



Adult Education Strategies as Sine Qua Non For Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The increasing complexity of conflicts currently subverting peace in Africa at large and Nigeria, in particular, calls for sustainable strategies for surmounting them. This paper looked at the relevance of adult education strategies in resolving conflicts in Nigeria. The paper discussed the concept of adult education, conflicts/conflict resolution and those adult education strategies which could be used for resolving conflicts. Such adult education strategies include advocacy, sensitization, conscientization, mediation and negotiation. In addition, the paper made some recommendations that the government and private organizations should incorporate adult education strategies for conflict resolution as integral and integrated element of peace building and conflict transformation process in Nigeria. This should be integrated into civic education curriculum and in general course in institutions of higher learning. Equally, peace education should be included in the school curriculum at all levels to enable Nigerian children understand the value of peace as they grow, among others.

KEYWORDS: Adult Education, Adult Education Programmes, Conflict and Conflict Resolution.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is ubiquitous in all areas of life – from the family to the organizational level in all society. Many countries around the globe experience myriad of conflicts ranging from religious, political, intertribal, social, economic and educational. Such nations include South Sudan, Liberia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Nigeria among others. Most often, these conflicts result to violence which bring about destruction and despair to citizenry. For example, the Libya crises in February 24th 2011 caused by long –running oppressive Qadhafi regime which escalated to violence and caused citizens to take arms to help free themselves from Qadhafi brutal regime and many lives were lost.

Similarly, in Nigeria, conflicts abound in most regions and states. The Niger Delta crises caused by environmental damage from oil spillage which the government was insensitive to the people. Kenule and eight other Ogoni activists lost their lives in the quest for resource control on 10th November, 1995, causing Nigeria suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations. In 2001, Alhaji Muhaji Asari Dokubo under the auspices of the Ijaw youth council began to clamour for resource control or self determination by all means, he took to armed struggle, founding the Niger Delta Volunteer Force which picked up the militia baton from where Boro left off, and eventually started an evolution of several splinter groups in the region, all fighting for resource control. The chaos lasted till 26 June, 2009 when late President Umaru Yar'Adua announced the granting of unconditional 60-days amnesty from 6 August 2009 to 4 October 2009. Also, the communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, the Brass and Nembe communities of Bayelsa and Rivers State are equally typical examples of fratricidal conflicts emanating from prolonged boundary disputes. The Bakassi Peninsula that is the international boundary disputes between Nigeria and Cameroon and currently the Boko Haram insurgency, among others as cited in (Igbnjesu, 2013). These crises in no doubt have caused destruction of lives and property to the nation. Ebenebe (2002) observed that “the crises in Nigeria have had tremendous effects not on the nation’s stability with threats of disintegration of the nation but also on the gross national economic and technological development as a result of wanton destruction of life and property that followed these crises” (p:80). In order to nip this situation in the bud and reduce the effect of future occurrences, the researchers try to draw the attention of the global community, private organizations and individuals in Nigeria on adult education strategies which could be used in resolving conflict in Nigeria, hence the need for the this paper.

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II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of literatures have indicated that adult education strategies have enormous roles to play in resolving conflicts in Nigeria. Obegi and Nyamboga (2008) see conflict resolution as the process of attempting to find solution to or settle a dispute. This process according to the authors may take different patterns which include the use of force or authority of state to enforce peace and the establishment of relationships or agreements among groups. Obegi and Nyamboga further stated that the application of force in resolving conflicts seems to be a harsh strategy rather negotiation and arbitration should be used.

Wekala (2008 as cited in Okoye, Imo and Igbo, 2011) added that educators can work with non – governmental organizations to organize out – reach programmes for distribution of information, delivery lectures and talks which would stimulate discussion among the participants to encourage them to embrace simple steps to promote peace and resolve conflicts.

In the same manner, Gaya Best (2006) noted that a wide range of non- violent methods of managing conflict avail to the conflict transformation world. These methods are available at the individual, family, group, community and international levels. The peaceful methods exist in two broad categories. The first is the proactive category, which entails method that aims to prevent the occurrence of conflict in the first instance. Examples include undocumented community- based trust and confidence building measures, communication, good governance, inter- party collaboration, etc. The second category is reactive, dealing with responses to situations that have already turned conflictive or are potentially so. These include third party interventions like mediation, brokerage, conciliation, arbitration and litigation, etc. The above strategies pointed out by Gaya Best are equally working tools in the field of adult education which can go a long way in engendering peace in Nigeria.

III. CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education as a concept has no specific definition. It has been defined differently by different practitioners because of its wide scope and multiplicity of activities and programmes designed for individuals at different point in time in their lives for better adaptation to the changes in their environment and society.

Onyenemezu (2012) defined adult education as the education (formal, informal and non-formal) given to any person regarded as an adult by the society in order to socially, economically and culturally improve and empower himself or herself so that the person will be able to contribute meaningfully as a useful and acceptable member of society. National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non formal Education 2010 (as cited in Obiozor and Obidiegwu 2013) viewed adult education as any organized learning activity for people considered to be adults by the society. While contributing to the meaning of Adult education, Bamisaiye (2001) relied on Akinpelu's definition of adult education as;

any deliberate and systematically planned educational activity that has the adults as its target that is designed around the interest and self expressed concern of adults, the intention of which is to solve immediate problems, and finally it is an activity that is usually part time (Bamisaiye 2001:157).

A close look at all the definitions revealed that adult education in whichever way it is defined, is meant to achieve deliberate change in the life of individual adult or group of adults for improvement of self and community life.

In line with the above definitions, adult education is any programme designed to enable people improve their lives and maximize their potentials in whatever profession of their choices regardless of age and prior levels of education.

Conflict resolution is seen to cut across many areas of human endeavor which include Guidance and counseling, philosophy, history, psychology and sociology but in the researchers view point, the concept is closely related to adult education because adult education is human oriented. Adult education is used specifically to solve the perpetual global problems and challenges ravaging societies as a result of conflict. In the section that follows conflict and conflict resolution will be discussed.



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IV. WHAT IS CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

Conflict results from human interaction in the context of incompatible ends and where one's ability to satisfy needs or ends depends on the choices, decision and behaviour of others. In view of the above statement, Bloisi (2007) defined conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. To him, individuals, groups, organization, countries do experience conflicts whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another. Nonyelu (2009) defined conflict as all manners of disagreements or dissenting opinions or interests on issues or matters affecting two or more people. Conflict therefore, is any disagreement over social issues, beliefs and ideologies. Most often when conflict escalates it leads to violence and the devastating consequences is destruction to both sides.

Conflict resolution is a process of checking the disastrous consequences. It can therefore be conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution (Wikipedia encyclopedia, 2011). Prevention of conflict and peace building is a basic mandate of the United Nations system and is the major principles of UNESCO constitution, to create peace in the minds of men and the UN Charter, to serve succeeding generations from the scourge of war (Smith, 2005). Conflict resolution remains a process of attempting to find solution to or an attempt to settle a dispute.

Since conflict is inevitable in human social life, it can be effectively controlled through the use of human oriented programmes of adult education.

V. CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Strategies can be defined as different ways of planning to achieve something. In adult education, some of these strategies which can be used for conflict resolution are:

A. Advocacy: Advocacy is one of the method used in resolving conflict. Hornby (2006) defined advocacy as the giving of a public support to an idea, a course of action or belief. According to National Health and Disability Advocacy (2009), advocacy means to advocate for or defend how you feel about something by advancing a second view point. Advocacy may be in different forms such as self advocacy, which implies one standing up for oneself. That is, the person acting for himself or herself. In addition, peer advocacy takes place when the individual providing help has been through or is going through a similar experience. Similarly, statutory advocacy is where someone is appointed with legal responsibility to represent another, such as a welfare guardian among others (National Health and Disability Advocacy). For example in Nigeria, like in the case of statutory advocacy, a legal practitioner such as a lawyer can advocate for an individual in the court of law in settlement of a dispute.

Through Adult education, individuals could form different advocacy groups towards the promotion of peace in the country. Adult educators could as well advocates for peace on behalf of others using propaganda. This can be done through organizing outreach programmes at the community levels to persuade people both old and young towards the promotion of peace in the country. From the grass root level to the state as well as federal level.

B. Sensitization: According to Online Dictionary (2006), sensitization is defined as a process of making someone react to something that previously had no effect. It is an act of creating awareness or making somebody to be aware of something, especially a problem. Adult education as a discipline is concerned with creating opportunity for individuals to be aware of some burning issues confronting them. One of these burning issues is that of conflict. Through sensitization as an adult education strategy, individuals can be made aware of the need for tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Adult education aims at organizing a peace or conflict awareness programmes for people on how to handle conflict. Community sensitization and mobilization can be organized through community outreach where information on peace is disseminated to people either through interpersonal contact, mass and local media channels. In sensitizing communities, trusted authorities and community members can be engaged to disseminate information to create credibility to the programme. These trusted individuals may be teachers to act as educators in educating families, community leaders among others. Individuals may be sensitized through workshops, seminars, conferences etc. Posters or pictures on those affected by conflicts could serve as a means of creating awareness.



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C. Conscientization: Conscientization is one of the methods used in resolving conflicts. Conscientization is an act of creating awareness to somebody on a particular issue either social or political. The word conscientization was invented by a Brazilian Adult educator called “Paulo Freire”. It is a term used to describe an approach in adult education. According to Freire (1972 as cited in Ani, 2003:118), “conscientization is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristics of all emergence”. It is a “transformation of a learner from a passive being to an active, creative and critical one”. Conscientization which was Freire’s philosophy of education was based on the thought that no matter how ignorant a person may be, such a person should be able to look critically at his world (Ugwoegbu, 2003).

Education generally is an instrument for transformation. 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. Similarly, Akinpelu (as cited in Obiozor & Obidiegwu) noted that adult education aroused in a person the consciousness of self- knowledge and confidence in his ability to change his life for the better. Ani (2003) supported this view when he stated that adult education is education for change and adults can support the desire for change only when they are properly educated. Through education, adults could change their attitude towards working for peace and understand the consequences of conflict to any nation. Adult education enables people to alter societal contradictions, improve relations and interactions and encourage changes in attitude in a way that can reduce the risk of conflict and help build a sustainable peace. It creates awareness on people to learn to live together and act as responsible citizens in local and global setting. Through Adult education, men, women and youths are conscientize towards knowing their rights, being an active being as well as taken their destiny in their hands.

D. Mediation: Miller (2003) defined mediation as the intervention of a third party in resolving conflict between two parties. United State Department of Health (2000) asserted that mediators are trained in communication and problem solving skills which they use to help parties make decisions on how to resolve their conflicts. According to them, mediators are not decision- makers or judges and have no personal interest in the substantive outcome of a case. They use their expertise in communication and negotiation to help the parties make effective and informed decisions.

There are three phases in mediation. These include; introductory phase, problem solving and closure. In introductory phase, the mediators help the parties to create a safe environment in which to discuss the case. Problem- solving stage is a situation where parties focus on issues of interest and ways for resolving the dispute. In this instance, both parties meet separately with the mediator to share confidences and fully consider options in private. The final stage is closure where both parties decide whether to resolve the conflict or not. Different people and individuals can serve as mediators to one another. In the same way, nations can mediate between other nations for peaceful co-existence around the globe.

Adult education strategies lay emphasis on peace education. As counselors, adult educators perform their functions acting as mediators in resolving conflict between individuals or groups. Through this process, peace talks are organized both locally and globally on the necessity for peace in families, communities and the nation in general.

E. Negotiation- Negotiation is another adult education strategy. Gaya Best (2006) defined negotiation as a structured process of dialogue between conflicting parties about issues in which their opinions differ. Oklahoma Bar Association (2012) noted that negotiation is a back-and –forth communication between different parties of conflict with the goal of trying to find a solution. In negotiation, both parties may negotiate directly between themselves or live an attorney to negotiate directly with the other side on one’s behalf. In most successful negotiations, the needs of both parties are considered. A negotiated agreement can become a contract and be enforceable. Negotiation is the first method of choice for problem solving as noted by (Faniran & Akintayo, 2012) where both parties try to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. It is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least two parties that are faced with a conflict situation. Both parties come to the realization that they have a problem, and both are aware that by talking to each other, they can find a solution to the problem. If negotiation fails, then a third party comes in.

Since adult education is an education that fosters positive change, progress and peaceful existence in people, individuals and groups of people can help people to understand their world and free them from shackles of conflicts. Adult education enables people understand the need for tolerance and live cooperatively among themselves. It is an instrument for all round development of a person. Edoziem (1996) posited that education should be directed towards the development of the dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms, aimed at promoting understanding, tolerance, friendship among all people and all nations and must ensure the development of national and international communities. Adult education as a lifelong education process creates opportunities for people to live in harmony and



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avoid unnecessary grievance that can lead to conflicts. Therefore, the place of adult education in resolving conflicts in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized.

VI. CONCLUSION

Conflicts refer to disputes, disagreement, quarrels, struggles, fight and war between individuals, groups and countries. Conflict is a natural and inevitable phenomenon in any interactive situation involving human beings and it is ubiquitous at all levels of human social system. The ability to resolve conflict becomes expedient. Adult education strategies are seen as tools and veritable instrument for conflict resolution in Nigeria. This is seen as very necessary because no meaningful development can take place in an atmosphere of rancor, disagreement and disunity. Nigerian citizens should embrace peace through conflict resolution strategies for the country to move forward.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above discussions, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The government and private organizations should incorporate adult education strategies for conflict resolution as an integral and integrated element of peace building and conflict transformation process in Nigeria. This should be integrated into civic education curriculum and general courses in institutions of higher learning.
2. Peace education should be included in school curriculum at all levels. This will enable Nigerian children to know the value of peace, co-operation and tolerance of cultural difference as they grow.
3. Capacity development seminars, workshops, conferences on peace building and conflict resolution should be organized regularly to enable people knows how to prevent conflict.

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