociology strictly observes the integration between Religion and Society. Similarly, certain laws explain the relationship between Religion and Society. Okwuenu (1994) illustrates that:

Certain laws have been abrogated in Nigeria as a result of religious influence. For instance, the law which made it compulsory for any motorcyclist to wear his crash helmet could not be enforced in the northern part of the country. The Moslems did not accept any law that would stop them from wearing their long cap or turban which Allah instructed them to bear (p 23).

### **History of sociology of religion**

The origin of Sociology of Religion is difficult to trace. The battle was first between religion and science and later, it shifted to philosophy. In these challenging discussions, religion held sway and adherents of religion could not be discouraged by the onslaught on religion.

The Sociology of Religion according to Maduro (1982) “began with Sociology” (p.16). Could it be true that up to a certain point, sociology itself began as a Sociology of Religion? This may be true especially if we examine critically the social conditions in which Sociology was born during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe.

Maduro (1982) recounts the various agitations that characterized the 19th century Europe. Consequently, a profound crisis in different social and political institutions ensued. The crisis affected people, the church which witnessed lots of heresies, splits, sects and theological disputations or conflicts. They rapidly multiplied and diffused faster due to improved communicative system. Maduro (1982) maintains that:

The new power nuclei – bankers, business and industrial potentates – generally despised the larger, established churches, especially in view of their ties to the old dominant nobility and the old landlords of Europe. Thus the young, rising bourgeoisie favoured, especially in the press and in the universities, the propagation of anticlerical, anti-religious, atheistic, rationalistic, skeptical, agnostic, materialistic and positivistic ideas (p.16).

Sociology of Religion began in a society of greatly reduced religious consensus of public theological quarrels, or remarkable divisions and transformations within the churches of accelerating erosion of the material and spiritual power of the clergy. The society under discussion witnessed a dramatic diminution in the credibility of importance and resources of the various churches. It became feasible to despoil religion of its untouchable and unquestionable character and equivalents it to other dimensions of a society that was becoming objectified and submitted to scientific analysis.

It has been observed that the atheistic, anticlerical, agnostic of University educated and liberal bourgeoisie in France, Germany and England laid the foundations for the Sociology of Religion by the auspices of the pioneering

efforts of Comte, Marx, Engels Saint-Simon, Proudhon, the classical efforts of Weber, Sombart, and Troetsch and their colleagues erected the principal pillars of the Sociology of Religion by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This social science of religion became an attempt to analyze religion as one dimension, one element, and one aspect of the dynamic of a society. It has given religion specific traits and functions.

Scientific method relied on evidence based on scientific explanations of concrete and factual observations which could be seen, heard, touched, measured, counted and checked for accuracy. He observed that accuracy is established in scientific evidence through competent services, repetition of the same variable under constant conditions and predictions with some degree of precision. Marx and Engel (1947) say positivism can only be valid if it is factual, observable, testable and verifiable. Dzurgba (2002) believes that positive knowledge is gained by using its methods to arrive at laws governing social behavior. There was the need for a body of testable knowledge which was essential for policies of social reconstruction in society.

Dzurgba (1991) is of the view that Comte's antagonistic position against religion was because religion is concerned with too many questions of man's ultimate origins, the purpose and meaning of life. He goes further to think that the illusive nature of religion distorts reality, stupefies a human being and hinders a proper development of man's intellectual ability. He advocated the extinction of religion and held strongly that the suggested extinction of religion was a task that natural science and sociology had to accomplish.

### **The development of sociology of religion**

The first stirring of the development of sociology of religion was the valuable contributions of the pioneering sociologists whose outstanding qualifications challenged man's sociological perspectives on the study of Sociology of Religion. Though these pioneering efforts seem to have little sympathetic perception of human's situations and sensitivity, they hardly reconciled the role of religion as a social system that has the ability to cement social relationships and did actually unite the masses is not only making a systematic mark on social inequality, exploitation and alienation but made some members of the ruling class remain consistent religious adherents. In this way, August Comte and his followers challenged people on what Sociology could teach about religious belief, practices, and values.

The functional school indicates that the contributions of the early sociologists were not totally rewarding. Comte and Marx inspired mixed feelings about religion which were responsible for the inability of Sociology of Religion in receiving early serious attention. The theory on the extinction of religion, alienation of man and other cynical remarks which compelled other sociologists share negative views about religion. Religion was seen as dying factor in an increasing secular society. Sociology was a future-oriented subject and therefore sociologists had no need to study religion.

However, the development of Sociology of Religions was pioneered by Weber who debunked Comte and Marx dysfunctional role of religion. There emerged a new era in the role of religion in the society. Durkheim, Weber and Troeltsch dismissed, according to Nottingham (1954), the view that “religion is obsolete and its replacement in human society by a triumphant science is merely a matter of time” (p. vii). As controversial as the issues seem before the masses, the right tool, an improved understanding of the social issues, objective social reality, makes, for according to Nottingham (1954) “a more assessment, mature social science bear impressive testimony to the fact that the social functions performed by religion are fundamental” (p. vii). Contrary to Comtean and Marxian, sociological view points on religion, Nottingham (1954) goes on to say that “religion was part of innovating revolutionaries whether in French or Russian; who have tried to banish religion, have succeeded only in renaming it” (p. vii). Religion seems to have a greater appeal based on the persistence of faith, rituals, and pervasiveness, permeation of our culture and mediation of our social structures. The role of religion in political, economic, social, spiritual and psychological life of man in society explains the great influence of religion in society.

### **Problems of teaching and learning sociology of religion in Nigeria**

This paper articulates lack of specialists, ignorance and the challenges of doing research as the major points under discussion.

**Lack of specialists in sociology of religion** constitutes problem of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. Specialization in any academic discipline entails expertise, skilled and authority in a given field of human life. Hornby (2001) defines it as “becoming an expert in a particular area of work, study or business” (p. 1415). It implies spending more time on one area of work than others.



However, the absence of specialists in Sociology of Religion leads to a number of problems. It is entirely a new comer in sociological and religious studies in Nigeria. The resource persons, materials and centres available refer to a great extent to Religion and Society rather than Sociology of Religion. Yet the scope or contents of Religion and society and sociology of religion are not the same.

Experts whose specializations are African Traditional Religion, philosophy of Religion, Christian Ethics, History of Christianity, Social Ethics, Dialogue, interaction, psychology of Religion and Sociology of Religion are lumped into Religion and Society. They teach, supervise, and examine programmes in Sociology of Religion. It seems doubtful if such academic exercises promote academic excellence, creativity and intellectual stimulation in teachers, learners and students of Sociology of Religion.

Some Universities in Nigeria mount postgraduate courses in Religion and Society. Others do the same in Sociology of Religion. This lack of uniformity in name and course contents has challenged the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. Similarly, those admitted into the postgraduate programmes are taught, supervised and examined by scholars in other areas of religious studies. In the University of Ibadan (UI) for example, their Master of Arts (MA) students in Sociology of Religion register Soc. 601: Research Methods in Behavioural Sciences and Soc. 602: Sociological Theories as their external electives. This is an exposure which those in Religion and Society do not share. This could not be achieved without some challenges such as having narrow scope and perception of Sociology of Religion.

Similarly, that one has written articles on religious issues does not qualify him as a sociologist of religion or lecturer in Sociology of Religion. The grave danger here relates to scientific methods of enquiry which is peculiar to and lacking in the specialized areas as social ethics. Ethical issues are not the same as social issues. Their acknowledged similarities do not qualify one in Social ethics to officially make the above claim. The supervision and examination of their theses and dissertations are frustrating due to the technical issues based methodology.

**Ignorance about sociology of religion** is a problem associated with a state of knowing very little or nothing about, and a lack in the basics of the discipline. Ignorance according to Mairi (1998) refers to “lack of knowledge

or awareness” (671). Ignorance promotes lack of a profound mental adjustment to accept this social change associated with sociological studies of religion in Nigeria. Ignorance turns the hand of the clock anti-clock wise. Sociology of Religion is not the same as Religion and Society. Any insistence explains ignorance of what both of them are and not accepting their differences.

### **Lack of scholarship in studying sociology of religion**

Lack of Scholarship or sponsorship is another factor. The need for sponsors is high but the poor funding in education seems to favour science, medicine, Engineering and technologically related courses. The efforts of Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF), Educational Trust Fund (ETF), do not seem to favour the humanities as they give little to Arts, Education and Social Sciences. Consequent upon this, few people are encouraged in carrying out postgraduate research in Sociology of Religion in overseas’ specialized educational centres. In situations where one would want to be self sponsored, entry permit or visa constitutes another problem. One of the reasons for this is that the Embassies concerned refuse intending scholars visa because Sociology of Religion is taught in Nigeria. The level of frustration is so high that one is forced by the above circumstances to study Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

With the ban on the importation of textbooks, the few that were smuggled into Nigeria are very expensive for an ordinary Nigerian researcher. Filling the gap due to the lack of resource materials is unacademic, and unproductive in promoting sound scholarship.

Lack of effective teaching of Sociology of Religion is a challenge and could be averted by promoting the ability in teachers to communicate in clear terms the basic sociological concepts, and analysis which when reflected in the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion leads to a lucid presentation and transmission of an enthusiasm which Amala (1979) says was infectious.

### **The challenges of doing research in Nigeria**

The various challenges which students, scholars and the public face in doing research in Nigeria affects what Eyisi and Uche (2010) say that:

Every field of free inquiry is faced with ignorance, poverty, lack of finance, poor research capacity, misplaced priority, power outage and political instability. Others include poor state of research

infrastructure such as libraries, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), laboratories, funds for field trips, lack of data security measures, doubtful integrity owing to indolence, incompetence, corruption and official secret act which militate against research in developing countries are not left out (p. 1).

These problems of doing research affect Sociology of Religion because any search for knowledge are observed to be responsible for the attendant lack of sound scholarship, intellectual prowess and creativity in Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. For the plans and goals of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria to be effective in increasing, validating and acquiring knowledge, facts, ideas, opinions and data, the following measures must be ensured. They include effective networking with international partners, financial sponsorship, collaboration, close monitoring, hard work and patience. These are qualities of good researchers which ought to be inculcated in the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. The absence of these research qualities explains the challenges of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

### **Prospects of teaching and learning sociology of religion in Nigeria**

Functional theory says every human problem has a functional solution. The identified problems of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria have the following prospects. They include proper training, registration with the national association, subscribing to journals on social issues, close monitoring and dialogue.

**A proper and adequate training** in institutions with resource persons, resource materials and a well prepared and functional curriculum when effectively implemented will enhance or promote an improved learning, teaching and research in the Sociology of Religion. In the same vein, the lack of proper social research tool of enquiry does not according to Eyesi and Uche (2010) “make for sound scholarship, intellectual stimulation and creativity” (p. 1). There is need therefore for educational planners to insist on academic excellence through strict adherents to the set standards that would make for dedication and commitment to the goals of the founding fathers of Sociology of Religion. The proper tools of enquiry are expected to assist both the teachers and the students of Sociology of Religion in facing the subject matter or contents of Sociology of Religion, sociological theories and

research methods in behavioural sciences in a humble and honest manner in Nigeria. Beyond this understanding, teachers and students would be better exposed to sociological perspectives as they relate to basic concepts and their applications to cultural issues in Nigeria. The acknowledgement of the interest of religious groups in social problems, the utility of functional analysis, the consequences of religion for social integration and the problems of human adjustment, social disequilibrium and change should form part of the scope of Sociology of Religion.

### **Formation and registration with national association of sociologists of religion (NASOR)**

The need to promote academic excellence in Sociology of Religion could be achieved through the formation of and registration with the envisaged National Association of Sociologists of Religion (NASOR). The body is expected to cover all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The secretariat remains rotational and whoever emerges as the president of the association houses the secretariat for the period of his tenure.

The aim of the association is to regulate the activities of its members, to ensure uniformity to the scope of Sociology of Religion and review the curriculum from time to time in line with international standards. It may organize workshops, seminars, conferences and symposia which would be publicize in print and electronic media. The vision and mission of the proposed National Association of Sociologists of Religion (NASOR) should be clearly defined to include: To promote sound scholarship in Sociology of Religion, to be one of the leading areas of intellectual stimulation and scholarship in Nigeria, to commit scholars to collaborative research, exchange programmes and foreign linkages. To popularize Sociology of Religion in addressing religious conflicts, disunity and religious fundamentalism in Nigeria.

Collaborative studies, exchange programmes, international linkages, fellowships, conferences and editorial positions in peer reviewed journals are not left out of the association's goal. There is need therefore to showcase the indigenous sociological issues, themes and concepts to the outside world. The association is better placed to give meaning to the social structures and institutions in Nigeria. Religious re-education ought to be promoted as an element of religious mobilization. This will enhance social transformation aimed at reformation, social commitment and making social contents of human conduct and moral behaviour in Nigeria.

The registration and membership of the above association will promote the spirit of mutual help which will also reduce exploitation, alienation and discrimination in the teaching and learning of the Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. It is observed that membership implies all hands on deck in tackling the problem associated with the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. The human and material resources induced by the membership of the National Association of Sociologists of Religion will provide new resources for tapping the abundant human and other potentialities inherent in the Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

### **Journal of sociology of religion in Nigeria**

The proposed Journal of Sociology of Religion will hopefully bring to functional reality the efforts of the National Association of Sociologists of Religion (NASOR) in Nigeria. It will go beyond a mouthpiece of the association. It is a product of a dream aimed at making a moral commitment in promoting studies in sociology in Nigeria.

All areas on the content coverage, will be considered. If we accept that Sociology of Religion studies all aspects of society but from religious angle, it should be interested in people, institutions and relationships in Nigeria. Social transformation through dialogue is considered ideal in promoting pure social thoughts, ethical behaviour, good citizenship. It should be interested in social institutions in Nigeria. How does it impact positively or negatively on the structures of society? A critical look at new religious movements, practical problems of religious fanaticism or terrorism such as Boko Haram, welfare services, promotion of order, peace and stability in society will interest not only the Sociology of Religion, but will form part of the focus of the proposed Journal of Sociology of Religion. Social issues in traditional or indigenous description of the life-orientation of Nigerian Societies which are fundamentally guided by their traditional value-systems despite their foreign exposure to acculturating influence are not left out. Other social issues may include the influence of society on religion, socialization, social change, religious involvement and the role of religion in relationships. The vision and mission of the proposed journal will complement that of the above association in making for academic commitment that will repudiate negative attitudes which have obscured sound teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

### **Close monitoring in the teaching and learning of sociology of religion**

This suggestion is based on the need to implement policy guidelines, pursue new initiatives and insure that no stone is left unturned in the programme of the National Association of Sociologists of Religion in Nigeria. The association will address the identified administrative bottle necks, inadequacies, misrepresentations and setbacks in the study and teaching of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

It brings about change, which promotes intellectual stimulation, self discipline and academic excellence. The proposed monitoring team is to be set up by the National Association of Sociologists of Religion in Nigeria. Their reports should be made to the National body. Men and women of high probity and accountability should constitute the close monitoring team. With the help of Information Communication Technology (ICT), they should coordinate their activities in line with behavioural tradition. Central to behavioural and other social issues and traditions is learning. Ebenebe and Unachukwu (1995) define learning as “a relatively permanent change in an individual’s potential behaviour as a result of experience. This means that only observable changes in behaviour justifies the inference that learning has occurred” (p.1). The desired change will be made possible if the stakeholders join hands in upholding the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

Close monitoring by the designated stakeholders from departments, associations and concerned lecturers will reaffirm faith in achieving the fundamental human dignity, worth of human persons and labour in Nigeria. This could be achieved by appealing to the conscience of the stakeholders to do away with lack of action towards gaining greater concession by teachers and learners of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria.

Teaching Sociology of Religion remains the process of assisting learners develop improved understanding to the solution of a problem or to form an association between a stimulus and a response. Onwuka (1981) is of the view that teaching is the creating or providing of opportunities from which the learners can gain such experiences that will enable him acquire the knowledge, skill, attitude and appreciation that will serve as tools in life.

### **Strong Indications of Learning of Sociology of Religion**

This is another prospect of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. Psychologists have explained what constitute learning in terms of

what happens when learning takes place on the learners head. If there is a focus on observable behaviour as basis for inferring that learning has occurred, then the absence implies that learning has not effectively occurred.

Those who study the Sociology of Religion are students on whose behalf the educational system exists and operates. It is observed that without the Sociology of Religion students, there is no teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion. A great deal of commitment, devotion and sincerity of purpose are needed to bear on the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion.

### **Purposeful learning process of sociology of religion**

The teaching of the Sociology of Religion involves a purposeful learning process. This learning process refers to the process by which students, learners and researchers of Sociology of Religion acquire changes in their behaviour, improve performance, reorganize their thinking on social issues, discover new sociological insights or perspectives of having, new concepts and information. Thus, it could be established that the purposeful learning process in Sociology of Religion is significant in making all that learners, researchers and students of the Sociology of Religion do when they learn or delve into the academic discipline. This includes behaviours that are not directly observable such as perceiving, thinking and remembering as well as behaviours that may be directly observed such as reading, writing, attending, solving problems. It may be noted that the learning process of the Sociology of Religion is affected by the method of learning and presentation in Nigeria. However, this depends very much on the developmental stage of the learners and teachers of Sociology of Religion.

### **Improved learning situation of sociology of religion**

The teaching and learning situation in Nigeria concern primarily the environment, process and conditions learners find themselves. The learning situations mean factors or conditions affecting teachers and learners of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. The learning situations need to be greatly and adequately improved upon. If the identified factors are improved upon, the goals of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion will be realized in Nigeria.

**Dialogue** is suggested as a search for mutual understanding, deeper insight and a commitment towards repudiating arrogance, alienation and other uncomplimentary attitudes, which obscure the teaching and learning of

Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. Uche (2008) says “dialogue is suggested to harmonize the above views by people of different faiths and ideologies. There is need for a conscious search for themes, issues and programmes that will promote genuine worship” (p. 101). Genuine worship in this context implies promoting academic excellence. A tripartite dialogue is suggested. It will be made up of resource persons in Sociology of Religion, those in other academic disciplines or fields but teach Sociology of Religion under the name Religion and Society and the curriculum committees of the universities and Colleges of Education concerned.

### **Conclusion**

There is a strong indication from the history and development of Sociology of Religion that there are identifiable grounds in establishing grave initially occasioned by Comte and Marx negative social theories of religion which made them loose their influence. Gunter and Robert (1970) say “men of more realistic imagination and a better sense of humour took over the discussion of social life” (p. 14).

This paper has articulated the grave challenges of teaching and learning Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. In spite of the progress made, there is a strong indication that learning involves changes in behaviour or acquisition of abilities that are not innate. Since learning depends on experience, only the best is good enough for the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. The desired best brings about an improved change in role performance and building a sequence of stimulus response relationships aimed at gaining deeper insight into the ever changing content coverage of Sociology of Religion. It is our statement of recommendation that a collaborative study of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria calls for improved funding, sponsorship, encouragement and provision of resource materials that will enhance and promote the teaching and learning of Sociology of Religion in Nigeria. In this way, the desired social transformation, creativity, intellectual stimulation, human capacity building and integration will be achieved if a systematic campaign aimed at enlightening, mobilizing and ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria by letting people learn what Sociology of Religion is, what significance it has in Nigerian society and how it could be improved upon.



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