

Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Adequacy of NCE CRS Curriculum for Interreligious Peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Kaduna State, Nigeria, is a state with a diverse religious population. In recent years, the state has experienced several inter-religious conflicts which call for attention. This study critically examines the adequacy of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) curriculum in Christian Religious Studies (CRS) of Federal Colleges of Education (FCEs) for the attainment of peaceful interreligious co-existence in the State. The study adopts a descriptive research method with a survey design. The method involved a self-administered questionnaire, a review of the NCE CRS curriculum, the opinions of the CRS teachers, and a focused sampling of religious leaders' views in the two government-owned Colleges of Education in Kaduna State. The study aims at analysing the adequacy of the NCE CRS curriculum of Nigeria Colleges of Education for addressing issues of inter-religious peace in Kaduna State. The study finds that the NCE CRS curriculum has the potential to promote inter-religious peace. The findings also reveal that the curriculum is not being implemented effectively due to the inadequacy of resources required to implement the content and spirit of the curriculum. The study concludes that the CRS curriculum has the potential to be a valuable tool for promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, and recommends among other recommendations, that the government of Kaduna State should provide more resources to support the teaching of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) for inter-religious peace.

Keywords

Nigerian Certificate in Education,
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Introduction

Kaduna State, with a population of about 10.4m (Kaduna State Bureau of Statistics, 2023), is a microcosm of Nigeria's social and religious composition. It is a cosmopolitan State

with a unique environment where inter-religious dynamics and tensions exist. The state has had several experiences of interreligious conflicts with dire consequences, and protuberant deep mistrust and suspicion between

adherents of Islam and Christianity. According to Ibrahim (1989), the continued interreligious wariness between Christians and Muslims has immediate and long-term causes. Citing the 1987 outbreak of religious violence between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State, the author argues that the crisis arose from the politicisation of religion in the regional contest for power.

The views of Ibrahim (1989) on the causes of interreligious misgivings between Muslims and Christians in the State are corroborated macroscopically by Enwerem (1995), and further exemplified by Kalu (2001). All the authors also identified the rise of fundamentalist Christianity and Islam as reasons for such interreligious conflicts. Ibrahim (1989), further points to “the struggle for political power by the ‘northern Oligarchy’ within the north and against the south in which religion has become a means for forging new coalitions” as another major reason for the tense interreligious relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna State. Although Akwara & Ojomah (2013), also argued that “religion is used as an instrument of internal colonization and disenfranchisement in Nigeria,” thereby corroborating Ibrahim (1989) position, Ekanem et al., (2022) advised that “the posture of Nigeria as a secular state should be streamlined and politicians who use religion to foster their political fortunes should be sanctioned with appropriate laws.” It thus appears that religion in itself is not a reason for interreligious conflicts, but its weaponization by adherents for personal interest. It is for this reason that there is a need to examine the curriculum of schools where religions are taught and

assess their relevance or otherwise to peace building.

Abuse of religious creeds or practices by adherents could cause interreligious disharmony or conflicts. However, the capacity of religious education to foster religiously peaceful conditions has been confirmed (Ajani, 2013; Joseph, 2019; Momodu, 2013; Sulaiman, 2012). In affirmation of the capacity of religious education to nurture peace in a society, Harris (2004), and Evimalinda & Lidya (2018), have argued that Christian Religious Education is a change agent for better human relationships. According to Evimalinda & Lidya (2018), “Christian religious education seeks change, renewal, and reform of individuals and groups through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that students live according to God's will, as stated by the Bible and by the Lord Jesus Himself.” Nevertheless, an effective realisation of the objective of a Christian religious education is a function of a well-focused religious education curriculum. Hence, the goal of this study is to determine whether the Government approved Christian Religious Studies curriculum of the Department of Christian Religious Studies operative in Nigeria College of Education, is effective in promoting interreligious harmony in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

The Christian Religious Studies (CRS) curriculum approved for usage in Nigeria Colleges of Education (NCE) is centrally planned at the national level, for domestication in the various Colleges across the country. The current version of the *Minimum Standard for Arts and Social Science Courses* (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2021), ensued from the 2012 edition and became effective in 2021. The CRS

component of the Minimum Standard is spread over 36 academic credits (28 core courses, and 8 elective courses) with the following objectives (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2021). By the end of the course in CRS, students should be able to do the following:

- i. Demonstrate professional proficiency in teaching Christian Religious Studies in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools.
- ii. Demonstrate sound knowledge and appreciation of the moral values needed to live as a Christian at the various stages of growth and development.
- iii. Explore the place and significance of religion in life and so make a distinctive contribution to one's search for a faith by which to live.
- iv. Express accurate knowledge of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit needed to live as a Christian in the community.
- v. Radiate attitudes and values which are typical of a mature and responsible member of the Christian community such as love, respect, honesty, and service.
- vi. Express satisfactory intellectual capacity to benefit from further education in Christian Religious Studies

It is expected that at the end of the programme the student should be able to embody the general objectives as outlined. It is instructive to note that objectives **ii** through **v** are modifiers of relational outcomes. Hence, the focus of CRS at the NCE level is driven by the need to correlate religion with matured practice of the Christian religion with the human society, in relation to God, the environment, and with fellow human beings.

As earlier noted, Kaduna State is a microcosm of Nigeria's social and religious composition. The State has had several experiences of interreligious conflict with tolls that are of significant human and material propensity. Most of the factors identified with the strained relations between adherents of the major religions of Islam and Christianity in the State are bordered on competition for resources and political power. Similarly, the rise of religious extremism has also accounted for several violent attacks, both against Muslims and Christians.

While a few organizations working to promote interreligious peace in Kaduna State abound, such as the Kaduna State Peace Commission, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI), a transformative religious education is expected to yield a more profound and lasting results in interreligious relation across the State. Such approach has been found to be effective in many climes as testified by researchers in the edited volume of Kazanjian Jnr & Laurence (2000). The Christian Religious Studies curriculum in Nigeria Colleges of Education is weighted in this paper for such capacity. Of course, there is no quick fix for the challenges of interreligious conflict anywhere. It often takes time, effort, and commitment from all stakeholders to build a more peaceful and inclusive society. However, the first step must be taken in the right direction.

The study of CRS within the fulcrum of teacher training institution is strategic to the extent of potentially deep-rooted influence on prospective pupils of the teachers at the elementary and secondary school levels. Hence, Njoku & Njoku (2015) noted that "the major aims of inclusion of CRS in the

education curriculum is to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, appreciate the dignity of labour and those moral values specified in the broad national aims as good citizens.”

While a consideration of religious curriculum for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State from a Christian Religious Studies perspective might be inadequate for the task of peacebuilding, it promises a better interreligious orientation for a Christian’ positive change in moral and social disposition in a religiously pluralistic society. To this effect, the article built on the conviction of Ali et al. (2021), who draws on institutions of Islamic higher education in Indonesia to recommend a reduction in religious radicalization.

Statement of the problem

In recent years, there have been a few high-profile incidents of violence between Christians and Muslims. This violence has caused widespread fear and insecurity and has made it difficult to promote inter-religious peace in Kaduna State.

The curriculum in Christian religious studies (CRS) in Kaduna State has the potential to play a role in promoting inter-religious peace. However, there is no clear consensus on how the curriculum should be used to achieve this goal. Some people believe that the curriculum should focus on teaching students about the similarities between Christianity and other faiths. Others believe that the curriculum should focus on teaching students about the importance of tolerance and respect for people of other faiths. However, this

study asks a more profound question of the capacity of the curriculum to facilitate interreligious peace in the State.

Objectives

The following research objectives are outlined to help assess the capacity of CRS in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State.

- i. To analyse the adequacy of NCE CRS curriculum of Nigeria Colleges of Education for addressing issues of inter-religious peace in Kaduna State.
- ii. To identify the resources available to support the teaching of inter-religious peace through CRS.
- iii. To assess the views of religious leaders on the role of CRS in promoting inter-religious peace.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

- i. Does the current NCE CRS curriculum of Nigeria Colleges of Education address issues of inter-religious peace in Kaduna State?
- ii. Are there available resources to support the teaching of inter-religious peace through CRS in Kaduna State?
- iii. What are the views of religious leaders on the role of CRS in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State?

Methodology

The study adopts a survey research design to investigate the adequacy of the NCE CRS curriculum for achieving inter-religious peace in Kaduna State,

Nigeria. The research population comprised all the CRS lecturers of the two government owned Colleges of Education in Kaduna State, namely, the Federal College of Education, Zaria, and Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan-Waya. According to information directly received from both departments in the two Colleges, there are twenty-two CRS lecturers in Gidan-Waya, and Nineteen CRS Lecturers in FCE Zaria. A total of forty-one respondents were used as the sample size for the study using purposive sampling technique. The choice of lecturers from government

owned Colleges was informed by a need for attaining a symmetry of learning environment and curriculum.

The fielded questionnaire for data collection comprised of Fixed response types and were validated for clarity of items, appropriateness of language and expression by experts in educational measurement and curriculum studies. The questionnaire was distributed virtually, and a Mean of 2.50 was raised. Therefore, any score below 2.5 was rejected, while 2.5 and above was accepted.

Data Presentation

Table I: Mean Score of Respondents on NCE CRS curriculum status for inter-religious peace. N = 41

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Remark
1	FCE CRS curriculum includes topics related to inter-religious peace	26	11	03	01	3.46	Accepted
2	The curriculum provides students with opportunities to learn about different religions and promote understanding	09	24	01	07	3.00	Accepted
3	The curriculum encourages students to engage in activities that promote inter-religious peace	11	25	01	04	3.12	Accepted
Grand Mean						3.19	

Table I shows that items 1-3 on NCE CRS curriculum potent the curriculum as relevant addressing issues of inter-religious peace in Kaduna State. A Mean score above 2.50 recorded. The grand mean of 3.19 indicates a high level of acceptance that the NCE curriculum has a capacity to address issues of inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean Score of Respondents on availability of CRS resources to support teaching for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria. N = 41

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Remark
1	There are sufficient availability of textbooks and other instructional materials that cover topics related to inter-religious peace	18	12	07	04	2.44	Rejected
2	There are professional development opportunities for teachers who want to learn more about teaching about different religions and promoting understanding	04	09	17	11	2.00	Rejected

3	There is funding for schools and teachers who want to implement activities that promote inter-religious peace	05	08	19	09	1.98	Rejected
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Grand Mean **2.14**

Table 2 shows that the respondents disagreed that there are resources and professional capacity to support teaching for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The respondents also rejected the hypothesis that there is funding for schools and teachers who want to implement

activities that promote inter-religious peace. The grand mean of 2.14 is below the criterion mean of 2.50 and indicates rejection of availability of CRS resources to support teaching for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Mean Score of views of religious leaders on the role of NCE CRS in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria. N = 16

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Remark
1	Teaching about different religions is important for promoting understanding and tolerance	08	06	01	01	3.31	Accepted
2	Schools should be places where students learn about different religions and cultures	09	05	02	0	3.31	Accepted
3	Promoting inter-religious peace is an important goal for society	13	02	0	01	3.75	Accepted
Grand Mean						3.45	

Results in Table 2 indicate that the sampled religious leaders on the role of NCE CRS in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, responded in the affirmative. The 16 religious leaders were picked in accordance to their extra-academic engagements in leading churches. They opined that teaching about different religions is important for promoting understanding and tolerance, and that schools should be places where students learn about different religions and cultures. It is their opinion that promoting inter-religious peace is an

important goal for societies to achieve. The grand mean of 3.45 is above the criterion mean of 2.50 and indicates acceptance of the positive role of NCE CRS in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Summary of the Findings

- i. The curriculum of the Nigeria Certificate in Education for Christian Religious Studies is though confessional (Ajibola, 2018b, 2018a), findings reveal that the curriculum has the capacity to positively address

issues relating to inter-religious peace in Kaduna State. The grand mean of 3.19 indicates a high level of acceptance that the NCE CRS curriculum has a capacity to address issues of inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

- ii. Furthermore, It is evident that despite the capacity to attain interreligious peace through the implementation of the NCE CRS curriculum, there is a dearth of resources and professional capacity to support the teaching of the course for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria.
- iii. Despite the unavailability of resources and professional capacity to support the teaching of the course for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, religious leaders see the course as potent in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State.

Discussion

Considering the overall aggregate Mean of 2.92 result of the perceptions of stakeholders on the adequacy of NCE CRS curriculum for interreligious peace in Kaduna State, one may safely conclude that the curriculum has the capacity to realise interreligious peace in the State. The potential signals of NCE CRS curriculum for attaining peaceful co-existence in Kaduna State cohere with the strategic implications of adopting the curriculum for peace education and national cohesion as identified by Chinyere & Ugwuegbulam (2020). The researchers suggest strategies such as introducing peace education into school curriculums, encouraging religious tolerance, conducting research, and offering

conflict resolution training for teachers as roadmaps to interreligious peace (Chinyere & Ugwuegbulam, 2020).

The curriculum of NCE CRS is strategic for interreligious peace discourse, as demonstrated in the 2.5 Mean result obtained in relevance of the curriculum to interreligious peace. Nevertheless, the claim is true to the extent of subjects that directly, or indirectly, relate students with other religions. The 3.19 Mean claim of the teachers adjudging the NCE CRS curriculum as capable of addressing issues of inter-religious peace may be justified by the availability of subjects as CRS 111: Introduction to the study of Religions, CRS 116: Introduction to Sociology of Religion, CRS 117: African Traditional Religion, CRS 126: Introduction to the Study of Islam, CRS 216: Christian Doctrine, CRS 226: African Independent Church Movement, CRS 323: Ecumenism and Religious Dialogue, and CRS 325: Philosophy of Religion. It should, however, be noted that it is not the whole subjects in Christian Religious Studies that may necessarily be required for interreligious peace in Kaduna State. Teaching the identified subjects must also be tilted towards the course objectives. Hence, attempts must be made to provide students with opportunities to learn about different religions and promote understanding, as well as encouraging them to engage in activities that promote inter-religious peace. This view syncs with the objective in European and UNESCO policy and research documents, in which educational institutions are seen as central places for dialogue (Riitaoja & Dervin, 2014).

The negative Mean Score of respondents on availability of CRS resources to support teaching for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State shows that it is not enough to simply have the contents of the curriculum adjudged as adequate for interreligious dialogue for peace; rather, such must be in sync with relevant resources required for the implementation. Currently, responding lecturers have claimed that there are no sufficient textbooks and other instructional materials that cover topics related to inter-religious peace. It was also noted that professional development opportunities for teachers who are keen to learn more about teaching around different religions and promoting understanding is lacking. From the responses, there is also a dearth of funding for schools and teachers who would like to implement activities that promote inter-religious peace. The empirical work of Kienstra et al., (2019), conducted among teachers of religion in the Netherlands confirms that lack of increased training can negatively affect interreligious teaching in a classroom setting.

The claims of the sampled religious leaders on the role of NCE CRS in promoting inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria corresponds to the view of Ibrahim (2023), that religion has a significant role in the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious co-existence of the people of Kaduna State. Similarly, Yusuf (2007), who had conducted in-depth interviews in communities and among religious leaders in Kaduna State stated that religious conflicts arise from clashes of values and claims to scarce resources, power, and status (Yusuf,

2007). These are fundamentally existential borderlines of interactions that bring to bare individual character, morals, and psychological formation in interhuman relations. Religious education plays a positive role in this exchange of human dispositions.

Overall, the NCE curriculum in Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in Kaduna State, Nigeria, has the potential to contribute to inter-religious peace in several ways. First, the curriculum provides students with a comprehensive overview of Christian beliefs and practices, as well as an introduction to other major world religions. This knowledge can help students to understand and appreciate the religious beliefs of others, which is essential for building bridges between different faith communities.

Conclusion

The study evaluates the adequacy of the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) curriculum in Nigeria Colleges of Education for inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The CRS curriculum could potentially encourage interreligious harmony, but it is not being utilized to its maximum potential in its current form. Therefore, steps need to be taken to improve its implementation. Suggestions include better teacher training, providing necessary resources, encouraging student interaction, and involving religious leaders.

Recommendations

The following are some specific ways in which the NCE curriculum in CRS can be improved to better promote

inter-religious peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria:

- i. The government of Kaduna State should provide more resources to support the teaching of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) for inter-religious peace. This could include providing more textbooks, training materials, and teaching aids for CRS lecturers in the NCE offering institutions in the state. The support may also include providing funding for workshops and conferences on inter-religious peace.
- ii. The government of Kaduna State should work to improve the professional capacity of CRS teachers. This could be done by providing more training opportunities for CRS lecturers, both in-service and pre-service (in the various Colleges of Education in the State). The effort may also include providing opportunities for CRS teachers in the colleges to network with other CRS teachers and experts elsewhere in inter-religious peace.
- iii. The government of Kaduna State should create a more supportive environment for inter-religious dialogue and understanding. The roles of religious leaders in the State could be relevant in this regard. Such effort may be done by promoting inter-faith events and activities, and by supporting initiatives that bring people of different faiths together.

It is hoped that by implementing these recommendations, the NCE CRS curriculum can become an even more effective tool for promoting inter-

religious peace in Kaduna State and beyond.

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