Abstract

Conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction and cannot be eliminated. It results from dissatisfaction or a situation of disagreement between two parties. It occurs where there is tension or when people revolt against social ills or irregularities in an origination. Since conflict is innate in man and evident in our tertiary institution, it becomes imperative to look for a way for its proper management which is essential for peace and progress. Peace has been recognized by scholars and citizens as a primary condition for progress and development of any society. This paper looked into the concept, causes and effects of conflict in tertiary institution and also the role of tertiary education in Nigeria. It discussed peace education as a means of conflict management in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Among the recommendations made were that school authorities should be more democratic in handling crisis, greater involvement of students in decision making and finally the teaching of peace education as a subject at all levels of educational programmes as a necessary step towards conflict management in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

Introduction:

The contemporary world is increasingly multicultural and the identity crisis resulting from the society sometimes threatens peaceful human existence and development. Conflict is an inevitable friction in an organization thus efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society.

A well managed conflict using peace will not degenerate into violence. Since violence will not erupt without conflicts as antecedents, one can be assured that many of the conflicts in tertiary institutions is because their antecedents were not properly managed, or that the conflicting parties did not explore the power of communication and conflict manager's personality in resolving the crises (Agbonna, Yusuf & Onifade 2009).
While conflict can be negative and can cause deep rifts in the framework of the institution, it can be used as a tool to move the institutions and the people in it from stagnation to a new level of effectiveness.

What makes the difference is conflict management (Holton, 1998). Conflicting issues in higher education that hinder the efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in management can be handled using peace education. Peace education is aimed at teaching individuals the attitudes, values and behavioural competencies needed to resolve conflicts without violence and to build, maintain mutually beneficial attitude and harmonious relationships (Johnson & Johnson, 2006). Through peace education there will be promotion of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will allow people of all ages and at all levels to develop the behaviour changes that can prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflict peacefully and create the social conditions conducive to peace.

Hence, this paper looked into the use of peace education as a conflict management strategy in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

The nature, causes and effects of conflict

Conflict is an activity that is almost totally negative and has no redeeming qualities which is accepted as dysfunctional and at the same time as a catalyst for change and productivity (Posigha & Oghurivu, 2009). Conflicts occur from time to time in all organizations due to human interactions. The rights of citizens are violated everyday and everywhere at times of peace, conflict or war, governance is falling at all levels, international, national and Local (Igbuzor, 2011).

He argued that conflict can be seen from social and political perspectives. Social conflict can be viewed as an expressed struggle between two or more independent parties who perceived scarce resources, incompatible goals and interference from different perspectives. From the political perspective conflict can be viewed an escalated competition at any system level between groups whose aim is to gain advantage in the area of power, resources, interests and needs and at least one of the groups believe that this dimension of the relationship is mutually incompatible. Conflict from political perspective is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or pursue their interest through actions that damage the other parties. These parties may be individual, small and large groups and countries (Lund, 1996).
The Action Aid International Strategy Rights to End Poverty cited in Igbuzor (2011) captured the conflict situation in the world when it stated that "every year about 300 million people are affected by conflict or national disasters."

**Causes of Conflict**

Conflict has been traced by researchers and scholars to leadership styles (Devereaux, 2003; Eregha 2006, Aguba 2009), structural Variation in school organization (Lawai 2006, Yakubu, 2006) employee unionism (Vasuthevon and Hee 2004, Taiye 2003) stress, poor communication and poor motivation (Aguba 2009).

However, Adeyemi, Ekundayo & Alonge (2010) postulated the causes of school conflict as wide communication gap between the students and the school authority, delay in meeting students demand, inadequate facilities, academic stress, drastic and obnoxious rules and regulations, increase in tuition fees among others.

As a result of the above antecedents the tertiary education institutions in Nigeria have been ungovernable thus leading to conflict among the students, staff and society.

**Effects of Conflicts**

Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria witness series of conflicts which lead to anarchy on campus. Aluede (2005) identified the effects of students crises as closure of affected schools, loss of lives and properties among others. In support of the above assertion, studies by Lynch (2000), Amaize (2007), Onoyume (2007) showed that when conflict is not adequately managed properties, lives and academic hours of unimaginable magnitude are lost. The disruption of academic session makes students to be recruited as armed robbers, assassins and political thugs (Ibok 2000; Jike 2002).

They reaffirmed that if conflicts are finally managed or resolved some students recruited as robbers or political thugs may not be back to school. They are completely drop-out thus contributing menace to the serenity and peace of the society.

**The role of tertiary institution in Nigeria**

Nigerian higher education otherwise called tertiary or post-secondary education is seen as the non-compulsory educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education (commonwealth, 2008). Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) sees higher education as education given after secondary education in University,
Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

The main aim of higher education in Nigeria is to give very sound and qualitative education which will enable individual function effectively in any environment in which he finds himself. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:36) highlighted the aims of higher education as follows:-

i. Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training

ii. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals in the society.

iii. Develop the intellectual capability of the individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment

iv. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills to be self reliant and useful members of the society.

v. Promote and encourage scholarship and community service

vi. Forge and cement national unity and

vii. promote national and international understanding and interaction. Access into higher education fosters the transmission of the cultural values of society as well as promotes change through the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge.

The general mandate of tertiary institutions is to generate knowledge and information through teaching and community service. They argued that the basic functions of tertiary institutions are to teach students and others knowledge, critical and analytical skills, appropriate values, norms, and attitudes, created ad extend the frontiers of knowledge through research, interrogate existing knowledge with a view to establish "facts" and "truths" through critical reflection and objective thinking and improve the quality of life of community members through community service initiatives.

Opatola (2002), reaffirmed the above that the primary objective of establishing tertiary institutions in Nigeria is to produce required manpower for the advancement of the Nigerian society in every facet of life.

The importance of higher education to national development cannot be over emphasized. However, no meaningful development can take place in a crisis ridden system torn apart as a result of poor management of conflict.

Therefore, it becomes highly important for our tertiary institutions to be in peaceful state using peace education as a strategy for conflict management.

**Peace education: A means of managing conflict in Nigeria tertiary institutions**

The Peace Education working group at UNICEF provides a concise and comprehensive definition of peace education 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, both overt and structural, to solve conflict peacefully, and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level (UNESCO, 2002).

UNESCO early declaration on a culture of peace called for an approach to education that is directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations or religious - groups (UNESCO, 1945). In support of the above assertion, Bekerman (2005) maintained that peace education should be used in resolving conflicts since it is focused on building mutuality among all citizens and teaching them the competencies, attitudes 'and values needed to build and maintain peace in society.

Opoto, Gerson and wood side (2010) defined peace education as a process of moral inclusion. From their point of view, moral inclusion is a fundamental and strategic principle of peace education because it stands for the willingness to extend fairness to others, allocate resources to them and make sacrifices for the well-being of others.

The expectation of peace education is when citizens are sufficiently literate in non-violence but behave in a manner that can enhance positive peace thereby reducing friction and conflict in the society. Baldo and Fumiss (1998) argued that peace education is most effective when the skills of peace and conflict resolution are learned actively and
are modeled by the school environment in which pupils are taught. According to Bodine and Crawford (1998) there are four main approaches for promoting peace education in our higher schools as conflict management strategies. These approaches are;

The process curriculum approach which deals with designing a distinct curriculum on the principles and skills of non-violence and teaching the contents as a separate course to be taken by students in addition to their existing courses.

The second approach is the mediation programme. This entails training a number of students within a school setting to provide neutral third party facilitation services to their peers. The knowledge imparted on the selected few is so deep that the beneficiaries can continue to serve as mediators in and around the school.

The third approach is the peaceable classroom approach. Here, the conflict management principles and skills are infused into multiple subject areas and students study it in their different departmental courses.

The fourth approach is the peaceable school approach. This involves allowing the entire school to benefit from the teaching of peace principles and skills. The value, effectiveness and efficiency of peace education as a conflict management strategy can be achieved through the following:

1. Helping the students to construct a fair, co-operative and democratic being thereby discouraging cantankerous hegemonic tendencies and youth militancy.
2. Inculcating in students the right attitude on how to manage anger, fight fair and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs and separating facts from emotions.
3. Enriching students knowledge on conflict management by transforming and empowering them to look at the work through the lenses of peace.
4. Changing the existing belief system which is using conflict to settle dispute among youths.
5. Fostering the spirit of oneness among our students through the use of the different approaches for promoting peace education.
6. Inculcating in students the feeling of seeing themselves as integral parts of one family.
Recommendations

The following should be used among others in managing conflict in tertiary institutions:

1. Appropriate leadership style of the school administration.

2. There should be good communication channels between the school authorities and the students.

3. Students should be involved in decision-making process of the schools especially in matters concerning them.

4. Open communication is another way of using peace education effectively. This involves transmission, transfer exchange of ideas, feelings, views, messages and issues. This can reduce anarchy, tension and promote friendship and cordiality in the organization.

5. Finally, the teaching of peace education in tertiary institutions is a more effective and efficient tool in management of conflict in tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

The world today is full of conflicts, violence, wars and man-made disasters, due to the pervasive influences of selfish materialism, ignorance, greed, hatred, corruption and lust for power in our communities. There is peace neither in human heart, in the society, neither in the nation nor in the world. Without peace in the country the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out for human betterment and well being by the United Nations will be nigh impossible to achieve.

Using the recommendations above, especially the inclusion of peace education in the school curriculum, there will be respect for the dignity of human person, respect for life, solidarity and tolerance which will bring development of new ideas, initiatives and innovations. When the above is adequately achieved in a peaceful state, conflict in tertiary institution will be practically reduced.
References


Amaize, E. (2007, January 21), Militants hijack ship, take 24 foreign hostage. Vanguard Newspaper pp.8


