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PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION PROVISIONS

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Abstract

Peaceful co-existence is essential to the attainment of national development in any society. The Nigerian society has witnessed and still witnessing several violent conflicts stemming from religious, political, ethnic and economic reasons with varied negative implications for national integration and sustainable development. It is against this background that this paper argues that everybody including Nigerian adult educators must contribute to the restoration of peace in Nigeria. The paper therefore, examines the relationship between peaceful coexistence and national development and factors responsible for lack of peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. The paper concludes that adult educators can use their virile adult education provisions such as peace education, human rights education, concentization programme, citizenship education, functional literacy, liberal education and tolerance education to restore peaceful coexistence in Nigeria.

Introduction

Development can only take place where peace is given a chance to thrive. Interestingly, the Nigerian Nation places great premium on peaceful co-existence as it has its motto as "Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress" and its constitution provides a basis for peace and stability with an affirmation of a collective will to live in Unity and harmony as an indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God (Bulus, 2005). Peaceful co-existence exists where people of different backgrounds and values agree to live together in harmony, equity, justly, and respect their differences in pursuing their common goal (Yusuf, 2012). Nigeria like any other human society believes in unity, indivisibility and harmony as factors for reaching the common goal as human society.

This is because the goals of human society which is the well being of its members are easier and better attained in their joint efforts than in their separate efforts. So, human society (Nigeria inclusive) came into being solely to help its members to achieve their individual and collective goals. The overall goal is that of their well-being. Their well-being is the purpose of their interaction.

Interestingly, man knows that the peaceful world is far better than the violent world because development, which is positive change and which enhances, promotes and advances his well being, is a direct function of peace. While backwardness, which distorts, disfigures, diminishes and impoverishes his well being, is a direct product of violence (war) (Ideyi, 2011). Yet for the reasons' such as ignorance, suspicion, poverty caused by unemployment, especially among youths, fear of marginalization or domination by another group(s), perceived injustice among some sections of the society in terms of resources allocation as well as the inadequacy or complete absence of peace education in many communities in Nigeria (Usman, 2011), Nigerians could not restrain from entertaining thoughts and engaging in activities that provoke crises, violence and wars to their enormous cost and peril.

Since independence in Nigeria, the country has experienced a number of civil disturbances and ethno-religious crises which have threatened the national cohesion, stability and progress. In fact, Nigerians who are hitherto seeing themselves as brothers and sisters begin to see themselves as enemies of one and another. The security of lives and property is no longer guaranteed by any one in Nigeria. By implication, everyone is affected in one way or the other. This might be the reason why everybody wants to discuss the "state of disintegration" Nigeria is experiencing right now. Thus, all hands must be on deck to save Nigeria from recurrent violence and conflicts. In view of this, Nigerian adult educators must join host of other professionals, civil societies and well meaning Nigerians in their crusade to attain peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. It is against this background that this paper examines peaceful co-existence as a tool for national development in Nigeria with a view to ascertaining its implications for adult education provisions in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework:

Peaceful Coexistence

Peace is a state of being calm or quiet or harmonious. It is a state of living in harmony or friendship with one another without argument or violence or disagreement (Ibegbu, 2011). There are variations in the understanding of peace. For example, to the philosopher, peace is a natural, God-given state of human existence without the corruptive tendencies of man. For the sociologists, peace refers to a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms. In the case of the political science student, peace is a political condition that makes justice possible (Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), 2008). To the National Open University of Nigeria (2010), peace is a long-term and gutsy project that seeks to bring about lasting and constructive change in institutions that maintain society. Said differently, peace is a dynamic social process in which justice, equity, and respect for basic human rights are maximized, and violence, both physical and structural, is minimized. The National Open University of Nigeria (2010) further categorised peace into a negative and a positive peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence that causes physical harms, and positive peace refers to the absence of structural violence manifested as the uneven distribution of power and resources. Negative peace is reactive in nature in that it seeks the cessation of actual or impending conflict.

Peaceful co-existence is a state of living in unity with other people's behaviour and way of life. That is, to tolerate one another's attitude or way of life without complaint. This normally occurs where people respect the rights and views of others. More importantly where people learn about other people's belief system and philosophy behind such beliefs and they are ready to respect them, peaceful co-existence will reign.

National Development

National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g by providing social amenities like quality education, portable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care, security etc. National development, according to Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011), can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious

advancement of a country or nation. By implication any country that cannot guarantee its citizens qualitative standard of living cannot be said to have attained national development.

Violence

The term 'violence' is derived from another term 'violate' which is its verb form. To violate means, among other things: to hurt, injure, break, disobey, infringe, invade, desecrate, pollute, profane, abuse, debauch, defile, deflower, outrage, ravish, transgress, damage, etc. Each of these synonyms of 'to violate' brings out the meaning of violence. Thus, simply put, violence means an act of destruction, any act of man that involves wilful destruction. Ideyi (2011) defines violence as whatever violates another, in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is involved or not, can be understood as an act of violence. Whatever the form violence takes it, threatens the peaceful co-existence of a society and by extension the development of the country.

Adult Education

Adult education is an amorphous term lacking any precise definition. Lending credence to this assertion, Fadeyi and Folaranmi (2002) affirm that the problem of defining adult education is yet to be resolved. Hence, it is imperative to note that as long as adults continue to be educated, there is the likelihood of not having a once and for all definition of this multi-faceted discipline. It is also important to note that, there are various meanings and definitions of adult education as there are various organisations, scholars and practitioners or professionals of adult education who see the term differently. The variation in the definition of adult education was informed by the specific orientation or field of their authors, the nature of programme involved, the target audience as well as their social, economic, political and ideological inclinations and philosophy. In the view of Nzeneri (2002), adult education is defined as any education given to adults based on their social, economic, political and cultural needs to enable them adjust fully to the change and challenges in their lives and society. This definition portrays adult education as an important sub-sector of education that has the

capacity of addressing numerous problems confronting Nigerian adults including insecurity and lack of peaceful co-existence in the country.

Incidents of Violence in Nigeria

Since the attainment of independence in 1960, many parts of Nigeria have become theatres of war, characterized by an increasing number of ethnic and religious crisis, notably the Maitatsine religious disturbances in parts of Kano and Maiduguri in the early 1980s, Jimeta Yola crisis/religious disturbance (1984), Zango Katof crisis in Kaduna State (1992), Bulumkutu Christian–Muslim riots (1982) among others (Fawole and Bello, 2011). There was also Muslims and Christians clash during a Christian procession at Easter in Ilorin (Kwara State) in March, 1986 and another clash in 1987 between the two faiths at the College of Education, Kafanchan, which claimed some lives and the burning of some mosques by Christians and natives Kajes (Ezeibe, n.d).

Community clashes in Ife and Modakeke in the South-West; the Ijaw/ Urhobo/ Itsekiri in the Niger Delta region; and Umuleri and Aguleri in the South-East are few examples of community crises that have affected negatively the development of Nigeria (Usman, 2011).

Others include July 1999 Oro conflict in Sagamu in Ogun state where a Hausa woman was accused of coming out when the cultist were outside with their Gnome. This led to some altercations, which eventually led to full blown crisis. Many people from the two conflicting, parties lost their lives. The crisis spilled over to Kano and Lagos over time claiming a number of valuable lives and properties (Fawole and Bello, 2011). An ethnic conflict between the Tiv and the Azara indigenes in Nasarawa State in 2001 was another ethnic conflict in Nigeria. It started with the gruesome killing of an Azara traditional leader, and later spread to the Tiv village, with the Tiv community on the defence (Ezeibe, n.d).

The most recurring 'ethno-religious' conflict in Jos have turned the town to a physical graveyard for hundreds of people including children and women (Fawole and Bello, 2011). Niger-Delta militant activities have also turned the region to a battle field which costs the country huge resources that might have been used for the developmental projects.

Post election violence has also threatened the peaceful co-existence of Nigerians. This incident has turned some Nigerian youths to thugs. It has resulted to the killing of innocent souls during protests of election results.

In recent time the most dangerous crisis is the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State and many other northern states. The damage done by the Sect is enormous; claiming valuable lives and properties. Usually, the concern is that resources that are originally planned for the funding of development projects are increasingly diverted to conflict resolutions and peace keeping processes.

In September, 2012 there were killings of students in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, Adamawa State, which was attributed to the Students' Union Government election according to some sources. The killing of the students of the University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers State in October, 2012 is another sign of security challenge in Nigeria. The killings of our youths especially students is not only a loss to the bereaved family but a big loss to the future of our country.

At this point one may wish to understand the factors responsible for the emergence of different conflicts that have threatened peaceful coexistence in Nigeria.

Factors Responsible for lack of Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria

A number of factors have been identified to have contributed to the recurrent violence and conflicts in Nigeria which are threatening the peaceful coexistence of the country. These factors include;

Injustice

Justice is the foundation of society as well as its lubricant. Where it is ignored and made to flee, leaving its opposite – injustice around, such a society is in a big trouble. It will be complaints, grudges, bitterness, fight and sometimes war. For justice says all must share what belongs to all. But injustice says might is right (Ideyi, 2011).

It upholds survival of the fittest and panders to the interests of the powerful and makes a burn fire of the interest of the weak and needy. Injustice destroys social web of human relations and sows seeds of bitterness, rebellion and war. It is the fundamental source of violence.

Ignorance

Ignorance is lack of knowledge. The world is very large and man has known a few aspects of it. Also, his knowledge about himself is next to nothing. And the little he knows intoxicates him and he loses it or impairs it in the course of his intoxication (Ideyi, 2011). Man is always showing amenity to what he does not know and in some other cases, man does result to violence when he cannot help himself on what he lacks knowledge of.

Misconception of Religion

Inadequate depth of understanding of both Christianity and Islam within and outside these two religions has been identified to have contributed to the misunderstandings that do occur between the followers of the two faiths. Lack of knowledge and information on a popular level, particularly in local languages, of the scriptural-based condemnations of violence and terrorism in both Christianity and Islam has further made some Nigerians to condemn one another on the basis of religious differences (World Council of Churches and The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012). Religious intolerance and extremism which stems from wrong perception of the religion of others and orientation of followers, the level of illiteracy of followers, selfishness on the part of some religious leaders, external influences, manipulation of religion for a selfish end (Bulus, 2005) continue to make the followers of the two dominant religions in Nigeria to see themselves as enemies.

Corruption

Rampant corruption at every level among politicians has contributed to the incessant violence in Nigeria. Our leaders, according to Adegoke (n.d), have consistently disappointed the vast majority of ordinary Nigerians. These groups of Nigerians have played the ethnic card when it suits them to the detriment of ordinary Nigerians. They have played up our differences to serve their selfish, self serving purposes. They are corrupt and careless about the people they are supposed to be ruling over. The result of all this is that the Nigerian masses are further pauperized no matter their ethnic nationality, no matter their religion.

The lack of ability or willingness on the part of government to consistently acknowledge all incidences of violence and to assist all victims has also encouraged different pattern of violence in the country.

Poverty and Unemployment

Poverty simply defined is a lack of what a human person needs to live a normal, true and genuine life. It is seen as a disease because it distorts person's worth and destroys his dignity and pushes him or her to live a miserable life. In Nigeria, where poverty is accommodated and crowned as a king, courtesy of bad managers of the country's abundant resources, the bitterness it arouses in the people has made the country vulnerable to violent eruptions with enormous costs in terms of lives and property (Ideyi, 2011). Unemployment is very high among Nigerian youth which has prompted many of them into formfitting trouble. An idle mind, they say, is a devil workshop.

Since we have seen the factors responsible for the lack of peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, we think it is appropriate to examine the relationship between peaceful coexistence and national development.

Peaceful Coexistence as a tool for National Development

Any society where peaceful coexistence is attained the following benefits, according to Anikpo, Mohammed, Ezegbe, Salau & Okunamiri (2009), will be accrued which will translate into societal development.

I)   Peace frees the individual from anxiety and insecurity thereby creating happiness. When happiness is achieved the society can tread the path to progress.

II)   It creates a good environment for people to be creative and productive. Therefore, it enhances development.

III)   Peaceful coexistence ensures group security and solidarity. In fact, peace makes people of different tribes and ideology to see themselves as a member of the same family.

IV)   When there is no peace as in wartime, educational, economics, political and social activities are disrupted. School children can no longer freely go to school;

many people are killed; many more are thrown out of their homes. Generally, people are not happy to do their work. This, by implication, will slow them or totally kill the process to development.

V)   Peace also enables human populations to grow. The growth of human population can serve a better purpose in the process of development when the population is given sound and functional education.

VI)   It promotes unity and understanding. When members of society work together with one mind, they are able to understand themselves better. This enables them to identify their common problems, which require common solutions.

VII)   Peace helps to promote harmony and progress. When members of a community are able to work together peacefully, they are better able to achieve their common goals, thereby promoting harmony and progress of the community.

VIII) Peace also helps to promote tolerance and happiness. Working together helps people to develop the spirit of oneness.

IX)   Peace inculcates the spirit of hard work. When people work together without grudges, they develop a team spirit. Team spirit and hard work lead to harmony and national development.

X)   Peace ensures growth, meaningful living and advancement in any society.

Having established that Nigeria is lacking peaceful coexistence which is not healthy for   national development, it is believed that all hands must be on deck to restore peace to the country. Adult educators, among other professionals, must join stakeholders in this crusade. It is on this note that the adult education provisions for peaceful coexistence shall be examined.

Suggestions for Attaining Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria from Adult Education Provisions

The lack of peaceful coexistence in Nigeria which has negative for implication for national development has far- reaching implications for adult education provisions in the country. As adult educators, we have to put in place relevant programmes that will help restore peace to our society. Usman (2011) acknowledges that the programmes embodied in adult education sub-sector have capacity of addressing the problem of

peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. In the opinion of these writers the following adult education programmes can go a long way to restore peaceful coexistence for national development in Nigeria.

Peace Education

Peace education can be described as education programme that recognizes, challenges, and changes the thinking that has supported oppressive societal structures. It reveals conditions that trigger violence, ideological rivalries, and national policies that maintain arms races, military systems, and inequitable economic priorities. The pedagogy of peace education should be a philosophy and a process involving skills, including listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution. The process involves empowering people with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment (National Open University of Nigeria, 2010). Peace education tackles the culture of violence and aggression and inculcates values of non-violent change among youths and adults. It opens up people's eyes and minds and makes them appreciate the repercussions of actions taken (Usman, 2011).

Human Rights Education

Everybody has a right to live as a Nigerian in any part of the country. This right must be respected by all. Through human right education Nigerian individual will be equipped with the right of other fellow Nigerians and the need to respect them. A culture of respect for human rights is crucial to permanent peace. Adult educators should supports the efforts of human rights activists at the grassroots and enlighten the general public about the dignity and worth of individual Nigerians.

Functional Literacy

Functional literacy is aimed at providing the recipient with the skills of reading, writing and numeracy with occupational skills for economic purpose. With literacy skills, illiterates are able to overcome the problem of misinformation and misconception of ideas, government policies and programmes. There are a number of Nigerian youths and adults who do not have any literacy and occupational skill; with this programme, they can be assisted to acquire the skills that will fetch them economic resources. When

they are engaged in productive activity of this kind, they can eschew violence. Adult educators in Nigeria need to preach functional literacy to Nigerian governments at all level so that Nigeria youths who are idle can be occupied with productive programmes of this kind for sustainable peace in the country.

Conscientization Programme

Nigerians need to be conscientized and enlightened on the importance of co-operation with one another in conflict resolution. Conscientization, according to Nzeneri and Adekola (2006), is an instrument of adult education that was initiated and promoted by Paulo Freire. To conscientize the adults and youths in Nigeria requires special skills possessed by those who have expertise in psychology of the adults. Thus, the knowledge and skills of adult education are highly required for a successful conscientization process for sustainable development.

Citizenship Education

Citizenship education inculcates in the learners the ideal of national consciousness and awareness. The need for national unity and stability is greater now in Nigeria than ever before, especially with rampant ethnic violence and religious crises. According to Dave (2006), the aim of citizenship classes is to develop young people into responsible citizens, who understand their rights and responsibilities and can play an active part in society. In other words, citizenship education requires a citizen to be well informed, gather facts, reject ethnocentrism, religious jingoism and encourage national consciousness. That means that citizenship education will develop in individual skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to show concern for the wellbeing and dignity of others, respecting the worth of others and approaching civil decision in a rational manner. Adult education centres should include programme that will instil love of one's country at the heart of adult learners.

Liberal Education

There is need for adult education outfits to popularize liberal education among variety of adult education programmes for sustainable peaceful coexistence. Liberal education inculcates the spirit of human dignity in individuals. A person who sees

himself as a human being that has a dignity and a name to protect will not involve himself in an act of injustice that will tarnish his image or prompt other fellow citizen to take arms and fight back. In fact, he or she would shy away from exploiting others. Corruption will not be his/her friend. In fact, when each one stands by justice, society will be free from violence.

Tolerance Education

As social animals, human beings behave and reason differently. In fact, we cannot expect everyone in Nigeria to believe in the same God and worship same way and reason or do things the same way. Our differences on the basis of belief systems, tribes, ideologies, religions, among others, must be tolerated and respected. Understanding and appreciating other peoples' belief systems and religious practices should constitute part of the components of tolerance education. This type of education should also preach endurance and forgiveness to the learners. Adult learners should be made to understand that they are bound to offend one another and this necessitates that human beings need to be tolerant and learn to forgive if social harmony, peaceful coexistence are to be attained in our country. This programme should be infused into literacy programme and be taught practically.

Conclusion

Cases of community clashes, ethno-religious conflicts are continuing in many parts of this country unabated which threatens the unity, progress and development of Nigeria. The consequences of these conflicts have negative implications for peaceful co-existence as people see themselves as enemies of one another. There is no doubt that enmity and hostility among people is not conductive to peaceful co-existence and sustainable development. With this therefore, all hands must be on deck to restore peace to this country. Adult educators need to join other professionals through the proposed adult education provisions such as peace education, human rights education, concentization programme, citizenship education, functional literacy, liberal education and tolerance education to restore peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. The realisation of

this proposal lies on extensive research on the part of adult educators into areas which appear to be new for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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