

Community Based Peace Education for Youths and Adults: A Panacea for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: Conflict and insecurity has become major social problems constraining the socio-economic and political progress of multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. Conflict prevention and peace building become a global challenge. Education has been described as an instrument for conflict prevention and peace building in the contemporary peace building efforts of the world. This paper draws attention to the possible ways of preventing conflict and peace building using Community Based Peace Education (CBPE) programme for Youths and Adults in Nigeria. The paper finally suggests that the promotion of good inter and intra groups' relationship as well as a well-designed CBPE programme for youths and adults should be integrated into the educational system of the country for conflict prevention, peace building and national security in Nigeria. So also, more efforts should be intensified in promoting education for youths and adults and redesigning their curriculum, primers and other materials to promote non-violence culture of peace, tolerance and integrity, gender equity and active citizenship for peace and national unity in the country.

KEYWORDS: Community Based Peace Education, Conflict prevention and Peace building

INTRODUCTION

Conflict and insecurity has become a major social problem constraining the socio-economic and political progress of the contemporary society Nigeria inclusive. The phenomenon according to Majaro-Majesty (2013) has been on unprecedented increase globally. About two decades back and more there has been a proliferation of unrivalled violence, the cases of kidnapping, abduction and wanton destruction of valuable infrastructures, politically motivated violence as well as lives and personal properties in Nigeria. The perpetrators of these illegal activities globally Nigeria inclusive are mostly youths and adults. This negative development according to Hamma (2018) is unfortunate and has become one of the security challenges facing man in the present societies across the globe. It is obvious that, African countries are usually refers as barbaric among themselves because of high level of insecurity especially among developing countries of the continent Nigeria inclusive.

The saddest part of the story according to Nwagboso (2012) is that this state of disorder and confusion in the society is affecting the youths and adults innocent minds. Children naturally absorb the spirit of violence in the atmosphere and will soon grow to be the next generation of perpetrators of violence while the youths and adults are the machineries of government and pillars of development of any society. They are responsible for monitoring the activities of the younger ones and keeping them away from these anti-social activities as well as absorbing the spirit of violence. Abba (2016) reported that in Africa youth and adult persons have been reputedly used as instruments to fight wars for reasons which they have very little knowledge about. In many of Africa's conflicts as reported in United Nations (2009) like those in Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Sudan, Somalia etc the phenomena of youths and adults soldering became a menace that needed to be tackled for the attainment of peace and security in the continent and world at large.

It is quite unfortunate however that, as the Nigerian society progresses, especially with the advent of the current democratic system of government, new forms of violent crimes have also emerged and the society has become more unsecured with many people getting involved in diverse sophisticated criminal activities (Otto & Ukpere, 2012). Recently in Nigeria, (Hamma, 2018) reported that a lot of criminal acts and conflict cases emerged and continue to affect some communities especially in the northern part of the country such as, Boko haram, Banditry, End SARS, Cattle rustling, Ethnic and Religious conflicts and political thurgery among others. These anti-social activities of these anti-social groups according to Hussein (2019) constitute serious security challenges in the country.

However, in Nigeria, Hamma (2018) noted that the rise of militant groups such as; Oduduwa People Congress (OPC), Bakassi boys, Area boys, Niger Delta militants group, Boko haram and Banditry activities among others in the country were used for institutional destruction, destruction of lives and properties, opposition, kidnapping, armed robbery etc are the influencing factors militating against peace in Nigeria. However, the increase in participation of youths and adults in all these anti-social acts in the contemporary society is becoming worth globally Nigeria inclusive. These perpetrators of these activities according to Majaro-

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Majesty (2013) are youths and adults more especially the illiterate class who are deficient of literacy skills and national patriotism national development and communal spirit. These groups according to Abba (2016) are mostly influenced by political groups and anti-nationalist to get involved in all these anti-social activities for setting the country into unrest situation. This negative development is unfortunate and has become one of the security challenges facing most of the communities in Nigeria.

Yusuf (2014) noted that in all situations, peace or conflict, those who enjoy or suffer it are the adults and youths. Also report shows that those who break the peace are either the adults or youths from the illiterate and poor family engineered by the haves or have notes to pursue one or more economic or political target of their interest. Education is a fundamental right that should be maintained at all times, even in the most difficult circumstances. In support of this assertion, Otto (2012) noted that in all societies of the world, man has experienced and is still experiencing conflicts from time to time. However, factors those precipitates conflicts in any conceivable manifestations are in haven't in man. Education may therefore be a driver of a conflict (fuelling grievances, stereotypes, xenophobia and other antagonisms), but can also be a way of contributing to 'conflict transformation' and peace building'.

Development in society must be seen to be able to manage conflict itself for further development in the society. Gumut (2010) noted that peace education sets out to redress this culture of violence and aggression and inculcate values of non-violent change among youth and adult persons alike. It opens up people's eyes and minds to see and understand action taken and their consequences. Youth and adult persons have to know what peace is and guard themselves against embracing or being used to create violence. This is not simply an ideological statement.

In response to the security challenges, ethnic and religious conflicts in the country, Yusuf (2014) noted that governments' and non-governmental security agencies and organizations are working hand in hand to ensure total peace and security in the country but yet no tangible results is actualized in the fight against insecurity, religious and ethnic conflicts in the country. This paper sees Community-Based Peace Education (CBPE) as panacea to this social problem in the country. The term 'Community-Based Peace Education (CBPE)' refers to an application of positive peace content as opposed to negative peace and process concerning the achievement of peace to individuals who are still growing and learning at the community level.

In support of this assertion, United Nations (2001) noted that where education is maintained in the midst of conflict it may provide an important mechanism for the protection of adults and youths against abuse; if this is so, the need for the professional adult educators to get concerned in the process of bringing about sustainable peace in Nigeria through CBPE approach becomes important. The aim of this paper therefore, is to analyse the role of CBPE for youths and adults for conflict prevention and peace building in the country.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Peace

The term 'peace' implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standard of justice, satisfy basic needs and honor human right. Mayanchi (2013) enumerates what constitute peace and their implications as:

- i. Reduction of threat of force in human affairs.
- ii. Employment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire ranges of human right and fundamental freedom.
- iii. A set of relationship between people recognition of the trust, cooperation and recognition of the interdependence and common good and mutual interest of all people.
- iv. A social environment which favors full development of human race.

Peace is therefore the condition that breeds peaceful co-existences and what is central to the maintenance of peace are justice (social and economic) equally (in treatment and opportunity), respect for human rights and fundamental freedom.

Peace education is therefore a rigorous field of study, requiring painstaking labour and detailed study.

The term peace in the context of this paper, "is a state of quiet, calm, public tranquility from war and concord of ideas among citizens, living according to the laws of a society". In the word of Majaro-Majesty (2013), peace is a form of developing a deep sense of concern and solidarity with the less privileged courage to act in a non-violent way against injustice in one's own community and an acceptance of responsibility by each individual for maintenance of the peace. Peace could be relative or absolute. However, Otto (2012) noted that an absolute peace is always difficult to attain since human existence based on interactions that generate cooperation, conflict and violence. Breaking of the peace in Nigeria has been extensively discussed by scholars at many discussions for in and outside Nigeria.

Education

Education is the all round development of individual physically, socially, morally and intellectually. It is a basic human right, which must be guaranteed to everyone regardless of sex, age, race, nationality or language. Today, there is no denying the strong correlation between education and development. Therefore, without education, science, technology, culture and communication there is tendency that society cannot be developed further. In the word of Mango (2009), education can be defined as a process of

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enculturation of the younger generation by the older ones. It is a process by which the individual acquires many physical and social capacities demanded of him by the group into which he is born and within which he must function.

Community Based- Peace Education

Community Based- Peace Education (CBPE) could be defined in different ways by various scholars. There is no universally accepted definition as such. Here are some definitions from peace literature. Mayanchi (2013) views the term as a deliberate attempt to educate youths and adults in the dynamics of conflict and promotion of peace making skills in homes, schools and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization. This approach will be more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched and globally relevant by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values. CBPE according to Hampson and David, (2002) provides education, global security and focuses on employing the framework based on recent theories of human security. It is also an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures. Mayor (2006) reported that CBPE is holistic. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework deeply rooted in traditional human values. In the word of Van and Jurjen (2006), it is based on philosophy that teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for the human family and all life on our beautiful planet. CBPE empowers youths and adults to creative and non-destructive ways to settle conflict and to live in harmony with themselves, others, and their world.

Community Based- Peace Education concerns itself with human and social dimension of peace. It also concerns itself with the global ethics, gender issues and various aspects of cultural violence. Otto (2012) noted that overall peace education is an investment in the younger and adult's generations and attest to the fact that by educating the younger and adult's minds in the virtues of peace, the skills of conflict analysis and management, identification of conflicts and sources of conflict, etc; a more peaceable future could be secured for humanity. Community Based- Peace Education (CBPE) is more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched and globally relevant by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values.

Historically, Majaro-Majesty (2013) noted that peace education openly acknowledged its purpose as education to facilitate the achievement of peace and related sets of social values, largely through learning to recognize, confront and practice alternative multiple forms of violence. CBPE is an integral part of the work of the United Nations (UN). Through the harmonizing process of teaching and learning, Mahuta (2009) maintained that peace education is out to enlighten youths and adults concerning the ills which are caused by man and woman in humanity to mankind among others include: discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, poverty, prejudices, violence and war etc. but peace education will create a culture of peace based upon fundamental scientific and ethical principles.

Conflict

The concept of conflict can be viewed in different ways, depending on its background or usage by various scholars. The term 'Conflict' means dispute. It varies in nature and scope and this make it un-wanting issue in the environment, where peace is to reign. Dispute can be between parties on specific issues, between state, class and organizations or groups. It arises from differences in outlooks, opinions and values, with respect issues of interest. These issues can be cultural, social, political or economy. However, it can be at individual or at national level. In the word of Mahuta (2009) conflict arises when individual and groups propose different goals and maintain different aspirations in specified social environment. In this respect, where the interest of two different people is the same towards a goal, the end result may lead to misunderstanding and might further lead to conflict of interests and struggle to gain first chance. Conflict interpretation according to Mayor (2006) can simply be quarrel, inconsistency, dispute, violence, aggression and even struggle over certain factors, such as power, resources by two individuals or groups. Yusuf (2014) noted that conflict is an omnipresent trait of human societies, since it is almost impossible to find two parties with over lapping interests. Thus, a general strategy and theory for bargaining and negating conflict issues is useful in all the field of study: economics, psychology, sociology, international politics and business management etc.

Conflict Prevention

Conflict prevention refers to the effective handling and the long term management of conflicts. It is also the use of various ways to handle grievances, standing up for what is considered to be right, against what is considered to be wrong and unjust. This is possible according to Hampson and David, (2002) through preventing the group to physical combat or by neutralizing the parties' grievances. The parties can equally be called to order. This is by way of having meeting with both the parties at different places, time and day to discuss issues for peace.

The term "conflict prevention" is commonly used to refers to action undertaken with the expression intent to anticipate a conflict or forestall the possibility of it escalation into generalized and uncontrolled violence whether between two groups or at the level of society at large Van and Jurjen (2006). This term is generally defined in two different but related meaning either to address structural or underlying factors, the so called "root causes" of conflict or half of its escalation into deadly violence.

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Community-Based Peace Education for Youths and Adults for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building

Education is light and a building block which lays a strong foundation for the development of every society. Strong and enlightened society rest chiefly with the educators (Abba, 2012). The United Nations secretary- general (2009) identifies a number of recurring priorities in conflict-affected situations, 'establishing security, building confidence in a political process, delivering initial peace dividends and expanding core national capacity'. These priorities according to Majaro-Majesty (2013) include 'the provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation, health and primary education'. However, in conflict-affected situations, education is also about more than service delivery because it is a means of socialization and identity development through the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across generations. The building of peace among Nigerians could be achieved through conducting educational programmes via CBPE approach, such as: workshops, seminars, sensitization campaign and conferences on learning to live peacefully in the contemporary society. Nigeria inclusive become crucial and imperative for sustainable conflict prevention and peace building in the country..

According to Akpotu and Jike, (2004) human capital formation and maintenance in Nigeria demands redress. Education is the most effective strategy to redress and reduce crime, if the Nigerian society has to attain its developmental heights in contemporary world. There is the need to pay adequate attentions to CBPE for youths and adults for conflict prevention and peace building and achieving sustainable development objectives in the country. Education can reduce crime; it can develop the talent and character of youths and adults and prepare them to be active participants in adult life as they are sensitized to keep away from any conflict and criminal acts so as to ensure peace and security in the country. Gehring and Eggleston (2002) noted that there is strong link between low level of education and high level of criminal activities among adults and youths. It is sad to mention that today in Nigeria; we live in an era of kidnapping, suicide bomb blast, injustice, exploitation, religious, tribal and communal clashes and other crimes. Not only that, majority of Nigerians lived in stark poverty, struggling to survival. In fact, there is so much disorder and confusions in the country which we built for ourselves. Lawali (2022) highlights some of the well known incidents of very serious violent and communal conflicts among others in Nigeria:

1. The KasuwarMagani Conflict in Kaduna state, 1980;
2. The Maitatsine uprising, Kano City, in December,1980;
3. The Ife-Modakeke conflicts, in April, 1981;
4. The Maitatsine uprising in Yola, February,1985;
5. The Maitatsine uprising in Gombe, April,1985;
6. The conflict in Numan neighboring areas of Adamawa state, 1986-1988;
7. The conflict in Kafanchan, Kaduna-Zaria and other parts of Kaduna state, in March,1987;
8. The conflicts of Wukari, Takum and other parts of Taraba and Benue state in 1990-1992;1999-2002;
9. The conflict in ZangonKataf and other parts of Kaduna state 2002;
10. The rise of Area Boys in Lagos state, in 2003;
11. The YelwanShandam crisis in Plateau state, 2004;
12. The Kano after math of Shandam, 2004;
13. The Boko Haram in Borno state and other parts of northern Nigeria, 2009 to date, etc.(Mayanchi, 2012);
14. END-SARS Demonstration that led to loss of lives and destruction and properties, 2020.
15. Fulani/Cattle wrestlers' clashes in some parts of North-Western Nigeria, North-East, Middle Belt and other parts of the country not mentioned.

Imaging how many lives and properties were lost in these crises, how many houses were destroyed, how many children missed schools and how many families were displaced. The suspected vanguards and machineries of these crisis are mostly youths and adults, who constitute the bulk of human resources of this country. Ololobu (2005) noted that quality and well meaningful planned CBPE is the educational system and programme that can prepare future generations to improve their living condition as well as bring about social integration in society. This will fight against problems, such as, poverty, disease, war and environmental destructions. CBPE can be used to elaborate and implant peace programmes, to cultivate inclusive citizenship, desegregate the mind and build a culture of peace and tolerance. However, every nation's economy and social development is strongly linked to its nature of peace and security. No meaningful development can take place without peace. Violence and instability are vices to the existence of peace in the society. CBPE for youths and adults for conflict prevention and peace building approach therefore, remains a major and lasting solution to the urgent quest for social stability and the good living conditions of millions of Nigeria.

According to United Nations (UN, 2001) peace education is aimed at creating conditions for building peace, resolving conflicts in its different forms, by tracing its roots, causes and consequences and dealing with ethical, religious and philosophical, ethics of human rights. Mayanchi (2013) noted that it is a unique process of resolving conflicts and promoting meaningful development in the community. Development, both at national and individual levels needs knowledge and skills to maintain and sustain it. This is the identification of its values and importance through peace education at community level in form of: Public lectures, workshops and conferences, community social mobilization and sensitization campaigns.

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Political crises, religious intolerance, ethnic marginalization, economic domination, cultural disregard and social crises are most importantly societal social problems although their effects extend to adults and the youths. It is up to adults and youths to know these and find solution to them. For this reason, Aderinoye and Ojokheta (2003) noted that adults and youths need to be involved in the search for peace and tolerance. Daily Trust (2013) noted that a quick survey of some years' back Nigeria's conflicts such as; the Yelwan Shandam crisis in Plateau state, 2004, the Boko Haram in Borno state and Banditry and Kidnapping for ransom in other parts of northern Nigeria, 2009 to date etc. revealed the degree at which youths and adults were involved. In this circumstance, the first intervention of CBPE programme would be to make as many as possible of our illiterates and literates youths and adults informed about the dangers associated with involving themselves into criminal activities or any illegal assembly.

In an efforts made by several governments in Nigeria to address the issue of conflict and insecurity in the country, Majaro-Majesty (2013) reported that measures which were constitutional means have been taken to manage conflicts and insecurity among Nigerians. Creation of states and local governments, and the federal character policy were enshrined in the National constitution. Creation of states and local governments according to Aderinoye and Ojokheta (2003) was to give ethnic and minority groups their own areas of control, and to eliminate situations of dominations from ethnic dominant groups. The federal character policy according to Hussaini (2009) was to make sure that all ethnic groups had representation in government's civil service. This includes the quota system adopted in the recruitment of public and civil servants in Nigeria. Although these strategies were helpful, the effect was minimal to resolve and prevent ethnic conflicts in the country. This was obvious according to Mayanchi (2013) in over for a nation like Nigeria with over two hundred ethnic conflicts experienced between 1960 and 2023. Education can also be the most powerful tool to develop the economic and social skills necessary to generate sustainable livelihoods for successive generations.

Considering the fact that most of the perpetrators of most criminal and other anti social activities in the country are mostly the poor and illiterate groups, this paper concludes that Community-Based Peace Education approach for youths and adults should be employed as a tool for conflicts prevention and restoring peace and sustainable development in Nigeria.

SUGGESTIONS

To promote peace and prevent and manage conflict effectively for sustainable development in Nigeria, the following recommendations proffered:

Peace education should be geared towards good value promotion and respect in Nigeria. CBPE is therefore, capable of building the youths and adults' generation towards a conflict free society. However, community-based peace education programmes containing peace message are more likely to bring about development in the society.

For conflict prevention and sustainable peace building in Nigeria, the promotion of good inter and intra groups relationship as well as a well-designed CBPE programme for youths and adults should be integrated into the educational system of the country.

More efforts should be intensified in promoting education for youths and adults and redesigning their curriculum, primers and other materials to promote non-violence culture of peace, tolerance and integrity, gender equity and active citizenship for peace and national unity in Nigeria.

Skills training for self-employment should be encouraged through community-based peace education approach. Vulnerable groups such as women, youths, demobilized soldiers, the unemployed and those who suffered the effects of violence need to be empowered through their active participation in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country so as to minimize adults and youths involvement in any act of conflict.

Creation of more states and local governments in Nigeria to allow more people's participation in governments and coming closer to governments should be taken into consideration. Federal character policy which was enshrined in the national constitution should be enforced to ensure equal representation in civil and public service, allocation and sharing of political powers among the populace so as to minimize conflicts in Nigeria.

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