

ADULT EDUCATION MECHANISMS AS TOOLS FOR ENHANCING PEACEFUL COMMUNAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In the whole universe, there has never been any tribe or continent that can be excluded in communal conflict but the effectiveness and otherwise of the mechanism apply to resolve it matters most. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to quickly attend to it whenever it occurs with the appropriate strategy like educating the conflicting parties on the possible consequences of engaging in communal conflict so that it can be resolved peacefully through Adult education programmes. Base on the above clarification, this paper endeavours to showcase the significant role of Adult education mechanisms in enhancing peaceful communal conflict resolution in Nigeria. Among the possible causes of communal conflict are; inability to tolerate each other, infringing on other people's right, disrespecting the norms and values of the community to mention but few. This paper, therefore, suggested that Government should endeavour to take conflict resolution serious and stop politicking conflict issues, more adult education centres should be established by government and professional adult education practitioners, adequate advocacy on respect for other peoples' culture among others must be encouraged to foster peaceful co-existence among the communities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Adult education, Adult education mechanisms, Communal conflict, Conflict resolution

Introduction

Hardly can someone contest the fact that in as much interaction still exist between two or more people, organisations, communities or even nations, conflict will still continue to exist. The plain fact is that conflict is inevitable where there is interaction, interrelation and interdependence. However, wherever and whenever conflict occurs, the most important thing is how to resolve it. Prominent among the mechanisms to resolve

conflict, most especially within communities, is by adopting the use of adult education practices. It is a known fact that conflict and concession are two sides of the same coin.

Nowadays, communal conflict is becoming rampant and it is a thing of pride within neighbouring communities which have resulted in loss of several lives, destruction of properties, maiming and injuring of innocent citizens and some other

unforgettable losses. There is need to look inward and re-strategise on how to sensitise the community members as well as the warring groups about the implications of conflict/violence to individuals, communities and government at large so that they can have a rethink about conflictual actions. There is need to embark on preaching 'peace' to everybody through the use of Peace Education (PE) which is a form of Adult Education.

Adult Education (AE) is an all encompassing concept that covers the whole existence of human life. It is any knowledge, skills, innovations and ideas that one acquires outside conventional school system and practice accordingly, which can bring about development to an individual and society at large. Adult education is concerned with preparing people for life and helping people to live more successfully. It is basically out to assist adult to increase competence or negotiate transitions in their social roles whether as workers, retirees, parents, community leaders and so on. It helps people to achieve greater fulfilment in their personal lives, and also assist in providing solution to personal and community problems. According to Egunyomi (2015), adult education is a change characterised or promoting discipline, which is relatively planned, situational, relevant and purposefully designed and organised in a multi-variety settings.

Omolewa (2006) posited that adult education is to overcome challenges for an individual, community or a nation. Such challenges include the digital problems, armed conflict, environment degradation, peace building, poverty reduction, climatic changes, gender disparity, insecurity, unemployment and other issues identified in the Millennium Development Goals. Adult

education needs to function effectively because it is a problem solver. Adult education has been universally conceptualised as an educational activity that is largely organised for different categories of people, experiencing some inadequacies in coping with current life situations. It is an educational activity that is relatively planned and purposefully organised for people, irrespective of their age, location, and socio-economic background who desire to learn in order to cope more satisfyingly with real life tasks or problems.

UNESCO (2015) emphasised that adult education is the key tool to address global challenges in such areas as democracy, peace and human rights, preservation of diversity, education for all, learning for sustainability, HIV and AIDS, conflict resolution and workforce development. Our national development process can be easily achieved and sustained only if adult education is encouraged, fostered and recognised as a vibrant educational system capable of liberalising people to know and demonstrate mutual respect to each other and the different ethnic groups or communities in Nigeria. Corroborating the above statement, Anyanwu (2002) affirmed that it is to improve the quality of life of citizens and foster democratic and cooperative processes for the development of mutual help and self reliance.

The main target of the need for adult education remains the urgent need to separate with the past. This is to set out the task of evolving a pattern of development and lifestyle that will enable country to achieve social and economic transformation which may lead to rapid improvement in the standard of living of the people both quantitatively and qualitatively (Oyebamiji 2008).

Sarumi (2011) posited that education in any developing world, including Nigeria, highlights some values like promoting national unity, addressing social inequalities, providing industrial manpower and pleasure, training for vocational competence, promoting international understanding, and public morality among others.

There are various forms of adult education. This study will be restricted to the peace education to foster peaceful communal conflict resolution. UNESCO which is regarded as one of the most important organisations for peace education quote on 'Education for a Culture of Peace' underlines UNESCO's commitment to peace education. The development of holistic approach is based on participatory methods, taking into account the various dimensions of education for a culture of peace (peace and non-violence, human rights, democracy, tolerance, international and intercultural understanding, cultural, and linguistic diversity) as its main objective.

However, learning and educational ability of people is the foundation of all peace education. It, therefore, focuses on acquiring capacities, skills, values and knowledge that contribute to the establishment of sustainable culture of peace. It is beyond any doubt that human beings are capable of learning and that mankind can live together peacefully. Moreover, it is quite obvious that human are responsible for every violence and war and that we could, if we want to, end or prevent violence or war. Obviously, wars begin in the minds of men and it is also in the mind of men that the defences of peace must be constructed UNESCO (1945).

Peace Education

Peace education is a subsidiary of Adult education. It is any strategy or knowledge acquisition programmes that can help to

enhance a state of tranquillity, freedom from disturbances or agitation and calm repose. Peace education is educational activities that are purposively designed to facilitate, enhance and sustain peoples' interest on the significance of peaceful co-existence among themselves and also to promote, strength and encourage peace in the situations of conflict and crisis. It can be deduced from the definition above that the absence of elements such as tolerance, understanding, empathy, cooperation and respect for the differences in culture, religion, ethnic, gender, political and so on cannot be peaceful.

According to Dupuy (2011) peace education is basically developing the individual skills. Schmidt (2006) posited that the result of peace education is to empower people with desired skills, attitude and knowledge to build, maintain and restore relationships at all levels of human interaction. It is the process of developing positive approach toward dealing with conflicts from personal to the international level. Moreover, it helps to create and sustain safe environment (both physical and emotional) that nurtures individuals, creates Safe Avenue for justice and human rights and as well protects it from exploitation and war.

Hanachor and Okanezi (2018) commenting on peace education, identified four types of peace education which includes criticism of war, liberation, a learning process and as a life style movement. The last of the four requires that people need to adopt a change of their life style such that human life should be valued and protected from violence and destruction. This is the aspect of the education of peace that affects conflict resolution; and mediators are to stress on it to ensure sustained peace in various communities.

UNESCO in Ekewuame (2004) presented the culture of peace as all about the value, attitude and form of behaviour that reflect respect for life of human beings and their dignity and for all human rights, the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding between people, groups and individuals. Peace education can be disseminated to people through religious houses, public places, mass media, community gathering, personal contacts and so on.

Therefore, various crises/conflicts pervading our society today are religious, ethnic, political, land dispute in nature, to mention but a few, can better be managed if the citizens are educated rightly about the need to live together in peace. According to Nwolise (2013), virtually every individual, community, region, nation, continent and the world at large presently are afraid and restless simply because of insecurity from pathogens or communal crises which are rapidly overwhelming the land. Leaders and citizens are running from pillar to post in search of solutions.

In Nigeria, particularly, in the south-west region, several communal conflicts had occurred which have almost escalated to war between neighbouring communities. Amongst were Ife-Modakeke in Osun state, Bakatari boundary of Oyo and Ogun States, Ijako-Awaye and Ijako Orile in Yewa North of Ogun State to mention just few. Also, there was Ogbakiri crises which almost swept all the villages in Ogbakiri clan in Rivers State, Zango-Kataf in Kaduna State among others. Governments at all levels have made several efforts to resolve communal crises across board. Prominent among the steps taken were setting up Board of Enquiry, deployment of security agents,

dialoguing with the community leaders and so on. Yet communal conflict has not been completely eradicated, hence, the need for the use of peace education to sensitise the inhabitants about the dangers associated with violence and how best to react and relate with other community members.

According to Freire (2000), violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognise others as persons and not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognized. Furthermore, people must object to violence of any type because if it appears like doing good, the good it does is always temporary and the evil it does is always permanent. Peace is the most essential ingredient of development in every society being developed, developing or under developed nation. It is not only the absence of conflict, violence, insecurity or war but it is a tendency to good behaviour, virtue, attitude, trust and justice. It is a natural social condition, a process and never-ending struggle to transform all forms of conflicts in the society so that violence can be completely avoided.

Peace exposes the developmental process of conflict in an understanding and constructive way. Although conflict is inevitable in every human gathering, where the inhabitants interact non-violently and conflict is positively managed with respectful attention to the legitimate needs and interest of all concerned, peace can be considered as well-managed social conflict. Peace then means a balanced, fair, just and calm state of affairs, where all the stakeholders know and enjoy their due rights and protection.

Peace can, therefore, be seen as the safety of people from fear, want and absence of violence, insecurity or war (Katharina & Schilling, 2012). It is, therefore, pertinent to emphasise the need for a culture of peace

which can only be achieved when the citizens of a community or nation understand the trend of collective problems, have the appropriate skills and knowledge to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings and struggle for justice non-violently, learn to live by international standard of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity and mutual respect for each other. Generally, there has never been a good war neither a bad peace. However, peace can be structured into three stages, durable stage, stable stage and unstable stage.

The durable stage of peace: This is also known as positive peace, it is characterised by high level of cooperation, mutual understanding and good interpersonal relation amongst the stakeholders based on shared values and goals. There is total obedience and respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights and legitimated freedom radiating within such community.

The stable stage of peace: This stage is relatively higher in its degree of tension than the precedent and was characterised by limited cooperation, trust, mutual understanding, respect for the rule of law, laissez-faire and lackadaisical attitudes, oppression and faded fundamental human rights pervade such society.

The unstable stage of peace: This stage normally occurs as a result of unresolved differences leading to rising tensions and mistrust which can quickly degenerate to serious and unmanageable crisis. It is sometimes characterised with sporadic violence and government repression of opposition. However, any situation that persists in this direction, the peace around there can shift its base and serious crisis marked with direct confrontations between the opposing parties set in and if the appropriate measure is not urgently put in

place, such conflict may aggravate from mere crisis to a full-fledge war.

Peace can only be achieved when the appropriate strategies are developed to accomplish the objectives. Therefore, preventing conflict, violence, insecurity or war supersedes providing solution to it. The most visible way by which prevention can occur in any society is to improve educational status of its citizens. It is pertinent to know that wars begin in the minds of men; it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace in any society must be constructed. Aside from acquiring formal general knowledge as provided in formal institutions like schools and universities, adult education takes care of the rest including the following: modifying the peace deficits of individuals such as prejudices and intolerance, and also covering the provisions of insight into people's relationship and their conflict resolution mechanisms as well as how the society work politically, economically and socially within their domain and beyond, to the international level.

According to Umaru and Shama (2013), peace refers to the absence of war or other hostilities and includes freedom from quarrels disagreement and strife. Hardly can any community exist without seeking a way to maintain relative peace and arrive to a state of social equilibrium where disputes/misunderstandings are resolved without resulting to violence or war. It is a systematic strategy mapped out to eliminate the conflicts and violence caused by injustice, inequality, human rights violations, and most importantly, implementing the ways and means of reducing the same through appropriate teaching and learning tactics by means of producing responsible citizens to attain and spread the peace in their neighbourhood and communities.

Therefore, peace education which is a branch of AE is one of the goals of education generally (Hanachor and Okanezi 2018).

According to Ajala (2008), the problem of peace in our community basically is underlying peace values and that if the underlying values are identified, mastered and well managed by the people concerned, communal conflicts will be reduced drastically and conducive environment worth of living will be guaranteed.

According to Freire (2006), peace education is a mechanism for the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace through a process of conscientisation. It is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence, of scale ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable features. From the above definitions, it can be understood that peace education inculcates the high order of human values among the individuals. More so, it aims at the overall development of the individuals and helps to enhance eternal values in their minds.

Peace education is a universal call for an inclusive approach to mutual coexistence and holistic way of living and an inseparable aspect of civilisation. No civilisation is truly progressive without education and no educational system can be truly civilised unless it is based on the universal principles of peace. Peace education can be taught in all forms whether formal, informal, non-formal settings. Peace education is absolutely necessary to the extent that it should be inculcated into every citizen including refugees and migrants, people from all social sectors and also disables in order to promote equal opportunities through education. Katz, (1989) affirmed that both conflict resolution and peace education are

concepts that can compliments each other in significant areas. Conflict resolution can be viewed as an approach to peaceful relations among individuals, groups, communities and nations. It is an effective vehicle for examining themes of peace, justice and non-violent social change.

Aims of Peace Education

In order to enhance a better, effective and desired peace within the society, peace education which is a form of adult education, must implore the following aims:

- i. foster changes in order to make the community a better and more humane place;
- ii. develop values and skills to assist the people in striving for fullness of life;
- iii. help the people develop a rich vision of peace to work for a visible global society;
- iv. create constructive behaviour for dealing with problems so as to minimise or eliminate conflict;
- v. explore peace both as a state of being and as an active process for the promotion of positive human relations; and
- vi. explore a range of different alternative futures in particular ways of building a more just and sustainable world society (Hicks, 1988).

Peace education is optimally useful in increasing awareness on issues such as environmentalism, disarmament, and promoting a culture of peace, providing skills for resolving and managing conflict, changing the mindsets of individuals and promoting human rights to mention just few.

All over the world, people have been in great need to be free from conflict, ill-feeling, selfishness, descent and strife. Hence, the need for peace to reign is now a common phenomenon that has gone viral

beyond individual personal life, not only at home and at work, but also at the national and global level. However, the tension, anxiety and fear arising from communal conflict are not only disruptive but continue to be a constant drain on well being of people mentally and physically.

In spite of all advancement made by science and technology, communities locally, nationally and internationally are far from being safe and peaceful. The international conference on education held at Geneva declaration of the 44th session in 1994 has listed the following as aims of peace education:

- develop sense of universal values in every individual;
- prepare citizens to cope with difficult and uncertain situations and fitting them for personal autonomy and responsibility;
- educate individual and develop the ability to recognise and accept the values which exist in the diversity of individuals;
- strengthen peace, friendship and solidarity between individuals and people;
- develop the ability of non-violent conflict-resolution among the individuals;
- cultivate the ability to make informed choices, basing their judgement and actions not only on the analysis of present situation and the vision of a preferred future among the individuals;
- teach the citizens to respect the cultural heritage, protect the environment and social harmony;
- cultivate citizens in the line of solidarity feeling and feeling of equity at the national and international levels in the perspectives of a balanced and long-term development.

In tandem with the highlighted aims and objectives of peace education, it is absolutely necessary to inculcate and recognise the crucial role of adult education

which includes perceived tools that can be used by people, particularly those who are oppressed to analyse, challenge and transform oppressive social structures and bring about social justice (Freire, 1974, 2000) which is a big contribution to building a culture of peace and non-violence which actually goes beyond the substance of fundamental human rights of the present era.

Core elements of peace education

There are some elements that can be referred to as cogent and important in all ramifications in regards to peace education. Gandhi (n.d) opined that collectively, people must be the change that they are yearning and wishing to see in their neighbourhood, community, nation and the world at large. The basis of peace education is to have a critical approach to conflict and violence and it has some elements, amongst these are:

Awareness of violence in all its historically and socially changing forms: Violence is understood here as the destructive dynamics of conflict.

Learning a constructive approach to conflicts at all levels;

Taking a preventable approach to violence; and

Preventing the negative dynamics of conflict escalation.

Using Adult Education to enhance peaceful communal conflict

It is universally accepted that an educated society is easy to rule than illiterate ones. However, a great purpose of adult education is to create awareness and sensitise people about their right, promote moral and also let people know how to accommodate, tolerate and endure each other and to guide against conflict in its totality. According to Akinkunmi and Omilani (2018), there is no nation, community or organisation that can reach the lofty height of development without having adequate

provision for education. Therefore, for any meaningful growth and development to take place anywhere in a country, community or even in any establishment, such organisation needs to continuously sensitise and educate its people on the importance of living together in peace and harmony.

It is obvious that no meaningful development can take place in an environment dominated by conflict and misunderstanding. Any leader that takes the issue of education with levity does that at his/her own peril and such community will find it difficult to progress or develop, Akinkunmi and Omilani (2018). It is worth noting that communal conflict emanates and escalates with the consent of grown adults. The occurrence of communal conflict goes beyond the teenagers. It is obvious that there are several ways in different forms of adult education that community members can be reached or educated in the bid to enhance peaceful communal conflict. Conflict resolution itself is a form of adult education. However, any of the following approaches/mechanisms can be used to create conducive atmosphere for peaceful communal conflict settlement: awareness, conscientisation, advocacy, round-table dialoguing, mediation, orientation of people, to mention but just a few.

Awareness creation: Liberation of the minds of the conflicting parties about the dangers associated with communal conflict is an essential strategy that can be used whenever there is a signal that conflict may break out in a community or between communities. This can quickly be used to prepare the minds of the parties concerned to have a rethink about the subject matter and change their initial plan from conflicting to peaceful mode.

Advocacy: It is another mechanism that can be used to enhance peaceful resolution of

communal conflict. It is the practice of supporting a person or group of persons to make their intention, view, observation, voice, decision and challenges known to the public so that intervention from individuals, group of individuals, well wishers and so on will set in to appease and make corrections where necessary to resolve the issue amicably. The National Health and Disability Advocacy (2009) posited that advocacy means the act of making the voice/s of the people heard, defend how people feel about something by advancing a re-think or second view point on the issue of contention.

Round-table dialoguing: It is a process of finding solution to a problem by mutual reasoning of all parties that are involved in such disagreement. Dialogue is a discourse or negotiation between two or more persons, group of individuals to create a better understanding of issues concerning them. Community dialogue is, therefore, the process of identifying and analysing possible solutions to community problem through joint efforts of all stakeholders within the community (Hanachor and Okanezi, 2018). The process involves interaction and communication of information between parties with the aim of reaching a consensus on issues of common interest. The rules are expression of views on the subject matter and the parties are expected to listen to each other in order to get insight into the subject of contention.

Mediation: It can also be employed to look into the bothering matter. This involves an external body which may be from the community or outside the community. Most importantly, he should be a person that is trusted and respected by all the parties involved in the misunderstanding. Most often, the mediator comes from the public but at times if the matter has attracted the

attention of the government, he may be an appointee of the government. The most important thing is that such person must be an unbiased, and his duty is not to give judgement but hear the views of both parties, make settlement and also be a witness to the signatories.

Orientation programmes: Peaceful communal conflict resolution can also be achieved by embarking on mass orientation within the community or communities involved. Government at all tiers has an establishment/agency for making people aware of a particular incident, dangers associated to it and how it can be avoided. An individual or group of individuals can also do same, that is, broadcasting and announcing to the people, certainly, a well informed society understands better and easier to coordinate. It can also be disseminated through the religious houses; all that matters is to ascertain that the information gets to the appropriate destinations.

Obiozor and Obidiegwu (2013) asserted that the major aim and responsibility of adult education is to help adults and youths adapt to change and live productively in the world of change. It creates awareness on people, encourages them in learning how to live together and act as responsible citizens in local and global setting.

Conclusion and recommendation

Adult education aims at organising peace and conflict awareness programmes on how to handle conflict. Community sensitisation and mobilisation programmes can be organised through community outreach where information on peace is disseminated to people either through interpersonal contact, mass media, local media channels, religious houses and so on. In sensitising communities, trusted authorities and community members can be engaged to

disseminate information to create credibility to the programme. These trusted individuals may be teachers, clergy men among others to act as facilitators in educating families, community leaders, among others. Individuals may be sensitised through workshops, seminars, conferences and community meetings/gatherings. Posters or pictures on those that have been affected previously by communal conflicts could serve as a means of creating awareness.

Conflict can be influenced and become a channel to peace, and justice can be achieved, bearing in mind that how you work on it is as important as the role you play in it. It is obvious that without peace ruminating among inhabitants of a community, there cannot be meaningful development. United we stand and divided we fall, living together in peace is the only way to achieve the desire goals of a community. It is a known fact that conflict and consensus are two sides of the same coin. Carrying sword, arrow, gun and piled up scientific nuclear weapon is not the best way to curb violence, rather, it aggravates it. Hence, there is a need for peace education to induce, persuade, appeal and sensitise the community members. Any strategy or platform that can make citizens of a community understand the need to embrace and promote cordial relationship that is free of conflict, violence or war and that can guarantee peaceful coexistence among various tribes, ethnic groups, religions, political affiliation, or racial groups is thereby recommended.

Provision of adequate and relevant knowledge for the citizens is the most appropriate means to anchor and achieve everlasting peaceful coexistence in the society and not through exchange of fire for fire, arms for arms or weapon for weapon. Every individual in each community needs

to be furnished with undiluted peaceful conflict resolution skills and knowledge to achieve their various desired, socio-economic, political or religious goals.

In view of the above, this paper concludes by suggesting that:

- Experts in the field of conflict resolution should not be left out in the bid to manage and resolve misunderstanding or disagreement in a community.
- Prompt attention should be given to the conflicting parties without any traces of biasness so that such misunderstanding will not aggravate to violent stage.
- Government should endeavour to take conflict resolution serious and stop politicking conflicting issues of contention to the level of escalating to violence or war.
- Adult education centres should be established by government and professional adult educators should be employed to facilitate and inculcate peace and community education into people within the communities so that they will be mindful of their rights and privileges.
- All tiers of government should also embrace the importance of peace within their community and thereby invest more in adult education programmes that can benefit their various communities.

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