

# EDUCATION AND EVANGELIZATION

- B. U. Menkiti

## EDUCATION:

Education in one form or the other is as old as man. This suggests that even in the early man's era some form of education was instituted in order to bring up the young according to the demands of the era and to perpetuate the group's culture from one generation to another.

Education is a dynamic process, never ending but ever changing (Musgrave 1981). This change which started from the era of early man has continued to date and will ever continue to take place. The implication of this change is that the curriculum, the state of the learner and those who have formed the teaching corps over the years have continued to improve.

All over the world, education is cherished as an instrument for development in both human and material resources. As a result of its influence on the progress of people of various countries, consideration is given to the enormous importance of education in various spheres of life. Its paramount role of bringing about development and change in the area of civilization, cultural and social life has spurred or motivated various societies to evolve different education systems suited to their social milieus, ecology, philosophy, and the objectives of putting the

system in place. Nigerian is not left behind in articulating her own education system to guide the education industry. The Nigerian Government placed a high premium on education, and so in 1973 constituted a body made up of knowledgeable Nigerians and headed by Chief S.O. Adebayo to produce a National Policy on Education (NPE), which is regarded as the 'teacher's bible'. Education, worldwide, is capital intensive and government spends a huge amount of money to make sure that every aspect of education is well taken care of. It is a serious venture and of vital importance for the production of fully articulated, honest, self sufficient and morally sound individuals that will be able to promote the course of others and at the same time advance their own well being.

Education is a household word even among the illiterate members of various communities. It is generally believed that any one who is educated has been lifted from ignorance, superstition and illiteracy and launched into the realm of potential greatness. Education serves as a launching pad or stepping stone into greatness, wealth, better job and other opportunities that are available to those who are educated.

**What then is education?** It is all about teaching and learning, so that the individual becomes useful to himself and to others. Aneke (2007) informs us that education is what makes human beings out of animals. According to

Ike (2010), education is an English word derived from the Latin word "educare" which means to lead. It also means culture and civilization. It helps to prepare humans for this world and for the next. To him, to educate a human being therefore is to train a human person to survive in the immanent and the transcendent. Christian education gives man this possibility. Without authentic and integral education man cannot fulfill his mission on earth. For Eze (2010) education comes from two Latin words - educare meaning "to bring up" or "to rear" and educere meaning "to bring out" "to bring forth from within" or "to bring out the potential". A very old definition of education is seen as a concept and process which has the capacity towards all round development of man in the area of social, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and moral development. (Menkiti 2008) When an individual is helped through education to achieve in the areas mentioned above, he becomes a well-rounded person with facilities to be useful to him and contribute his own quota to the development of his society.

Provision of education is done through the establishment of schools. In various countries there are public and private schools. Public ones are the government owned schools and the funding, management and recruitment of staff are their responsibilities. But the privately owned ones are the responsibilities of the persons, churches, institutions or groups of persons who established them. Any normal human being can be educated irrespective of

age, gender, creed and socio-economic background. Education is an inalienable right of anybody who is capable of receiving it. Nobody, not even the government, can deprive any person of education. Parents have the right (also an inalienable one) to make a choice of schools for their children and to be involved in monitoring what the children are taught and other activities in schools. The Catholic Church (and perhaps other churches) has been monitoring events in various schools especially in the ones belonging to them. In this regard, what is taught, how it is taught, when and where it is taught is paramount to the church. The principal reason for acting as the watch dog is to make sure that what is taught leads to the development of well informed, useful, active and morally developed adults. It is education therefore that will help them as God's children to love, worship and adore Him and to love others. It should also help them find jobs which will help them to fulfill their material (social) and moral roles.

### **Evangelization:**

Evangelization takes its root from a Greek verb 'evangelizo', which means to "convey good news" – any good news ranging from the gift of a new born baby, wedding party, promotions, winning of American lottery to an academic success and victory in a sporting event. Evangelizo was first used by Paul to mean, announcing the Good New of Jesus and in this sense to describe the

whole activity of a Christian disciple (Gbuji, 2001). Announcing, proclaiming, teaching, preaching and witnessing are other concepts which are used in the wider sense, as St. Paul did. At some point the word evangelization was rarely made use of except to announce the death and resurrection of Christ to people who have never heard about Him at all. Those who have heard are evangelized through catechesis. Recently, the word evangelization came into focus again mainly from the Protestant circle, after going into disuse for a long time. Every religion, just like Christianity, employs evangelization to proclaim God to its faithful in its own special way. These religions include Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, African traditional religion, Judaism and Islam. Evangelization is not therefore restricted to Christianity alone. This paper concentrates on Christianity, the one the author is familiar with and has experienced and has continued to experience.

Evangelization is one of the key concepts of Christian life because we are called by God to reform our lives and to help build up the Church, which is the body of Christ. The word has three parts; EV-ANGELIZ-ATION. The first two letters "ev" are from the Greek word, 'good' and signify the good news of salvation or the Gospel. The middle part "angeliz" means the task of being a messenger, an announcer, a proclaimer, (recognize the word 'angle in the word). The suffix "ation" means an action, a state of being, a quality or result in a word, a

process whereby something happens with definite results (Fonck, 1995). Evangelization therefore entails proclaiming, announcing, preaching, the Good News of Christ and there is a definite result, (a movement from old self to a new person). Through this word we share also Christ's presence and power of salvation with one another by means of our words and actions. At the root of evangelization is love/charity.

Different people perceive evangelization from the angle from which they are touched spiritually. To Mother Theresa of Calcutta, it is to have Jesus in the heart and carry Him to the hearts of others. She lived this out in her life and could not have been better in doing just that (Forrest, 2001). Mary Slessor evangelized in words and, through her preaching and action reached out to other people and caused them to change and to become Christians. John Paul II was a great evangelizer, and he did so in words and actions (through love) and he caused others to do like wise. Other great evangelizers include John the Baptist, Mary the Mother of Jesus, Francis of Assisi.

Jesus is the first and foremost evangelizer who has ever walked the face of the earth; an evangelizer par excellence. His mission was to announce the Good News of salvation and proclaim that the Kingdom of God is close at hand and that people should repent and believe the gospel. He preached and worked miracles. He knew

that evangelization will be on going and must continue even after His ascension. He therefore chose and prepared/trained twelve men (apostles) and commissioned them to continue the work he started. A few of the commissioning mandates are seen in Mt. 10: 7-8, 28:16-20; MK 16:15-18; Luke 5:10, 9:1-2; Jam 2:14. At a time in their training programme, Jesus sent them on what I choose to call "teaching practice" (see Mt. 10:3ff; Luke. 10: 43) to help them gain practical experience of the injunction given to them by Christ. It was a foretaste of how they would carry out their work of evangelization after Christ's Ascension. The "teaching practice" experience motivated them towards more successful achievement of Christ's mandate to them, which was perfected by the action of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Evangelization is carried <sup>on</sup> in two different but coordinated ways. These are: (a) through witnessing and (b) through apostolate or ministry. To evangelize through witness is to live such a Christian life that is committed to Christ and the Church with authentic credibility, conviction and zeal that other people will notice and use it as a parameter for examining their own relationship with Christ. The result of this is to make conscious effort to accept and acclaim the Gospel. The root of witnessing lies in the power of life of good example worthy of emulation by others. It is done through communicating the Good News which is followed by

actions (works of mercy, love and charity) in various situations - in our homes, schools, offices, neighborhood, market places, on the streets and in parishes etc. Evangelizing through apostolate involves a conscious decision and effort to participate in the saving mission of Jesus Christ. It must be recognized by the Body of Christ, the church. An apostolate can be (a) delegate which is the responsibility of the clergy but can by permission be conferred on a lay person, e.g. a lay leader (b) a designated one who is along with or on behalf of or mandated by the authority, to perform a certain parish function, e.g. parish pastoral councilor, or Catechist (c) a discerned apostolate is the one freely chosen by an individual or a group to carry out in its name the work of mercy, love, charity in order to accomplish the work of the church through the promptings and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The work of evangelization has been carried out through the ages by men and women termed agents of evangelization. Every baptized and confirmed person is called to evangelize because all are called to holiness. The difference lies in the fact that people are evangelizing according to their state and the circumstances of their lives. These include - the lay faithful and the family - a privileged school for education and evangelization of both old and young, (Vatican II, No 1657). As baptized Christians the members exercise the priesthood of a life of prayer, fasting and reception of



sacraments. The youth, the future of the church should be protected from all erroneous teaching and then trained to overcome obstacles like hunger, drugs, cultism, and illiteracy. Pastoral care of the youth is essential so that through it they can be formed to become veritable instruments of evangelization. Priests, religious and deacons carry on evangelization through formation, training and preaching in conjunction with other agents enumerated above. They should live by example in action and word so that people will imitate their way of life. All the agents work through the structure of evangelization - parishes, pious associations, schools at all levels and maternal means which, entail caring for and providing for the needs of the Christian community especially, the financial means. The Christian community should support the work of evangelization and any other needs of the community, both financially and morally.

Evangelization and education dovetail into each other. One can be employed to achieve the other. Two of them therefore have one common denominator. The common denominator is found in the fact that it involves teaching and learning. The roles, functions and other aspects involved in education and evangelization overlap. For instance, they have the same clients - the learners. For the two to function well, there must be the learners, those to be taught or evangelized, a teacher or evangelizer, and facilities to be used. For Ike (2010), the history of the Christian message and witness universally

or locally is the history of the juxtaposition of education as development, as evangelization, as justice and peace as an integral life style.

In delivering education for instance, the teacher helps the learner towards accomplishing the desired objectives, just as evangelization does. Both provide learners a live opportunity to learn. This can be done by bringing learners in contact with books and face to face with the teacher. With the explosion of information technology, and other means of learning are developed in the form of graphic materials, bound recordings, visual and audio-visual aids, projectors and programmed aids of various types, magazines, tracts, news papers, flyers, drama and so on. These are employed when need arises. Both also evaluate learning and all the elements involved in that learning. For both of them, evaluation is done to ascertain how far learning is understood and for possible promotion to the next level or assigning duties to perform as a result of the level of performance. (Menkiti and Chidobi 2008).

Both of them

- touch on religious and moral instruction and issues
- have the same clients - human beings, irrespective of age, creed, socio-economic background, gender, provided the individual is normal and can be conveniently educated or evangelized.

- employ teaching as a medium of imparting knowledge
- have the same roles to play
- can use all the varieties of methods of teaching to carry out evangelization or accomplish the objectives of education
- employ instructional materials of all sorts, as has been stated before.
- lead to spiritual, moral and social uplift, resulting in the desire to do good, to avoid evil, and seek more and deeper knowledge of both, which may lead to conversion, increase of faith and love of God and neighbour.
- give parents and guardians the right to make a choice of where their children should be educated or evangelized.
- have a course of study each, (curriculum) broken down into a scheme of work, and have places where they are taught or preached.
- have need to employ quality personnel - well trained and dedicated ones - teachers/priests and lay members in various churches to work in both areas so as to bear fruits in people.

- aim at producing articulate, dedicated, God fearing persons that can work toward nation building and national development.

- are meant to open the eyes of the recipients to their civic duties, rights, obligations and privileges and how to go about demanding or carrying them out.

Since anything can be abused, it is of vital importance that supervisory bodies are set up to monitor how work goes on in the two areas - that of standards expected to be achieved and maintained and that of contents to be delivered and the general attitude of both the learners and those who cause them to learn. There is need, indeed an urgent one, to constitute these bodies so that the fruits of evangelization and education will lead the recipients to a final and ultimate destiny here in this world and in the world to come.



**Education**

# Priesthood

Ten Years of Priesthood:  
Very Rev. Fr. Prof.  
Christian Anieke, PhD  
(Honorary Citizen of  
Mitterkirchen, Austria)

Editors:  
Chiedozie Alex Ogbornia  
Mary-Ellen Chijioke