# ADULT EDUCATION FOR CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING, GOOD NEIGHBORLINESS AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY AND LIVELIHOOD IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*Friendly neighborliness is an instrument for peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship. It is also very vital to the sustenance of democracy and livelihood in every society. Unfriendly neighborliness is mostly caused by conflicts, especially when they escalate to violence. The Nigerian nation has witnessed several conflicts stemming from religious, ethnic, political and economic reasons. The effects of such conflicts are enormous; apart the loss of lives and property, resulting into many people deserting their homes, jobs and other sources of livelihood. The major repercussion of those conflicts is the intendments of hatred, fear, suspicion and unfriendly neighborliness among people living in such communities. Adult Education has numerous programmes that raise consciousness as well as solve the problems of ignorance, poverty, frustration among adults and youths in Nigeria. Peace education which is also an integral part of adult education can be used to raise the consciousness of the Nigerian adults and youths against violence. This type of education inculcates the virtues of tolerance and forgiveness; it also highlights the dangers of conflicts and the need for peaceful co-existence needed for the sustenance of democracy and livelihood in Nigeria.*

## Introduction

Adult and Non-formal Education is a very important sub-sector of education that has the capacity of addressing the educational and sociological problems of adults, youths as well as the entire community. As a discipline of learning, Adult and Non-Formal Education sub-sector has numerous programmes that are capable of creating awareness and raising the consciousness of the adults and youth populace with a view to making more enlightened and better informed about the desire to have more harmonious relationships that would ensure peaceful co-existence.

The programmes embodied in the Adult and Non-Formal education Sub-sector that could address the problem of unfriendliness within neighborhood among the Nigerian communities include: Literacy Education, Continuing and Remedial Education, Functional Literacy and Entrepreneur Education, Life-long Education, Extension Education, and Peace Education, among others. It appears that unfriendliness among neighbors which often culminates into conflict and sometimes violence is mostly caused by ignorance due to illiteracy among adults as well as frustration due to idleness caused by unemployment among youths. The situation is further aggravated by lack of sound background in peace education among most of our populace.

The objective of this paper is to bring forth the role the Adult and Non-Formal Education sub-sector can play in raising the consciousness of the Nigerian adults and youths with a view to fostering good neighborliness among them, which will hopefully lay a solid foundation for sustainable democracy and livelihood among the Nigerian communities. The paper intends to discuss the various programmes of the Adult and Non-formal Education sub-

sector and how they can be used to address the problems of lack of awareness of Social and Civic responsibilities among many adults and youths which often cause lack of tolerance and forgiveness as well as desire for peaceful co-existence that usually culminates into unfriendly relationship among neighbors which in turn, threaten democracy and livelihood in many instances.

Adult Education has been defined differently by scholars; Houle (1976) in Abba, (2009) for example, defined it as 'any process by which individual, group or institutions try to help men and women improve their skills, knowledge and sensitiveness". Abba (2009) furthers defined it as "a programme of activities designed to promote the professional growth of individuals working for an agency or an organization". Zuofa, (2004) defined Adult Education as the education that encourages individuals of all ages to enhance their abilities and potentials through diverse modes of formal, informal and non-formal education based on their social and religious needs, thereby enhancing their scope of facing challenges. Zuofa, (2004) considered Adult Education a problem oriented programme which help the adult to function immediately and more effectively in the society.

The goals of Adult and Non-Formal Education are clear and comprehensive. They include the provision of Functional Literacy and Continuing Education for adults and youth who never had the opportunity for early education or who dropped out before completing their Primary education. This group, according to the National Policy of Education (2013) includes nomads, migrants families, the disabled and all other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender. The policy further elaborates as follows:

- Provision of education for different categories of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- Provision of in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- Giving the adult citizens of the community necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

The Adult and Non-formal Education sub-sector has a very wide scope that encompasses all forms of education needed for public enlightenment, consciousness raising as well as making adults and youth independent and self-reliance economically and socially. The Sub-sector comprises of Mass Education, Community Development, Vocational training, Literacy education, Civic and Political education and all such educational programme that assist adults to discharge their societal responsibilities (Zuofa, 2007). For the sake of clarity, it is important to explain what their programmes are and how they work to achieve the educational, social, economic as well as political empowerment of adults and youths.

**Adult Education and Consciousness Rising**

Adult and Non-Formal Education is not only about preparing people for life but also helping adults to live successfully. Programmes in Adult and Non-Formal Education assist "to increase competence and negotiate transition in their social roles, help adults gain greater fulfillment in their personal lives and to assist them in solving personal and community

problem" (Oyebamiji, 2006). The role of Adult and Non-Formal Education in raising consciousness of adults and youths has been traced back to history. Peterson (1992) (eds) observed that:

> The radical and socialist movements in Russia had realized, as early as 1848, that for the working class to be politically empowered, it was imperative that it had political education---if the working class was to capture political power, it would need an educated elite drawn from among its own members. It was to provide such an educated elites that the adult education movement within the working class for the working class arose (Peterson, in Avoseh, 1992).

The above opinions showed clearly that Adult Education has capacity to raise people's consciousness if it is provided to do so. Scholar like Paulo Ferire has demonstrated the power of Adult Literacy in raising people's consciousness so that people can ask questions and challenge those who stood on their way to progress. In Nigeria therefore, efforts need to be made by Adult Education practitioners to develop programmes that can raise people's consciousness with the view to challenging the corrupt practices and corrupt elements in our society for the betterment of all. The relevant programmes for raising people's consciousness are literacy for development, skills for empowerment, political education, and civic education among others.

Having established the capacity of Adult Education in raising people's consciousness, it is imperative to discuss the issue of unfriendly neighborliness in Nigeria and especially raise fundamental questions regarding the causes, magnitude and repercussions of such relationships.

**Unfriendly Neighborliness**

Unfriendliness neighborliness in Nigeria is mostly caused by conflicts which in some cases culminate into violence. It forms a formidable threat to sustainable democracy and livelihood in Nigeria. As already pointed out, unfriendly neighborliness is mostly caused by conflict. At this point, it is pertinent to know what is conflict, how does it spring-up and how does it result into violence and ultimately make neigbours unfriendly.

Conflict according to Ademola, (2004:35) is "a phenomenon that is an important part of human existence and a natural part of our daily lives". Hellriegel and Slocum (1996) posited that conflict is an opposition arising from disagreement about goals, thoughts, or emotions with or among individuals, teams, departments, or organizations. Opposition is all about blocking an individual or a group from achieving set goals, and this leads to conflict because of the instant over reaction that will be put up by the party being blocked. Adomola (2004) argued that conflicts are caused by many factors and no single explanation can be offered for the emergence escalation or protraction of conflict of whatever form. There are instances

where conflicts degenerate into crisis and many of the parties to the crisis tend to forget the actual root cause of the crisis.

It is imperative; however, to note that, not all conflicts are violent, some conflicts are positive in nature. These are situations where conflicts are used constructively to explore different solutions to different problems. But in many cases, conflicts culminate into emotive and non-rational arguments into open and destructive long-standing tension (Ademola, 2004). Wherever conflicts result into destruction, the progress of the society is retarded and individuals in those societies would turn unfriendly to each other. In those societies, emotions take presence over reason; groups become disintegrated and all development efforts would be scuttled. A typical such episodes can be cited within the Nigerian communities where frequent conflicts have culminated into raging violence thereby creating unfriendly neighborliness among many Nigerians. Such conflicts which had their roots in religion and ethnicity have occurred severally in Nigeria.

Few examples of these conflicts are conflicts between the Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) and Hausa/Fulani resident in the South Western Nigeria, between Ife and Modakeke also in the South-West. They have also occurred among the Ijaw/Urhobe/Itsekiri in the Niger Delta region, and between the Umuteri and Aguleri in the South-East. The most recurring of such conflicts is the indigene/settler conflict in Jos, the Capital of Plateau State and the many religious conflicts that occur from time to time, the most recent of which is the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State and many other northern States. Numerous Chieftaincy and land disputes have always happen in our communities with the consequences of causing unfriendliness among many neighbours in Nigeria.

The major issue at stake presently is how do governments; federal, state, local, traditional institutions, non-governmental organizations as well as the larger society join hands to address the issue of violent conflicts as they occur in some communities in Nigeria, thereby creating lasting peace and ensuring friendly neighborliness for the sustenance of democracy and livelihood in Nigeria.

**The Concept of Peace**

Peace according to Hornby (2005) is a situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area. The concept of peace has been given different interpretations and definitions. According to Ibeanu, (2004:10) 'peace is a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict both within specific societies and in wider international community.'' Peace is seen as a product of the function of other social structures and institutions, according to their view therefore, peace have the function of social integration and order. It is also seen as a natural original and God-given state of human existence. Peace is a state of being calm or quiet or harmonious. It is a state of living in harmony or friendship with one another without argument or violence or disagreement (Ibegbu, 2011).

To the National Open University of Nigeria (2010), peace is a long-term and gutsy project that seeks to bring about lasting and constructive change in institutions that maintain society.

Said differently, peace is a dynamic social process in which justice, equity, and respect for basic human rights are maximized, and violence, both physical and structural, is minimized. The National Open University of Nigeria (2010) further categorized peace into a negative and a positive peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence that causes physical harms, and positive peace refers to the absence of structural violence manifested as the uneven distribution of power and resources. Negative peace is reactive in nature in that it seeks the cessation of actual or impending conflict. Ibeanu, (2004) argued that countries that experience pervasive structural violence are not peaceful. Although there is no physical war, such countries with pervasive poverty, oppression of the poor by the rich police brutality, intimidation of ordinary people by those in power, oppression of women or monopolization of resources and power by some sections of the society are not peaceful.

From the above submissions we can safely infer that peace is not the absence of physical violence but the presence of justice. In summary, peace relates to existing social condition and is dynamic; it is also of a finished condition but always work in progress. Peace may also increase or decrease defending on the prevailing social conditions, which is why solutions to conflict should take into cognizance social changes and prevailing circumstances. After addressing problems that cause or aggravate conflicts, Government should make all concerted efforts to disseminate peace education. What is peace education and how does it address conflicts and achieve friendly relationship and peaceful co-existence?

**Peace Education**

Peace Education, according to Ibeanu, (2004) is "the application of positive peace content opposed to negative peace and also a process concerning the achievement of peace to individuals who are still growing and learning. Peace education is seen as the deliberate attempt to educate children and adults the dynamics of conflict homes, schools, and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization. According to Kaura, (2006) Peace Education is the condition that breeds peaceful co-existence, and what is central to the maintenance of peace are: justice (social and economic) equality (in treatment and opportunity), respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. In his definition of peace education, Muhammad (2009) considers it as a beneficial adjustment of harmony between the individual and his lord one side and fellow men on the other hand.

Peace education tackles the culture of violence and aggression and inculcates values of non-violent change among youths and adults. This type of education opens up people's eyes and minds and makes them appreciate the repercussions of actions taken. Peace education introduces the important concepts of human dignity and human rights. It emphasizes values, such as economic equity, political participation, ecological balance, the type of education reiterates the formative principles fundamental to international human rights standard. It is also concerned with global ethics, gender issues and values of cultural violence.

If lasting peace and friendly neighborliness are to be achieved, children must have early peace education. It is through peace education that children could be taught to suppress their impulsive nature of being violent, and embrace tolerance. When children and youths become

educated on the importance of lasting peace, peer mediation becomes an alternative to formal teaching of peace (Ibeanu, 2004). When adequately disseminated, peace education can serve as an investment in the future generations. This is because the future generations would imbibe the virtues of peace, the skills of conflict analysis and management identification of conflicts and sources of conflict among other things. This investment will bring a more peaceable future for our communities and the nation at large.

The essence of peace education is to prevent armed conflicts, intolerance by one community against another, reduce threat of force in human affairs; employment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedom. It also aims at cordial relationship between people and recognition of the trust, cooperation and recognition and mutual interest of all people. Peace education entails the creation of a conducive social environment which favours the full development of human race (Best, 2004).

Peace education can be achieved through tolerance and forgiveness which are inter-woven concepts as one leads to the other. While tolerance is described as the acceptance of different views, opinions or behavior of other people and also the ability to endure pain, hardship or difficult conditions, forgiveness is described as a situation where a person stops feeling angry with somebody who has offended, harm, annoy or upset him (Hornby, 2005). All human beings have the moral obligation to relate effectively, efficiently and successfully with their creator and to also perfect their relationships. It is pertinent we need to be tolerant with conditions and always ask for the forgiveness from our creator for actions committed outside the enshrined norm. We are also bound to offend others and also be offended by other fellow beings. All these conditions necessitate that human beings need to be tolerant and forgiving if social harmony, peaceful co-existence as well as friendly neighborliness are to be established in our communities.

Peace Education can also be achieved through the inculcation of religious education. Religion is seen as a universal unifying factor as such, the greatest instrument for achieving peace, unity and development when strictly adhered to. The two major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity all preach peace, love, truth, brotherhood, unity, selfless sacrifice and above all guidance to eternal life. The prevalent socio-economic problems of our society can all be corrected through the inculcation of religious conscience (Kaura, 2006). Religion more than any other institution inculcates morality through adherence to positive social values such as truth, justice, honesty, chastity, charity and love which are all necessary for peaceful co-existence and friendliness among neighbors in every society.

**Conclusion**

Unfriendly neighborliness which is mostly caused by conflict is very common in Nigeria as exemplified by the prevalence of violence in many communities. Cases of ethno-religious conflicts have occurred in most parts of this nation and consequences of such crises are very grievous as they resulted to loss of numerous lives and property worth billions of naira. The conflicts have also forced many people to flee their homes, thereby becoming refugees in their own father land.

The worst repercussion of the conflicts is the entertainment of hatred among individuals and groups and infusion of unfriendliness among neighboring families and communities with the resulting mutual suspicion and fear among such settings. There is no doubt, these unfriendly neighborliness are not conducive to peaceful co-existence and livelihood. They are not also conducive to the substance democracy.

**Recommendations**

In view of the need for the achievement of sustainable democracy and livelihood in Nigeria efforts through consciousness raising the following recommendations are hereby offered:
For conflicts to be resolved and harmonious relationships and peaceful co-existence be achieved among unfriendly communities in Nigeria, authorities must identify and address factors responsible for the emergence of the conflicts. Some of the identified causes of conflicts as suggested by many investigation reports include: Ignorance, Suspicion, Poverty cause by unemployment, especially among youth, fear of marginalization or domination by another group(s), perceived injustice among some sections of the society in terms of resource allocation as well as the inadequacy or complete absence of peace education in many communities in Nigeria.

1. Government should emphasize on the provision of educational programmes that raise the consciousness of adults and youths as well as those embodied in the Adult Education sub-sector.
2. Government should also emphasize on the provision of peace education, especially by religious institutions.
3. Leaders inter ethnic religious dialogue should also be encouraged by government through workshops, seminars, conferences etc.
4. Leaders especially religious should avoid inciting and provocative statements, they should bear in mind that many citizens are non-literate and can misinterpret them.
5. The Nigerian security agencies should also double-up their efforts at detecting and punishing people found involved in or cause violence.
6. The general public should be further sensitized on the dangers of violence.

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