

THEMES AND IMPACTS OF TEN YEARS SYNOD OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE ON THE NIGER, 2011-2021

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Abstract

Synod is an ecclesiastical activity that is biblical affirmed. Synod is an integral aspect of the Church liturgical activity. It began in the early Church with Jerusalem Council as the first of its kind. The decisions made at the council were crucial to the spread of the gospel to the Gentile world, in compliance to the Great Commission as mandated by Christ. This study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection to conduct the study. Using phenomenological approach to data interpretation, the study discovered that synod is not only evangelical but development oriented hence, must not be toiled with. This is why Diocese on the Niger Anglican Communion gives credence to proper hosting of Synod programmes since its creation. In these Synod programmes issues regarding both ecclesiastical and social matters are discussed. The study further pinpointed the achievements made as a result of synod programmes held under the Episcopal leadership of Owen Nwokolo between 2011 and 2021. These include; religious, medical, education, human capital development, infrastructural development, medical, agriculture and social impacts. The study, therefore recommended that other diocese within the Anglican Church in Nigeria can adopt the model used by Bishop Owen Nwokolo on the Niger so as to achieve a simultaneous socio-economic and religious development across the country.

Introduction

The Church is the body of Christ and Christ is the head of the Church. The Church could be said to have begun at an encounter recorded in Mathew 16:18-19. “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. It is interesting to note that, since the inception of the Church, she had held different councils or synods at various times, starting with the Jerusalem Council. The occasion that gave rise to Jerusalem Council was that, as the Gentiles accepted the gospel; some Christian Jews began to advise the newly converted Gentiles to keep the Mosaic laws as a sure way to be saved (Acts 15:1). This teaching was not pleasing to some Apostles like Paul hence, the Jerusalem Council was held in order to resolve this issue.

From the 4th century A.D, when Emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as a legal religion in the Roman Empire, the Church flourished and dominated greater parts of Europe.

Mohammed, Yusoff, Ebrahimi and Azlizan (2014) observe that a system of religious institutions gradually developed including Bishops' (Episcopal), catechetical and pastoral monks' schools as well as boarding schools at monasteries. During this period, Episcopal schools were established for exegetes (interpreters of the Holy Scriptures). However, some scholars and other religious leaders began to postulate and propagate certain religious ideas which are contrary to the Christian faith. These include: Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism among others. Councils or synods were held to either approve or disapprove such religious teachings. It was the decisions taken from some of the Church councils or synods that cancelled certain teachings considered as false to Christian faith while those upheld were approved and were authorized to be among the beliefs and teachings of the Church.

In this 21st century, synods continue to hold sway and seem to be the most influential activity in the calendar of Anglican Communion. The Synodical trend of Diocese on the Niger, Anglican Communion needs to be understood in the light of contemporary scholarship. The Synodical experience and choice of Synod themes in the Diocese on the Niger underscores the emphasis on evangelism in the mission of the Church. According to Egwuonwu and Mgbemena (2018), in all ramifications, synod sessions provided the Diocese with fertile opportunities to evangelize, reflect on its mission focuses and strategies, engage in critical self-appraisal, and address issues in the light of its vision and mission. There is no gain saying the fact that a well-informed synod delegate would be well equipped for evangelism. The synods of Diocese on the Niger, Anglican Communion under the Episcopal leadership of Bishop Owen Nwokolo have witnessed some landmark achievements unlike his predecessors. This is because, after each synod meeting, Diocese on the Niger implements and executes decisions and policies taken at the synod. Thus, this brings positive changes not only to the Church but to the society at large. In agreement to this viewpoint, Diara, Okoli and Nche (2014) affirm that the Anglican Diocesan system did not only constitute a religious factor in the Igbo society but also a factor of human and social development. In affirmation to this statement, Ehigie (2020) said that, according to the report of World Council of Churches in 2016, the Church of Nigeria is the second largest province in the Anglican Communion, after the Church of England; as measured by baptized membership (but not by attendance). This is as a result of the positive impacts of synods held in various dioceses inclusive of Diocese on the Niger.

Brief Survey of the Anglican Diocese on the Niger

The Church Missionary Society was the missionary arm of Anglican Church of England. It was founded by evangelical Anglicans in 1799. It was the quest to fulfill the Great Commission that brought Church Missionary Society to Igbo-land. However, in the opinion of Okpalike and Nwadiakor (2015), the British Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) claimed

to have chosen Africa as one of the spheres of its apostolic work, and the Negro race in particular, out of commiseration for wrongs which the slave trade had wrought upon them. For the missionaries be successful in this missionary enterprise, Spirited members of this evangelism team held various synods to formulate plans which when implemented and executed, will yield positive results. This led to the formulation of the Bible and the Plough missionary policy spearheaded by Thomas Fowell Buxton. He was of the view that the Bible and the Plough missionary policy would serve the course of civilization and Christianity. Having designed a master plan, the Anglican missionaries joined the British expeditionary team to Igbo territory. Igwe (1977) has it that as Church Missionary Society arrived at Onitsha on Sunday 26th July 1857, and was warmly received by the King, Obi Akazua and his chiefs. A piece of land was immediately allocated for the proposed mission station. This generous attitude by Onitsha people was an indication that they will receive the gospel wholeheartedly. Within one year of the arrival of the Anglican missionaries, they received deputations from Obosi, Ogidi, Nri and other towns for churches to be established in their area. During the period, the missionaries responded to as many of such requests. There was so much demand for the missionary that in 1862, a team of 27 African Evangelists were sent down to Onitsha to reinforce the volunteers left behind five years earlier. Crampton (1976) documents that the Church Missionary Society spread from Bonny to Brass in 1868 and into Kalabari in 1874. Using Bonny, Opobo and Kalabari converts who were mainly merchants, the mission began to spread to the interior through the inland waterways. These converts reached Azumiri in 1878 from where it spread to Akwete, Nkpunkpu Ebule, Aba, Ohuru waterside, and Abayi waterside before 1890. Igwe (1977) reports that by 1883, Church Missionary Society had opened churches at Obosi, Abo, Alenso and Asaba by 1895.

Thus, the Church needed training centers where converts could be trained to become evangelists, church teachers, catechists and pastors. The idea was to get Igbo people who could help spread the gospel among their kinsmen. Awka town then became the target for the setting up of a training college. Nmah (2016) asserts that Church Missionary Society came to Awka in 1899 and 1903. Kanu (2012) narrates that the soon, by the 11th of January, 1904, a mud structure was standing at the site which signaled the birth of Awka training college. Thus, C.M.S started her first school at Awka in the early 1900s. The college thus became the powerhouse for the evangelization of the entire Igbo-land and beyond. The church continued to spread as the Holy Spirit empowered the missionaries and the gospel was penetrating Igbo territory.

Nwosu (2011) enunciates that Church Missionary Society came to Owerri District Area in 1905. The second group of missionaries went to Ngwo in 1917 under the leadership of Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu, a native of Obosi. From Ngwo, Ejindu and his team took the gospel to the coal miner and traders in Ogbete Enugu. From there the gospel spread to other parts of Enugu. While in Ebonyi State, Anglican Church was established in 1959 at Hosanna Hill Hall with only 601 members who were entirely non-indigenes. Today, a handful number of residents of the state are Anglicans.

The Journey to Episcopacy

The Journey to Episcopacy of the present Diocese of the Niger began with the establishing of a permanent mission in Onitsha by Church Missionary Society in 1857. As a result of the astronomic growth of the Church, there was need for an Episcopacy to be instituted for the Niger mission. At first the parent committee of the Church Missionary Society envisaged a development in which Europeans and Africans should work together. But, as already indicated, the unfavorable climate condition of Igbo geographical territory thwarted this plan. According to Dike (1957), in 1859, for instance, five European missionaries were sent out to the West Coast, but of the two destined for the Niger one died at Lagos and the other was invalided home. It seemed hopeless to expect Europeans to work on the Niger for any length of time, and yet if the mission was to expand there must be a Bishop to confirm and ordain.

It was Henry Venn, Church Missionary Society Secretary at the time, who envisaged an African Mission under an African Bishop. Samuel Ajayi Crowther who was ordained for the Niger mission on Trinity Sunday in 1843, was the obvious choice. He was already on the Niger, and was the first indigenous clergyman ordained in the West African Mission field. When the news that he might be consecrated Bishop reached Crowther, he declared himself unfit for the post. But the Church Missionary Society knew better and he was duly consecrated Bishop on 29th June 1864, in Canterbury Cathedral. Dike (1957) wrote thus; in order to understand what happened subsequently it must be pointed out that Crowther was not consecrated Bishop of the Niger Mission. He was consecrated Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa beyond the Queen's Dominions. That is to say, his jurisdiction extended over all West Africa with the exception of Bathurst, Freetown, Cape Coast and Lagos.

Creation of Diocese on the Niger

Before Crowther's death, he built the Niger Mission on sound and solid foundations that after his death the mission survived and continued. Adiele (1996) narrates that the two missions, the Yoruba and the Niger were merged and given the name Diocese of the Western Equatorial Africa. Bishops J.S. Hill (1891-1894) and H. Tugwell (1894-1915) were the Diocesan Bishops successively. When the Diocese of Lagos was later carved out of the Diocese in 1919, the Diocese was renamed Diocese on the Niger. With time, Diocese on the Niger which is the first Diocese of Anglican Church in Igbo land, had Cathedral, Bishops court, Diocesan Secretariat and other infrastructural features were sited.

This is the chronological order of Bishops of Diocese on the Niger, Bertram Lasbrey (1922-1945), Cecil Patterson (1945-1969), Assistant Bishop Denis Hall (1947-1957), Assistant Bishop Samuel Nkemena (1955-1961), Lucius Maduka Uzodike (1969-1975), Jonathan Onyemelukwe (Archbishop of Province 2 and later Dean of the Church of Nigeria) (1975-

2000), Ken Sandy Edozie Okeke (2000-2010), Owen Chidozie Nwokolo (2011-present). Much has been done by the current Episcopacy not only in consolidating what his predecessors have done in the past but in seeing to the spiritual revival of members and in the rendering of effective social services to the society. This is by organizing synods through which important decisions and policies are made, dutifully implemented and executed with its attendant positive impacts. Much about the synod programmes held under the Episcopal leadership of Owen Chidozie Nwokolo will be extensively discussed in the next chapter.

Themes of Synods in Diocese on the Niger, 2011-2021

The 2012 Synod was titled: *The Harvest is Plentiful but the Labourers are few*. The venue was at Saint James Church Awada with Rt Rev Micheal O. Fape (Bishop of Remo Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 31st May through Sun 3rd June, 2012. The Synod observed that there are many people who are willing and prepared to receive instruction but they are very few who able to instruct these people in the way of righteousness and truth. It emphasized that Jesus wishes for labourers not gentlemen who are either idle or slaves to pleasure and sin but those who are ready for work. Nwokolo (2012) states that, it pains God each time he looks at the vast majority of men and sees them perishing or walking in paths of destruction. He laments repeatedly saying they are like sheep without a shepherd. God's big challenge is not the sheep but shepherds. There is a great deal of work to be done. God is looking for good and true shepherds who will lay down their lives for the sheep, feed the flock with the appropriate word of God. Neither a hireling nor wolves in sheep clothing. In this 21st century, Nwokolo (2012) is of the opinion that missionary work has become employment to those who are looking for food; it has become a business to those who want to excel in other areas. Hence, it seems that the aim of missionary activity is declining. To this end, the Synod points to the need for genuine shepherds who will preach and teach the undiluted word of God and portray it in godly characters. Despite the wave of worldliness that has eaten deep into the lives of some who claim that they are shepherds but are into the missionary enterprise for material and monetary purposes; true shepherds or laborers should uphold godly standard in shepherding the flock.

Equipping the Saints was the theme coined out for the 2013 Synod programme held at Saint Thomas Anglican Church Oraukwu with Rt Rev David A. Bello (Bishop of Otupko Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 30th May through Sun 2nd June, 2013. It examined the Church as the body of Christ. As a body, there are many members (believers) that is both the clergy and the laity. All must join hands to make the body to grow. As a result of this, believers are equipped with diverse gifts mainly for the exhortation of the body of Christ and edification of the believers. The gifts members have received from God is not for personal gain but for the general good of the Church. The gifts are not to be neglected (1

Tim. 4:14). However, according to Nwokolo (2013), it is appalling that some gifted members are not involved in the Church; they use their gift, time, energy, resources, tithe outside the Church. The God given endowments given for the edification of the saints are diverted or hoarded. The saints that are meant to edify are left stunted or malnourished hence, many members of the Church are not spiritually mature as expected and the society is not transformed as we prayed. Hence, the Synod encouraged members to take immediate steps to use their gifts in the Church. The work of the ministry is the enterprise of each member of the body of Christ not the exclusive charge of selected persons. The task of the gifted person is to cultivate the individual and corporate ministries of those he/she serves. A progress in maturity, stability and integrity taking place in every individual member's experience results in the growth of the body of Christ and edification of the saints.

In 2014, the Synod deliberated on *Occupy Till I Come*. It was anchored at Saint Monica Church, Woliwo with Rt Rev Ezekiel B. Dahunsi (Bishop of Idoani Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 12th June through Sun 15th June, 2014. For Christians to occupy till our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, they must continue to add value and meaning in the lives of members of the society. Thus, they are called to be light of the world and salt of the earth. Nwokolo (2014) explains that salt means preserve thus, a Christian must preserve himself/herself first in purity and preserves everything he/she touches in purity. This means that Christians should raise the banner of morality in the world and not allow their own morality to be lowered. This is because the Church is the moral conscience of the society hence; Christians should exemplify moral living in their daily activities. Furthermore, Christians are light of the world. It means that they are to shine by living a Christ-like life. They are not to criticize or condemn others but preach to them as well portray godly characters to distinguish them from unbelievers. Christians are to live godly that unbelievers can even attest that they are truly followers of Christ not by regularly going to Church. They should do this through living a life of love, peace humility among others. Christians as light of the world should show us the way which others should follow and not otherwise. Another way to occupy till our Lord Jesus Christ comes is by effective studying, preaching, teaching and witnessing Christ. The greatest witness a Christian has in the midst of opposition and persecution as a result of his/her faith is the word of God. Effective preaching transforms the mind and changes one's perception to conform to the word of Christ. Lack of effective preaching and teaching breeds half-baked and docile Christians who cannot attempt great things for God. Hence, the word of God should not depart from a believer's mouth, he/she must study it always, preach, teach as well keep to it as a sure way to occupy till our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

2015 Synod birthed the topic *Grow unto Maturity*. The location was Saint Paul's Church Ogidi. Christ has brought salvation to mankind with Rt Rev Micheal O. Fape (Bishop of Remo Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 31st May through

Sun 3rd June, 2012 with Rt Rev Jolly E. Onyekpen (Bishop of Akoko-Edo Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 18th June through Sun 21st June, 2015. The salvation brings a new life and restores the broken relationship between man and God. Having accepted this salvation, Christians are called upon to grow onto maturity. For this to happen, Christians must lay aside every weight and sin that easily beset them and run with perseverance the race that is set before them looking unto Christ. They are to forsake their ungodly behaviors, friends and avoid unnecessary argument and debates concerning the things of God (1 Tim.4:7). They should not study the bible for the sake of argument. Nwokolo (2015) warns that Christians must not dwell on irrelevant debates and controversies that could result to quarrels as such things cannot profit the body of Christ. McDonald (1995) gave instances of such ancient debate, whether to use fermented wine or grape juice, leavened or unleavened bread, a common cup or individual cups during Holy Communion among others. Also, Christians should avoid worldliness as it results to stunted spiritual growth hence, a believer cannot grow onto maturity. Worldliness also distracts believers from rendering effective services to God. To overcome worldliness, Christians should seek the kingdom of God first.

Whatever He says to you, do it (John 2: 5) was adopted as the 2016 synod theme. It calls for Christians to be obedient and humble to God's given mandate. the synod had Rt Rev Duke Akamisoko (Bishop of Kubuwa Diocese) who was the Guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 17th June through Sun 21st June, 2016.

You are a Chosen Generation was adopted as the 2017 Synodical theme. It calls to mind that Christ has chosen believers as his own people. The challenge of being a chosen generation is demanding. It covers all areas of life and ministry. Nwokolo (2017) explains that the one who is chosen by God must realize his position in the Lord and resolve to take up the various responsibilities accruing to the position. He must function as an ambassador of Christ in the world. He stands as a mediator bringing the message of reconciliation to the people. The only qualification to be among the chosen generation is by accepting Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, keep on studying, hearing and doing the word of God.

The 2018 Synod event ushered in this topic *Take You're Cross Daily and Follow me*. It was hosted at Saint Paul's Anglican Church Alor with Most Rev Edmund Akanya (Bishop of Kebbi Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 15th June through Sun 18th June, 2017. According to Nwokolo (2018), the cross is expressive of reproaches and trails which the followers of Christ must endure (Matt. 16:24). Just as 2017 synod declared *You are a Chosen Generation*, this does not mean that a person chosen by God does not exclude the person from trail and temptations hence, there is need for the person to take his/her cross and follow Christ. The cross implies that Christians must not stay away from Christ even if things are not going well. Furthermore, the cross is a symbol of the

victory over sin, world and devil. Nwokolo (2018) states that to bear the cross is taking a stand for Christ against hostile environment. Christianity as a religion evolved from a hostile environment first from the Jews who killed Christ under Pontius Pilate to the oppression of Herod. Then more severe persecution against the early Church started with Emperor Nero until the time of Emperor Constantine. Thus, from inception Christianity is all about sacrificing and paying a price to achieve a tangible goal, most times for the common good of the society. Christ paid the price (death) to reconcile mankind with God. The early Church sacrificed their time, resources, energy and life to see that the gospel spread throughout the Greco-Roman world. The European and American Christian missionaries despite challenges and oppositions did not relent in bringing the gospel message to Nigeria. Hence, present day Christians have to take their crosses daily and follow Christ. This calls for self-denial, perseverance and the need to embrace God's purposes for their lives whether it is convenient or not. Christians must make sacrifices to ensure the rule of Christ in the society no matter the cost.

In 2019, the Synod title was *Stand Firm in the Faith*. The programme took place at Ascension Anglican Church Isiafor with Most Rev Emmanuel S. Egbunu (Bishop of Lokoja Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 14th June through Sun 17th June, 2019. Today's world is filled with immorality and if care is not taken many Christians may fall away from the faith. Hence, the Synod theme is imperative and calls for present day Christians to stand firm in the faith. Christians should stand against corruption, social injustice, homosexuality, love of money in the guise of prosperity gospel and materialism among others. The word of God should be their firm stand especially now where various false teachings are being spread by self-acclaimed ministers through radio, television and social media. Studying, hearing and doing the word of God is a sure way to *stand firm in the faith*.

The 2020 Synod topic was *Walk in the Spirit*. The Synod was held in Saint Simon's Nnobi with Rt Rev Stephen Ayodeji A. Fagbemi (Bishop of Owo Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 26th June through Sun 29th June, 2020. It was identified that the flesh is a strong enemy to the quest to live a victorious Christian life. The solution lies on the Christian deliberate action to crucify the flesh and make no provision for it. Christians are to forsake the old sinful ways and turn to a new life in Christ. Christians are to surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit that is a sure way to walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit directs Christians to do things that are pleasing to God and help Christians not to fulfill the works of the flesh. Christians should focus their minds on what the Spirit desires and disassociate their minds from earthly desires which suite the flesh. Materialism should not be allowed to rule them else they cannot walk in the Spirit. Christians should regularly study, hear and be ever ready to do the word. Christians should constantly ask for the Holy

Spirit to help them to conform to the word of God. Finally walking in the spirit does not mean that Christians will not go about their decent businesses however; they should do their businesses without losing sight of Christian standard. They should show integrity, honesty, transparency and accountability in business.

In 2021, the Synod theme was *Be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers Only*. It was hosted by Ezjowelle and Abacha Anglican communities in this St John's Church, Ezjowelle with Rt Rev Dr. Stephen Akobe (Bishop of Kabba Diocese) who was the guest speaker. The synod held from Thurs 10th June through Sun 13th June, 2021. According to Nwokolo (2021), the command, gbe doers of the word is clear. Do not merely listen to the word, do what it says. Christians must become or keep on becoming doers of the word and not just hearers. Christians must systematically and continually practice what the word says, as if this is their regular business. It is not sufficient to hear the word of God; we must obey it. There must be a deep desire to hear God speaking to us and a whole-hearted readiness to heed to whatever he says. We must translate the Bible into action. Following or obeying the word of God is a major hallmark of those who belong to God (John: 10:27). This Biblical verse simply indicates that those who hear and do the word are true children of God in fact brothers and sisters of Christ (Matt.12:50). While those who hear and refuse to do the word are not God's children. Rather, they are just deceiving themselves. James begins to explain that hearing without doing is a self-deception. Nwokolo (2021) asserts that merely listening to the word without corresponding actions amounts to deceit of one's soul. If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance to Church or religious gathering and fellowships, without doing what God requires, he has done all that is required of him. He is laboring under a most gross self-deception. It is important to note that not everyone who says Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of God. Those who hear and do not obey (do) the word of God, do not love God (John 14:15) and without love, one cannot enter into God's kingdom because God is love. So, the sure ticket to heaven is obedience to the word of God. The Synod calls on true Christians to be doing and practicing the word of God daily, to distinguish them from mere Church goers.

Impacts of Episcopal Synods on the Diocese on the Niger, 2011-2021

Synod programme is very crucial not only to the body of Christ but to the entire society. This is because it is not only a tool of evangelism but also development oriented. Egwuonwu and Mgbemena (2018) opine that Synod is taken to mean policy making meeting. Here, certain policies and decisions are made for the common good of the members of the society. This is because, after each Synod meeting, Diocese on the Niger implements and executes decisions and policies taken at the Synod. Thus, this brings positive change not only to the Church but to the society at large. This portrays that Synod programmes cut across Church activities to seeking the common good of man. The Church uses Synod to attract some

developments in the society. To this end, the impacts of Synod programmes in Diocese on the Niger will be enumerated in this section.

Religious Impact

Diocese on the Niger, through her Synod programmes, prepares the minds of her clergymen and members to get ready through prayer and devotion, to move into the nooks and crannies and evangelize as well enjoin the faithful to be steadfast in their faith in season and out of season. For the clergymen to be completely equipped for every good work (evangelism) there is need for them to undergo proper ministerial training. Hence, the Diocese organises Clergy Continuing Education Training School. The training makes use of Logos Bible Software among other theological related instructional materials. Logos Bible Software is an extraordinary tool for ministerial training of clergymen and bible students. During the training period, the Diocese invites seasoned clergymen, theologians and Bible software specialists such as Morris Proctor (USA), to direct the training. The training is quite beneficial. With this preparation, the clergymen are sent-forth in compliance to the Great Commission. It is important to note that the call to fulfill the Great Commission is not only for ordained people. Hence, all hands must be on deck and Christians should neither wax cold nor grow weary or fainthearted in evangelism/missionary endeavor.

Furthermore, the Diocese carries out foreign mission just like Church Missionary Society. The Diocese has a foreign mission JDON -Togo Mission. The mission in Togo is growing. The missionary and his team are working very hard to spread the gospel from Togo to other African countries. Diocese on the Niger is also not relenting in her efforts to see that the mission continues to grow. Nwokolo (2013) documents that the Diocese spends over seven million naira annually in supporting the mission. This comes directly from the Diocesan Budget. Individuals and Parishes from the Diocese also support the mission as they are led. In 2012, for instance, St John's Parish Fegge, Onitsha, was led by their Vicar, Ven Dr. Emma J Ejianya to visit the mission. They donated the following; ten passenger seat Toyota bus with a carrier, 4 Pieces of two in one speakers, one, tiger' generator, two horn speakers, one mixer amp, one power amp, three flood lights, four long poles, assorted wires, assorted local musical instruments, assorted medicines, roofing sheets. Rev. Oliver Ofoegbu a missionary has continued to work hard in sourcing for funds to meet the increasing demands in of funding the mission. Presently, the mission acquired plots of land in six different places in Togo. The plots of land were given voluntarily by the host communities. An anonymous Nigerian is building a Church in Bassar Zone of Togo, and another who also chose to be anonymous has given money for another church building in Togo.

Medical Impact

Diocese on the Niger has not relented in this aspect. During her Synod programmes, an opportunity is created for health seminar to take place. Here, health officers from relevant health agencies are invited to enlighten Synod delegates on ways to improve healthy living. The delegates now take the information back to their respective parishes. Apart from this, Bishop Owen Nwokolo and other principal officers of the Diocese, draft our plans on how to promote good health in the society. This has led to establishment of health care centers like Iyienu School of Nursing, Iyienu School of Midwifery and Iyienu School of Medical Laboratory Technicians among others. The Diocese carries out medical outreach programmes aimed at rendering health care services to the citizenry. Although Iyienu Mission Hospital has been built before the Episcopal leadership of Owen Nwokolo, it is worthy to note that, under his Episcopal administration, the hospital has received a new look. Anagwu (2018) reports that:

Iyienu Mission Hospital has been equipped and upgraded with modern medical facilities and equipment to meet the health challenge of the society, and has over 375 staffs comprising of Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Laboratory Scientist, other professional and non- professional workers. The hospital has Diagnosis and Dialysis Centre in order to promote health of the people (p. 99).

Improved Facilities at Iyi-Enu Hospital

Installation of new computerized medical laboratory equipment, namely: Automated Electrolyte Analyzer, Automated Semen Analyzer, a distiller, four oxygen concentrators, 32 Slide CT Scan Machine, Classic CR Digitizer, Direct Online UPS, digital X-ray machine, Dialysis and Ultra Sound machines. Additionally, the Hospital has been upgraded to a comprehensive site for the management of HIV/AIDS cases. This is in collaboration with Family Health International (FHI) -a Non-governmental Organization under its Sidhas project. This means that the hospital can now diagnose and manage HIV/AIDS cases. Sequel to this upgrade, Family Health International has so far provided anti-retroviral drugs and some medical laboratory equipment to the hospital, namely; CD4 Count Machine V, Chemistry Analyzer, and Hematology Analyzer. There is theatre equipment and fully fitted ambulances.

In order to make these things work, the management has recently recruited 17 newly trained nurses, two new medical laboratory scientists, and a medical officer to aid our service delivery. The management has also engaged the services of four new consultants in different fields of medicine. The Diocese through Iyienu hospital has established a Community Based Social Health Insurance Scheme (CBSHIS). These are done to improve on the quality-of-service delivery. Furthermore, the Diocese offers scholarship to students who are interested in studying medical related courses in various institutions in Nigeria. This is to encourage youths to join the medical field and to cushion the effects of brain drain in the health sector.

All these could have not been achieved if not for the plans orchestrated during Synod sessions and afterwards proper implementation.

Educational Impact

Diocese on the Niger through decisions made in Synod programmes has been proactive in contributing immensely to the growth and enhancement of formal education and promotion of literacy in Nigeria. According to Anambra Broadcasting Station (2023), the Diocese has been in the vanguard of education in Nigeria and will continue to set the pace that will satisfy the people. During the Synod sessions under study, educational reports of the Diocese is given due attention and plans are spelt out on how to continue to promote standard and quality education in the society; Nwokolo (2018) reports that the Diocese had built over 171 primary schools. Normal school activities are carried out diligently, effectively and efficiently. The primary school teachers are working hard in teaching in performing their duties and other assignments.

Nwokolo (2018) documents that the Diocese has established over 59 secondary schools some of them include: Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Saint Monica's College, Ogbunike, Anglican Girls' Secondary School, Onitsha, Patterson Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha, Oraukwu Technical and Grammar School, Girls' Secondary School, Ogidi, Girls' Secondary School, Oba, Progressive Secondary School, Umunya, Girls' Secondary School, Alor amongst others. There is determination to uphold the high academic performance of the students in both internal and external examination. Schools under the administration of the Diocese have maintained steady excellent positions in competitions winning laurels in sports, debate, and quiz competition in internal and external competitions.

According to Nwokolo (2018), it is on record that:

In 2017, the secondary schools recorded success in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), University of Cambridge International examination (UCIE) ordinary level. Names of best students in the above exams are: Ezeador Chukwudube, Madu Nchedo, H., Ezeokoli, C. Kamso, Achufu Ejikeme, C., Okosa Osorachukwu, J., Oguabia, Chimdindu, Nakamigbo Favour, E., Nwosu Emeka, E. and Chuwkwuma Stanley, C., Okonkwo Emmanuel, S., Ibeneme Chukwuebuka, Ofomah Ikechukwu and many others. Two best students namely Umenweke Chisom and Nwankwo Chizitere travelled to Taiwan in September 2017 for internal Iron-man Creativity Contest (HCC) at Taipei University. They came back successful (pp.776-777).

Okoro (2018) traces that the introduction of vocation education in Eastern Nigeria must be credited to the Christian missionaries as part of their evangelization and self-support

programme. This started way back in the 1840s. Egwuonwu and Mgbemena (2019) view that that Church Missionary Society set up an Onitsha Industrial Mission (O.I.M.) 1900-1903 to train and educate young and capable Christian youths in various trades, carpentry, sewing, brick-making and tailors. Diocese on the Niger has established vocational schools. Nwokolo (2018) recalled that there is Diocese on the Niger School of Skill Acquisition (DONSSA) which trains about 219 candidates in the last three years. There are many other students currently obtaining their training in the skill acquisition school. Diocese on the Niger Women's Ministry built Beatrice Onyemelukwe Vocational Education College which offers computer training, catering, saloon and other training services. In 2018, about 110 students graduated from Beatrice Onyemelukwe Skill Acquisition Centre (BOSAC) with various skills as the vision of the project is to assist the government in promoting vocational education which in turn would reduce unemployment by making youths to gain the knowledge and technical know-how in order to be creative enough to be self-reliant. BOSAC through technical and vocational education teach youths various skills that will help them to be self-employed and also contribute in the development of the society. Also, the Diocesan Girls Guild has started building a vocational school at Uke. The skill acquisition school has helped and is still helping youths in Anambra State.

Following the drive by Owen Chiedozie Nwokolo for holistic education, the Bishop approved the establishment of Niger School of French in 2014. At initial, the school had 49 students but currently many more students are attending the school. It is worthy to note that students, who graduate from the Diocesan French School, will have better opportunities to teach French language in schools, work in Embassy and other offices that is associated with international business affairs.

University on the Niger

The vision to establish the University on the Niger has been realized with every sense of purpose and determination. The Planning and Implementation Committee (PIC) left no stone unturned to ensure that this was achieved. In keeping with the NUC (National University Commission) standard, the drawings of relevant structures have been completed. According to Anambra Broadcasting Station (2023), Diocese on the Niger is placed on the international map as a Diocese that has tremendously progressed to the height of opening up a university that is taking off with medical science courses which is critical in present day Nigeria. The University on the Niger will be the first university to be owned by a Diocese in Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

Discipline is the watchword of schools under the Diocese. The establishment of schools by the Diocese, have not only decongested the number of people seeking admission in government owned schools but have a hedge-free academic calendar which ensures that students graduate at the duration of their various courses respectively. Thus, schools established by Diocese on the Niger in Anambra State have contributed immensely to the development of Western education in Igbo-land.

Scholarship Grants

The Bishop of Diocese on the Niger, Owen Chiedozi Nwokolo has been a motivator and sponsor of brilliant indigent students through scholarship grants. Owen Chiedozi Nwokolo still is the ticket out of illiteracy for thousands of people through his scholarship scheme. The Diocese under the Episcopal leadership of Owen Nwokolo has given many youths scholarship to study in various institutions in the country. The Bishop with Calvary Care Foundation Episcopal House always organizes a scholarship programme for indigent youths. Nwokolo (2014) reports that six students also received scholarships to university level during the Anglican Students' Association Day held on Saturday, March 8, 2014.

On the other hand, Dennis Memorial Grammar School Old Boys Association of North America (DOBANA) has sponsored scholarship for some students. DOBA Enugu State Branch through the Efobi Foundation organises an annual award and scholarship for some brilliant but indigent students. In order to encourage people to join the health sector, Calvary Foundation of Owen Chiedozi Nwokolo offers scholarship to students who are interested in studying medical related courses in various institutions in Nigeria. Examples include Madu Nchedo Holiness studying medical laboratory science at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Odilora Chukwuema, O. an undergraduate of University of Ibadan in the Department of Medicine and Surgery; Umenweke, Chisom Amara a student of medicine and surgery, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Shedrack Blessing studying nursing at School of Nursing Iyenu Mission Hospital, Ogidi and many more. This portrays the Bishop's quest to improve the health system of our nation.

Details of Some Beneficiaries of Diocese on the Niger Full Scholarship Scheme

SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
1	Olive Ozioma Okolo	Nwaoafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe	Graduate	Obioma, Udi LGA Enugu State.
2	Chukwumaike Amaechi.O.	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	Graduate	Oba Anambra State
SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
3	Aroh Vincent. O.	Nwaoafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe	Graduate	Abatete Anambra State.
4	Okafor Chukwuweikem	National Open University		Nsugbe Anambra State.

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SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
5	Anyawu Chidmma, B.	Enugu State University	500	Nkanu, Enugu State.
6	Ilodigwe Chinaza	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	500	Mgbakwu

SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
7	Madu Nchedo	University of Nigeria	400	Ichi,
8	Odiliora Chukwuema, O.	University of Ibadan	300	Umunachi

SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
9	Ibekwute Gideon, I.	University of Nigeria	200	Umuchu Anambra State.
10	Umenweke, Chisom Amara	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Akwa	100	Alor Anambra State.

SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
11	Ebegbunam Chukwudi, C.	University of Nigeria	100	Ogidi, Anambra State.
12	Iloduba Ifeanyi N.	Nwaoafor Orizu College of Education	200	Ogidi, Anambra State.

SN	NAME	SCHOOL	LEVEL	HOMETOWN
13	Shedrack Blessing	School of Nursing Iyenu Mission Hospital, Ogidi	100	Eziagu, Anambra State.
14	Chukwuchebem Nwachukwu, A.	Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State	100	Ogbunka.
SN	NAME	SCHOOL		
15	Ifediegwu Chidubem	Holy Cross Primary School, Onitsha		
16	Onwuemeli Somtochukwu	Raymond School, Nkpor		
17	Nworah Ifeanyi, O.	Bishop Otubelu Juniorate, Enugu		
18	Molokwu Chinaemelum	Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha.		

Source: Nwokolo (2018).

Through this scheme many youths have been availed the opportunity to access formal education.

Conclusion

The study discussed the impacts of Synods of Diocese on the Niger held under the Episcopal leadership of Owen Nwokolo precisely 2011-2021. The Synodical impacts are witnessed in the following ways; education, human capital development, infrastructural development, medical and social impacts among others. Synod is an integral aspect of the Church liturgical calendar. It began in the early Church with Jerusalem Council as the first of its kind. This is why Diocese on the Niger Anglican Communion gives credence to proper hosting of Synod programmes since its creation. In these Synod programmes, issues regarding both ecclesiastical and social matters are discussed. Concrete decisions are made, following successful implementation, positive results are achieved as enumerated in chapter four. Synod is an ecclesiastical activity that is Biblical affirmed and the practice must continue in this present era, owing to its usefulness not only to the body of Christ but to the entire society.

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