



Institutional Leaders Capacity in Promoting Peace Culture in Public Universities

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Abstract

This study assessed institutional leader's capacity in promoting peace culture in public universities in rivers state, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of the study, a relatively comprehensive literature was review. Information obtained indicated that one of the levels for peace culture promoted by institutional leaders is that of tolerance, spirit of solidarity and respect for all human life. More so, based on the review and discussion, conclusions were made. it was however, recommended that institutional leaders should develop a climate within the context of the school that models peaceful and harmonious coexistence among all members of the university community, again, that universities in Nigeria and other higher institutions of learning should incorporate peace education into all their programs offering to enhance the building of peace culture and improve academic productivity.

Keywords: Institutions, Institutional Leaders, University, Peace Culture, Peace Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Peace is required for every human Endeavour to thrive. Universities as part of educational institutions cannot function effectively in achieving their goals and objectives without a peaceful environment. However, universities are gradually becoming volatile resulting to peace being elusive. Students vent their anger through violent demonstrations and damage school properties with huge amount of money at the slightest, flimsiest and sometimes reasons uncalled for. This is a clear indication of near absence of peace culture in Nigerian universities (Aharoni, 2002). Universities are established to train and equip men and women with skills for self-fulfillment which is necessary for becoming useful to themselves and their societies. Thus, they solve manpower needs for their country. Aside from these they are also expected to inculcate in students' rights and desirable knowledge, values, aptitudes and attitudes with which to impart positively on their immediate environment by promoting and sustaining peaceful coexistence. In essence, universities produce individuals who are found

worthy in character and learning that is sound, effective and total human beings (Oyebanji, 2001).

The Nigerian nation has long realized the need for peaceful co-existence that she entrenched it as one of the cardinal philosophies of her education. Consequently, the overall philosophy of the nation is tailored towards using education in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation which is founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice. This is with a view to promoting inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Evidently, Nigeria laid a solid foundation for sound and lasting peace through education before now. Undoubtedly, peace is required for harmonious human existence and academic excellence. However, university campuses which are supposed to be theatres of peace are gradually sliding with chaos. Instances abound where academic activities have been disrupted and suspended as a result of strike actions embarked upon by academic and non-academic staff and in some cases, campuses short down due to students' unrest (Aharoni, 2002). All these are clear indications that enduring peace culture is yet to be entrenched in our universities.

Universities are administered by institutional leaders referred to as principal officers, such as vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors registrars, deputy registrars deans of faculties, directors of academic units and heads of departments whose responsibility is not only to ensure that they fulfill their universities vision, mission and core values, but to ensure that peace reigns in campuses for academic activities to thrive. For these leaders to live up to these expectations they must be effective and capable, which is having the ability to achieve goals at minimum cost and time using available resources (Adeleke, 2010). Peace, according to Johnson (2011) is the absence of war, violence or conflict; in a situation that is not only mutually beneficial, but supports and encourages harmonious relationship among relevant parties, which are aspects of a person or among individuals, groups or countries. Culture has to do with a way of life of a particular group of people. That is the unique ways, practices shared values, behavior, beliefs, deposits of knowledge and attitudes universities involve to realize their visions, mission and core values which is distinct from that of any other group of human organizations. It is learned and shared by university community for organizing and perpetuating her existence. In the same view, peace culture is defined by United Nations General Assembly (2009) as the values, attitudes and behaviors that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and Endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society.

To Boulding (2000), it is a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs and patterns that lead people to live nurturing with one another and the earth itself without the aid of structures power differentials, to deal creatively with their differences and share their resources. In the context of this study, peace culture is viewed as measures embarked upon by institutional leaders to facilitate and foster peaceful coexistence by ensuring that students embrace, practice and live in peace as a way of life. These measures include education for peace, human right, sustainable development gender equality democratic participation, understanding, tolerance and solidarity, participatory communication and free flow of information, international peace and security and peer mediation (Rivera, 2004). It is an integral approach to preventing campus unrest, students' demonstration management and staff conflict, student/student conflict,

Student/staff conflict and break down of law and order and it is an alternative to the culture of violence. It is supposed to exist in daily life and habitual interaction as students and staff gets on with their lives and works, negotiating differences rather than engaging in

interminable conflicts on battles over just how to solve each problem as it comes up (Boulding, 2000).

Creative management of differences among individuals and groups is at the core of peace culture. It is not a culture without conflict, because conflict is inevitable in every human organization. As students from different cultures converge together for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, there is bound to be conflict. The need for peace culture arises not of the fact that university is a centre for molding character where desirable traits, values and attitudes are bred and cultivated. Students from different works of life converge together, each with their unique way of life distinct from those of others. There is the tendency that they will come to school with differences with others who do not share the same perception about life. Therefore, as converging point, universities through the type of education they provide refine characters, change behaviors and modify perceptions to acceptable standards where each student see the other as colleague, friend, partner and mate whose interest is supposed to be protected, nurtured and views respected with the accommodation of those views, peaceful coexistence emerges naturally as a way of life, with integration, mutual and cordial relationship as the hall mark. As such, they spend their lives bridging the differences between their perception and the needs and wishes they generate and the perceptions of others (Boulding, 2009). This is likely to be extended to their different communities after their university education thereby perpetuating peace and imparting positively on the lives of others.

University campuses appear to have been embroiled in interminable conflict. Yearly or seasonally, management of higher institutions and students are locked up in one form of disagreement or the other bothering on increment in school fees and charges, conducive learning environment and policy decisions. In most cases students vent their anger through violent demonstrations often resulting to incalculable damage to school properties at the slightest, flimsiest and sometimes reasons uncalled for. In addition, peace has appeared to be elusive because students engage in various acts of breaking of law and order. They inflict injuries among themselves and often destroy one another's properties in a bid to settle one score or the other. Additionally, administrators of institutions of higher learning are faced with noticeable challenges which hinder the planning, management and promotion of peace culture in Nigerian educational system. Noticeable among these are; inadequate knowledge about the concept of peace culture as well as its aim and objectives by both the institutional leaders, policy makers and the general public, lack of appropriate and comprehensive peace education curriculum etc. despite the efforts of university administrators who sometimes organize forum (orientation) encourage dialogue with students, free flow communication and supported unionism among them with a view to promoting lasting peace culture, yet the desired peace has not been achieved in campuses.

It is on this premise therefore, that the main thrust of this paper predicated on the assessment of institutional leaders capacity in promoting peace culture in public universities in Rivers State.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OR FRAMEWORK

Attempt is made to address the following:

- The concept and goals of higher education in Nigeria;
- Concept of peace;
- Concept of peace culture;
- Importance of peace education and peace culture in Nigerian educational system;

- Eight (8) principles of peace culture that needs to be promoted and strengthened in order to maintain a non-violent atmosphere in Nigerian universities;
- Challenges for promoting and managing peace culture in Nigerian educational System;
- Strategies for promoting and managing peace culture in Nigerian educational system.

Concept and Goal of Higher Education in Nigeria

According to Adeleke (2010), higher education refers to a system which embraces much of the country's research capacity and reproduces majority labour market. Obanya (2009) views higher education thus: "Higher education is taken to embody all organized learning and training activities at the tertiary level". This includes conventional universities and science faculties as well as specialized universities like institutions specializing in agriculture, engineering, science and technology. It also includes post-secondary institutions such as the polytechnics and colleges of education. "Higher education includes all forms of professional institutions drawing from the available pool of persons who have completed various forms of secondary school education: institution of the military, the police, nurses, agriculture, catering services, secretarial services and other possible combinations of programmes. Even this wide spectrum does not exhaust the possibilities of forms of higher education such as non-formal higher education. Indeed, any situations in which mature persons are organized from building up their knowledge and skills, to apply knowledge to the analysis and search for solutions in life problems.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the goals of tertiary education that is necessary for system performance and growth include the following:

- Contribution to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- Develop the intellectual capability of individual to understand and appreciate the local and external environment;
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills from self relies;
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community services;
- Forge and cement national unity;
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The above goals as enunciated by the NPE are laudable enough for consideration and utilization by educational managers for the purpose of improving a statement of fact that the sustainability of institution, organization or any society depends largely on the creative capacity of the institution by offering the required services for the sustenance of the system.

Concept of Peace

Peace is a term commonly used to describe a state of being calm and quiet (Hornby, 2006); a state of tranquility, free from argument, conflict, violence and disturbances. It is an avenue permeated with attitudes that allow people of all ages and all levels to co-habit in harmony. It is also considered as the development of behavior that can prevent the occurrence of conflict. According to Ekwueme (2001), Peace is a quality describing a society or a relationship that is operating harmoniously. This is commonly understood as the absence of hostility, or the existence of healthy or newly healed, safety in matters of social or economic welfare, the acknowledgement of equality and fairness in political relationships and in world matters, it is

a state of being absent of any war or conflict. Reflection on the nature of peace is also bound up with considerations of the causes for its absence or loss, a reflection of non-violent lifestyle, which also describes a relationship between any person, characterized by an absence of disturbance or agitation. Peace can make the world feel like a home. Peace is a state in human relations that implies a sense of community, support of each other and enables freedom of expression of thought (Boulding, 2000). Peace needs functioning channels for communication among people, which can express all emotions and also aggression by not using violence. This would lead to far less division of humanity.

Concept of Peace Culture

In 1992, a document of declaration on the culture of Peace was proposed by UNESCO as a contribution to the peace building activities of the United Nation System. It was described as a comprehensive effort to identify and support structures which tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people. Since then the concept has been used for prevention of violent conflict in situations where such potentials exist. Quoting from Article 1 of the UNESCO declaration, which was adopted in September 1999, a culture of peace is described as a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behavior and ways of life based on ideas like respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practices of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, pluralism, cultural diversity and understanding at all levels of society and among nations (UNESCO, 1999).

The UNESCO organization continue to work in accordance with the principles include among others, understanding and respect for all people, their cultures, civilization, values and ways of life, including domestic ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations. All of the fields of competence of UNESCO, that is, education, science, culture and communication have been engaged in the organizations' trans-disciplinary approach to the culture of peace.

To achieve this peace culture, Weis (2001) recommends peace education which is a participatory process that develops critical capacities for solutions to the challenge of war, terrorism, economical damage to be integrated to all schools' curricular knowledge, skills and social conditions that are conducive to peace. According to Mazer (2002), peace education is still a fairly controversial term because some felt that education in general should automatically imply "Peace Education". However whatever the focus taken, peace education is needed to educate the populace to embrace a culture of peace, such that the youthful energy can be redirected to improve the condition of the human society using peaceful initiatives. To Olugbuyi (2006) peace loving human being haunts for peace and is generally inclined to living in peace. The UNESCO document of declaration of a culture of peace (UNESCO, 1999) says "since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed".

Importance of Peace Education and Peace Culture in Nigerian Educational System

Peace Education and Peace Culture are essential in school because Nigerian Society is sometimes infested with treats of violence. Teachers and Lecturers as surrogate parent promote peaceful coexistence among students by resolving conflicts justly in the class. Mutual respect, tolerance and observance of child's right help to create love, happiness and conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning (Rivera, 2004). Students or children learn peace culture through discipline, avoiding aggressive tendencies and developing team spirit through academic activities in schools. Peace culture helps to create democratic leadership in

the class, order, gender, equality and healthy interactions (Rosen, 2009). Peace Education and Peace Culture are global targets capable of achieving quality economic output, good technological and social development. Therefore, imbuing peace culture in students is the root of quality human resources, civilization and peaceful coexistence.

Dimkpa (2014) in affirmation of the above view listed some benefits of peace education as follows:

- Improved security conditions;
- Improved quality of life inner peace;
- Dignity of labour;
- Higher life expectancy;
- Improved working conditions;
- Increased employment opportunities;
- Higher savings;
- Better decision making.

The relevance of peace education to an individual, the family, the society and the world using manifests itself in the total eradication or reduction in the rate of crime such as inter-tribal/religious disunity within the country, militancy, cultism in the schools, theft, political crisis, rape and killings others include hatred, prejudice, pride and murder to what peace education is capable of replacing with love, patience, tolerance, dialogue and understanding.

Eight (8) Principles of Peace Culture that Needs to be Promoted and Strengthened in Order to Maintain a Non-Violent Atmosphere in Nigerian Universities

According to the United Nation General Assembly (2009) and Rivera (2004) they identified eight (8) indicators or bases for peace culture that need to be promoted and strengthened in order to maintain a non-violent atmosphere, whether in universities or any other human organization. They include the following:

Peace Education: this is where education is directed towards teaching non-violence solutions for conflicts. Such education can teach principles of negotiation and mediation and training for the practices of non-violence, promote qualitative values, attitudes and behaviors of peaceful disposition. Ogunyemi (2006) stressed that teaching people (students) about the tenets of inter – cultural understanding, tolerance of opposing views, non-violent approach to conflict resolution and related strategies for coping with diversities would usher in a new era of a just, equitable and peaceful world. Kester (2007) accentuated this position thus, since wars begin in minds of men, it is in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace must be constructed”.

Human Rights: the need for emphasizing human right is predicated on the beliefs that without human right, there can be no culture of peace. Human rights are promoted by peace education which ensures equality and participation as well as create an environment of tolerance, care and respect (Ogunyemi, 2006).

Sustainable Development: three components are involved in this namely; economic development as a solution to poverty, the reduction of economic inequalities and the sustainability of natural resources. Emphasis must include reducing social inequalities, eradicating poverty, assuring social justice and putting in place special measures for groups with special needs among university students.

Gender Equality: focus is on gender empowerment measures such as full participation of women in economic, social and political decision making, elimination of all forms of violence against women, support and assistance to women in need. Previous studies demonstrated that when there is gender equality, there is less interstate violence (Caprioli, 2000) and more domestic tolerance (Trumbore, 2003). Increasing influence of women in collective decision-making whether in traditional communities or in contemporary democratic parliaments significantly reduces the risk of violence in the respective societies (Harling, 2004).

Democratic Participation: this requires choices to contribute to the well-being of the university, a transparent and accountable governance and administration, elimination of corruption and equal opportunities to participate in school administration.

Understanding Tolerance and Solidarity: internal solidarity is reflected by the absence of internal turmoil. Tolerance is reflected in the acceptance of others irrespective of who they are. Students have to be capable of overcoming enemy images with understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people and cultures, and learn from their differences through dialogue. Commitment to non-violence should be their goals along with sympathy for the weak. To an extent, this represents the basic propensity of a culture of peace.

Participatory Communication and Free Flow of Information: This reflects in ensuring freedom of Information and communication, the sharing of knowledge and unfettered access to information among all classes of students. Students have to acquire pro-social communications competence which is being aware of other's needs, knowing what kind of help to offer, being aware of a limited or lacking resources willingness to share or donate that resource and an understanding of such actions (Oyebanyi, 2001).

International Peace and Security: Emphasis is on increasing efforts in negotiating peaceful settlements among all classes of students from within and outside the country. In addition to these, the researcher included peer mediation as an aspect of peace culture indication. This involves selecting and training a number of students on conflict resolution strategies and vests them with the responsibility of resolving conflicts peacefully among students and promoting peaceful co-existence among their peers.

Challenges for Promoting and Managing Peace Culture in Nigeria Educational System

The most noticeable challenges in promoting planning and managing peace education in Nigerian Educational System include:

Inadequate knowledge about the concept of peace education as well as its aims and objectives by both the policy makers, members of the general public and government. In other words, there is limited exercise and capacity for peace education availability in most parts of the country (Ikechukwu, 2014). Also, in his words, peace education is most effective when the skills and knowledge of peace and conflict resolution are learned and known by the planners as well as the implementers. This implies that the planners give a clear picture of how the programme should be conducted and how it will be modeled by the school in which students are taught of course, school managers, teachers and lecturers are the key actors in the implementation of these and so, they cannot give what they do not have.

Lack of acceptability of the peace education by government in West Africa, Nigeria inclusive. Adeleke (2010) opined that if Nigerian government will accept peace education as it is being talked of the rate of insecurity would have been reduced to its barest minimum and that legal or pragmatic efforts would have been in place to enforce it.

Lack of political will to adopt it as part of the education policy despite the increasing appreciation of its positive impact on the psycho social behavior of children who have already benefited from the programme.

Lack of funds especially funding dedicated to peace education is a major problem. Asamonye, (2014) posited that money is an absolute crucial input of any educational system. It provides the essential purchasing power with which education acquires its human and material inputs. With too little money, education can be helpless with an ample supply, its problems become more manageable even though they do not vanish.

Another challenge is lack of appropriate and comprehensive peace education curriculum that can be used to suit the need of the country. A number of countries have developed peace education, curriculum for schools, usually consisting of activities such as communication, cooperation and problem solving, etc. without which the objectives of peace education would not be achieved Rosen (2009). stated that in order to achieve the objectives of peace education, a school system has to be prepared for drastic changes including setting new educational objectives, preparing new curricula and writing school textbooks, developing instructional materials, and training teachers to create a school climate that is conducive to peace education.

The basic and primary needs of man in the society for survival today are food, water and shelter. It is said that a hungry man is an angry man. When these needs are not met peace education would suffer defeat. Salomon (2002) opined that have not been able to live in a peaceful and non-violent life and individual must first have his basic survival needs met. This implies that peace education is possible if the poverty level of Nigerians is alleviated. According to him, it is one of the first step and creating a culture of peace and non-violence for this to be possible, collaborative effort of everyone is paramount to contribute a small amount of their time and resources to the cause of alleviating the poverty of others so that there would be a drastic change in the number of impoverished people in our society.

Furthermore, parents and guardians are often reluctant to support their children and wards to actively participate in peace educational programme and activities. Socialization begins at home and nurtured by the school. Deutsh (2003) argued that besides the school the family is another most important institution that influences children's concepts of hate and love. He argued that a cooperative learning environment, conflict management initiative, the constructive use of controversy and establishment of resolution dispute centers in the family and schools will enhance a constructive relationship which will ultimately help prepare children to live in peaceful world.

The methodologies currently used in formal learning in schools contrast with the peace education approach and tools which place more emphasis on learning, critical inquiry and discovery method than competition learning approach. Abida (2013) opined that it is the responsibility of every teacher to introduce experience-based learning, group work and discussion methods in classroom lessons. Teachers should not dominate the teaching-learning situation, but rather promote an open atmosphere for discussion in which students feel to participate. Student should learn to take up independent view points and to make a contribution towards solving problems and resolving conflicts situations. Teachers thus play the role of facilitator of learning, rather than the transmitter of knowledge. These methods, if carefully followed, will foster peace education at the tertiary institution level.

Strategies for Promoting and Managing Peace Culture in Nigerian Educational System

For Nigeria to move forward there is need to plan and manage peace education well in Nigeria. According to Asamonye (2014), the following can help to promote peace education in Nigeria.

Educational Strategy: The educational curriculum of all categories of education should be revised to include peace ethics – from nursery –primary-secondary to tertiary education. The revised curriculum must include qualitative values, attitudes and behavior of cultures. All these should be included in the curriculum; things like respect for elders, loving and caring for one another, peaceful slogans must be taught and included as well. Teachers at all levels must teach and emphasize these values. The educational approach should also be geared towards promoting sustainable, economic and social development. Peace clubs, must be encouraged and developed in schools

Legislative Strategy: The legal/judicial system should be made more responsive to issues of violence and disruption of peace in the country. New laws should be enacted and existing laws reviewed to ensure that Justice is quick and punishment meted out to the culprits is commensurate with severity of the offense.

Government Policy Strategy: Government should make more responsible policies to the issue of peace disruption. They should be firm and fearless when handling the culprits. Favoritism or issues of political party alliance must be de-emphasized.

Political/Social Integration Strategy: There should be strategy interaction between the school and community. There should be support for participatory communication and free information among students themselves, between students and management and between school and community. Peace education should be centered on democratic and conflict resolution principles. The society must be taught not to resolve conflict through violence and war but rather through dialogue. A democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflicts as well as necessity for tolerance. This kind of peace education should attempt to foster a positive conflict orientation in the community by training students and community members to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth. Peace education programme of this kind should include training the participants in skills of critical thinking, debate, coalition building, promoting the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objective.

Security Strategy: Campus security/policy and protection services vary widely around the world. Nigerian schools must establish security policy services. Their aim should include the following:

- Provision of security in the school;
- Assure safety of students, employees and guests;
- Interact with local and external security agencies;
- Provide education programmes on safety for students;
- Patrol the school regularly;
- Investigate any crisis trying to erupt in the school; and
- Provide safety programmes to students and lecturers.

CONCLUSION

Education is a critical tool through which citizens of any country acquire the right knowledge, skills, values, attributes and attitudes for peaceful living within the society. With well managed education, people's attitudes and behaviours to violence can be redirected to the development of skills that support economic regeneration and sustainable livelihood within the developed countries like Japan, American etc. having recognized the important role played by education for peace building included in the objectives of education for the peace of this country. Nigeria can only attain sustainable social, economic and political development when there is peaceful co-existence, cooperation and mutual tolerance among the citizens. Peace is one of the major factors that catalysis the sustainability of any institution of higher learning. Lack of peace culture in Universities would trigger acrimony, hatred, tension, mistrust, mutual suspicion, instability of the system and dissatisfaction of staff. All these would hinder academic productivity within the system. Existence of a peaceful institutional climate indicated by love for one another, when faculty members are closely united together as one family, caring for each other, openness, trust, compassion, justice and fairness, would facilitate cross fertilization of ideas and enhance knowledge creation and academic productivity, efficiency and effective management of the institution for the attainment of academic excellence in Universities.

Recommendations

In view of the above discussions, it is hereby recommended that:

- Academic staff should be encouraged to work in relevant peace and tranquility, not to dissipate all their energies in preparing papers to persuade the government to fulfill their role by funding institution appropriately and agitating for better condition of service;
- Six month training on leadership strategies and conflict management should be provided for those willing and interested in becoming institutional leaders for effective productivity;
- Institutional leaders should develop a climate within the school that models peaceful and harmonious coexistence among all members of the university community;
- Institutional leaders should intensify the use of appropriate teaching methods or techniques as well as introduce innovative methods like ICT in the system;
- Institutional leaders should instruct their staff on the use of existing and approved curriculum to impact knowledge, skills, values and behavioral pattern for peaceful coexistence in school and society;
- Again, universities in Nigeria should institutionalize peace education into all their programmes in the school to enhance the culture of peace building and improve academic productivity;
- Universities in Nigeria should organize workshops and training programmes on peace themes and on education for development to facilitate building of a culture of peace and improve academic productivity.

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