

Social Educators' Contribution in Educating for Peace and Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

For almost a decade, Nigeria has been facing serious peace and security challenges. The different ethnic nationalities have wedged one form of violent confrontation or the other against the federal government. Peace has been elusive. Beginning with the Niger-Delta militancy in the South-South to the on-going Boko Haram insurgency in the North East all bothered on agitations of marginalisation and unjust distribution of resources among the ethnic groups. This paper is a qualitative study carried out in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State of Nigeria. The sample involved 77 social educators purposively selected the University of Calabar, Cross River State College of Education and some selected secondary schools in the study area. Three research questions were posed and the respondents' responses formed the primary data for the study. The study was supported by the descriptive and analytical methods. From the responses, it was revealed that social educators by working in partnership with other groups, organising of public enlightenment and the teaching of core values can promote a culture of peace in the society.

Keywords: Social educators, peace, security, ethnic diversity, governance.

INTRODUCTION

1. Nigeria has been witnessing tumultuous and challenging moment in its political history. The various ethnic nationalities have wedged one form of violent confrontation or the other against the federal government. This has made peace to be elusive as government has been on a continuous search for peace and security became national and individual security has been under sustained threat.

The genesis of social, economic and political unrest in Nigeria began first with sustained agitations by the Niger-Delta ethnic minority groups that felt not just oppressed but exploited and marginalized. The agitation is traceable to obvious injustice against the minority groups, a trend that bred discontent, consequently led to hostility and militarization in the region. As government tried to contain the militants by granting them unconditional amnesty, unfortunately, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua died. His death brought the ascension of Goodluck Jonathan to power who was his Vice-President. On assumption of office, a new twist to the crisis of governance greeted the new president with the emergence of an Islamic fundamentalist group, Boko Haram from North East of Nigeria.

Since the emergence of Boko Haram in 2007, the group has carried out various violent attacks on lives and properties and has claimed responsibility for such deadly attacks. Between 2009 to date, the Islamist terrorists group has attacked schools, churches, government institutions and has killed both innocent children and women. The high point of their terrorist operation was the abduction of young girls from a secondary school Chibok in Borno State numbering more than 200. Till this moment, the whereabouts of the abducted girls is unknown. This is outside many other cases of abduction carried out by the same Islamist group.

In the light of the above, and in an effort to set Nigeria free from the shackles of insecurity and terrorism, it has become very urgent to cultivate a culture of peace through education as to cultivate and promote qualitative values and attitude of peaceful coexistence among citizens. That is why it has become very obvious and quite imperative for Nigeria social educators to assume the responsibility of educating children within the lower basic education on how to internalize and sustain the virtues of tolerance, respect for human rights, equality of people and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence through education.

2. Education is an instrument for advancing social, economic and political development in any society. Section 1(4a) of the (FRN 2004) states that education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education. Earlier, section 1 (2a) had indicated that the overall philosophy of Nigeria is to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice.

This philosophy underscores the need for a peaceful coexistence among all Nigerians irrespective of tribe, religion, culture and linguistic diversity. Within the current content of globalization where cross border violence and conflict has become a prominent factor influencing national politics and domestic as well as foreign policy goals of nations, the quest for global peace and security has occupied the attention of government and Non-governmental Organizations across the globe. One of the purposes of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture and recognizing the role and contributions of

that organization towards the education of young people in the spirit of international understanding, co-operation and peace.

Peace and security within the context of Nigeria have become very serious challenges that have dislocated most national priorities. For government to achieve peace and security, according to Musafiri (2013) requires the institutionalization of good governance that embodies democracy, promotion of the rule of law, transparency, accountability and good service delivery among others. The author added the need to emphasis values, attitudes and modes of behaviour that promotes non-violence and respect for fundamental human rights. Afterall, the constitution of UNESCO and Universal declaration of human rights according to (Parmar 2014) states thus:

Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (p:4).

Social educators owe a lot of responsibility to ensuring the actualization of the above. That is why (Gallagher 2010) said that social educators are agents of social change who co-ordinate social groups through educational strategies that help citizens to understand and participate in their social, political, economic and cultural surroundings for purpose of full integration into the society.

Social educators have therefore realized that without peace, no meaningful development can be attained. Therefore we cannot sustain peace within the context of political and religious violence and fanaticism, which have become the order of the day (Enu 2007). The author furthered that peace cannot be sustained when international terrorism is gradually being adopted as a vocation in life. And of course we cannot attain peace when the interest of the less privilege members of the society is not guaranteed: massive unemployment, poverty, corruption and in most cases fragrant abuse of fundamental human rights and government's introduction of obnoxious policies and economic reforms with only the poor at the receiving end. Indeed peace and security challenges will continue due to the rising profile of international terrorism and with national government's increased budgetary allocation for arms acquisition across the global.

3. **WHAT CAN SOCIAL EDUCATORS DO TO ACHIEVE PEACE AND SECURITY?**

(Parmar 2014), in establishing the role of teachers in educating for peace advocated for the understanding of multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious problems in societies as these problems are never addressed in bits or in isolation. These three interrelated and mutually overlapping problems must be address as a whole. What is the expectation of social educators in this regard? Social educators have the mandate of encouraging the cultivation of human qualities of compassion, empathy and love as these will reduce racial, religious and other forms of prejudices. Education programmes must provide students from diverse background with learning spread across these themes and perspectives.

According to (Pigozzi 1999) and (Sinclair (2012), social educators are groups of civil society that educate people about non-violent ways of responding to security challenges within communities. Being educators, they can contribute through social reform by educating people about new arrangement for political representation, justice, government policies and security sensitization. To ensure peace and security in the society, the citizens can be educated on the various sources of grievances between and within groups or the state and sections of the society as this approach will provide the necessary opportunities for adjustment of draconian policies and programmes without human face likely to escalate rift among the people. In situation of outright violence and conflict like in Nigeria, social educators should play a protective role of becoming a focus for stability by keeping the system functioning. This they can help the citizens to understand and appreciate the causes of violence and so strengthening their pursuit of peace through ensuring the elimination of the negative impact of violence and insecurity. To support this approach, (Parmar 2014) requested for an education that actualizes people's potentialities in helping them learn how to make peace with themselves and with others, to live in harmony and unity with self, mankind and nature.

In the face of escalating peace and security difficulties in the country, social educators can commit themselves to becoming peace educators. This they can do by being instrument of peace to their students, fellow educators, families and their communities. Social educators can organize workshop activities on conflict mapping wherein the educators identify the issues, problems and conflicts in their schools and communities and map out the people involved by educating them more on the culture of peace and how this can be imbibe to make their schools and communities peaceful environment.

Social educators can contribute to the growing global culture of peace by ensuring the pursuit of peace education perspectives and themes that explores peace education in theory and practice. A culture of peace will be achieve by helping citizens to understand global problems with requisite skill of conflict management and the pursuit of justice and non-violence. Social educators can help citizens to imbibe global standard of human rights, equity, fairness, tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for planet earth. The peace education

perspectives and themes must be systematically structured and implemented with the ultimate goal of achieving peace oriented values and habits of tolerance, love and empathy which are basic essentials of peace (Chekputo, Ombangi & Kipsang 2014).

Educating for peace and security is more effective and meaningful when its adopted based on the social and cultural context of the locality and on the people's needs and aspirations. This implies social educators' understanding of the peace and security challenges which they are meant to address within and outside school. It is expected that educators are properly equipped with sufficient and enhanced knowledge acquired from seminars and workshops on the promotion of peace values and concepts that will be imparted to young school students on the positive role of peace building with greater emphasis on peace education on the primary concern of bridging inequality among students and the emphasising discrimination among culture and understand complexities among diverse societies.

As a problem-posing education according to (Kester 2009), peace education attempts to build in people the universal values and behaviours upon which the culture of peace is predicated. This is characterized with the development of a non-violent curriculum and conflict resolution skills for purpose of ensuring a secured future. It involves the cultivation of peace building skills dwelled around dialogue, mediations, and conciliation. What then is the expectation of social or peace educators in helping learners to understand conflict, violence and peace? This can be achieved through teaching the values of respect, understanding, nonviolence and present skills for analysing international conflict, education for alternative security systems and the use of a pedagogy that promotes democratic participation (Kester 2009).

The expectation of social educators in promoting a sound and responsible interaction in the classroom should be geared towards improving the relationship of learning to imbibe the culture of tolerance which will facilitate the cultivation of the spirit of dialogue and peaceful coexistence among the people. Such education should be able to equip the students with the requisite skills, capacities, attitudes and behaviours of nonviolence.

4. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical method. This was supported by qualitative research method. Other research findings, books and research articles all formed the body of this study. Since the study sought to examine the contribution of social educators in educating for peace and security in Nigeria, 75 social educators in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State were purposively selected to constitute the sample for the study. 44 of the social educators are teachers from the University of Calabar and Cross River State College of Education while 31 of them were teachers across some secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. Their written responses which formed data for the study were coded to identify recurrent themes and patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are based on the responses from the three research questions. Based on the analysis, each research question produced recurrent themes and patterns. Two major themes emerged from research question one.

These include:

1. Religious and ethnic diversities
2. Absence of good governance due to corrupt leadership

RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC DIVERSITIES

Almost all the study participants agreed in strong affirmation that religious and ethnic diversities have significantly been responsible for peace and security challenges in Nigeria right from the time of independence. There is no respondent who did not identify these twin factors as possible source of social and economic unrest in the country. Below is a respondent reaction:

Religious extremism, religious intolerance, religious fanaticism and the multifarious native of the country have given rise to ethnic struggle for dominance and the general quest for development. Each ethnic group competes for the control of state power and national resources. So the less powerful ethnic groups are being marginalized in the distribution of political, social and economic resources. This therefore breeds ethno-religious intolerance among people from diverse backgrounds.

ABSENCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE DUE TO CORRUPT LEADERSHIP

The general absence of good governance in a country bountifully blessed is one reason for persistent peace and security challenges in Nigeria. The general feeling of the participants is that government has not been responsible enough in the judicious management of national resources. There is so much corruption among leaders. Government is not accountable to the people and so the mismanagement of the state resources has led to

so much poverty, unemployment and lack of basic amenities. This is what a respondent said:

The absence of qualitative leadership, failure of the country's leadership to equitably distribute the resources of the land to all, and improper funding of security agencies, social injustice, and unfair treatment of citizens in the society account for peace and security challenges. Not forgetting pervasive corruption among government officials.

Similarly, another respondent reacted thus:

A ready source of peace and security problems in Nigeria is poor leadership traceable to lack of political will to govern. Due to weak political leadership characterized with massive corruption and greed, the citizens are made to suffer social injustice, denied essential service delivery, lack of protection of their fundamental human rights, mismanagement of the country's resources and high level of corruption. This general feeling of hopelessness by the citizens becomes an immediate source of rebellion against constituted authority.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What can social educators do to educate for peace and security in Nigeria?

From this research question emerged three recurrent themes which are:

1. Social educators to work in partnership with other groups
2. Organize public enlightenment programmes
3. To teach core values that promote peaceful co-existence

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER GROUPS

Peace advocacy and peace-building can be more enduring when in partnership with organizations with similar orientation. This is what one respondent said of this:

Social educators should work in partnership with faith-based organizations, religious bodies, civil society groups, government and Non-Governmental Organizations in advocating for timely introduction of peace studies and conflict resolution in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools. Such efforts should be geared towards preaching, advocating and sensitization of the public on the need for peaceful co-existence of citizens in the society.

The best approach to peace-building is collective participation where every member of the community is a custodian of the much desired peace and security. And so evolving a working partnership with others in the community or society will further guarantee peace-building effort. Similarly, another participant reacted thus:

Social educators in collaboration with other partner should ensure the sensitization of the youths on the dangers of conflict and violence in the society. In partnership, they should advocate strongly for enthronement of social justice and campaign vigorously for government to adopt the principle of equity in the distribution of national resources, because when the citizens are satisfied, there will be no need for peace to be threatened.

ORGANISE PUBLIC ENLIGHTENMENT PROGRAMME

Significant approaches by which social educators can advance the pursuit of peace and security challenges is by organizing public enlightenment campaigns. Describing how this is done, a participant responded thus:

Social educators should create public enlightenment programmes that will raise the level of awareness among citizens on the relevance and importance of dialogue in settlement of disputes instead of resorting to violence. Social educators should organize orientation programmes for members of the public on peace and security challenges. Such enlightenment programme should centre on sensitizing the public on the importance of living together as one indivisible Nigerians.

In a similar development, another participant commented this way:

Social educators should emphasis preaching the gospel of peace and security in their classes and place emphasis in writing of papers and organizing seminars and workshops that promotes peace and security. Vigorous enlightenment programmes that should sensitise the youths about a secured future is a necessity.

Supporting the above, another respondent his stated this view this way:

Social educators should be involved in organising school debates to seek the opinions of students on issues of peace and security. They should organize seminars too that educate members of the public on the relevance of peace and the effect of crisis and violence among individuals in the society. To do this, social educators need to put up acceptable characters that will make them to be role models in the society.

TEACHING OF CORE VALUES

How do social educators teach core values that promote peace and security? Here is what a respondent said:

Social educators owe the responsibility of promoting national values of patriotism, love and tolerance in their classrooms. Such teaching should inculcate in the learners the need to place national interest above individual and ethnic interest and emphasis should be place on unity in diversity.

Commenting on the need to teach core values, here is another submission:

It is the duty of social educators to impart knowledge to learners and members of the public about the core values of the society on daily basis. Students should be made to understand the duty they owe their communities and the nation on the need to promote peaceful co-existence. Through their teaching of moral values and practicing same, others will see them as role models in any given environment, they find themselves.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

The role of education in attaining peace and security:

Different views were articulated on the critical responsibility of education in producing conflict free society. Among the imminent role detailed as presented by some participants are:

Education plays a vital role in the attainment of peace and security. Given the fact that children come from differently homes and backgrounds to meet and interact in school, this provide an opportunity for the inculcation of the right values and norms. By so doing, such attitudes of peaceful co-existence are established thereby seeing themselves as brothers' keepers. This will help to maintain peace and security in societies.

The curriculum being the right instrument in the attainment of the desired peace and security in the society is described thus by another participant:

The curriculum of the school system should inculcate in the learners the spirit of tolerance, mutual love and understanding. The contents of the school curriculum should be planned to reflect some of the core values of the society. With this, children will learn to respect one and other and will have value for life.

Similar to the above view, another participant has this to say:

The role of education in this context is to ensure that peace education is integrated into the school curriculum. Peace education should be compulsory for all students in school so as to imbibe the values of peace and avoid future insurgency in Nigeria. The curriculum contents should contain both peace and security education as this will help growing children to desist from rebellious acts against constituted authority.

Education being a transformative agent, a respondent observed thus:

Education is the vehicle for creation of awareness and inculcation of national values on the youths. It quickens the pace of transition from barbarism to civilization and develops the mind. Based on this, it should be made compulsory for every child as civic and moral education inculcate the right values and attitude among youths in the society. So schools should encourage the teaching of multi-religion and multi-ethnic perspectives that will make students to become aware and appreciate the tenets of other religions.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of results of this study is based on each of the research question meant to seek solution to the study. Considering the first research question which seeks to identify factors responsible for peace and security challenges in Nigeria, almost all the study participants were very positive as they responded in similar direction by identifying very obvious and pervasive factors accountable for sustained peace and security challenges in Nigeria. In their various responses, ethno-religious diversities and failure to provide good governance are ready sources of peace and security challenges in Nigeria right from the time of independence. These twin factors have grossly limited genuine efforts towards national development and national integration. To this effect, (Adeyeri 2012) noted the Nigerian Federation has been bed-devilled with bitter, ethno-religious crisis since independence. That ethno-religious conflicts in this era have been further heightened by the citizen/indigene syndrome, land ownership and the indigene/settler debacle that have always generated security concern in the country. The wave of religious violence across the country in the North, in due to the politicization of religion by the selfish ruling elites who manipulate religious emotions of the masses for selfish personal and elitist objectives

Supporting the above, (Okoli & Iortyer 2014) indicated that Nigeria got entangled with recent security challenges owing to the activities of Boko Haram. The authors traced the nature of the violence as being

principally fuelled by religious extremism.

But how has poor governance contributed to peace and security challenges in Nigeria? Addressing this question, (Omodia & Aliu 2013) put it that the state failure under a democratic circumstance to provide improved welfare standard for the citizens of Nigeria is one major factor that has fertilized numerous threats to national security in this dispensation. This is aggravated by a dysfunctional governance process of insensitivity and recklessness in the management of public funds and material and national resources. The visible lack of accountability and deliberate compromise of the basic principles of good governance such as equity, fairness and justice provide sufficient reactionary sources of rebellion and threat to peace and security in Nigeria.

Similarly, (Omodia & Aliu 2013) corroborating poor governance states thus as reported by (UNESCAP 2009)

Bad governance includes governments that are ineffective and inefficient, not transparent, not responsive to the people, not held accountable for their actions, inequitable and exclusive to the elites, non-participatory; do not follow the rule of law and lacking policies that are consensus driven. (p:1).

In ascertaining what social educators can do to educate for peace and security in Nigeria, working in partnership, organizing public enlightenment campaigns and teaching of core values were seen by participants as common grounds upon which social educators can explore to improve the peace and security challenges in Nigeria.

Social educators can go into partnership with other stake holders like the United Nations, Government and Non-Governmental Organizations to enhance the promotion of peace and security.

Organizations with national character can synergize and take action on collective peace and security. They can begin an advocacy and sensitization that provide a forum for other responsible citizens to participate and express their views that will stimulate prompt response in the search for a lasting atmosphere of peace and security. In this case, social educators can be a driving force that can help build a world where the rights of every citizen is guaranteed through a network of partners at the municipal and grass-root levels.

The above partnership can better be boosted through the organization of peace oriented public enlightenment programmes such as conferences, seminars and symposia. For example, (Esu 2013) noted that conferences and seminars are organized with specific themes in mind and presentation of papers is restricted to experts to offer their wealth of experience geared toward solving contemporary issues in the society. According to (Nandi 2013), social educators have used seminars as a tool to promote peace and security by helping people make certain decisions that will affect their relationship with other human beings for security is better addressed through collective effort.

The above if closely followed with an establish pedagogy of basic core values of peace in the country will go along extent in building a lasting culture of peace, hence, guaranteeing security of lives and properties.

How and to what extent does education contribute to peace and security? According to (Ndura 2009), education should help in developing educators who will understand and unveil their natives and foster intergroup appreciation and validation (Bretherton, Weston, & Zbar 2005; Ndura 2003, 2006). Supporting this assertion, (Chiba 2004) stated that the goal of education is to perfect the human personality and forming a peaceful and democratic nation and society. This implies that education serves the need of developing fundamental virtues in individual. Such virtues like love, truth and justice; respect for the value of an individual; the importance of work and responsibility.

To achieve peace and security through the instrumentality of education demand elements of moral education with the following objectives as identified by (Chiba 2004):

- i. To develop a sense of respect for human beings and human life
- ii. To develop a rich mind and a sense of humanity
- iii. To produce citizens who develop democratic society and nation
- iv. To groom citizen who are capable of contributing to the realization of a peaceful international community.

The above established objectives of education are summarized to mean peace, harmony and non-violence. Any education with such mandate is capable of ensuring peace and security in the society.

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