

REVITALIZING PEACE AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The central focus of this paper is to ascertain the impact of community and peace education for sustainable security in Nigeria. This paper therefore reviews literatures on issues such as concept of community and peace education, agent of peace education and as well highlights the challenges to sustainable peace in Nigeria. It draws the conclusion that community and peace education is an important instrument for promoting sustainable security in Nigeria, for its capacity to be applied in addressing various forms of situational educational needs of the community. It was recommended that community and peace education should be fully entrenched across all levels of education in Nigeria and that the content of community and peace education in Nigeria should be directed toward imparting respect and tolerance of one another as a pluralistic and heterogeneous nation.

Key Words: Community, Peace Education, Community Development, Sustainable Security.

Introduction

The interests of actors, nations or nation states, and other dramatis personae in conflict situations at the international, regional and national levels are diametrically opposed to one another. Even where actors share common interests, concerns and objectives, these are in most cases not permanent. However, for some countries, there is neither a permanent enemy nor a permanent friend, but rather permanent interest. Complex interactions among actors in international politics, largely due to developments in technology, communication and mobility of factors of production in a world that is increasingly becoming a “global village”, have made conflict a permanent feature of

human society. Consequently, conflicts have erupted at various levels of intensity and in every region of the world. Between 1945 and 1967 alone, Holsti (1983:268) points out that there were eighty-two armed conflicts in the world; out of these, twenty-six were interstate wars, and many of the remaining fifty-six conflicts were civil wars, insurgencies and the like with tremendous international implications. In fact, since the end of the Second World War in 1945, and despite the creation of the United Nations Organization (UNO), the world has never been in absolute peace; it has been in permanent tension from the cold war to the war on “terror”, or war of cultures, elsewhere described as “clash of civilizations”(Huntington, 1996). In order to depict what he describes as the “bleak picture of today's world”. Nasrel-Din (2003:1) succinctly notes that:

According to the jargons of a new language, outright aggression on foreign nations is now termed preventive or preemptive strike or even self-defense. The occupation of foreign territories in named liberation and national resistance to occupation is considered terrorism that needs to be contained at any event. Freedom fighters are murdered without investigation and illegitimate force employed to set a precedent to be used in the future by the hegemonic nation.

At another level, the intricate human relationship which entails power, socio-cultural, psychological, religious, economic, as well as environmental factors has made it possible for individuals and groups to engage in a mutually exclusive, sometimes opportunistic and particularistic relationship based on mutual suspicion, anger, tension and exclusion which in most cases engender skirmishes, revolts, insurgencies and, at the extreme level, armed conflict. In each case, the resultant disorder escalates to cause systematic failure and breach of peace and tranquility among people, thereby resulting in a full-scale war. Similarly, intermittent insurgent conflicts and deep-seated animosities among people of divergent cultures, or even those who share similar cultural traits, often degenerate into horrible conflicts and wars.

Some conflicts are protracted and they take a great toll on human lives and property. Some other conflicts persist for a long time and tend to be lessened or heightened from time to time with profound consequences on the psychological, socio-economic, and environmental conditions of citizens. Still, other conflicts are spontaneous, and even if their underlying causes are known to everyone, their impact on the lives of innocent civilians, children, women and the aged is unimaginable. In this context, the consequences of conflict are unpredictable.

Thus, the past and contemporary experiences of great wars and violent conflicts caused largely by ideological differences (Nasr el Din, 2003), coupled with the seeming inevitability of wars in the future as a result of intractable power relations, national and international, create room for insecurity, breach of peace and disorder in different societies and, therefore, make the search for peace a necessity. Indeed, acrimonious ethnic relationships in most pluralistic societies today, competition for resources and accumulation of wealth by a few classes of politicians and military officers, as well as cultural and religious intolerance add up to create deep-seated hatred and, in most cases, a xenophobic relationship among people of different nationalities. Hence, the study of the causes, dimensions and effects of conflicts not only becomes a desirable area of interest by peace researchers the world over, but also an interesting study for African students and intellectuals in general and those of West Africa in particular. For in Africa, where incessant conflicts have rendered some states either collapsed or failed, weak and incapacitated, fragile or dwarfed, the sorry record of war atrocities, loss of lives and post war trauma are nauseatingly fresh in our memories. As Vraalsen (1997:22) rightly observed, 'African countries have since the 1960s been beset by an extraordinarily heavy burden of warfare. Close to two dozen civil wars have been fought. Nearly one third of all overt military interventions in the world between 1960 and 1985 were aimed at African countries. Most of them came from within Africa. At present, more than ten African countries are suffering from violent conflicts and civil disorder. Propaganda campaigns, border skirmishes, terrorism and other forms of low intensity conflict have been the order of the day'.

Ethno-religious, communal and political conflicts permeate the country and impede the process of nurturing a virile democratic culture and its consolidation. As a result of ethno-religious, communal and political conflicts in Nigeria in the post military era, a lot of lives were lost within a short period of the return to civil rule. In particular, between 1999 and 2003, a total of 10,000 lives have been lost in the country (Naanen, 2003 :34). In 2001, in the clash between Christians and Muslims over "Miss World" beauty pageant slated to be held in Abuja, about 250 people were killed in three days (Mohammed, 2005:95).

In general, the foregoing scenarios suggest that although conflict is inevitable the world over, Africa illustrates a case of a continental terrain where the magnitude of conflict, its dimension and consequences threaten peace and development. The increasing tide of social conflict is a pointer to the fact that a systematic study of how it can be resolved becomes necessary. Therefore, a study of how to manage or resolve conflict in Nigeria as in any other country in the West African sub-region is a welcome development.

Peace

The concept of peace has been subjected to different interpretations by different scholars in the field of peace studies and conflict resolution. Its diversity of meaning is largely due to its application in relative terms. Unlike other classificatory concepts, 'peace' is a value loaded and multifaceted concept; its meaning can be seen at different levels of human social interaction and at the level of state actors in international system. However, despite the various meanings that the concept carries, there is a popular view attached to it, particularly at the level of international political interaction and in the analysis of internal politics of the modern state. Generally, therefore, peace can be defined as an absence of violence, war or dissension (Rummel, 1981; Bhuchongkul, et al, 1991; 2005, Francis, 2005).

Peace at the individual level is essentially a state of mind. It arises from individual perception of the presence or absence of psychological control of one's "self or environment. Environment here is taken to mean human adaptation to and control of "self from external stimuli. Thus, as Rummel noted, peace is then "conceptually opposed to nonviolent, antagonistic conflict, such as that manifesting threats and accusations, hostile quarrels, angry boycotts, and riotous demonstration" (emphasis in the original) (1981:11).

In the context of peace research, the concept of peace is seen from the concept of a social contract (compact) when people with common or divergent world view, be it ideological, materialistic, cultural, religious or even personal, resolve to live together in tolerance with one another, and therefore in peace. Based on this understanding, peace can be seen as the absence of any hostile or antagonistic relationship that may degenerate into a state of distorting a harmonious existence that could lead to war. It is this kind of peace that most plural societies such as India, Rwanda, Nigeria and a host of other nation-states in Africa are in dear need. In Nigeria, the history of animosity, fear of domination and unequal power relations among different nationalities in the country has engendered various crises and conflicts.

Community and Peace Education

Peace studies which has since engaged renowned scholars has, over the years, attracted extensive research and recognition as a result of concern, interest and commitment to world peace. In fact, it is one of the most interesting fields of study today in social sciences and humanities. Francis (2005) defined peace studies or peace research as distinctive method of inquiry and practice concerned with the causes of violence and conditions for a peaceful world. Its primary focus, the author stated further, is on 'peace and the creation of peace' and is concerned with the movement from war to peace.

The area of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (PSCR) as an academic field of study has developed over the years as a result of various events and issues in the international system. While systematic analysis and research in peace studies started in

the twentieth century, interest in it started as long as the 17th century when peace philosophers (not peace researchers) such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Alighieri Dante and a host of other philosophers of their time examined critical issues about peace and devised schemes for their rulers on how best to overcome military advances of other states. Most of the philosophical works on peace bear the realists world view which suggests that violence is an important, ever-present, and recurrent pattern of society, and that periodic war was inevitable in an anarchic world system dominated by the interests of state actors. According to them, war could be avoided only to the advantage of others and this suggests that the notion of the inevitability of conflict as later theorized by power theorists such as Claudwitz and Morgenthau had received greater impetus than the earlier philosophical works on peace.

Peace education equally uses spiritual and faith traditions as resources for peace building. This is corroborated by Machado (1993) who provided that the world's major spiritual and faith traditions inspire and motivate people to embrace peace as a mission. A close look at the original teachings of spiritual and faith traditions indicate that they are essentially wellsprings and resources for peace. We need to rediscover the principles and values that they uphold, to remind us of the essential goal of each faith tradition to seek peace.

Challenges of Utilizing Peace Education for Sustainable Security and National Development in Nigeria

Experts in peace education in Nigeria (Enaigbe and Igbinighene (2016), Nwiyi, Osuji and Okorie (2011) have identified a number of challenges facing the delivery of peace education in Nigeria. These include among others the following:

- 1) **Inadequate knowledge about the concept of peace education:-** Inadequate knowledge of peace education as a field of study, its scope and coverage remains one major problem to both practitioners within the field and members of the public. This easily breeds misconception and disagreement among specialists in the field, and at the same time triggers wrong perception of the education programme by the teeming Nigerian masses. This results in failure in content delivery on the one hand, and lack of interest in the programme among the Nigerian masses on the other.
- 2) **Lack of acceptability of peace education by government:-** Another major problem facing the implementation of peace education curriculum is its lack of government acceptance. Governments across all levels place less premium on peace education as it is not seen as an important aspect of knowledge to be emphasised. However, with the trend of things both at the national and international scenes, it is important that deserved place be given to peace education for promotion of peace within and outside the country.

- 3) **Inadequate funding:-** Inadequate funding has been identified as a general problem for quality delivery of any type of education in Nigeria and peace education cannot be an exception. Educational programmes' implementation is seriously affected by lack of, or inadequate, funding. This tells so much on the quality of teaching personnel to implement a programme, the materials and resources available for its implementation, and the success of the programmes.
- 4) **Lack of political will:-** The willingness of the people in government is a strong factor in the success of any programme. No matter how good a programme is, if the political will to implement the programme is lacking, if the programme is not implemented at all, the implementation will be a poor one and the outcome will not be good. Lack of political will to fund peace education has constituted a hindrance to its effective delivery and this has a serious consequence on the peaceful co-existence of individuals and groups in society.
- 5) **Attitude of parents and guardian towards peace/ community education:-** The attitudes of most parents and guardians are not positive towards peace/community education. Parents and guardians, as noted by Enaigbe and Igbinighene (2016) are often reluctant to support their children and wards to actively participate in peace education programmes and activities. When this happens, it slows down the pace of implementation of peace education programme and at the same time affects the success of the programme. Other challenges identified by peace researchers include: inappropriate methodology, lack of appropriate and comprehensive peace education curriculum (Enaigbe and Igbinighene, 2016), demonstrations and riots in schools, tribal sentiments and greed (Nwiyi, Osuji and Okorie, 2011) among others.

Therefore, based on the discussions and the manifestation of insecurity challenges in Nigeria and the sporadic attacks of various degrees by bandits and various perpetrators, peace education becomes imperative for the building of peace for sustainable security in the Northern region and the nation in general.

Conclusion

The discussion emanating from the reviewed literatures on the topic under consideration has highlighted the significance of community and peace education. This paper therefore concludes that with proper exploitation of the opportunities in community and peace education, sustainable security could prevail in most volatile communities in Nigeria. The opportunities and potentials available within the realm of community and peace education (e.g. community education programmes, disarmament education, human rights education, global education, conflict resolution education, multicultural education, interfaith education etc.) that lie within its scope are important mechanisms that can aid peace building and promote sustainable security in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In reflection to the challenges of peace and community education discussed above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Community and peace education should be properly entrenched and implemented across various levels of our school curriculum.
2. The content of community and peace education in the context of Nigeria should be guided by instructional processes leading to the development of norms and values that uphold tolerance of each other in a plural society, development of the culture of peace and nonviolence.
3. Governmental and non-governmental agencies in Nigeria should be fully involved in the implementation process of community and peace education.
4. More resources should be deployed for the development and delivery of community and peace education curriculum contents.
5. The spiritual and faith based traditions for peace as a resource for peace education should be adequately exploited in the context of Nigeria for the promotion of sustainable security.

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