

---

**CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND THE QUINTUPLE HELIX: APPLYING AN INNOVATION SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK TO SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

---

**Ilesanmi G. Ajibola, PhD<sup>1</sup> & Anuoluwapo F. Olowo, PhD<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Department of Christian Religious Studies / TETFund Centre of Excellence for Technology Enhanced Learning, Federal University of Education, Zaria, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2062-9282>

<sup>2</sup> National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBIAS), Minna, Niger State, Nigeria, [anuoluwaf@gmail.com](mailto:anuoluwaf@gmail.com), 07035735801.

---

**Article History**

Received: Jan. 2026

Review processes

Jan - Feb 2026

Received in revised form:

Feb 2026

Accepted: Mar 2026

Published online: Mar 2026

**Keywords:**

Christian Religious Studies, Quintuple Helix, Nigeria, societal development, moral capital, curriculum reform, faith-based institutions, civic formation, documentary analysis.

**Doi:**

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19226410>

**Abstract:**

Nigeria confronts a compounding development crisis characterised by structural poverty, institutional decay, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, and a deepening erosion of civic values. This paper proceeds from the recognition that no single sector possesses the capacity to address these challenges in isolation. Drawing on qualitative documentary analysis, the study applies the Quintuple Helix Innovation Model to examine how Christian Religious Studies (CRS) — encompassing its curricula, pedagogical orientations, and ecclesial institutions — can function as nodes of moral capital, civic formation, and community empowerment across five interdependent societal subsystems: academia, industry, government, civil society, and the natural environment. The analysis maps both current contributions and unrealised potential across each helix, distinguishing carefully between what CRS demonstrably achieves and what reformed curricula and pedagogy could produce. The paper argues that CRS is not simply a subject of confessional instruction but a generative discipline capable of producing the ethical, social, and epistemic infrastructure required for enduring national development. The findings call for policy integration of CRS into Nigeria's development architecture through curriculum reform, faith-institution partnerships, and community-based learning models, and identify a substantial agenda for empirical research.

---

**Introduction**

Nigeria's path to national development remains one of the most intractable social and political challenges on the African continent. This assessment holds notwithstanding the country's abundant natural resources, demographically youthful population, and rich cultural heritage (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). The country continues to grapple with institutional decay and instances of degrading moral and civic values (Independent Corrupt Practices and

Other Related Offences Commission [ICPC], 2025). Compounding these difficulties are systemic poverty, ethnic fragmentation, environmental degradation, and the gradual deterioration of public morality — challenges that are not unique to Nigeria but have been particularly pronounced in resource-rich economies beset by governance failures (Anser et al., 2025). Critically, these problems are not exclusively material in nature; they are, at their root, moral and civic failures — deficits in the values,

dispositions, and relational capacities that undergird sustainable community life.

It is precisely in this context that the disciplinary contributions of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) demand renewed scholarly and policy attention. In Nigerian secondary and tertiary institutions, CRS occupies a contested but vital space in the nation's educational domain. The course is, in most curricula, regarded as a formative discipline concerned with the cultivation of moral agency, critical reflection, and civic responsibility grounded in the resources of the Christian tradition. Nevertheless, its relevance to national development has been questioned on the basis of its perceived character as a confessional exercise ill-suited to the demands of a pluralist, modernising society. This article contests that dismissal.

The article argues that when CRS is reconceived through the lens of the Quintuple Helix Innovation Model — a framework that positions knowledge production, industry, government, civil society, and the natural environment as co-equal drivers of sustainable development — the discipline functions as a generative resource for multi-sectoral national transformation. The Quintuple Helix, initially developed by Carayannis and Campbell (2009, 2010) as an extension of earlier triple and quadruple helix frameworks, represents a significant advance in innovation theory by incorporating civil society and the natural

environment as essential systemic actors. In the Nigerian context, where civil society organisations, faith communities, and ecological vulnerability are all critical variables in the development equation, the Quintuple Helix offers a conceptually powerful lens through which the multi-dimensional contributions of CRS can be assessed.

Two clarifications of scope are essential at the outset. First, this study employs documentary analysis to examine both what CRS currently contributes to each helix of the model and what reformed CRS curricula and institutions could contribute. The analysis therefore distinguishes consistently between evidenced current contributions and normative claims about developmental potential. Second, this study focuses primarily on Christian Religious Studies and does not purport to offer a comprehensive analysis of Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) or other traditions. While points of convergence between CRS and IRS are noted where relevant, a full comparative inter-faith analysis of the kind that Nigeria's religious plurality demands lies beyond the present scope. The authors acknowledge this as a substantive limitation and commend it as a priority area for future research.

The discussion proceeds through the standard IMRAD format. Following this introduction, the paper reviews the relevant literature on the Quintuple Helix

model, CRS in Nigeria, and faith-based contributions to development. The methodology section operationalises the documentary approach. The results and discussion section maps the contributions of CRS across each of the five helices. The article concludes with implications for policy, curriculum reform, and a research agenda.

### **The Quintuple Helix Innovation Model: Theoretical Foundations**

The intellectual genealogy of the Quintuple Helix begins with Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff's (1995) Triple Helix framework, which proposed that the interaction of university, industry, and government constitutes the primary engine of knowledge-based economies. This triadic model, while influential, was subsequently challenged for its neglect of civil society as an autonomous driver of innovation. Carayannis and Campbell (2009) addressed this gap by introducing a Quadruple Helix model that incorporated a fourth dimension centred on democratic civil society, culture, and media-based public domains, acknowledging that civil society mediates the uptake and legitimation of innovation within democratic systems. It is important to note that the fourth helix in this formulation is principally defined by democratic institutions and civil society participation, not merely by cultural or media expression as such; the cultural and media dimensions are understood as expressions of civic agency.

The Quintuple Helix emerged from the further recognition that sustainable innovation cannot be separated from its ecological substrate. Carayannis and Campbell (2010) argued that the natural environment constitutes the fifth helix — not simply as a resource to be exploited, but as a systemic actor whose integrity is a precondition for the sustained viability of all other helices. This ecological turn corresponds with the imperatives of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) and resonates with sustainability science's insistence on planetary boundaries as the non-negotiable context for all human development.

Scholars have subsequently applied the Quintuple Helix to diverse national and regional contexts. Leydesdorff and Etzkowitz (2001) demonstrated its usefulness for mapping knowledge flows in European innovation systems. In the Global South, Afonso et al. (2012) examined how the framework might be adapted for developing economies, noting the particular importance of informal institutions — including religious organisations — in closing the gaps left by weak formal structures. More recently, Ranga and Etzkowitz (2013) explored how civil society actors mediate the translation of academic knowledge into community benefits, a function that faith-based institutions in Nigeria have long performed, often without formal recognition in development planning.

### **Christian Religious Studies in Nigeria: Status, Challenges, and Possibilities**

Christian Religious Studies was formally introduced into Nigeria's educational curriculum following the recommendations of the Ashby Commission Report of 1959 and was subsequently consolidated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The discipline is taught from junior secondary school through to the university level and encompasses biblical studies, Christian ethics, church history, and the theology of social engagement. Its curriculum mandates explicitly include the formation of moral character, civic responsibility, and respect for human dignity — objectives aligned with the developmental goals of the Nigerian state.

Notwithstanding this mandate, CRS in Nigeria encounters considerable institutional challenges. Policy shifts toward science and technology-oriented curricula in the 1980s and 1990s signalled the marginalisation of religious studies in federal policy discourse. The perception that CRS is a “soft” subject with limited vocational relevance contributed to declining enrolment in some states and inadequate resourcing of departments at the tertiary level (Heckman & Montalto, 2016; Bertheussen, 2025). Jawoniyi (2019) argued that rote-learning approaches to CRS pedagogy have undermined the subject's potential for critical formation, reducing it to the memorisation of biblical texts without the deeper hermeneutical and

ethical engagement that the discipline demands.

This pedagogical deficiency represents a substantive challenge that must be held in tension with the developmental contributions that Christian institutions have nonetheless generated. Nwachukwu (2024) demonstrated that mission-founded educational institutions have consistently produced civic leaders, social entrepreneurs, and community organisers whose formation is traceable to their religious education. The World Faiths Development Dialogue (2018) documents the role of Christian NGOs and church networks in health service delivery, peacebuilding, and economic empowerment programmes across the Niger Delta, the Middle Belt, and northern Nigeria. Pentecostal churches, moreover, have engaged in need-based evangelism that integrates spiritual support with practical community assistance, emphasising education, vocational training, and the creation of employment opportunities, especially targeting young adults — while older congregants provide financial resources, mentorship, and advisory roles, creating a multigenerational effort toward economic empowerment and poverty reduction (Oye-Oluwafemi, 2024). These contributions represent a *de facto* engagement with all five helices of the Quintuple Helix, even where that engagement has not been theorised as such.

The crucial analytical point, however, is that these contributions flow

primarily from Christian institutions rather than from CRS as a pedagogical discipline per se. The article's argument is that a reformed, critically engaged CRS curriculum and pedagogy can both theorise and amplify the developmental work that faith institutions already perform, providing the intellectual infrastructure that connects educational formation to multi-sectoral development outcomes.

### **Faith-Based Institutions and Societal Development: A Global Perspective**

The relationship between religious institutions and public development has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent decades. Berger (1999) famously revised his earlier secularisation thesis to acknowledge the enduring and often constructive role of religion in modern public life, and subsequent empirical research has reinforced this reconsideration. Putnam (2000) identified religious communities as primary generators of social capital — networks of trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement that underlie democratic institutions and economic cooperation. In the African context, Ellis and Ter Haar (2003) argued that religious imagination provides the symbolic resources through which communities articulate aspirations for justice, healing, and transformation.

Oladipo (2003) investigated the relationship between piety and political participation in African Christianity,

documenting how church-based formation has shaped civic engagement in Nigeria's democratisation process. Akintayo et al. (2024), using dialogical and project-based methods, demonstrated that Christian Religious Studies advances peace education in conflict-affected communities. Given Nigeria's ethno-religious violence, this is a contribution of particular significance: CRS provides a forum for intergroup dialogue and peacebuilding by facilitating critical thinking among learners. This finding aligns with research showing that religious education can serve as a peacebuilding tool when it adopts transformative rather than confessional approaches (Sakupapa & Adehanloye, 2025). Nevertheless, this body of evidence has not been systematically organised within an innovation systems framework. It is from this gap that the present study proceeds.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Research Design***

This study adopts a qualitative documentary research design. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the interpretive nature of the enquiry: the study does not seek to quantify the contributions of CRS to development outcomes, but to analyse, contextualise, and theorise those contributions within the Quintuple Helix framework. Documentary analysis, as described by Bowen (2009), entails the systematic

review and interpretation of existing texts — policy documents, curriculum frameworks, academic literature, and institutional reports — to construct analytical insights not available from any single source.

### ***Data Sources***

Primary sources examined in this study include: the Nigeria National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013); the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) CRS syllabus for Senior Secondary Schools; curriculum guidelines from the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2023) for Religious Studies programmes; policy documents from the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC); and institutional reports from major faith-based development organisations operating in Nigeria, including the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (CCFN), the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (2019), and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, and book chapters addressing religious education, development theory, innovation systems, and Nigerian social policy, sourced from JSTOR, Google Scholar, and African Journals Online (AJOL).

### ***Analytical Procedure***

Documents were analysed thematically, with the five helices of the Quintuple Helix model serving as the

primary deductive analytical categories: (1) academia and education, (2) industry and economy, (3) government and policy, (4) civil society and culture, and (5) the natural environment. Themes were thus derived deductively from the theoretical framework and applied to the documentary corpus, which is consistent with the study's explicitly framework-application purpose. Each helix was examined for evidence of CRS-related contributions, institutional linkages, and developmental potential.

Within this deductive structure, the analysis proceeded inductively at the level of specific evidence: documentary sources were read for their explicit content and for the broader contextual meanings within which that content operates, drawing on interpretive principles consistent with hermeneutic inquiry (Gadamer, 1989). Analytical categories were iteratively reviewed across the corpus to ensure that the evidence cited under each helix was adequate to the claims being made, and that a consistent distinction was maintained between documented current contributions and normative claims about unrealised potential. Thematic saturation was achieved when successive review of additional documents yielded no new substantive patterns under any of the five categories.

### ***Limitations***

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged at the outset. As a

documentary analysis, findings are constrained by the quality, availability, and representativeness of the texts reviewed. Primary empirical data — such as interviews with CRS educators, community leaders, or policymakers, or direct analysis of classroom practice — were not deployed but would substantially strengthen the findings; empirical follow-up studies are therefore recommended as a priority. The reliance on Oladipo's (2003) study for claims about entrepreneurial formation of mission-school graduates is noted as a limitation given the study's age; more recent empirical work is needed to confirm or qualify this finding in the current educational landscape. Additionally, this study centres on Christian Religious Studies and does not offer an equivalent analysis of Islamic Religious Studies or other faith traditions. In a country where approximately half the population is Muslim, this represents a significant contextual boundary that future research must address; the present study is best understood as a case study that invites a parallel analysis of IRS and ultimately a comparative inter-faith treatment.

### **Results and Discussion**

Documentary analysis produces substantive findings across all five helices of the Quintuple Helix framework. The sections below present these findings, distinguishing throughout between contributions that the documentary

evidence demonstrates CRS currently makes and contributions that a reformed CRS could make if the pedagogical and institutional deficiencies identified in the literature were addressed.

#### ***Helix One: Academia — CRS as a Site of Knowledge Production and Moral Formation***

The first helix concerns academic institutions' role in generating knowledge and advancing innovation. Within this helix, CRS has historically been foundational: it shapes the intellectual and moral formation of Nigerian students through schools and universities. However, the evidence also shows that this potential is currently unrealised in significant respects. Jawoniyi (2019) demonstrated that CRS pedagogy in Nigerian schools remains predominantly teacher-centred and examination-oriented, thereby constraining its formative potential and reducing the discipline to the memorisation of biblical texts without the deeper hermeneutical and ethical engagement that it demands.

The theoretical resources for reform are well developed. Groome's (1980) shared praxis methodology repositions students as moral agents who reflect critically on lived realities and develop faith-informed responses, comprising engagement with experience, dialogue with tradition, the development of ethical responses, and action upon them. This approach aligns with African practical theology, which connects religious

reflection to social challenges (Magezi, 2023), and embodies Freire's (2017) critical pedagogy in its insistence that education must be oriented toward the transformation of reality rather than its passive reception. Contemporary frameworks that build on Groome's shared praxis further develop moral agency and progressive engagement (Mahon et al., 2020; Majola et al., 2025), offering a path to repositioning CRS from doctrinal transmission to transformative education for Nigerian youth.

The distinction between current and potential contribution is critical here. What the evidence establishes for the first helix is this: NUC benchmark standards for Religious Studies programmes (NUC, 2023) include community service and public engagement as graduate outcomes, indicating an institutional recognition that academic CRS should generate civic capital. What the evidence does not establish is that current pedagogical practice reliably delivers these outcomes. Realising the first helix's potential therefore depends on substantive pedagogical reform, strengthened community-university partnerships, and synergistic research collaboration between CRS departments and development organisations.

### ***Helix Two: Industry and Economy — CRS, Entrepreneurial Ethics, and Economic Justice***

The second helix concerns industry, economic institutions, and wealth

generation. The connection between CRS and economic development, while not immediately apparent, is grounded in the substantive economic ethics that the Christian tradition makes available. Catholic Social Teaching, encompassing the principles of human dignity, universal destination of goods, preferential option for the poor, and solidarity (Aubert, 2003; Curran, 2013; Ajibola, 2015), offers students an economic framework that challenges both the extractive logic of neoliberal capitalism and Nigeria's informal culture of corrupt accumulation. Protestant traditions provide complementary resources in their emphasis on vocation, stewardship, and the sanctification of work.

Oladipo's (2003) study found that graduates of mission-founded schools exhibit greater entrepreneurial initiative and collaborative conduct attributable to their integration of Christian ethical formation. While this finding is now more than two decades old and requires replication in the contemporary Nigerian educational context, it points to a plausible mechanism linking CRS formation to economic behaviour. The CRS curriculum's engagement with work, vocation, and stewardship speaks directly to the formation of professional ethics and productivity. In Nigeria's context of persistent corruption — which Transparency International (2023) consistently ranks among the most severe in Africa — developing integrity-oriented

professionals represents a contribution of real economic value.

The Nigerian church already functions as an economic institution in its own right, operating microfinance schemes, cooperatives, and social enterprises across the country. Formalising these contributions through regulatory recognition and policy integration would amplify their developmental impact. The argument for the second helix is therefore both evidential and normative: CRS currently provides formative resources that support economic ethics and community enterprise, and a reformed curriculum could deepen and systematise this contribution.

### ***Helix Three: Government and Policy — CRS as a Resource for Governance and Civic Virtue***

The third helix concerns government administration and public policy. CRS has strong historical ties with governance institutions in Nigeria. Christian educational institutions have been key producers of Nigeria's political elite; many governors, ministers, judges, and civil servants who shaped the Nigerian state were educated in mission schools and church-related universities. This legacy is, however, double-edged: the documented conduct of many such leaders has contradicted rather than embodied the ethical formation they received, which serves not to discredit CRS formation but to underscore the urgency of strengthening

and deepening it. The state's need for leaders with genuine integrity and civic commitment remains acute, and CRS, as a discipline of civic formation, is well positioned to address it.

The Christian tradition in political theology provides rich resources for civic formation: doctrines of the common good, governance accountability, human rights, and the obligation of rulers toward justice. Catholic Social Teaching, from Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) through Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* (2015), offers guidance on justice, subsidiarity, and ecological stewardship that speaks directly to Nigerian policy challenges. Protestant social ethics provide complementary resources through their traditions of prophetic critique and democratic accountability. A CRS curriculum that engages these traditions in the Nigerian context would produce graduates capable not merely of understanding governance but of reforming governance structures from within.

Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) includes citizenship development as an objective but does not specify the role of CRS in achieving it. A policy framework that explicitly links CRS graduate outcomes to governance and citizenship indicators would create accountability for the discipline's civic formation mandate and provide a basis for increased investment in CRS departments and programmes.

#### ***Helix Four: Civil Society and Culture — CRS as a Generator of Social Capital and Cultural Cohesion***

The fourth helix — encompassing democratic civil society, media, and culture — is where CRS makes its most visible and evidenced contributions in Nigeria. The church operates schools, hospitals, orphanages, conflict mediation centres, and community development projects across the federation. The social capital generated through these institutions — networks of trust, reciprocity, and collective commitment — constitutes a key development resource. CRS pedagogy cultivates the personal and relational capacities — forgiveness, reconciliation, and service — that underpin this social capital formation.

In a Nigerian context defined by ethno-religious conflict and deep inequality, these capacities are preconditions rather than luxuries of development. Akintayo et al. (2024) found that CRS-based peace education is effective in reducing intergroup hostility, particularly in Plateau State, one of Nigeria's most conflict-affected regions. This constitutes direct evidence of CRS's contribution to the civil society helix in the domain of peacebuilding. CRS also engages with Nigeria's cultural diversity in ways that the fourth helix demands: Ukpong's (2002) inculturation methodology points toward a CRS pedagogy that mediates cultural particularity with cross-cultural solidarity, engaging with Igbo, Yoruba,

and Hausa traditions in dialogue with Christian thought to produce a more contextually grounded and culturally cohesive formation.

The church's media presence through television, radio, and digital content further shapes public discourse on ethics and governance. The development of a CRS-informed media ethics would strengthen the discipline's contribution to this cultural dimension of the fourth helix. Crucially, this is the helix where the extension of this analysis to Islamic Religious Studies is most urgently needed: Nigeria's civil society and cultural fabric are jointly constituted by Muslim and Christian communities, and a development framework that attends only to CRS's contribution to this helix risks inadvertently reproducing the very fragmentation it seeks to overcome.

#### ***Helix Five: The Natural Environment — CRS and Ecological Stewardship***

The fifth helix concerns the natural environment as the ecological foundation for all human development. In Nigeria, ecological challenges are both severe and deteriorating: oil pollution in the Niger Delta has devastated ecosystems and livelihoods; deforestation in the Middle Belt and the north has accelerated desertification and fuelled resource conflicts; urban waste mismanagement threatens public health; and climate change increasingly disrupts agricultural cycles, threatening food security and rural livelihoods (Okore, 2024).

The Christian tradition provides considerable ecological resources that remain, as the documentary analysis confirms, substantially underutilised in current Nigerian CRS curricula. This underutilisation is an important finding: unlike the first four helices, where CRS both currently contributes and could contribute more, the fifth helix represents an area where the contribution is primarily potential rather than actual. The theology of creation, which holds that the natural world is God's gift entrusted to humans as stewards, provides the theological grounding for environmental ethics. Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* (2015), which connects care for the earth with care for the poor and constitutes one of the most significant contributions to environmental ethics in contemporary Catholic Social Teaching, speaks directly to Nigeria's challenges. Protestant ecological theology offers complementary resources through Reformed creation doctrine and the Wesleyan tradition's emphasis on sanctification of creation.

There are, however, grounds for cautious optimism about the fifth helix. Church-based environmental initiatives have demonstrated practical potential: the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (2019) has issued pastoral letters on environmental care, and dioceses have established ecological committees engaged in tree planting, waste management, and advocacy against oil

pollution. These projects constitute promising engagement with the fifth helix that CRS education — if reformed to incorporate ecological theology as a substantive curriculum component — can inform, amplify, and sustain.

### *Synthesis: CRS as a Quintuple Helix Integrator*

The foregoing analysis reveals a consistent pattern: CRS, when properly conceived and resourced, functions not as a single-helix contributor but as a cross-cutting integrator across all five dimensions of the Quintuple Helix. The formation of moral agents with integrity and civic commitment addresses the governance failures of the third helix. The cultivation of social capital and communal solidarity strengthens the civil society dimension of the fourth. Theological engagement with creation care speaks to the ecological imperatives of the fifth. The training of ethically minded professionals contributes to the economic productivity of the second. And the generation of critical, engaged citizens and scholars enhances the knowledge-production function of the first.

This integrative potential is not simply theoretical. The institutions of Christian education in Nigeria — mission schools, church universities, theological colleges, and parish-based formation programmes — have historically embodied this multi-helical function, even without an explicit theoretical

framework. The Quintuple Helix model provides the conceptual architecture through which these contributions can be named, mapped, evaluated, and intentionally amplified. The model is valuable precisely because it refuses the reduction of development to any single sector, insisting instead on the creative interdependence of knowledge, industry, governance, community, and the environment. Christian Religious Studies, at its best, has always understood its own vocation in similar terms — as oriented not exclusively toward individual salvation but toward the shalom of the whole community, the healing of the land, and the flourishing of all.

### **Conclusion**

This article has argued that Christian Religious Studies, when reconceived through the Quintuple Helix Innovation Model, constitutes a strategic resource for multi-sectoral societal development in Nigeria. The documentary analysis demonstrates that CRS engages with all five helices of the model, both actually and potentially. CRS as an academic discipline generates moral and civic capital in the educational helix; provides formative resources for economically ethical professionals in the economic helix; equips citizens for responsible governance in the policy helix; builds social capital and cultural cohesion in the civil society helix; and draws on a theological tradition of creation care that, if integrated into curricula, would speak

powerfully to the ecological imperatives of the fifth helix.

The study has been careful to distinguish between contributions that the evidence demonstrates CRS currently makes and contributions that a reformed CRS could make — a distinction that is not a concession to scepticism but a sign of analytical integrity. The gap between current practice and developmental potential is, in many respects, the most important finding of the analysis: it identifies precisely where reform is needed and why.

A Nigerian proverb teaches that wisdom is not the monopoly of one household. The challenges of Nigerian development are deep, multidimensional, and urgent enough to require the coordinated efforts of multiple disciplines, sectors, and traditions. It is time for Nigerian policy, scholarship, and ecclesial practice to take seriously the integrative developmental vocation of Christian Religious Studies, and to build the institutional structures through which its promise can be fully realised.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study generate the following recommendations:

For curriculum developers and educational policymakers: CRS should be repositioned from a confessional subject to a critical formation discipline whose graduate outcomes are explicitly linked to the civic, economic, and ecological

imperatives of national development. The National Policy on Education should be revised to specify the role of CRS in achieving citizenship development objectives.

For CRS educators: A pedagogical shift from rote instruction to dialogical, praxis-oriented, and contextually grounded teaching is urgently needed. Groome's shared praxis methodology and its African practical theology adaptations provide a theoretically developed and empirically grounded framework for this transition.

For church leaders and faith-based organisations: The Quintuple Helix framework provides a theoretical rationale for formalising, scaling, and entering into structured partnerships around the developmental activities that faith institutions already undertake. Policy advocacy for regulatory recognition of church-based microfinance, cooperatives, and social enterprises is specifically recommended.

For researchers: The article identifies a substantial empirical research agenda, including: longitudinal studies of CRS graduates' civic and economic behaviour; comparative assessments of CRS pedagogy across Nigerian states; action-research partnerships between university CRS departments and faith-based development organisations; and, most urgently, a parallel analysis of Islamic Religious Studies within the Quintuple Helix framework, with a view to

producing an inter-faith development analysis adequate to Nigeria's religious plurality.

For the scholarly community: Future research should deploy primary empirical methods — including interviews with CRS educators, community leaders, and policymakers, as well as direct observation of classroom practice — to ground the theoretical contributions of this study in empirical evidence.

## References

- Afonso, O., Monteiro, S., & Thompson, M. (2012). A growth model for the Quadruple Helix. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 13(5), 849–865. <https://doi.org/10.3846/16111699.2011.626438>
- Ajibola, I. (2015). Review of the book *Option for the Poor and for the Earth*, by D. Dorr. *Religious Studies Review*, 41(1), 17.
- Akintayo, O., Ifeanyi, C., & Onunka, O. (2024). Enhancing domestic peace through effective community-based ADR programs. *Global Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 2(2), 001–015. <https://doi.org/10.58175/gjarr.2024.2.2.0054>
- Anser, M. K., Nazir, M., Nassani, A. A., Al-Aiban, K. M., Zaman, K., & Haffar, M. (2025). Rethinking economic policies: Diversification and governance strategies to address

- the resource curse in mineral-rich economies. *Natural Resource Modeling*, 38(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/nrm.70011>
- Aubert, R. (2003). *Catholic social teaching: An historical perspective* (D. A. Boileau, Ed.). Marquette University Press.
- Berger, P. L. (1999). The desecularization of the world: A global overview. In P. L. Berger (Ed.), *The desecularization of the world: Resurgent religion and world politics* (pp. 1–18). Eerdmans.
- Bertheussen, B. A. (2025). [Source on resourcing of religious studies at tertiary level.] [Note: Authors to verify and complete this reference.]
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Carayannis, E. G., & Campbell, D. F. J. (2009). “Mode 3” and “Quadruple Helix”: Toward a 21st-century fractal innovation ecosystem. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 46(3/4), 201–234. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTM.2009.023374>
- Carayannis, E. G., & Campbell, D. F. J. (2010). Triple Helix, Quadruple Helix, and Quintuple Helix, and how do knowledge, innovation, and the environment relate to each other? A proposed framework for a transdisciplinary analysis of sustainable development and social ecology. *International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development*, 1(1), 41–69. <https://doi.org/10.4018/jsesd.2010010105>
- Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria. (2019). *Pastoral letter on environmental care and stewardship*. CBCN Publications.
- Curran, C. E. (2013). *Catholic social teaching and Pope Benedict XVI*. Georgetown University Press.
- Ellis, S., & Ter Haar, G. (2003). *Worlds of power: Religious thought and political practice in Africa*. Hurst and Company.
- Etzkowitz, H., & Leydesdorff, L. (1995). The Triple Helix — university–industry–government relations: A laboratory for knowledge-based economic development. *EASST Review*, 14(1), 14–19.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National Policy on Education* (6th ed.). NERDC Press.
- Francis (Pope). (2015). *Laudato si’: On care for our common home*. Vatican Press.
- Freire, P. (2017). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.; 50th anniversary ed.). Penguin

- Classics. (Original work published 1968)
- Gadamer, H. G. (1989). *Truth and method* (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.; 2nd rev. ed.). Crossroad. (Original work published 1960)
- Groome, T. H. (1980). *Christian religious education: Sharing our story and vision*. Harper & Row.
- Heckman, S. J., & Montalto, C. P. (2016). Consumer risk preferences and higher education enrollment decisions. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 52(1), 166–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12139>
- Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission. (2025). *Annual report on corruption and public integrity in Nigeria*. ICPC Publications.
- Jawoniyi, O. (2019). Rethinking the religious education curricula in Nigerian schools. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 22(2), 63–86. <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsr.v22i2.50586>
- Lawal, T., & Oluwatoyin, A. (2011). National development in Nigeria: Issues, challenges, and prospects. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*, 3(9), 237–241. <https://doi.org/10.5897/jpapr11.012>
- Leo XIII (Pope). (1891). *Rerum novarum: On the condition of labour*. Vatican Press.
- Leydesdorff, L., & Etzkowitz, H. (2001). The transformation of university–industry–government relations. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*, 5(4), 338–344.
- Magezi, V. (2023). Quest for African practical theology: Lived religion, social transformation, and public aspiration as organising centres. *Practical Theology*, 16(2), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2023.2183305>
- Mahon, K., Heikkinen, H. L. T., Huttunen, R., Boyle, T., & Sjølie, E. (2020). What is educational praxis? In K. Mahon, T. Boyle, H. L. T. Heikkinen, R. Huttunen, & E. Sjølie (Eds.), *Pedagogy, education and praxis in critical times* (pp. 15–38). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-6926-5\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-6926-5_2)
- Majola, E., Geduld, D., & Rangana, N. (2025). Critical pedagogy in context: Problematizing the application of Paulo Freire’s framework in TVET education in South Africa. *International Journal of Training Research*, advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14480220.2025.2531215>
- National Universities Commission. (2023). *Benchmark minimum academic standards for undergraduate programmes in*

- Nigerian universities: Religious Studies. NUC Publications.
- Nwachukwu, G. O. (2024). Human capital development: A driver for educational improvement in Nigeria. *British Journal of Education*, 12(6), 30–39. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bje.2013/vol12n63039>
- Okore, O. K. (2024). Ecological ethics and the involvement of the contemporary church. *The American Journal of Biblical Theology*, 25(30), 1–19.
- Oladipo, C. (2003). Piety and politics in African Christianity: The roles of the church and the democratization process. *Journal of Church and State*, 45(2), 325–348. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/45.2.325>
- Oye-Oluwafemi, F. A. (2024). Need-based evangelism as a tool for economic empowerment and poverty alleviation in Nigerian Pentecostal churches. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(5), 24–43. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04178>
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ranga, M., & Etzkowitz, H. (2013). Triple Helix systems: An analytical framework for innovation policy and practice in the knowledge society. *Industry and Higher Education*, 27(4), 237–262. <https://doi.org/10.5367/ihe.2013.0165>
- Sakupapa, T. C., & Adehanloye, O. P. (2025). Sacred contradictions: Religion, conflict, and peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 81(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10969>
- Transparency International. (2023). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2022*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>
- Ukpong, J. S. (2002). Inculturation hermeneutics: An African approach to biblical interpretation. In W. Dietrich & U. Luz (Eds.), *The Bible in a world context: An experiment in contextual hermeneutics* (pp. 17–32). Eerdmans.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- World Faiths Development Dialogue. (2018). *Faith and development in focus: Nigeria*. Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. [https://www.partner-religion-development.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Faith\\_and\\_Development\\_in\\_Focus\\_-Nigeria.pdf](https://www.partner-religion-development.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Faith_and_Development_in_Focus_-Nigeria.pdf)