Repositioning Higher Education through Peace Building and Peace Culture in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Idoko, A. A.
alphonsus56@gmail.com
Tyokyna, C. I.
&
Kajo, D. T.

College of Educational Foundations and General Studies, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

Abstract
Education inculcates to its citizens skills, values, and appropriate knowledge effective and efficient functioning in the society. This study is designed to reposition higher education through peace building and peace culture in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study is prompted by series of violence among youths in higher institutions, which manifest in the form of cultism, killing, arson, prostitution, vandalism, rape among others, which have affected the quality of education. To reposition higher education, there is the need to integrate peace building and peace culture, peace education, and peer group mediation in their curriculum. This is because peace education is fundamental in moderating unwanted behaviour. The behaviour orientation of youths and the state of higher institutions can be modified and redefined through peace building and peace culture. The study looked at challenges, which include lack of acceptability of peace education concept by government, inadequate scholarly research works in the area of peace, lack of appropriate and comprehensive peace education curriculum and lack of proper understanding, and interest in peace education by all the stakeholders. It was recommended among others that government should insist that all higher tertiary institutions in the country incorporate peace building and peace culture in their curriculum. There is need for effective monitoring to ensure compliance to objectives. Government should also sponsor adequate scholarly research work in the area of peace.
Introduction

Education is aimed at inculcating to its citizens skills, values, and appropriate knowledge to enable them function effectively and efficiently in the society. This implies that educational institutions must provide adequate peace and decorum for effective teaching and learning to take place. Unfortunately, higher institutions today have become hunting grounds for all sorts of deadly and corrupt cultists' activities that threaten the lives of innocent lecturers and students. Rituals, cold blood killings, and sporadic shootings have become very common in campuses. What is more worrisome is the incessant indiscipline, lawlessness, gangsterism, substance abuse, rape, and hostility. It becomes clear that the quality of education is grossly affected.

Higher education is that form of education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, including those institutions offering correspondence courses. Osokoya (2004) in Alimba (2012) asserted that the aims of higher education in Africa include, developing and inculcating proper values for the survival of the individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society, developing the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, developing physical and intellectual skills of individuals, promoting and encouraging scholarship and community service, promoting national and international understanding and interaction among others. As conflict has become a permanent life threat in our higher institutions there is the need for laying "a scientific basis for the formulation of policies that will promote peace, social, economic, and political relations. Peace building is laying a foundation for peace." It is a deliberate attempt to educate youths and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace making skills, in homes, schools, and communities throughout the country, using all the channels and instruments of socialisation (Best, 2006). Peace building concerns itself with human and societal dimensions of peace. It introduces the concept of human dignity and human rights with specific reference to such values as economic equity, political participation, ecological balance, and particularly, the formative principles fundamental to international human rights standards.
Repositioning Higher Education through Peace Building...

Jeong (2003) sees peace building as an investment in the younger generations and attests to the fact that by educating younger minds in the virtues of peace, the skills of conflict analysis and management identification of conflicts and sources of conflicts, a more peaceable future could be secured for humanity. The concept of peace building brings security and development at the international and domestic levels, offer an integrated approach to understanding, and dealing with full range issues that threaten peace and security (Tschirgi, 2003).

Peace culture is a culture of peace built from values, attitudes, behaviours, and ways of life, based on non-violence, respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights, equality between men and women, appreciating cultural diversity and respect for others (Best, 2006). A culture of peace cannot be imposed from outside. It is a process that grows out of the beliefs and actions of the people themselves and develops differently in each country and region, depending upon its history, culture, and traditions (Fish, Abdi, Ludin, Smith, William, & Williams, 2000).

Urgent Need to Reposition Higher Institutions

As a result of the violent nature of youths in higher institutions today, there is an urgent need to reposition higher institutions to reassess their commitment to the realisation of goals of higher education. To reposition higher education to achieve its goals and positively motivate youths to develop attitudes for peace, call for adoption of peace building and peace culture in all the learning process in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Peace education is proposed because it is highly fundamental in moderating unwanted behaviours in the society. It can change the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual abilities of people within the context of their cultural, political, and social milieus for sustainable peaceful living. The behaviour orientation of youths and the state of higher institutions can be modified and redefined through peace building and peace culture. In this way, higher institutions will become more relevant in the search for viable path to national development. Repositioning higher institutions also include a viable economy founded on inclusive growth that simultaneously addresses the
problem of violence, poverty, unemployment, and other critical dimensions of inequalities including gender and sustainable growth.

Alimba (2012) explained that repositioning higher institutions requires that a culture of transparency is entrenched, respect for human rights and the rule of law accorded a prime consideration. It would also, among others, be a society in which the realisation of citizenship rights is possible without being mediated by ethnic, gender, and class identities, but also in which citizens are active agents of development and change both within the university communities and the larger society. Alimba (2012) reported that schools can be agents and can provide an avenue for developing critical thinking, serve as a forum for analysing violence, society, and provide means for young people to acquire and practice the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills associated with tolerance, conflict management, dialogue, and peace building. This study is therefore designed to reposition higher education through peace building and peace culture in Nigerian higher institutions.

One of the ways of sustaining a culture of peace in a society is to teach students about peace building, peace affirming, and peace-loving world inside the classroom as well as outside in the world (Wells, 2003). This is so because schools can empower youths appropriately as designed by the society. Therefore, higher institutions of learning can achieve this by totally transforming its receivers to challenge stereotypes and sentiments, which stand as barriers to the formation of peaceful attitudes as deemed fit by their society. Burns (2000) opined that societies should develop educational programmes, with long-term goals to challenge the acceptance of war and terrorism and to build attitudes for peace. Peaceful attitudes can be cultivated through the educational system, but the system can achieve this when it is transformed and induced with the capacity to do so. The purpose of this study is to reposition higher education through peace building and peace culture in Nigerian higher institutions. This can be achieved through the following processes: peace education, peace culture, peace building, and peer group mediation.
Peace Education

Peace education has been defined as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youths, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create the environment conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level (Mohammad, 2010). Students in peace education learn how to solve problems caused by violence. Peace education tries to inculcate students against evil effects of violence by teaching skills to manage conflicts non-violently, and by creating a desire to seek peaceful resolution of conflict. Hicks (1985) described peace education as activities that develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to explore concepts of peace and enquiry into the obstacle to peace. Peace education if institutionalised in Nigeria: tertiary institutions can modify, violent behaviours of children, youths, and adults. It will engender peace and sanity. Peace education was designed to address the rising level of violence and youths’ involvement in conflict in higher institutions of learning. It is aimed at creating a learning environment where both teachers and students teach and learn from one another through equitable dialogue; combining academic study with practical application towards societal transformation, promoting values such as compassion, equality, interdependence, diversity, sustainability and non-violence (Fountain, 1999). Peace education can harmonise different groups to seek for peace especially the opposing cult groups in higher institutions.

Peace Culture

Culture of peace is built from values, attitudes, behaviours, and ways of life based on non-violence, respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights, equality between men and women, appreciation of cultural diversity, respect for others. In a culture of peace, power grows not from the barrel of a gun but from participation, dialogue, and cooperation: A culture of peace rejects violence in all its forms including war and culture of war. It replaces domination and exploitation by the strong over the weak with fairness through respect for the rights of everyone both economically.
Idoko, A. A., Tyokyaa, C. I., Kajo, D. T.

and politically (Best, 2006). It protects the rights of the handicapped, the elderly, and the socially disadvantaged. The inculcation of peace culture in higher institutions of learning will bring an atmosphere marked by intercultural understanding, tolerance, and solidarity. Where there are contradictions such as intimidation, harassment, violent fight, rape, maiming, and destruction, they are resolved through non-violence means (Albert, 2001). A culture of peace will be achieved when both lecturers, students, and staff embrace peace education and peace culture willingly, have skills to resolve conflicts, struggle for justice, and non-violence, live by international standards of human rights, equally appreciate cultural diversity and respect others, respect life, liberty, justice, solidarity, human rights and culture, equality between men and women, and the rights of the child (Fish, Abdi, Ludin, Smith, Williams, 2000).

Peace Building
Peace building is laying a foundation for peace. It is a deliberate attempt to educate youths and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace making skills, in homes, schools, and communities throughout the country, using all the channels and instruments of socialisation. Promoting peace was seen as the role of women, while men were thought to be drawn to war and violence. The nineteenth century notion of “maternal feminism” depicted women as holding the moral high ground and therefore important in providing, through education, a blueprint for a morally upright and peaceful society (Sharon, 1995). Case studies of peace building interventions attributed to women in recent times across the West Africa sub region validate this fact. The past decades of wars and conflicts in West African States have highlighted a unique peace-building role of women during conflict as peace makers and opportunities for conflict resolution and transformation within schools and communities.

Women roles have rapidly evolved from the traditional gender defined “home keepers” to mediators in conflict situations driven by men and youths. It is therefore important that this intrinsic quality needs to be harnessed and reinforced with gender balanced peace education for boys and girls whose values will become appreciative and mutually supportive to sustainable peace within
communities and states at the long term (Bernice, 1987). It should also provide balanced education that protects boys and girls from falling into the ways of violence in schools. When a new gender culture of peace is taught, it will lead to a critical mass of young changed agents that will be responsible men and women of tomorrow. It will inculcate higher human and social values in the mind of the youth and develop a set of behavioural skills necessary for peaceful living and peace building from which everyone within the institutions and society will benefit. It will offer constructive dimensions to all the forms of peace education (Nzovu, 2006). This explains why the researchers intend to reposition higher institutions through peace building and peace culture.

Peer Group Mediation
Peer group mediation has been identified as a potent instrument for the promotion of peace education among young persons. This is against the feeling that young persons can do a lot among themselves. The lessons and principles of peace promotion and non-violence can then be enhanced. A peer is a person who is approximately the same age as another. In most cases, peers are heavily influenced by others of their age bracket at school or in the community (Davies, 2005). Their actions are usually done in groups, which are known as peer groups. A peer group is a social relationship beginning with the pre-school years. The relationships become increasingly sophisticated which influences the youth’s value and behaviour. Membership of groups change with age: pre-adolescent are homogenous and come from the same neighbourhood (Best, 2006). Cultism spread is higher in institutions through peer group influences. Peer group mediation empowers young people who are usually vulnerable to being used for violence, to resolve their own disputes themselves. Through peer group mediation, a lot of violence in schools will be reduced. This is done by equipping them with skills that remain with them long after the resolution of the dispute.

For peer mediation to work, it should be built on positive relationships, trust, support, open communication, mutual respect and tolerance, cooperation and readiness to work through problems. According to Davies (2005), peer mediation does not work in
atmosphere of negative relationships, mistrust, lack of support, avoidance of conflict, disrespect, intolerance, secrecy, aggressive confrontation, and dictatorial management or teaching. For peer mediation to achieve the purpose of promoting peace, it should be built on positive relationships, trust, support, open communication, and mutual respect.

Skills for Peer Mediation
The goal for peer mediation is to reduce conflict and provide children and young persons with problem solving skills. Students should participate in activities and role plays that promote empathy, self respect, self-discipline, responsibility, patience, and respectfulness. The gains are understanding of conflict and strategies for dealing with anger. Confidentiality is stressed. Students should know and practice the following mediation techniques and skills:

a) Communicating verbally and non-verbally: Mediators are required to be persons who can effectively communicate both verbally and non-verbally. It has been said that negotiations begin the moment communication is made to another person that there is a conflict that needs to be resolved. In communicating, the mediator should be able to facilitate dialogue, such as setting ground rules, paraphrasing, and coping with strong emotions.

b) Active listening: A good mediator remains an active listener always. He/she is alert, asks questions to clarify accuracy with the speaker and ensures that the other party has heard the point. Mediators show understanding of each party's perspective through non-verbal reactions and comments.

c) Problem analysis/Conflict analysis: An analysis can be seen as an intervention as well as a preparation for action. It provides understanding to background and history of the situation as well as current events, it helps in identifying all the groups involved in the problem, helps to understand the perspectives of all the groups and how they relate to each other, identify factors and trends that underpin conflict and to learn from failures as well as successes. It is not a one-time exercise but is an ongoing process as the situation is developing. The mediator must be able to analyse the problem before attempting to mediate. There are
very many problem analysis tools that exist, which the mediator will have to use either singly or collectively.

d) Identifying common interests: A problem identified is a problem half-solved. The onus lies on the mediator to identify and capitalize on common interest. He/she evaluates alternatives in relation to needs and interests of both sides. He/she encourages creativity in combining options and seeking common ground. Together, decide what to try. Identify who will do what and when. Write down the solutions in an agreement and have both sides sign it.

e) Plan development: For mediation to succeed, adequate development plans must be made. Tasks like getting the parties participate, selecting mediators, and preparing oneself for mediation are invaluable (Kraybill, Evans & Evans, 2001).

**Characteristics of Peer Mediation**

A peer mediator must possess qualities that will endear him/her to both parties. He/she should be seen to show care for all parties, be serious about helping peers solve their problems, provide an opportunity for both disputants to tell their story, listen carefully and respectfully, show sensitivity to each person's feelings and exhibit patience and be friendly. Mediators must not physically restrain peers, place blame on any party, take sides, judge guilt or innocence, make decisions regarding a solution or force a solution on disputants.

**Procedure for Peer Mediation**

In a general sense, peer mediation is a long process that is akin to the general principles of mediation, and could include the following procedure: (a) General introduction: the mediator introduces him/herself and also the disputants (b) Explain the mediator's neutral role and discuss ground rules, e.g., doing their best to solve the problem, telling the truth, being polite, no put-down or threats, listening to each other without interrupting, agreeing to a solution, signing a written agreement, taking responsibility for carrying out the agreement, and keeping the mediation confidential (c) Define the problem by asking each student to tell their story (d) Listen to and reflect on the content and feeling expressed by both students (e)
Show understanding of each child's perspective through non-verbal reaction and comments. Verify the stories by paraphrasing what was said. Ask the disputants to speak directly to each other as they discuss their issues, feelings, needs, and hopes. Keep them on the topic. Ask clarifying questions and issues. Ask them to brainstorm ways to solve the problem. Look for areas of agreement and present possible solutions. Together decide what to try. Clarify the first step that needs to be taken. Who will do what and when? Write down the solution in an agreement. Decide on a consequence if either party does not follow through and add it to the agreement. Have both parties sign the agreement. Congratulate them and have them shake hands (Davies, 2005).

Challenges of Implementing Peace Building and Peace Culture in Nigerian Higher Institutions

Challenges of implementing peace building and peace culture in Nigerian higher institutions are as follows.

a) Lack of acceptability of peace education concept by government: There is lack of acceptability of peace education concept by governments in West Africa as well as their lack of political will to accept it as part of the education policy in their countries despite the increasing appreciation of its positive impact on the psychosocial behaviour of children and youths who have already benefitted from the programme.

b) Inadequate scholarly research works in the area of peace: There are limited available research materials in the area of peace in Nigeria. Majority of the materials are of foreign origin and may not be absolutely used to reflect local peculiarities of the various institutions.

c) Lack of appropriate and comprehensive peace education curriculum: Curriculum dictates what should be taught, and how it should be taught. The fact remains that the curricula of most tertiary institutions are obsolete and do not contain peace programmes. They are lacking in all facets to meet up with the development trends in the areas of peace, security, conflict resolution, and non-violent education (Alimba, 2012). Alimba opined that where such programmes are provided, they are inadequate and may not reflect the needs and aspirations of
Nigerian societies because they are basically drawn from foreign experiences.

d) **Limited expertise and capacity for peace education available in Nigeria**: Staff in higher institutions in Nigeria both teaching and non-teaching, have poor orientation concerning the theoretical and practical underpinning of issues relating to peace. The financial implication of training people abroad often stands as a barrier in developing staff in this area. Home grown institutions offering courses in peace studies are limited in supply, and majority of their staff are not formally trained in the area, hence their performance abilities will be adversely affected in terms of productivity and scholarship (Harber, 2008).

e) **Poor family support orientation**: The family plays an important role in the transmission and inculcation of societal values and norms. Currently, the forces of globalisation have negatively influenced the family, making it to lose the grip on its individual members and its potency to culture people for peaceful living. The socializing power of the family in helping its members to cultivate the needed value which higher education will later build upon has been frustrated by modernisation articulated by the forces of globalisation.

f) **Other Challenges**: Other challenges include, lack of financial resources especially funding dedicated to peace education, lack of coordination and collaboration between different initiators of peace education programme in Nigeria, the limited gender dimensions and input to the peace education programme and the risk of the programme responding only partially to local contexts and conditions and there is also lack of proper understanding and interest in peace education by all the stakeholders.

**Recommendations**

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made, viz:

1. Government should insist that all higher institutions in the country should incorporate peace building and peace culture in their curriculum. This is because peace building and peace culture will challenge the acceptance of war and will build
attitudes for peace and will construct the right frameworks in schools through its values, which are based on non-violence.

2. Effective Monitoring and Evaluation: The essence of monitoring and evaluation is to constantly ensure that the programme has not deviated from the original plan and also to provide credible information about programme, progress, and problems.

3. Family Support Orientation: There should be family support orientation because peaceful behaviour emanates within the context of the family and other primary social groups like the clan, peer group, through arts, songs, drama, and storytelling. The socialising power of the family can help its members to inculcate the needed values, which higher education will later build upon.

4. Government should not only provide special funds to peace education to purchase materials and provide specific training and specialisation for lecturers but should be ready to sponsor adequate scholarly research work in the area of peace. In this way, unacceptable behaviour and conduct will be modified to conform to expected social standards and norms in the higher institutions.

5. Government should sensitise the people and create awareness for people to know what peace education, peace building, and peace culture are all about and their relative importance in creating a peaceful atmosphere both in schools and in the society at large. In this way, peace education will be universally accepted both by government and the people.

Conclusion
The integration of peace building and peace culture in higher tertiary institutions will go a long way in equipping young persons and youths with knowledge and skills that would help bring about world peace through better understanding. Peace education exposes students to concepts of peace, conflict, violence, and non-violence with their interest values and problems. Peace building and peace culture becomes imperative if higher education must be repositioned to make its receivers gain the expected skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to function effectively in the society.
References


