

CURBING YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN NIGERIA THROUGH FUNCTIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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Abstract

The widespread youth restiveness and involvement in crimes of violent nature have become serious concern to the government and those genuinely interested in the peace, unity and stability of Nigeria. The youth are not only leaders of tomorrow but they represent the collective aspirations of Nigeria for a better tomorrow. It is for this all important reason the paper examines youth restiveness, a very disturbing phenomenon in Nigeria now, and came up with the verdict that functional citizenship education is what the country needs to arrest this epidemic sweeping across the country. The paper is not unmindful of some challenges inherent in the teaching of Citizenship Education, a discipline aimed at bringing sanity in the Nigerian polity. One of such is the practical difficulty in citizenship education, is the instructional strategy. Finally, the paper makes some recommendations, chief of which is the institutionalization of citizenship education in the educational curriculum at all levels.

The verb 'function' from which the adjective 'functional' is derived, finds its home in the realm of activity that is proper to a particular thing of being, or mode of action by which a thing or person approaches the pursuit of its/his purpose (Abdullahi, 2007). Therefore a thing or person that is functioning is the one that approaches its/her purpose through activity rather than passivity. The adjective 'functional' suggests a system where attention is paid to activity or practical application of the subject of focus.

Citizenship education according to Olalubon (1999) is that education which teaches one what it takes to be a citizen of a community, his responsibilities in the society, his limitations and his fundamental human rights as enshrined in the constitution. In addition it teaches why it is important for one to be patriotic to his/her country and love his fellow country man and woman. It also teaches citizens to shun practices that will cause disunity in the country. Functional citizenship education therefore refers to the type of education that works for the good of the individual and society. But in another way, it is the type of education that makes the individual all said above to be effective person mentally, socially and practically or professionally. Audu (2000) considers functional citizenship education to be an effective process in which the students acquire those attitudes, values and skills necessary for human interaction as much emphasis is on patriotism, nationalism, self reliance and national integration.

Restiveness according to Hornby (2000) is being or acting impatiently or being bored. For youth to be in this state according to Japa (2011) means that their energy must be directed to what they feel can occupy them. Youth restiveness is synonymous with youth violence. This shows that youth with this bundle of energy is unwilling to submit to authority. Youth restiveness is therefore seen from the point of view of idleness and impatience which culminate in anti-government and destructive tendencies to destroy social decorum. The strategies often adopted could be in form of verbal outbursts, frivolous or inflammatory petitions, demonstration of carrying of arms in order to dismantle, disorganize existing idea or destroy life and property, all these constitute youth restiveness.

The current trends of youth restiveness and even violent crimes do not call for cheer at all. On daily basis the print and electronic media are awashed with reports of one form of youth violence, crime or the other. These range from their involvement in armed robbery, kidnapping, cult activities on our campuses,

political thuggery, activities of ethnic militias such as Oduwa People's Congress (OPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu, Niger Delta Youth and the latest being Boko Haram. This is a disturbing trend and poses great danger for peace, unity, stability and development of Nigeria.

Earlier in this paper, what may be termed as definitions of functional citizenship education, and youth restiveness were given. In the subsequent sections, the paper discusses theoretical framework on which this paper was anchored, youth restiveness and functional citizenship education and some challenges likely to stall the effective teachings of Citizenship Education. The paper concludes with a number of recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

Fuandai (2007) citing Giddens (1996) says violence is any physical force directed against self or others in which physical harm or death occurs. The rate of violence manifested by our youths has become alarming and is a matter of concern for people interested in the peace, progress, unity and development of Nigeria. Though sociologists and psychologists are not unanimous in their opinions about the causes of youth violence, many explanations have been put forward to account for violent behaviours among youths. These explanations include modeling as championed by social learning theorists like Bandura (1977), behaviorist theory as postulated by Skinner and his colleagues, genetic and motivational theory of human behaviour.

Over fifteen years, there has been growing acceptance of the etiological theorists' position which states that behaviour occurs in a social setting. According to this theory, learning (including deviant behaviours) occurs among human being as a result of interaction between individual and his environment has major influence on individual's behaviour. This view is amplified by Pretomdoe (1993) who asserts that behaviour acquired by observing others is enacted if it is reinforcing to do so and to withdraw if such an action results in negative and aversive consequences.

To the proponents of this theory, violent behaviours are learnt through what Bandura (1977) and Akoye (1984) refer to as modeling. Modeling means initiating the behaviour of a person that one is observing and which appears rewarding. Such models according to Ekeruo (1998) and Oladele (1998) can be divided into three, namely:

- (a) Real life model e.g. parents, teachers, sports stars, significant other children are known to develop primary attitudes through observing and initiating such models.
- (b) Symbolic models as presented in print forms, e.g. characters in tables, parables, biographies and art.
- (c) Representational models as in watching violent acts on television. Youth children tend to model their behaviours after those behaviours that have been praised and rewarded. Conversely, the behaviour of unsuccessful people tend to attract less attention and to be avoided. In this regard, there is research evidence to support the view that there is a strong relationship between watching television and violent behaviour.

Of more relevance is the theoretical explanation offered by the behaviorist and psychologists for youth violence and restiveness. This theory which Skinner (1938) as its Godfather asserts that all behaviours including violence/restiveness are learned. According to this school of thought, reinforcement and observational learning force considered to be responsible for the development of abnormal behaviour among youths. To that extent, models whose deviant behaviours succeed in obtaining desired goals without being punished for the behaviour are most likely to increase aggression among observers. What this means is that children will tend to give up behaviours that provide few if any reinforcers and to repeat behaviours that bring reinforcers other theoretical explanations of violent behaviours include biological factors. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs and that of Freud who maintains that the child passes through a series of stages of development on his way to maturity and concludes that violent acts result from any breakdown in the essential family relationship necessary for progress through these stages of development.

Various Forms of Youth Restiveness in Nigeria

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It is no longer news that some youths are hired as political thugs and touts by desperate politicians to settle scores with their opponents. This is particularly so during electioneering campaigns. Aside from this some youths are also hired to assassinate some opponents by disgruntled politicians, businessmen and women who have axe to grind with such opponents. The assassination of Chief Bola Ige, Marshall, Dikibbo, Pa Alfred Rewani, assassination attempt on Dora Akuyilli, the then Governor of Benue State, George Akume are few such examples.

There was disruption in oil prospecting exploration and mining in the Niger Delta Area through violent attacks and kidnapping of oil workers. Aside from this, kidnapping in the Eastern part of Nigeria is gradually became a permanent feature of the area.

Cult members are having field days in the various campuses across Nigeria. They have been terrorizing innocent, peaceful and law abiding students and members of the academia. Such cult groups include the Black Axe, Black Scorpion, The Seadogs, Eye Fraternity, Buccaneers, The Trojan Horse, the Vikings, The Amazons, and The Jezebels etc. These names conjure up fears and terror. The members carry guns, dagger, axes and knives.

Members of street gangs such as 'Area Boys', Yarn Dabar, Motor park touts etc. are usually found in the big commercial cities like Lagos, Kano, Onitsha etc. Their violent activities are fast spreading to other cities.

Armed robbery and other criminal activities such as murder, rape, pick-pocketing, human trafficking, and drug trafficking. Others include vandalization of PHCN and NNPC pipelines installations.

The latest being the activities of Boko Haram which portrays Nigeria as a country that is at war with itself. This dreaded Islamic religious sect uses violent means including bombs to kill and maim Nigerians and foreigners with impunity. Up till now the government and Nigerians are yet to come to terms with the very reason(s) why this dreaded sect is doing what it is doing. Lives have been lost, properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed. The name Boko Haram alone sends shock waves down the spines of Nigerians and foreigners alike. The government appears hapless even though it kept assuring Nigerians of being on top of the situation which every right thinking Nigerian thinks otherwise. The fear of Boko Harm now is gradually becoming the beginning of wisdom.

Using Functional Citizenship Education to Curb Youth Restiveness in Nigeria

In every society, education is expected to play vital role of ensuring that culture of the society is preserved and pass to the new generation (Okosun, 2006:34). Japa (2007) observes that in Nigeria, education for good citizenship is aimed at imparting in the learners those aspects of Nigeria history, which have contributed to a free and open democratic society for the wellbeing of the nation. Here lies the indispensable utility of citizenship education as a vehicle for social order and peaceful co-existence among the entire citizenry in Nigeria.

Citizenship education has a positive and decisive role to play in curbing youth restiveness in Nigeria, taking into cognizance the various factors responsible for youth restiveness. These various restiveness with their attendant consequence leave no one in doubt of the urgent need to have them reduced to the barest minimum through the teaching of citizenship education.

Citizenship education has the merit of not only stimulating unit, but equally mobilizing the people to live in peace with one another, instead of resorting to violence and brigandage that are gradually becoming a permanent feature in Nigeria.

Citizenship education is meant to inculcate in the mind of the learner the ability to understand their environment, their past, socially and culturally which at the long run, would enhance inter-personal relationship that would reduce youth restiveness.

It is believed that education equips an individual with necessary skills to be able to find solution to societal problems. Drawing from this assumption, it could be said that education given to any member of the society should be geared towards the pursuance of those goals, which are held by the society as dear and good. Citizenship education should transmit values, skills, attitudes and knowledge to make the recipients responsible and effective functioning members of the society.

This of course is in line with the postulation of Okosun (2006) that teachers at the primary and post primary schools and lecturers at the tertiary should emphasize the principles of live and let live, rather than live and let die that tend to create flashpoints of violence and epicenters. He posits that all shades of violence which have drawn Nigeria to its nadir of her reputation can be simmered through the teaching of citizenship education.

It also makes the citizens to be aware of manipulations in our society, and making citizens realize that these manipulators are doing so in their self interest and not that of the community.

Finally, citizenship education is seen as watershed, in that it has the capability to harness various conflicts that pervade Nigeria's political landscape into basin of harmonious and peace loving nation. Now that globalization has gained currency among comity of nations and the entire world as a global village, Nigeria cannot afford to be flash point of violence except she does not wish to catch up with other major players of the world.

Implication of Youth Restiveness in Nigeria

With the amnesty programme of the Yar'Adua administration the restive youth in the Niger Delta region where the bulk of Nigeria's crude oil comes from no longer witness kidnapping of oil workers and the vandalization of pipelines. But with some misgivings in the implementation of the amnesty programme some restive youths who could not be accommodated in the programme are back to the creeks. Millions of naira in oil revenue has been lost due to disruption in prospecting and production. This has a negative impact on the economy of Nigeria.

The current kidnapping going on in most parts of Eastern Nigeria is a sad development. Foreigners and foreign workers are withdrawing and this will definitely tell on investment. Political office holders, public servants and wealthy ones from that part of the country are no longer interested in visiting home or their constituencies.

Ethnic tribalism as championed by ethnic militias such as Oduwa People's Congress (OPC), MASSOB, Egbesu Boys, Bakassi Boys, Arewa People's Congress (APC), Ijaw Youth, Niger Delta Youth, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) just to mention a few posed great treat to national unity and national development. Development will certainly be a dream away in an atmosphere where there is no peace and security.

The activities of cult members on campuses have grave implication for national unity and development. The activities of these cult members create tension, disruption of academic programmes, loss of lives and properties especially during clashes by opposing rival cult members.

The image of Nigeria is dented badly especially with the activities of the Boko Haram whose targets are not limited to Nigerians alone but foreigners alike. Such activities portray the government as incapable of taking care of its primary responsibility – that of safeguarding the lives and property of the citizens.

Another implication is the impediment to the free movement of people, goods and services through mounting of road blocks on the highways. This has also affected the economy badly and scares away the much expected investors that Nigeria desperately needs.

The high rate of politically motivated killings cannot be divorced from the proliferation of firearms in circulation in Nigeria. The politicians who armed these hoodlums just for political scores find it difficult to retrieve these firearms thereby paving the way for violent crimes.

Conclusion

Nigeria has been bugged by series of restiveness and violent crimes, to curb these, the school, the home, the government and the larger society must make sincere contributions to remove all utterances, practices and policies that pitched the youths against either themselves or the government. One of the surest ways of achieving this is the teaching of functional citizenship education. Citizenship education is a type of education that focuses and promotes a social order in the society. It is a veritable tool for achieving peace and unity especially in flashpoint of violence like Nigeria. The attendant results of youth restiveness are destruction of lives and property, retardation of progress and dent on the image of the country. This cannot be allowed to continue if Nigeria must experience development in all facets. This is

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where the teaching of citizenship education becomes inevitable because of its capacity to stem all forms of restiveness.

Recommendations

In order to curb rampant youth restiveness, the following have been recommended: There is the need for the government to review the curriculum content of citizenship education or political education as the case may be. It should be made more functional, relevant and responsive to the changing needs of Nigeria. Besides, the government should make the teaching of citizenship education compulsory at all levels of our educational system.

The creation of employment opportunities by the government will go a long way in reducing the number of idle unemployed youth roaming the streets of our major cities. An idle mind, they say is the devil's workshop. Efforts of some of our states like Lagos, Bayelsa, Rivers and Edo States, are worthy of note. These states have engaged the youths in various ways just to arrest restiveness.

The government must go beyond lip services and condemnation each time the issue of cultism was reported in our campuses. The Colleges or University authorities should be empowered to deal with the issue squarely. Parents should also be alive to their responsibilities of good upbringing of their children.

National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be repositioned and well funded to carry out ethical orientation through which family values, respect for life and the inculcation of national and loyalty to the country should be emphasized.

Government at all levels should strengthen and fund all federal institutions which represent our national unity adequately so that they could perform their statutory functions effectively. These include, Unity Schools, Students Exchange Programme, The NYSC Scheme, The Nigeria Police Force so as to awaken a sense of patriotism and national consciousness in our youths.

The ostentatious lifestyle of some of our politicians and those in position of authority in midst of poverty stricken communities has been fingered to be a reason for the constant violence. The joblessness of our youth became an advantage to some of these politicians who used them to ferment trouble especially when things are not going their way.

Finally, the government must be more forthright in its drive for anti-corruption crusade so that we can at least have some sanity in the polity.

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