

Promoting Peace, Security and Other Social Issues in Nigeria Online Education Programmes

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Abstract

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa is faced with a lot of social contradictions, and the country is totally in need of peace and unity among her citizenry. The search for peace process cannot be achieved in a vacuum. An urgent problem demands immediate solution. In view of the current challenges confronting the social, political, religious and economic fabrics of the country, there is need to adopt new strategies to ameliorate these issues. The paper focused on peace education culture. The authors are of the view that the persistent violence and insecurity, which are heavily caused by illiteracy, poverty, excessive bribery and corruption, among others, could be seriously challenged through the instrument of education, as an apparatus for change and development. Hence, peace education culture needs to be integrated into the Nigerian education curriculum to address the identifiable issues that are threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria. The authors have advocated for aggressive or massive education as an antidote for illiteracy and poverty, which are some of the causes of conflicts and insecurity. The paper also stressed the need for early adoption of peace education culture in Nigerian school system which can be achieved using online technology.

Keywords: Peace education, Social contradiction; Illiteracy, Violence, Corruption and Poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a victim of accident of history sharply divided along ethnic (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba) and religious lines (Christianity and Islam). We can attest to this due to the prevalence of violence and conflict in Nigeria since independence in 1960. It is on record that since independence, the nation has never had peace. It will not be an overstatement to say that in view of the historical antecedents, as a multi-religious and ethnocentric society, Nigeria has experienced substantial ethnic, sectional, religious and political violence, which resulted in wanton destruction of lives and properties across her territorial boundaries.

Consequently, it is either a coup or a counter coup; Biafra or MASSOB, Jihad or Maitatsine religious fanaticism; Aguleri-Umuleri; Bokoharam or Cattle Migrants; Militants or Avengers; Jos and Kaduna riots; Students riots, Bakassi boys, Maiduguri and Damaturu clashes; Political clashes, Odi massacre, Kaduna or Baga massacre. In addition, strikes and violent demonstrations, such as, PENGASEN, Medical Doctors or Nurses, NASU or SSANU, ASUP or ASUU, etc., have taken their own turns. Assassinations and kidnapping have become common terms and a daily occurrence. These problems have caused the nation lots of shame at both national and international levels.

These problems, we know are very inimical and counter-productive to the development of this country. In view of these crises, the citizens are skeptical about the continuous corporate existence of Nigeria as one and indivisible country. Nigerians are living in perpetual fear, and there is tension everywhere.

These menace demands immediate measures for remediation that will not only be addressed through our traditional institutions, but through online programmes. This process, the authors believe will reach the majority of our citizens. So, all hands must be put in place to solve this social malaise, particularly via the instrument of online education. But, let us ask this basic question.

Is it possible for any individual that has no basic education in the present society to talk of meaningful employment and good thinking faculty? No; not in the present dispensation.

It is unfortunate that a country that parades majority of illiterate citizens, dichotomized religion, and multiplicity of suspicious ethnic groups and sections, and a country full of bribery and highly corrupt individuals, cannot witness true stability but constant upheavals. This write-up is an attempt to examine the major causes of conflicts

and insecurity in Nigeria and how both offline and online education could be used to address this endemic disease for peace to reign in Nigeria and the world at large.

However, for us to address “peace education culture” in contemporary Nigeria, and for a better comprehensibility of the subject matter, it is pertinent to examine the following terms.

(i) Education (ii) Illiteracy: (iii) Dropout (iv) Peace (v) Peace education (vi) Online education

Education: Smith & Smith (2008) posits that education is concerned with change – ‘with how people can act with understanding and sensitivity to improve their lives and those of others,’ and appreciation of emotions and feelings. This goes to prove that if you are not educated, you hardly can appreciate other people’s emotions and feelings. In the same development, Ijaiya (2015) defined education as, “the wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life.” In totality, it means that if you are not educated, you cannot equally be concerned with the process of fostering understanding with yourself and the environments in which you operate. Education makes you a total man or woman.

Illiteracy: The condition of being unable to read any text, such as signs, books, magazines or newspapers. If somebody cannot read, then, the person is in the dark and blind; hence, the person can be pushed around like the present Nigerian youths.

Dropout: This is described as a person who deliberately or not deliberately is out of school, college, or university before completing a course or skill. There is no doubt that the country has one of the highest dropouts in the continent.

Conflict: Conflict is a behavioural pattern involving two or more individuals, which can be inter-personalities, inter-groups, inter-organizations and inter-states (Afegbua, 2014).

Peace: Peace is described as freedom from war or violence or disorder or conflict; it could also mean peace and tranquility. It also embraces freedom from violence or conflicts or fear or anxiety (Ijaiya, 2015).

Peace Education: Peace Education could be defined as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive for peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international levels (Fountain, 1997).

Online education: For learners, it is the process of taking courses without attending a brick-and-mortar school (Prince, (n.d.)). On the part of the instructor, it is the process of delivering educational instruction through the internet, which the students receive through their computers and other alternative technologies. In this case, interactions between the teacher and the learners could be via synchronous or asynchronous communication means.

Online education is a type of educational instruction that is delivered via the internet to students using their home computers. During the last decade, online degrees and courses have become popular alternative for a wide range of nontraditional students; include those who want to continue working full-time or raising families. Most of the time, online degree programs and courses are offered via the host school's online learning platform, although some are delivered using alternative technologies. Although there are subtle dissimilarities, the main difference between online and traditional learning is the fact that online education liberates the student from the usual trappings of on-campus degree programs — including driving to school, planning their schedule around classes, and being physically present for each sequence of their coursework.

Online learning allows us to bring educational opportunities to you. This type of learning is especially beneficial to students who live far away from campus, have busy work schedules, family demands, and other commitments. Online courses are also an excellent option for students who prefer to work independently at any time of day.

REDUCING OR ELIMINATING ILLITERACY FOR A SUCCESSFUL PEACE EDUCATION CULTURE IN NIGERIA

There is no doubt that the problem of violence and conflict can be resolved through peace education. However, it will be extremely difficult for a successful peace education to thrive when the majority of the citizens are school dropouts or completely illiterates.

The question now is, “How do we achieve peace education when the majority of the populace has not been within the four walls of the school?” This question needs to be answered with caution, and it will be tackled or addressed from different angles, as will be discussed hereunder.

First of all, let us look at illiteracy as one of the major contributors to social conflict in the country. Illiteracy is a disease that must be addressed in Nigerian society before any meaningful thing will be achieved. Nigeria owes her citizens massive education. Education should be provided for all Nigerian citizens who are of school age in order to make a meaningful and vibrant society. Nigeria has a lot of school dropouts in the society begging to be re-trained. In fact, Fafunwa (1991) commented that it is even worse when one has not seen the inside of a formal school. Hence, the scholar recommended that one important guiding principle is that education should be a continuous process, and flexible enough to accommodate any mature person at any stage.

It is also important to emphasize here that any child that is of age to attend school and did not get the opportunity will continue to be an unhappy child. Consequently, any unhappy mind can do “anything possible” because his/her mind has become the devils’ workshop.

Thus, for peace and harmony to reign in our society, Nigerian youths must go to school. It is worthwhile to ask this question - Can someone without a school certificate (i.e., Primary, secondary or higher) be employable in Nigeria? Secondly, if a person cannot be engaged in school or any meaningful job, can’t he/she be engaged in any other job that is not meaningful (i.e., unlawful jobs, such as Robbery, Cultism, Rape, Kidnapping, assassination, 419, etc.).

In this respect, there is need for Nigerian education system to expand the existing educational institutions and also embrace and integrate e-learning in order to absorb candidates that are of age and qualified to gain admissions into Nigerian schools in order to reduce the level of school dropouts and illiteracy in the society.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

It will be pertinent to ask why people need to go to school for a peace education culture to be effective. Education, however, is seen as a potential key to peace education culture. Education has been identified as an appropriate tool of fostering national unity, and its potentials have not been fully tapped due to mismanagement and low morality, (Ajaiyi, 2015). The scholar further advanced that Nigerian society needs to be transformed in order to develop peace culture, and proper education. He further claimed can play a key role as in development. The author suggested that the present system of education needs total overhauling and transformation in order to promote contentment and peace culture in Nigeria.

Being educated bestows a lot on human beings. The following among, others could be derived as an educated person -

- a) Education for individual’s freedom of expression
- b) Education for critical thinking
- c) Education for intelligent criticism
- d) Education for self-development
- e) Education for self-determination
- f) Education for independent of opinion
- g) Education for eradication of illiteracy
- h) Education for eradication of corruption in Nigeria
- i) Education for meaningful jobs or skills
- j) Education for effective political participation
- k) Education for meaningful and effective leadership
- l) Education for religious unity and tolerance

- m) Education for good citizenship
- n) Education for security and safety
- o) Education for cultural integration
- p) Education for ethnic cohesion
- q) Education for agricultural education & participation
- r) Education for a total personality
- s) Education for social and economic growth
- t) education for social awareness, a better understanding of society and the knowledge of available alternatives (Almeida, 2009).

DEVELOPING CULTURE AND PEACE VIA EDUCATION

How can we develop culture and peace through the instrument of education? Off course, many scholars have advocated for peace education in order to solve some of the social maladies trailing Nigeria for decades. Peace education aims to provide learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to end violence and injustice and promote a culture of peace (Noah & Dosunmu, 2011). Hicks (1985) regards peace education as activities that develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to explore concepts of peace, enquire into the obstacles to peace (both in individuals and societies), to resolve conflicts in a just and non-violent way, and to study ways of constructing just and sustainable alternative futures.

Reardon (1995) revealed in her writing that “the ultimate goal of peace education is the formation of responsible, committed and caring citizens, who have integrated the values into everyday life and acquired the skills to advocate for them”. The scholar went further to express that “the conceptual core of peace education is how to control, reduction and elimination violence in the society. In the same manner, in order to combat the current culture of intolerance and violence in Nigeria, (Noah and Dosunmu, 2011) further suggested that there is need to reinvigorate social reconstruction via peace education programme. Dewey (1957) also asserts that there is an intimate connection between education and social action in a democracy. Hence, he advocated that schools should teach students how to be problem-solvers by helping students learn how to think rather than simply learning rote lessons about large amounts of information.

Baldo and Furniss (1998) also put forward that peace education is most effective when the skills of peace and conflict resolution are learned actively and are modelled by the school environment in which they are taught. If students are taught the strategies and techniques of solving conflict in the classroom, they will definitely extend this to the larger society.

Peace education will enable learners learn to live and work cooperatively and harmoniously with others.

In summary, Peace education puts emphasis on what unites individuals, groups, sections, nations and the world in general. It helps to build knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that seek to make the youths/young people to understand what conflict is in order to avert it and also resolve it in a peaceful manner, which ultimately promotes peace and harmony, thereby creating conducive atmosphere where peace and justice reign. Peace education teaches individuals trust, love, fairness, cooperation, nonviolence in relation with others in a given society. Peace education instills discipline and critical thinking enough for problem-solving or conflict resolution. Peace education empowers young adults with the enabling skills for peaceful resolution of conflicts; it also mirrors into the causes and consequences of such acts. In totality, it attempts to save the human race from extinction.

WHEN DOES PEACE EDUCATION CULTURE START?

Scholars have quarried on when to start the much advocated peace education culture. The authors are of the opinion suggests that peace education be introduced at the early age. The scholars claim that quality education delivered in a violence-free, cooperative learning environment, teaches children critical lessons about non-violent conflict resolution.

Contrary to the aforesaid claim, all over the world, millions of children are denied the opportunity to receive an education. If this is the case, what is the position or the faith of peace education culture? It has been observed that some disputes between individuals, groups and nations are settled without the option of violence. If this is so, how do we imbibe this method of settling disputes through education without resulting to violence? This is a thoughtful question that needs thoughtful solutions, which this paper attempts to proffer answers.

First, let us reflect back on when United Nations Assembly proclaimed the year 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the children of the world. The UN then defined a culture of peace as, "All the values, attitudes and forms of behaviour that reflect respect for life, for human dignity and for all human rights, justice, solidarity, the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding between people."

The UN called on all nations to ensure that children, from early age benefit from education to enable them resolve any dispute peacefully in a spirit of respect for dignity and of tolerance. The body stressed that the essentials for building a culture of peace is education for all. This means that for peace to reign in Nigeria, the majority of the populace must be educated right from the start.

Early education as I understand starts from 1-2 years. Our children must be taught on how to embrace peace and solve problems from the early age to adulthood. In the same development, since UN Assembly recommended education for all for peace education starting from the early age, it means that you cannot easily understand how to make peace if you are illiterate. As a result, being educated is the panacea for peace in our society.

Furthermore, it is of note that education is not only acquired in schools; hence, to effectively tackle peace education in Nigeria, there must be a national re-orientation that will enable parents to start the education of their children from our various homes because that is the basis of our moral values. Whatever you (parents) teach a child at the tender age, he/she grows with it. The evidence of this could be observed in Russia and United States where the citizens of the two countries grow to know that that the two nations are enemies.

When you tell your child not to go to your neighbour's door-step, the child usually refrains from getting closer to anything that is connected with your neighbour's. Parents must teach their children how to see their neighbours as their friends. They must be taught on how not to retaliate when they are offended. They must be taught on how to say sorry when they offend others. This is the foundation of peace education.

Secondly, a viable curriculum that will embrace all aspects of peace education must be in place where teachers will inculcate into our students on how to promote peace and tolerance one another. We must teach the students how not to fuel hatred and suspicion among themselves; how not to divide themselves among ethnic and religious lines; how they will see themselves living in one indivisible country called "Nigeria. It is important that education should facilitate people's understanding that war and other forms of physical, economic, political, ecological and gender violence are not on the same order as natural disasters.

CAUSES OF CONFLICTS/CRISES IN NIGERIA

Illiteracy: Illiteracy is one of the major problems facing Nigeria as a nation. The impact of illiteracy is very enormous and also very harmful. If you are not educated, you have no freedom; you are totally and perpetually enslaved to others. In fact, a country with majority of illiterate citizens parades with unproductive population. Ajaiyi (2015) summarized it all when the scholar stated that ignorance due to large population of illiterates in one of the major factors. The author further stated that due to large illiteracy among our youths, the majority of our elites now use them for, personal, political and economic gains.

Unemployment & Poverty: There is no gainsaying that the majority of Nigerian youths or employable adults are idling away their time at various homes. In this same case, their energies are untapped. There is no doubt that energies not utilized will be channeled to unproductive ventures. Nigerians are wallowing in poverty and joblessness. Ijaiyi (2015) pointed out that poverty is more pronounced than ever before in spite of Nigeria's status as oil producing nation. This is a fact. In reality, the situation is not getting better, as Nigeria's naira exchange with one British pound is approximately N500. Nigerian government needs to assist her citizens by providing jobs, and engaging them positively in order to reduce the poverty level. Providing jobs for them will re-direct their energy to productive activities that can enhance the development of the country's economy. Therefore, Nigerian government at all levels has to assist her population by providing meaningful jobs for them in order to reduce inactivity and boredom.

Self-centeredness and Greed: The selfishness or parochial interest of our leaders on offices or positions of authority are some of the cause of crises in the country. One individual or group wants to own what belongs to the whole. When you listen to the sum of money being swindled by our brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in administrative or political authority, you feel like taking over the government through any means.

Lack of Implementation of Pragmatic Curriculum: Currently, Nigeria's curriculum is tailored towards training personnel that will work in rugged or tilled and good air conditioned offices. In Nigerian, the acquisition of a certificate in school does not make you an independent man, but dependent.

Unemployment: Joblessness among our teeming population is causing a lot of fracas in Nigeria. Nigeria has "uncountable" graduates that are rooming the streets looking for invisible jobs. Even when there are available jobs, it becomes a matter of "who is who" in Nigeria, either based on ethnicity or religion.

Excessive Bribery and Corruption: Most of us are aware of Nigerian culture of "You grab and I grab" or "Who grabs what?" I will not waste my precious time explaining this particular act because we are all witnesses to what is happening daily in this country. Every day we hear about money laundry and how billions or millions are being swindled out of the country. This is the money that belongs to all of us. Who will be happy? Why won't there be discontent in the country?

Multinational corporations' tactics of divide and rule. The multinationals, in an attempt to cheat our people have resulted to divide and rule tactics. For instance, if there is a community's road project that is worth N100, 000, 00, they will prefer to give our chiefs or our political representative's about N20, 000.000 in order not to do the project. Once this is exposed to the citizens, the community will be in crisis.

Chieftaincy Tussle and Untruthfulness Among our Chiefs: Looking at our various communities today, how many of our chiefs can you attest for in terms of honesty and trustworthiness? How many of them will tell you that they are going to Borokiri that you will not see at Aba? This is the true nature of our Chiefs in recent times. Due to this lack of trust and true representation, our youths always boil up and carry arms and ammunitions legally or illegally to express their dissatisfaction with their leaders. These youths are usually backed up by disgruntled elders who had no opportunity to grab like the chiefs, thereby causing mayhem on innocent citizens.

Land or Boundary Disputes: Land or boundary disputes have been one of the causes of fracas in the country since individuals don't see themselves as belonging to indivisible Nigeria.

Ethnicity: The lumping of numerous ethnic nationalities of North and South with diverse values, orientation and interests into one by the British government, our colonial master, which constitutes the present Nigeria, is one of the major problems. A country where each of the ethnic groups first of all pays loyalty to the group before the nation is a very bad omen. This is one of the major causes of boundary disputes in the country. Ijaiya (2015) has observed that instead of an average Nigerian man to say "One nation, one destiny", they resort to saying, "One people, one zone, one destiny." Nigerians are divided along tribal lines. Of a truth, our dealers are worsening the situation, as each of them fight for their tribes instead of focusing on national unity. The elites see themselves as the gods of their ethnic groups. In every crisis, they are behind the scene; making one provocative statement or the other, and gives financial and moral advices to almost all crises.

Religious Bigotry: World over, religion has been said to be one of the major causes of violence or riots. Religion, as divisive as it is, plays a major role in causing most violence in Nigeria. There is constant religious intolerance in the country. The case of Maitatsine religious fanaticism has been forgotten in the history of Nigeria. This is usually more pronounced during political appointments. Once political appointments are made and they don't favour a particular religious, there will be fire on the mountain.

For instance, this has been observed in several states in Nigeria. There have been constant clashes between Muslims and Christians' in Jos, Plateau State, as Muslims feel that they are in a majority, hence, should have a Muslim ruler (Helleman, 2011). Religious violence/riots have been witnessed in Kaduna, Kano, Benue states at different times. There is hardly any part of Nigeria that has not witnessed one religious intolerance or the other.

Lack of Pragmatic Curriculum for Peace Education Culture: Nigeria is seriously in dear need of peace education culture, whereby the children will learn how to tolerate one another at the early age.

Unguarded Utterances by Our Political Elites: The Nigerian political elites have not helped to unite this country; instead, they tend to pure fuel in the fire in place of kerosene. In view of their unguarded political utterances, President Goodluck Jonathan, in 2014 while swearing in his Special Adviser on Political Affairs, Prof. Rufa'i Alkali and other political appointees, decried the constant unguarded political utterances and urged Nigerian

politician to desist from making provocative statements that are capable of heating up the polity. The President further stated, “When one listens to some of the comments that we politicians make sometimes, it could be terrible and do not portray the character of good politics. We are supposed to be nation builders.” Yet, the reverse has been the case for our “ethnic” politicians.

PREVENTING CONFLICTS/CRISIS IN NIGERIA THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION CULTURE

- i. Government at all levels should create avenues for our children to go to school, so that they can think critically and analyze issues by themselves. This will liberate them from “Go” and “Come” commands, and also stops them from being used as political weapons.
- ii. Peace education should be incorporated into Nigerian education curriculum whereby students will be thought on how to co-exist with each other; how not to discriminate based on religious grounds, and how to see each other as one and indivisible entity. They should be taught that multiplicity of religions and ethnics’ in the country should be seen as advantageous rather than the opposite. This, I think, was the thoughts of those who initiated the National Youth Service in this country.
- iii. Pragmatic curriculum should be in place to teach our children agriculture education, thereby disabusing their minds that they can only survive unless they become public/civil servants. Reliably, in the 2016 academic year, an attempt to this effect has been made by the federal or state government by introducing *security education* at the secondary school level.
- iv. Nigerian political and religious elites should play good role models and learn to guard their lips and refrain from making unguarded and inflammatory statements that boils the minds of uninformed youths and adults in various ethnic setups. As Afegbua (2014) puts it, “The country’s political leaders at all levels of government have a spearheading role to play. They should stop making inciting statements that will disunite us as a country and plunge the country into crisis, but rather they should focus their attention on those things that unites us and promote peaceful coexistence among the citizenry.”
- v. Nigerians should instill the culture of dialogue in managing disputes in the country.
- vi. It is worth noting that an idle mind is a devil’s workshop. A man that is idle will never be happy with himself, rather, he thinks of evils against anyone. Therefore, Nigerian governments at all levels should provide meaningful jobs for our teeming young adults in order to positively engage them on daily basis.
- vii. The traditional methods of education cannot adequately address the current maladies in Nigeria, but a pragmatic online peace education should be in place to address these issues.
- viii. Finally, Peace education centres should be established in most local government headquarters to enhance peace education culture in the country.

Conclusion

This paper has established the state of violence and insecurity in Nigeria, and enumerated the major probable causes of problems, such as, illiteracy, poverty, ethnic, political and religious factors, among others. The authors also noted the state of national and international embarrassments such problems have caused the country, such as, social, political, economic, and total underdevelopment and poor image. The authors suggested for massive education for illiterate Nigerian citizens, and an integration of peace education culture in the curriculum, particularly at the early age in Nigerian school system, so as to imbibe the spirit of peace, tolerance and love in order to foster national unity. The authors are also of the view that the traditional method of educating our citizens should be enhanced via online peace education programmes which they think will reach the masses irrespective of their location status.

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