

EDUCATION AS A VEHICLE FOR MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT AND CRISES FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

This paper examines education as a vehicle for the management of conflict and crisis in order to ensure national security. Poverty, joblessness and restive youths have led to violent conflicts in Nigeria. This paper asserts the view that moral education can be used as a strategy in crisis and conflict management. Education will cause enlightenment of every Nigerian citizen and help to widen their horizon for acculturation and refinement in their approach to life. The paper makes some recommendation for conflict and crisis management to ensure lasting national security, using the contents of education as an effective strategy.

Introduction

Education involves teaching people various subjects, usually at a school or college, or being taught. Education of a particular kind involves teaching the public about particular issues. Education brings about enlightenment, re-awakening and resurgence of knowledge. Learning of all kinds are facilitated by good education, sound moral education can enhance the receptivity of good morals, and bring about refinement of behaviour to correct the social laxity of morals that have bedeviled our society. Good behaviour, socially acceptable manners and character could be greatly improved by good education and enlightenment from formal and informal education which can correct moral laxity in the society today.

Among the major causes of crisis and conflict in Nigeria today are the restive youths, who are idling about, unemployment and breakdown of morals and lack of respect for societal norms and values. Conflicts and crisis are permanent features of life which we have come to live and cope with and resolve from time to time. Certain types of conflict and crisis could become violent or destructive which could hinder natural peace and security.

Since independence, Nigeria has never escaped a season that was free of crises 60th at community level and beyond. Crises and conflict lead to calamities of monumental effects that can shake the very foundations of the society and an obvious threat to national security and stability. Albert (2010) has stated that the major causes of conflicts and crises in Nigeria are a competition for resources that are often in limited supply. It is believed that excessive poverty makes people to become pliable instruments in the hands of conflict entrepreneurs. Hence the need to avoid conflict and crisis of any sort so as to enhance national security which is a vital tool for national development and nation-building.

Since the literacy rate in Nigeria is very low, many people especially the youths and rural folks are ignorant and become ready instruments in the hand of conflict entrepreneurs who can cause a lot of havoc in the society. The case of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria is a case in point. It points to the need for proper education, enlightenment and awareness for social ills to be identified, abhorred and eliminated from the society.

This study highlights education as a tool of enlightenment and learning. It can be used as a vehicle to eliminate crisis and conflicts. The study also asserts that crisis and conflict could be injurious to national security and nation-building. But education can be used as a veritable instrument to solve the crises and conflict to cause acculturation and refinement in the lives of citizens. When people are properly enlightened, it enhances moral behaviour and good character.

This study uses materials from secondary sources to clarify the concepts of education, conflict and crises management as well as national security. Examples are drawn from contemporary issues and circumstances in Nigeria. Recommendations to resolve the conflict and crises to ensure national society will also be made in the study.

Clarification of Terms

Education: Education is such an indispensable tool to man and society for sustainable development, that it should be an inalienable right of every citizen. In Nigeria, education has been spelt out in the National Policy on Education (1998:5) as "an instrument for effecting national development. Nigerian government had taken constant steps to put vigour into the educational system in the country.

Besides seminars and conferences, Nigerian government, in a bid to fund meanings to the country education system to make it relevant to the overall development of the country, the government had put in place many educational schemes. In 1976, the government hijacked regional free educational programmes and started a

University Primary Education Programme (UPE). The programme was an attempt at removing or reducing the barriers to primary education enrolment and re-invigorate education.

Okanye (2000) and Mohammed (2002) summarized that there have been attempts at instituting free primary education in various parts of the country before the federal government's UPE of 1976, all in an attempt to give equal educational opportunities to the citizens

Meaning of Conflicts and Crises

These words do not imply peace rather they are anti-peace. As a matter of fact they stand for or symbolize a state of human society. The World Book Encyclopedia (2004) sees crisis as a turning point in the course of an uncertain time or state of affairs, moment of great danger or difficulty." Conflict, on the other hand, is seen as a state of opposition to another or each other; disagree crises are sudden eruptions or 'unexpected events' caused by various conflicts.

Westerner and Ray (2002) see conflict as a social factual situation in which at least two parties (individuals, groups or states) are involved and strive for goals which can only be reached by one party, and or want to employ any possible means to achieve a certain goal. Conflict and crisis implies struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired resources but to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals.

Causes of Conflicts and Crises in Nigeria

The major cause of conflict and crises is the competition of resources such as land, money, power and prestige that are often in short supply.

People fight over resources when it is unjustly distributed or allocated.

It is believed that excessive poverty makes people to become ready instruments in the hands of conflict makers.

Poverty probably explains why unemployed youths are the tools of violent conflicts in different parts of Nigeria. People pay them to fight their cause. The Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria can be excellently used to illustrate the various aspects of resource based conflict.

Another cause of conflicts most especially religious and ethnic alteration, is differences in our value systems, which stem from our inherited modes of behaviour or belief systems; what a person considers being important or does not consider to be important.

Management of Conflicts and Crises in Nigeria

The wanton destruction of lives and properties occasioned by incessant crises that Nigeria experiences call for the need to look into the issue of conflicts and crises management a strategy that can help nip conflict in the bud and prevent it from escalation if it erupts, as well as to sustain peace to avert future occurrence of crises and their associated large scale effects. Suffice to state that though we do not have the option of staying out of conflicts as states or beings, unless we stay out relationship, family work and community, all we need to do is imbibe conflict management strategies and sharpen our crises management skills so that we can interact meaningfully with one another.

In the words of Schind (2000), conflict management is interference in an ongoing conflict process in such a way as to curtail and if possible reduce the level of violence and destruction; prevent the escalation towards the use of means of mass destruction, and prevent the horizontal expansion into other areas.

Conflict and Crisis Management Strategies Include

Avoidance and denial

Strategies withdrawal

Third party decision-making

Confrontation:

Joint problem solving: This has to do with the conflict parties working together to find mutually satisfying solutions to the problem. It also involves a neutral third party (usually a mediator) working with the disputants to deal with the problem. This is where negotiation and mediation find relevance. This is also where education could be used as a vehicle for solution.

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National Security Concerns

National security refers to all measures that are taken to protect the nation or to ensure that only people with permission enter or leave the country, without subjecting the nation to any insurgency attacks as have happened with the Boko Haram insurgency in some parts of the North of the country. There is a great deal of pressure on Nigerian security agencies to tighten both internal and external exit points, to provide security to the citizens, and to apprehend all aliens who are the instruments of terrorist and insurgency of all forms in the country. As a result, strict security measures are in force throughout the country.

Crises and conflicts are capable of heightening the tension in the country, leading to wanton destruction of lives and properties. More so, these conflicts can be escalated with the use of weapons of mass destruction like incendiary bombs and artillery shells. Hence the need to prevent this with proper enlightenment and mass education of the population. This is with the view of eradicating ignorance and illiteracy or reducing them to the barest minimum in the society.

Peace is not the absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind and a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice, peace is not the product of a victory or a command, it has no finishing line, no final deadline, no fixed definition of achievement, peace is a never-ending process. Peace and security are related and are fundamental to and pre-condition for human dignity and sustainable development, No development can take place in any society without sustainable peace and security.

National Security Dimensions

Security as a concept means to be safe; freedom from anxiety and fear, to be emotionally secure affords grounds to be confident. It is the condition of feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defense, protection and observation of core values and the absence of threats to acquired values (David, 2006).

Human security is not concerned with weapons-it is concerned with human life and dignity (UNDP, 1994). National security is to ensure protection of the nation from all forms of threat, physical, social, political and obvious threats to peace nationwide. The prevailing situation of insecurity in Nigeria due to the menace of Boko Haram insurgency has continued for about a year now to wreck havoc on the nation's cities, Christian places of worship, government and international agencies.

The on slaughter has claimed several lives and property hence there is no peace and the country is faced with a lot of security challenges. The question therefore arises, what factors can foster peace and security? And how can education be used to bring about sustainable peace and security in Nigeria? These are some of the issues that this paper addresses

The Role of Education in Conflict and Crisis Management

Education is a life-long process, leading to bringing out the best in every human being. The brain believed most of the conflict and high rate of illiteracy and ignorance. Too many people are involved in one conflict or crisis without understanding the issues involved. As far as they are concerned, their mentors have given the directive to fight and so they fight. For the fact that most people in the country. Mostly the youths are illiterate; they are easily recruited by older politicians and used as tools to unleash violence on opponents.

Education is used in determining how well people adjust to the realities of an increasingly complex and interdependent world. Education to a large extent determines who will be able to face persisting challenges in a constructive and positive way. It also ensures that individuals possess the capabilities to prosper and work themselves out of perpetual poverty (Julius et al 2012), and not easily manipulated and used by charlatan and demagogues to achieve their nefarious activities. Education is tremendously beneficial in terms of the institutionalization and promotion of cultural inclusive behaviour, cross-cultural understanding and the movement toward promoting a cultural of peace and national security. Education will help in the enlightenment, orientation, and consciousness of the people towards the needs for oneness, togetherness, comradeship and national unity that will encourage and enhance national security.

For education to serve as a vehicle for fostering peace and national security there has to be what Sahoo (2011) referred to as a paradigm shift – a shift of values, social practice and Human Rights Values i.e. equality, co-operation peace social justice etc. These can become imbedded in what Sahoo called "radical humanism, dynamic secularism and synthesis of material and spiritual values".

Conclusion

As earlier stated crises and conflicts are inevitable societal phenomenons. Management of conflicts and crises can stem down the tide of these evils or worsen them, the usual way of using force to stop crises or conflict is

necessary as an emergent measure. The government should go beyond the use of force to bring lasting solution and national security or crisis.

Furthermore, the parties concerned must show commitment to resolving issues by their willingness to find a solution. There must be compromises and concessions from the parties concerned. It should be give and take. No side is usually completely right in conflict and crisis. As such, each of the parties still need more to make. We wish to say that the destiny of this country is in our hands. We could turn around what is the misfortune of this country by a change of attitude.

Recommendations

The parties concerned must give full support to the resolutions reached at the round table meeting. No one can force them to embrace and implement the resolutions than they themselves.

Every Nigerian should be educated, as it helps an individual to be cultured and refined. It also widens the individuals' horizon to understand life better and be able to contribute meaningfully to life and society. Individual then becomes an agent of life and creativity than agent of destruction.

The citizens need to be enlightened on the needs for tolerance and co-existence; through an enlightenment programme put in place by the government.

All Nigerians no matter our status should desist from discrimination on the basis of ethnic, religious and political lines or affiliations. We should endeavour to build across ethnic and religious divides.

The continued existence of Nigeria as a nation can only be guaranteed in an atmosphere devoid of suspicion of one ethnic group, by the other feeling of segregation or marginalization in the scheme of things. therefore equal opportunity should be given to all for participation in politics and strict observance of federal character as entrenched in the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria should be encouraged.

The sovereign National conference should be employed as the last resort, if all attempts fail to achieve the desired result of restructuring the polity. We should strive to achieve true federalism in the interest of our Nation.

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