

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN INTERNAL CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF AGBOR, IKA ETHNIC NATIONALITY
OF DELTA STATE**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the use of Social Studies Education in Internal Conflict Management: A case of Agbor, Ika Ethnic Nationality of Delta State. The general objective of the study is to expose exhaustively how Social Studies Education through its classroom instructional process can be used to ameliorate internal conflicts in Agbor. This will also be applicable in all human societies. Questionnaire was used as the major instrument for primary data collection, while secondary sources like journals, books, online materials and periodicals were also used as sources of data collection. Tables, frequency and percentage were the statistical instruments used for data analysis in the study. The paper concludes that conflicts whether personal or group does no one any good, no matter how good its intentions may be. Urgent need to strengthen educational facilities from the elementary to tertiary levels to enable it develop in people the needed knowledge and skill to appreciate peace and despise conflicts through effective social studies classroom instructional process and regular academic Conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums on peace building were recommended.

Keywords: Conflicts, Management and Mechanism.

Introduction

Conflict as a concept has attracted varied definitions from different scholars in the field of Law, Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. Discussions on the concept of conflict is gaining momentum daily in social, political and religious circles as a result of its negative impact on man and the entire human society. Hornby (2001) defines conflict as a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. A violent situation or period of fighting between two countries; armed/military conflict. He also defines conflict as a situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes. Hornby's assertion shows instructively that conflict can be personal or group. Personal conflicts can therefore be perceived of as conflicts that exist within persons. This may not necessarily be violent to the extent of inflicting bodily injuries or open wound but

are mostly psychological and emotional which may often times be more traumatic and depressing culminating to lack of coordination, emotional wreck and total mental breakdown. Ameliorating personal conflicts in all human societies is extremely vital in achieving societal peace and development because it is only when an individual is peaceful within, that he can contribute to a peaceful environment. Group conflicts from Homby's analyses depict conflicts that exist between groups and corporate bodies. This form of conflicts are more physical, destructive and bloody than personal conflicts. The possibility of physical harm and destruction is all times high in group conflicts. Iwegbu and Owa (2014) asserts that conflicts involving groups can be either inter-group or intra-group. They further affirmed that inter- group conflicts are in most cases more destructive and damaging than intra-group conflicts. Intra-group conflicts denote conflicts within a group or members of a group, while inter-group conflicts exist between two or more groups.

Conflicts in human societies according to Iwegbu & Ukadike (2010) assume different colorations. According to them, conflicts can be ethnic, religious, economic or political. Conflict is said to be ethnic when the rivalry is between two different ethnic groups. It is religious when it exists between two different religious groups. Conflict is classified as political when it is between members of two or more different political parties, while conflicts over resources can be termed economic.

Lewis Coser in Obi (2003) refers to conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Akpotor in Orhero & Obukohwo (2000) defines conflict as a situation whereby an identifiable group of human beings are consciously in opposition to another group or groups pursuing incompatible goals or objectives. Agbefe (2004) refers to conflict as wars, revolution or communal struggles, which may involve the use of force or weapons of war. Conflicts to a layman, means everything bad but to the Chinese, conflict whether personal or group means an opportunity for positive change and improvement (Iwegbu & Ukadike 2010).

Conflicts, irrespective of its dimension and colour, in most cases usually end up in unpalatable consequences. Though there may be situations whereby conflicts may end up defining a new way of solving a new social problem and end up creating a new social order.

Conflict Management

Conflict management as a concept is a vital aspect of human existence as no man or society is devoid totally of conflict whether on a low or large scale. The most devastating effects of conflict and insurgency in every human society is the colossal destruction of both human and material resources that would have contributed their managerial and organizational abilities in the development of human environment. Conflict management therefore, is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspect of it. The positive aspect of conflict is usually the establishment of a new social order resulting in improved relationship and harmonious coexistence where trust, tolerance and development will be entrenched thereby establishing a new social equilibrium. According to Rahim (2002) the whole essence of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness of performance in human societies and all

izational settings.

Conflict Management Models

Conflict management experts from different schools of thought have developed several models of managing conflicts in human societies whether political, ethnic, religious, economic or organizational conflicts. One of the earliest models was put forward by Mary Parker Follett (1926/1940), Follett Parker's model of conflict management asserts that conflict can be effectively managed by individuals and organizations in three major ways;

- . Domination
- i. Compromise and
- ii. Integration,

Follett also found other measures of handling conflicts that were largely employed in organizations, such measures as;

- . Avoidance
- i. Suppressing. These two latest designed measures of conflict management may only end up not bringing permanent solution to the conflicting issues/ideas but will only succeed in postponing the evil day.

Blake & Mouton (1998) also developed a more elaborate model for conflict management and resolution. The definitions in Blake and Mouton model of conflict resolution include:

- . Forcing,
- i. Withdrawing,
- ii. Smoothing,
- v. Compromising.

The efficacy of Blake and Mouton's conflict management model is hinged on problem solving approach. Further development of models for conflict resolution by the conflict resolution experts began using the intentions of the parties involved to classify the styles of conflict management that they would include in their models. Thomas & Printh (1973) put forward a model based on the concerns of the parties involved in the existing conflict. The combination of the parties concerns for their interest (i.e. assertiveness) and concern for the interests of those across the table (i.e. cooperativeness) would yield a particular conflict management style. Pruitt called these styles yielding (low assertiveness/high cooperativeness), problem solving (high assertiveness/high cooperativeness), inaction (low assertiveness/low cooperativeness) and contending (high assertiveness/low cooperativeness). Pruitt argues that problem-solving is the preferred mode when seeking mutually beneficial options.

Other existing conflict management models as cited by Rahim (2002) include;

- . Khun and Pooles model
- . Dechurch and Marks meta... taxonomy
- i. Rahim's meta-model

Research Problem

The dwindling relationship and psychological warfare among the various communities and clans within Ika ethnic nationality have left cooperation among the communities in a very poor state. The prevailing scenario has continued to hamper socio-political cum cultural development in Ika land for over a long period of time, hence there is an urgent need for resolving the unending internal conflict through well tailored research in general and Social Studies Education in particular.

Study Objective

The general objective of this study is to use education to ameliorate the internal conflicts among communities and clans in Ika ethnic nationality so as to pave way for sustainable peace and socio-cultural cum political development in Ika land as no meaningful societal growth and development can sustainably take place in an atmosphere of rancour.

Research Methods

The study specifically relied on both primary and secondary means of data collection. The primary data was collected with the use of questionnaires as research instruments. Journals, books, periodicals and online materials were used for the study as the secondary sources of data collection. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed with the help of a research assistant who is very familiar with the streets within the study area. The systematic random sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents from the sampled streets in Agbor - Obi and Boji-Boji Agbor. The primary data were analyzed using descriptive statistic such as tables, frequencies and percentages. The analysis and discussion of result was based on 280 returned questionnaires representing 93% of the total questionnaire distribution.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Agbor, the Local Government Headquarter of Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. Agbor is approximately located between the following coordinates $6^{\circ} 16'.93''\text{N}$ and $6^{\circ} 11'.79''\text{E}$ (Azani, 2015). It is bounded on the East by Emuhu, on the West by Alifekede, on the South by Boji-Boji Owa and the North by Ota. Agbor lies at a strategic junction linking the East, through Asaba; West through Benin, North through Uromi and South through Warri. It lies between two rivers Orogodo and Ossionna. (Azani, 2015).

Result and Discussions of Findings

Types and Nature of Conflicts Predominant in Agbor

Conflicts have been a long standing phenomenon in Agbor. Two basic types of conflict with their distinct characteristics were identified by respondents in the study area. They are as represented in table one below.

Table 1: Types and Nature of Conflict in Agbor

Types and Nature of Conflict	Frequency	% Response
Socio-political	186	66.4%
Cultural	94	33.6%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Work

Table 1 above reveals that there are two major types of conflicts predominant in Agbor. They include socio-political (66.4%) and cultural type of conflict (33.6%). The study further reveals that socio-political form of conflict is more pronounced in Agbor community than cultural form of conflicts. The nature of conflict in every human socio-political and cultural environment generally and particularly in Agbor Clans and communities according to the data collected and results from field work is similar to the general nature and types of conflict predominant in all societies. Conflicts in Agbor Clans and Communities can either be:

- i. Social
- ii. Political, or
- iii. Cultural, but according to Iwegbu & Ukadike (2010), conflicts in societies can also be grouped into two;
 - i. Inter Conflict
 - ii. Intra Conflict

Inter Conflict : Conflicts in societies is said to be inter when it involves two or more clans, communities, groups and associations.

Intra Conflict : On the other hand, conflict can be said to be intra when it is within members of a group. Conflict in societies in general and in Agbor in particular can be resolved amicably through any or all of the above discussed models of conflict resolution.

Causes of Conflicts in Agbor

Major conflicts in Agbor in modern times have been largely identified to result from socio, political and cultural supremacy and relevance. The struggle for prominence in these areas as identified by the respondents has for ages been the root cause of conflicts that has been witnessed in Agbor.

Table 2: Causes of Conflicts in Agbor

Causes of Conflicts	Frequency	% Response
Political	132	47.1%
Social	54	19.3%
Cultural	94	33.6%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Work

From the table above it can be seen that the three fundamental causes of conflict in Agbor as identified by respondents include political (47.1%), social (19.3%) and cultural factor constitute 33.6%. The major cause of conflicts in Agbor according to the analyzed data is political in nature. The socio-political cum cultural wrangling among communities and clans in Agbor Kingdom has a long standing history and has become a recurring decimal. This according to the result of interview from authors field experience may largely be occasioned by

- i. Inter and Intra community headship.
- ii. Dates of settlements (medieval and contemporary settlers). This has for long created demarcations between indigenes and settlers.
- iii. Resource allocations (political offices).
- iv. Social amenities and institutions.

Table 3: Impacts of Conflicts in Agbor

Effects of Conflicts	Frequency	% Response
Distorts peace	68	24.2%
Derails infrastructural development	112	40%
Vandalization	80	28.7%
Hampers investment	20	7.1%

Source: Field work

Table 3 above shows that the worst implication of socio-political and cultural conflicts in Agbor is the derailment of infrastructural development which represent 40% of the total respondents, distortion of peace (24.2%), vandalization of the few available infrastructures (28.7%) while 7.1% of the total respondents believe that conflict is the major reason why Agbor is not a preferred destination for investors.

The derailment of socio- cultural and infrastructural development in Agbor from data analysis is the most impacts of internal conflicts within Agbor kingdom and between various clans and communities that has become phenomenal according to the data from field work included

Method of Conflict Resolution

Conflicts in Agbor from the analysis of field data shows the methods of conflict resolution include, mediation, conciliation and arbitration. This finding is in conformity with the view of Jike (2003) that internal conflict in modern times can be resolved through the tools as revealed by the study.

Table 4: Methods of resolving internal conflicts

Method of conflict resolution	Frequency	% Response
Mediation	168	60%
Conciliation	79	28.2%
Arbitration	33	11.8%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field work

Table 4 above reveals that conflicts in Agbor are resolved through mediation (60%), conciliation (79%) and arbitration (33%). Mediation as proven by the respondents is the major method of conflict resolution in Agbor.

The Role of Social Studies towards Enhancing Internal Conflict Management Mechanism

Social studies at all levels of schooling in Nigeria is an effective machinery towards achieving the desired goal of imparting knowledge, developing skills, attitude, behavior and competence through classroom instructional process to solve problems and challenges of existence adversely affecting man and his entire environment, resulting from man's continued and persistent interactions, with his immediate environment. The resultant effects of persistent interactions between man and his environment are what Mezieobi (2012) christened "New Frontier Areas in Social Studies Education" to which internal conflict

management strategies are not divorced.

Conflicts existing within human social milieu all over the world have deeply been entrenched into the hearts and mind of men and is fast becoming an acceptable cultural practice as individuals and groups have for long taken conflict options as the only viable means of being heard and their demands being achieved be it a realistic demand or otherwise. To reverse this ugly trend, education has become the most veritable tool and social studies education is a pivotal instrument. This can be strategically done by making the issues of violent conflicts management mechanism become an integral part of the entire classroom instructional process of social studies at all levels of schooling with models and mock-ups, pictures, charts, and television programmes depicting the negative effects of violent conflicts and insurgency to man and his immediate environment. When this is done at the early age of pupils in school, it establishes a permanent picture of the evils of violent conflicts and insurgency in the minds of the lads which makes it extremely difficult for them to be indoctrinated and conscripted into believing that violence is a way of life.

This mechanism is expected to progress with the pupils as they progress through elementary schools to the tertiary levels of education making all needed improvement on the entire methodologies and content of this instructional process. It is also expedient that social studies teachers ought to make the issues of conflict resolution strategies a significant part of their annual national conferences, workshops, seminars and symposiums regularly coming out with improved strategies of fighting conflicts and passing some to the relevant agencies for implementation.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Internal Conflicts around the world has become an epidemic but it is clear that there is a dearth of knowledge by the security agencies and the political class on how best to abate this ugly trend as the conflict mongers are always more than ten steps ahead of the security men. If the world must escape from the various evils associated with internal conflicts in all human society in general and Agbor ethnic group in particular, there is the urgent need to strengthen educational facilities from the elementary to tertiary levels to enable it develop in people the needed knowledge and skill to appreciate peace and despise conflicts through effective social studies classroom instructional process. Conferences, seminars, workshops and symposiums are other academic tools needed to arrest this global madness of violence. The development of the culture of peace in all the conflict turned zones of the world is a priority and this is only possible through the development of knowledge, skill, abilities and competence for conflict avoidance/management through effective, efficient and functional education and Social Studies Education is a panacea. "*Conflict is evil let us shun it*".

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