Enlightenment on Population Control and Youth Exposure to Formal Education via General Studies: The Antithesis to Politico-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract

Peace is one of the invaluable assets which can encourage human socio-economic development in every society. It encourages interpersonal and group interaction leading to, a platform of trust and mutual understanding. Although the evidences of the positive impact of peace in the society are obvious in all aspects of the existence of the society, conflict seems to be inevitable in every human interaction irrespective of the context of such interaction. Conflict itself is one of the greatest challenges being faced by the world presently at all levels of interactions. There are many factors responsible of conflicts in the society at all levels. These included material, immaterial, remote and immediate causes. Among other things in the history of the world, which contribute to conflict in modern time, high population growth rate and lack of exposure to formal education play significant role in the incessant conflicts at various levels in the developing nations. These two factors act as the remote factors which build the ground for other immediate factors to socio-political conflicts. Although much attention had been given to other remote and immediate factors in the analysis of conflict in the developing nations such as Nigeria, this paper focused on unraveling the relationship between incessant conflicts in different parts of Nigeria, high population growth and lack of exposure to formal education among the youth. Based on the findings, the paper suggested the active role of the School of general studies across the federation in the enlightenment of the youth about remote factors behind Politico- Religious conflicts, sincerity among the political elite in the effort to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria, individuals and groups sincere involvement in the implementation of the population policy for its effectiveness and, that both parents and government should encourage the youth to embrace formal education.

Keywords: Population; Peace; Unity; Antithesis; Civilisation

Introduction

Peace and unity are some of the most important factors that reinforce the human existence from generation to generation whether internally or externally. It encourages sincerity, faithfulness and progressive mutual understanding among the group in question. The essence of peace in every society cannot be over emphasize especially, in the presence of ever growing individual and group differences in the modern society, as it is the foundation for politico-socio-economic growth and developments among the nations that have embraced it. In spite of the huge benefits and opportunities which peace and unity avails to humanity from individual interactions, family relationship to the level of group coexistence, the opposite of peace (conflict) still holds sway in virtually every inter group relationship be it family, communal, religious, ethnic and racial inter group relationship.

Although many philosophical assumptions and conceptual propositions have been put forward to explain and analyze conflict, much is still desired from more empirically justified explanation of the thesis and antithesis of peace and conflict; owing to the fact that peace as a social phenomenon is more empirically felt than philosophically and conceptually assumed. From empirical stand point, many factors have been implicated in the thesis and antithetical progression between peace and conflict in the modern society. Among the factors implicated are human population growths, slack in educational development among different groups and lack of medium for general enlightenment about the factors behind politico cum religious conflict in the generation of ever growing academic specialization [1].

Apart from the environmental and economic crisis which human population expansion have triggered in the early 18th century, it has spilled over to socio-political activities of the society springing up conflict and heterogeneous interests among ever growing groups and subgroups across the globe. Similarly, moving from pre-modern, modern and post-modern societies, the slack in objective formal education for universal consensus on human value and harmonious coexistence of groups and sub groups has created a loophole for conflict by making available, educationally less privileged for progressive intergroup and intra-group conflict and violence. Similarly, owing to the fact that every human being ought to be conversant with most of the phenomenon which, are inevitable in the society for her/his survival, the need for a common ground to share basic information and knowledge about the numerous phenomenon in the society arises. Of course, the imperative of the general study in the higher institutions especially in the developing nations like Nigeria become evident as this offers the youth in particular the opportunity to have cross discipline information and by implication be equipped in attitude and character in confronting multiple challenges in the society.

Since the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria till date, no single year has passed without an account of one conflict or the other at the level of intra and intergroup relationship [2].

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Acknowledging the fact that different factors contribute to conflicts among groups and intergroup relationship, this paper specifically focused on the role of uncontrolled population growth and lack of exposure to formal education, to the ever growing conflict in Nigeria and how proper information about these, via general studies in the Nigerian higher institutions can help in dealing with the problem.

Having introduced the interest of this paper, the remaining part of the paper will run thus: Concept clarification, population policies in Nigeria till date, development of educational policies in Nigeria till date, the relationship between education, population control and peace, building the antithesis of conflict and conclusion.

Clarification of Concepts

Among the concepts which are the thrusts of this paper are: Conflict, Education, Peace, Population control and General studies.

Conflict

Conflict as one of the oldest social phenomenon in human existence has been defined and explained from different perspectives. However, for the interest of this paper, the focus for definition will be on pragmatic definition of conflict. Conflict according to Nwafor is the pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups. It reflects a determined action or struggle over a goal, which may be overt or subtle; manifest or latent. Conflict situation may surface through contrasting images of each party's intensions, inactions or actions [3]. The minimal level of conflict which attracts external interference for conflict resolution is interpersonal conflict however, conflict surfaces at different levels such as interfamily conflict, inter communal, interethnic, inter religious, inter racial and international conflicts. Conflict at different levels if unresolved, can lead to socio-economic and political deadlocks.

Education

Education includes all efforts, agencies and organizations which equip individual to master his social and physical environment as well as adapt to the expectations of society [4]. Education is all the experiences by which intelligence is developed, knowledge acquired and character formed (catholic encyclopedia). Education is an activity that helps in the preservation, development and transmission of culture from one generation to the other Nnajieto and UkhureBor. Education is the society while the society is education without education, it is impossible for society to survive from one generation to the other. Education is grouped into two forms viz: Formal and informal education.

Formal education is a type of educative process which goes with prescribed syllabus which is consciously and deliberately planned to create a cordial relationship between the giver (teacher) and the taker (learner) Nnajieto and Ukhurebor.

Informal education is a type of education in which we have no prescribed syllabus; it is deliberately or in deliberately learned by the individuals. Although education is divided into formal and informal education, the yard stick in the modern society is formal education which follows curriculum and sound logical process. Whether American format, Western European format, Chinese format, etc., the objective essence of education is first, socialization into conventional human values and corporate social responsibilities for the survival and advancement of human society [5]. These thrusts of formal education aim at liberating man from mental slavery and instinctive behaviors which are detrimental to inter personal and group existence. Though formal education technically develops individuals into specializations

for the solving of the society's needs, the ultimate goal of formal education is to build uniformity in understanding of humanity, conventional and appropriate means of pursuing individual and group goals without undermining of the right of others. Lack of formal education in the modern society becomes problem both to the individual concerned and the society at large. While the inward potential in the individual will be stagnated and untapped, the individual becomes vulnerable to individual and group sentiments which are capable of engendering conflict at different levels [6].

Peace

Peace at macro level can be defined as the coexistence of different cultures to be obtained by improved communication with others, common understanding and the ability to tolerate one another [7]. It can be a state of harmony or absence of hostility; a nonviolent way of life. Though ideally, we can talk about absolute peace, for human social existence, what can be obtainable is relative peace. While absolute peace can be likened to object in the space which moves ad infinitum without obstruction, relative peace can be likened to a bicycle on the road which has many obstructions and hurdles to dodge while at the same time, the rider continues riding to maintain a balance. In essence, as far as human interactions and incompatibilities exist at different levels, there will never be a relationship or coexistence that will not encounter frictions and to curtail such, there must be proactive and regular surveillance measure to counter the chances of conflict at any level.

Population control

Population control which in itself can be realized through population policy represents a strategy for achieving a particular pattern of population change. The strategy may consist of only a specific component –a single purpose goal such as to lower the crude birth rate by 10 points during a 5 year period. Or it may be multifaceted, such as an attempt to improve the reproductive health of women as well as controlling the population level at the same time. Human population is such a phenomenon which is open to different aspects of analysis focusing on human beings as the measure. While the biological or physical analysis of human population focus on the physiological factors that encourage reproduction such as age, fecundity, infant and maternal mortality; the social aspect of population analysis focuses on the social factors which encourages or discourages population growth such as age of entering into sexual union among cultural and religious groups, pattern of sexual relationship, attitude to pregnancy termination and cultural practices affecting maternal and infant mortalities among the group. There are other factors which affect or are affected by human population growth which, warrant other perspectives in the explanation of human population variations. However, population control in principle, aim at putting in check, the variables which affect fertility rate of a population such as intercourse variables, conception variables, gestation variables and migration which in turn determine the birth rate, reproductive rate and population growth rate.

General studies

Although the concept of general can be easily conceived as including all available phenomenon in a particular context making it, somewhat difficult for us to differentiate between one's definition of general and another one's interpretation of the definition without further explanation. General as adjective qualifying another word can be conceived as involving all and at the same time carving out a unit of analysis for more clarification. General studies in view of the above clarification are a form of study which includes the entire available

program run by an institution at least, at the introductory level. Also, it involves the interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge to make students become conversant with the natural and social phenomenon surrounding them in the society beyond their area of specializations.

According to Nweke and Nwoye, it is through the approval of a minimal standard for academic activities that, the National University Commission (NUC) launched the General Studies programme into the University's curricula [8]. This by implication was a focus of the NUC to improve the quality of graduates produced by Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Having knowledge of more than one discipline or better still, general study and its implication to the competency of the graduates of higher institutions of learning, is not a recent phenomenon as this has taken place in the ancient civilization of Egypt via the Egyptian Mestry School in which the students were expected to spend at least forty years studying every aspect of humanity.

Population policy in Nigeria till date

Population policies and their implementations are either proactive measure against the perceived or projected direction of the population growth or, reaction to the existing population growth rate in order to encourage upward or downward growth rate. Before 1974, policy on population among the developed and developing nations (where it existed), was majorly a private (national) affair in which each nation especially the developed nations, operated both domestic and international population policies. While the domestic policy on population was focused on immigration and incentive for family planning, the international policy on population focused on encouraging birth control in the developing nations through donations. Meanwhile, the first conference on population which by way of formalization brought uniformity in the concept and principle of population policy was held in Bucharest in 1974. This was focused on encouraging mostly the developing nations to set quantitative goals on population growth rate [9]. After 10 years of the conference in Bucharest, another conference on population was held at Mexico to evaluate and reinforce the agenda of the Bucharest conference [10]. Having acknowledged the implication of high population growth rate to economic development, majority of the nations in the Mexico conference unanimously upheld the recommendations for the further implementation of the world population plan of action. The conclusion of the Mexico conference led to divided argument between the development apologists, free market apologists and the feminists [11]. While the development apologists were of the view that population growth affected economic development, the free market apologists maintained that building free market and capitalism were the antidotes of high population growth rate. The feminist sympathizers held the view that population policy was the hegemonic strategy of men to continue to dominate women in the society.

Whichever way, the post-Mexico conference of 1984 agitations led to a background and aroused the necessity of the 1994 Cairo conference which perhaps, served as the last conference on population with full support of the majority of the members of the United Nations [12,13]. In view of the population trends and concern at the global stage, Nigeria after her independence in 1960 seems to be unperturbed by the issue of population and by implication, deemed it unnecessary any form of population policy. It was not until 1984 when Nigeria participated in the mini conference on population at regional level (Africa) which took place in Tanzania, that Nigeria joined the 1984 Mexico conference and accepted in principle, to put her population under control for economic development [14]. After the approval of the policy in 1988, it was placed under evaluation and review to test the achievement of the objectives and to incorporate the recent developments on population issues from 1988 to 2014.

Among other things, the policy was focused on reducing the population growth rate to at least 2%, a reduction in the total fertility rate to 0.6% every five years; reducing the infant mortality to 35/1000 live births; reducing maternal mortality ratio to 125/100000 live births by 2010 and 75 by 2015 etc. (NPC, 2004; NBS, UNICEF and UNFPA, 2012).

Since the 1988 Nigerian policy on population, Nigerian population growth rate had been hovering around 2.40 and 2.63. As at 2016, Nigerian gross reproductive rate was 2.49 and the total fertility rate was 5.13 making Nigeria the 13th nation among the 100 nations with high fertility rate. Specifically, the Nigerian population growth rate stood at 2.67% as at 2016 while the recent studies indicate that in every 43 persons anywhere in the world, one person is a Nigerian (Geoba.sc, 2016; CIA Fact Book, 2016). The implication of the above situation is that Nigerian population is not under control and is moving to the level of doubling itself every 28 years approximately.

Education policy in Nigeria since independence

The 1882 education ordinance was the first educational legislation in Nigeria; this ordinance was focused to among other things, the encouragement of enrolment of students, expansion of the mission school curricula and, making the school more circular than religious [15]. The 1882 education ordinance as the first education ordinance in Nigeria put to an end the exclusive control of education by the missionaries.

In 1887, after the separation of Lagos colony from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) a new ordinance was enacted to particularly suit Nigerian education setting. This ordinance, among other things, established education board to maintain homogeneity in the diverse educational activities by different missionaries at different levels. This ordinance helped in determining the standard of certificate to be awarded to both the teachers at training institutes, and the students at different levels. In 1916, another education ordinance and code was established. This was one of the Lord Lugard's efforts to unify the country after amalgamation in 1914, by unifying the education departments [16,17]. It reorganized the school system in Nigeria to focus on developing individual and the society in general. The ordinance in order to achieve the aim of maintaining academic and moral standard, made the grant-in-aid to be based on the following percentages based on different segments of school activities – discipline and moral standard (30%), excellent arrangement and qualification of the teaching staff (20%), periodical examination and general progress (40%), building/equipment/sanitation (10%). By implication, the ordinance paved way for increased government participation as well as elaborated the standard for schools to operate in the country [15,18]. By 1926, another education ordinance was enacted following the 1920 Phelps – stoke commission on education in Africa, which was informed by the 1925 memorandum on education policy in British Tropical Africa. This was because of the need to control the indiscriminate building of mushroom schools in the southern Nigeria. Among other things, the ordinance/code brought sanity to the education sector by controlling the establishment of schools, the standard for teaching staff strengthening and specifying the functions of the educational inspectors and supervisors and, encouraging moral standard in the education sector [15,17].

In 1948, another education ordinance was enacted which aimed to decentralize educational administration while maintaining a central education board. This ordinance included the governments at regional level as well as the local authorities in the educational administration. Among the region were the East, West, Lagos and North. To strengthen

this new education ordinance and the regional participation, the 1952 ordinance helped the regional governments to develop educational policies and systems. Of paramount importance, here, the ordinance abolished the colonial educational board and subjected all schools both privates and public to the supervision and inspection of the regional boards.

In 1955, after the 1954 change in the government structure, which made Lagos the capital territory and other three regions, becoming semi-independent region, the west developed her first education law because of bringing education into concurrent list. In 1956, the northern region had her own education law while Lagos enacted education ordinance of her own in 1957.

By 1959 at the eve of independence, the colonial government constituted the Ashby commission to investigate and report on the Nigerian manpower need for a period of 20 years [15]. The commission has reported the disparities between levels of education; north and south; teachers against the number of students; and the highly parochial and literary nature of the education in Nigeria. In recommendation, the commission suggested the improvement of primary and secondary education, the upgrading of the university college Ibadan that had operated as teachers training institute, to fully-fledged university, the establishment of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ife and Zaria. Furthermore, it recommended the establishment of University commission, to oversee the tertiary institutions.

Between 1966 and 1979, the then military government expanded the regions into states, and allowed the states to promulgate edicts on education. In 1979 – 1983, after the military era, the second republic government through the 1979 constitution chapter II, section 18 subsections 1 – 3, maintained a homogenous education policy that focused on equal and adequate educational opportunities, the promotion of science and technology in the educational curricula, the encouragement of adult education etc. This in essence moved the Nigerian education system to the higher level; eliminating the structures of adhoc education created by the colonial masters.

Consequent to the return of military in government, in 1983 – 1999, several decrees were promulgated by the federal military government to guide and regulate the conduct of education in the country. Among the decrees were decree No 16 of 1985 on national minimum standards; decree No 20 1986, which changed the school calendar from January to December, to October to September, decree No 26 of 1988 which proscribed and prohibited the academic staff union of universities from participating in trade union activities and decree No 36 of 1990, which resolved the proscription of ASUU, etc. [17].

Meanwhile, in the internal structure of the education system in Nigeria, around 1982, the 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 system of education was introduced nationwide to maintain a uniformity and systematic method. By 2006, the 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 was replaced by Universal Basic Education new method (9 – 3 – 4). In essence while the 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 was to maintain 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary, 3 years in senior secondary and 4 years in tertiary institutions; the new UBE method extended the primary education to 9 years incorporating the 3 years in junior secondary school while maintaining the 3 years in senor secondary school and 4 years in tertiary institution (NPE, 2004; Omovo, 2006; Uwaifo and Uddin, 2009).

The historical antecedence of education in Nigeria obviously indicates that it was a child of necessity both to the colonial administrators and the subsequent developmental needs of the country. However, the seed of discord sown by religions and subsequent inappropriate attention to the development of education in the interest of Nigeria as an entity, resulted in the poor attention to education by the parents. Though data on school enrollment at primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions were not available from 1960, the ones made available to UNESCO by Nigerian government from 1970 indicate some level of inconsistencies and moreover, fluctuation towards the down ward slope. Between 1970 and 2010, the gross enrollment rate for secondary school in the country stood at 43.84%, this included all ages and males and females; while the maximum enrollment was in 2010, and the minimum was in 1970. However, the gross enrollment for the primary schools between 1970 and 2010 stood at 84.72%; while the maximum here (112.81%) was reached by 1983; the minimum (40.84%) was in 1970. Yet, the enrollment as at 2010 was 13.49%. For the tertiary institution, 1975-2010, the gross enrollment rate stood at 10.41; while the maximum was reached by 2005, the minimum (0.74%) was at 1975 while by 2010 the enrollment rate was at 21.53% (Index Mundi, 2011).

By 1999 in an effort to increase school enrollment especially at primary and junior secondary school levels, and subsequently boost the senior secondary and tertiary enrollment, the federal government initiated the Universal Basic Education program which, made enrollment at the primary and junior secondary school level compulsory for all the citizens of Nigeria at school age. While the UBE program recorded some level of improvement in Nigeria, moving the general enrollment rate from 6.9% to 15.5% between 1999 and 2005 (for primary level), it bounced back to 8.5% in 2010. For the secondary level, the case was similar. While the enrollment for 1999 was 4.2%, it rose to 65.8% in 2005 and bounced back to 19.0% in 2010.

Indeed, the progress based on the compilation was on the general note however, at the state level, within the country, the case is different. All the states in the North except Adamawa and Taraba state have at least 40% of the children out of school at the primary and junior secondary levels [14].

The relationship between conflict, population growth and poor educational background

Conflict as a social phenomenon, has other social phenomenon that interact with it. These phenomenon can be causative factors as well as consequential. In the case of population and education, they are all causative factors to conflict according to the focus of this paper.

Population growth is the least factor to be considered in most cases by the conflict analysts who focus on the immediate rather than the remote causes of conflict in the society. The increase in population growth rate triggers other socio-economic situation of which social and political conflicts are some of them. This works with stages, composition and structure of the population. The younger and larger the population, the higher the chances of conflict especially, in the developing nations where struggle for the available resources always fuel civil conflicts [19]. Most of the conflicts across the globe presently are linked to high population growth rate in most of the Middle East, Asia and African nations [20]. The findings by FBI and CIA suggest that the mean age of the youth involving in suicide bombing was 22 years while, majority came from polygamous families with at least seven children [21]. Also, studies have shown that apart from poverty, the religious wars and similar conflicts in the Middle East nations are fuelled by uncontrolled population growth rate among these nations [22]. While the oppressive regimes and high level of unemployment (also connected to high population growth) attracted discontent among the population, the subsequent conflict which resulted from them in such places as Mexico,

Iran (1979 Iranian revolution), Palestine, Syria Egypt, Iraq, Libya, etc., were all connected to ever growing population of these nations [23].

The common logic of population growth and conflict is located within the quest for access to resources such as land and raw materials as the human population continue to grow uncontrollably. Earlier, Malthus has connected the unforeseen population problem to land and available resources which cannot grow as the population which is dynamic. Though the development apologists such as Boserups have allayed the fear with the assumed incredible power of technology to multiply the means of satisfaction to human needs, the truth remains that the land and nature cannot increase rather; it can be constant as human population increases. Between 15ᵗʰ and 18ᵗʰ century, the European population was growing beyond the carrying capacity of the region, as technology has not become sufficient then, the trend for containing the growing population was to transfer the population to other parts of the world via colonialism and empire building agenda; a strategy which Plato recommended in his philosophical assumption in other to lessen the burden on the land and ensure the satisfaction of the remnants in the city of 5040 human beings [24]. This perhaps may be responsible for the infrequent internal and external conflicts. However, when the colonialism and empire expansion became weak as a strategy of contending with population problems due to the increase in search of territories by the European nations, the voice of Malthus and other *antinatalists* started reverberating across the Europe thus, overshadowing the influence of the *pronatalists* such as the mercantilists. In response, Europe sub pedaled her population growth through certain policies which yielded positively later [25]. In the case of Africa and other developing nations in Asia and Latin America, the surplus of the population were later transferred to Europe and North America in the early 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ centuries in form of cheap labours apart from the Atlantic slavery however, the policies on population by North America and Europe in reaction to the perceived effect of immigration on their internal population structure started bouncing back the surplus from the developing nations which, resulted in much population of these region that lacked any form of consistent population control policy [9].

Although the African societies and other continents apart from North America and Europe have experience more births in the past, high mortality rate continued to exact pressure on the population growth until the advent of improvement on maternal care, pre-natal and post-natal care. As the population of these developing nations continued to grow without consistent policy for regulation, the internal struggle for available resources became the order of the day moving from the level of individual interest, to that of group interest. In the case of individual interest, in places like Nigeria, land was the ultimate measure at the earlier stage. Here, as the number of children per one man increases so the land portions decreases at family level. As the number of families increases in a community, so the available space within the communal boundary become insufficient. As the number of communities (usually containing an ethnic group) increases, so the confinement of the occupied area becomes insufficient.

In reaction to the above situation, the individual members of the family starts running into conflict while trying to secure a more satisfactory portion of land within the available space, families starts contending with other families in an effort to secure the available land space in the community while the community starts moving over to the nearest land space at the boundary with her neighbors as far the community is confident that such is possible with her power and resources. The ethnic group that was on migration due to increase in population is under pressure to conquer other areas to accommodate her population. Beyond land space as the major factor in the relationship between population growth and conflict, there are other factors in context and time. In the case of Nigeria, ethnicity, religion and the national cake with population growth driving the engine from behind become the foundation for conflict. As the different ethnic groups grow in population, so their need for land space and economic cum political domination increases, leading to strife with other similar out groups. As the religious groups increase in population internally so their need for domination to gain more adherents and controlling of the political cum economic system increases.

In any case, the available land and natural resource are not increasing but are decreasing in sufficiency and values as the human population increases. Even if we find oil wells on daily basis, encroach more into the forests and offshore, they are bound to become insufficient as far as population keep growing unabated. This of course is responsible for the ceaseless conflicts in Nigeria at different levels. As the number of Fulani men grows so the number of herds men grow and the need for more pasture lands increases, leading to the effort to dominate or exterminate other groups who occupies where the new pasture land is found. In addition, their interest for political and economic domination increases. As the number of one religion adherents increases, so the aspiration to occupy and dominate other religious groups increases leading to open confrontations at all levels.

For education and conflict, education is a form of emancipation of man from mental slavery. Naturally, man is subject to instinctive drive except there is a process of socialization which liberate him from wild thinking because, this wild thinking usually result in conflict attitude towards his neighbor in the quest to satisfy his desire [26]. Although there are other means of socialization in form of informal education, which each society adopt in transforming their younger ones into social being from biological being, the formal education which seems to incorporate human right and dignity remain the yard stick for civilization across the globe. Technically, formal education can include any form of training with a uniform curriculum however; the interest here is the training for common logic about human existence, values, and individual and group rights in the presence of others. The Western Europe education format stands as a means of actualizing this aim. This form of education in its ideal form, is devoid of sentiments of all kinds and also focuses on the general concept of knowledge for its sake and equality among all human beings and the justified means of pursuing individual and group interest without undermining others. The relationship between lack of formal education in the development of an individual and socio political conflict appear as a replacement of common social value by the group's sentiment in the mental process of the individual [27]. When the individual skip the opportunity for formal education, the truth that hovers around his memory will only be the religious, ethnic and racial sentiments and even the ideology and doctrine of few individuals who are available to convince him. Hence, the individual in question remain deadly instrument in the hand of the manipulator who exploits his ignorance in form of using him for ulterior motives [27].

In the case of Nigeria, one of the ulterior motives which individuals and groups achieve using the ignorance of the uneducated is the perpetuation of conflict at different levels in order to gain other secondary interests which can be economic, political, etc. Lack of exposure to formal education by the Nigerian youth especially, at primary and post-primary levels in different parts of the country, is one of the culprits in the perpetual violent conflicts. Although violent conflict has been a common thing in the Northern part of the country

since Usman Danfodio established the foundation of war between one group (Muslims) and others in the Northern part of Nigeria, the trend of conflicts on a more visible level was witnessed both in the North and the South in the post-independence era. However, these perpetual conflicts gradually faded off or came to barest minimum recently in the south when the governments of the southern region (South-South states), embarked on sincere battle against illiteracy using all available means including scholarships and the UBE by the federal government. Among the Northern states, formal education has taken back seat compared to the Koranic education among the Muslim majority making it difficult for the federal government in the effort to eradicate illiteracy.

The inconsistency between effort of the federal government to tackle illiteracy and the results in terms of the educational enrollment rates in different parts of the country is not far from the hypocritical position of the politicians in the Northern part of the country who see all reasons to pursue the course of religion and selfish political interest to the detriment of the future of their youth. Many states in the North perceived Koranic education as more important than any other form of education. This is only for the poor while the rich send their wards as far as Europe, Asia and America for formal education. Almajiri is a normal thing for the children of the poor who later become instrument for Jihad and political thuggery while, the children of the rich and politicians (who are in charge for providing education for all via their political positions), will go to school and come back to take over from their parents. If the effort the Northern political elites make in sponsoring and encouraging religious cause is focused on encouraging formal education, the situation would change for better after all, the South-South region that was once seen as highly educationally less privileged is now the area where majority of the youth are in school due to, the government's massive effort to encourage formal education with the back up by the politicians in the region.

The lackadaisical attitude towards youth education among the Northern political elites has been fanning the ember of ethno religious conflicts in this region. There is a high level of conspiracy against the federal government effort to eradicate illiteracy in the North as most of the Islamic fundamentalists see it as cultural imperialism. By implication most of the Northern political elites accepted the educational campaign in principle, and rejected it in practice. This has become a bumper harvest for the religious fundamentalists and the political demagogues who use these loopholes to indoctrinate the ignorant youth into ideology and anti-social activities leading to religious and political conflicts.

Building the Antithesis to Politico-Religious Conflict: The Importance of School of General studies in Nigeria Institution of Higher learning

Population growth and lack of exposure to education may not be seen at the surface as the cause of conflict and war however, it is at the bottom of the whole matter and act as the driving force to it [28]. There are remote and immediate causes of conflict in every setting. In most cases, the conflict analysts focus on the immediate causes of conflict undermining the remote causes. At some other level, attention is also focused on the material aspect and causes of conflict. In any case, the two ignored or less observed aspect and causes of conflict (remote causes and immaterial causes) such as population growth and lack of exposure to formal education are the foundation of other causes. The remote here, are those interwoven factors, which may have accumulated for months, years, decades etc. that seems invisible with surface observation [20]. Similarly, the immaterial causes of conflict are those factors that appear

as a concept, human mental and emotional process that appear as part of interaction in the relationship and communication of individuals and groups. They inform the understanding and interpretations of every sign, symbols, verbal communication, and etc., in the context of individual and group relationship. Both population expansion and lack of formal education appear as the remote and the immaterial factors that cause conflict in Nigeria and therefore, require a counter measure from all and sundry. The higher the population of the nation with less or no effective control measure, the more the chances of discontent both at the individual and group level of relationship. Furthermore, the availability of uneducated and unemployed youth among a particular ethnic/religious group, helps to fan the ember of the aspiration for domination [5]. Also, lack of formal education makes the youth vulnerable to individual and group obnoxious ideologies and sentiments which, subsequently leads to conflicts and war with other groups.

Knowing the importance of population control to conflict management is one thing while making it a practical reality is another thing. For the issue of population, is high time the attention move from government to individuals and groups so as to realize without much protocols, the aim of the population policies both at the domestic and international levels. Population policies generally aim at changing people's attitude toward the demographic factors that influences population growth. More than any other thing, the government role is to introduce, declare incentive or punishment for adhering and not adhering to the policy; monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the impact of the policy. However, the implementation of these policies largely depends on the cooperation of the masses. Even in the presence of not obeying child policy order, many people have abandoned cities in China to make sure they have more than one child for instance. This indicates the fact that without understanding and cooperation of the public, government policies may yield nothing. Therefore it is the responsibility of all and sundry, to contribute towards bringing Nigerian human population growth under control. One of the cardinal points of the 1988 Nigeria policy on population was that each couple at most should maintain a family of four children which, in demographic analysis, is an inch above replacement level.

Nevertheless, education and conflict sharing a common social boundary or rather, fluid relationship, require a serious attention from all and sundry to control the relationship. Education makes men realize themselves and become less available for conflict and violence since they are the nexus for destruction and instability in the society. The need for formal education for the youth cannot be over emphasized. Although the issue of wide spread of education has much to do with the government than the individuals, in the modern time, individuals and groups have had a niche in the effort to spread formal education among the youth owing to the continuous liberalization of education to remove certain hurdles that are denying individuals and groups access to quality education. While the government has many roles to play in providing access to quality education at all levels, the individuals and groups have many roles to play in convincing, persuading and encouraging the youth into formal education especially, at the primary and post-primary levels.

Although the importance of population control and exposure to formal education by the youth cannot be over emphasized, there is still the challenge of passing the information properly, regularly and on a macro-scale. The school of the general studies in the Nigerian higher institution is the answer to the aforementioned challenge to the spread of information about population control and youth exposure to formal

education. The General Studies (GS) courses are a set of Courses in the university educational system where the students are exposed to areas other than their core area of study. All students in the university must take GS courses which are meant to broaden the students' horizon in order to produce a well-informed individual [29]. In view of producing a well-informed individual by the institution of higher learning in Nigeria in order to face squarely with the challenges of the nation in all ramifications, School of general studies is the perfect channel through which certain information from different disciplines can be shared and spread. While the population studies (Social Demography) has its root in Sociology and lack the opportunity for general presentation to the public, it requires an open presentation to the public especially to the undergraduate students for its effectiveness. The necessity of spreading the information about the important of population control via the school of general studies cannot be doubt as this will be the perfect opportunity to inform the youth as well as preparing them to inform others about the issue. Nevertheless, using the same medium to inform the students and the youth about the importance of formal education in controlling ethno-religious conflict will also empower the youth to spread the information and practically drive it home during their National Youth Service [30]. This is important following the new principle by most of the state government in mobilizing the corps members to the educational institutions.

Conclusion

Peace is a socio-psychological phenomenon which operates at the level of individual, group and intergroup for the harmonious coexistence of individuals and groups with differences. It is important in every human society for socio-economic and political progress. However, peace has one major opponent- conflict which in itself is a challenge to humanity from time immemorial. Conflict as a contradiction to peace, is engendered by many factors of which two of them are ever-growing human population and lack of formal education among the youth. These two factors act as remote factors which now spring up other immediate factors to conflict in the interpersonal and intergroup relationship. These two factors as remote cause of conflict, need the attention of all and sundry in reversing them from the grass root for consistent and long lasting strategy for conflict management. While the expansion of human population can be reversed through population policy and positive attitude towards it by the general public, illiteracy can be reduced through comprehensive efforts by government, parents and everyone in the society in encouraging the younger ones into formal education. Moreover, the school of general studies in the Nigeria institution of higher learning can be the perfect avenue through which the youth and the students in general can be informed and empowered to spread the knowledge about population control as well as encouraging the uneducated youth into formal education.

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