Youth Restiveness, Dialogue and Mutual Understanding in Society Development: A Theoretical Analysis

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Abstract
The problem of youth restiveness and violence in society is increasing on a daily basis and constituting major socioeconomic and political issues of concern in respect of development and stability. The youths are the future generation for continuity and sustainability of the society, hence, determined efforts should be put in place to take them away from anti-social and developmental activities. The paper x-rays the various shortcomings of government and other individuals to create a conducive environment for them to be productive and useful in development, rather than being used as agent of destruction, political tugs and messengers of social disunity. The paper indentifies the fact that cultural, religious and environmental differences are not strong enough factors to create social conflicts, tension, intolerance and resulting to de-development undue destruction of lives and properties. The paper identified mutual dialogue as one measure and means of alternative dispute resolution method, and strongly recommends its utilization at any point in time with the youths as a major player. Youths must see themselves as dignified future leaders of substance and integrity; avoid criminal acts of vandalization, robbery, kidnapping, assassination and tuggery among others. The youths should be usefully engaged in productive developmental activities at different levels of society. More employment opportunities should be created purposefully as to reduce and annihilate unemployment and create in them a sense of self worth and responsibility.

Key Words: Youths, dialogue, violence, mutual understanding, society and Development.

INTRODUCTION
Every society that strives to achieve quality growth and development must emphasize dialogue which results to mutual understanding and provides peaceful co-existence. To achieve this the youths of that society must not only be considered as existing but be granted a Place of recognition, participation/contribution, as well as respect their views and opinions. A militarized society with draconian policies which may be anti-youths or humans, always resort to retrogression. According to the United Nations (UN) definition, a “youth” is anyone from the age of 15 to 24 years. Today, research has shown that the youth constitutes about 18% of the world population (Andro, 2010; Ojua, 2006). This means, their interest, needs, expectations, opinions and demands should be taken into consideration to void rebellious and other acts of violence.
The conscious determination of the world government to achieve multi-varied and multidimensional dialogue and mutual understanding as the only panacea for growth, tolerance and peaceful co-existence is no more in doubt. Human Behaviors and relationships only become and remain meaningful where the individual is granted a quality sense of belonging. Dialogue and mutual understanding for growth and global development had been emphasized over the past years, however, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared 2009 year as the “Doha Declaration” with a theme: The Potential of Media: Dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation. This represented other preceding sessions and conferences as far back as the 1950s and early 1960s on dialogue, mutual understanding and peaceful living. One is not therefore surprised that the participation in violent, rebellious and vocal activities of the youths have reached a globally undeniable dimension today, which re-emphasized for and recommends the dear n the youths to be involved in dialogue and the process of achieving mutual understanding all geared towards social order, youth empowerment, recognition, participation, as well as societal growth and development (Agbor, 2002).

CONCEPTUALIZATION

It is necessary and important to attempt a conceptualization of our basic concepts in this paper from common/general knowledge to operational contextualization within the ambit of this work.

What then Is Dialogue? Dialogue is a conversation in which all participants take as their primary goal to pursue mutual understanding. The New Edition Living Longman dictionary of contemporary English defines dialogue as a discussion between two groups, Countries etc. It is worthy of note to state that dialogue in its original sense is distinct from debate; in fact, participants often agree to set aside permission and debate so that they can focus on mutual understanding. Dialogue on its strictest sense is also different from mediation, conflict resolution and problem solving; however, it may serve as a prelude to or aspect of such processes.

Lama, (2010) sees the absence of dialogue as the invitation of violence. To him if mutual respect and understanding must be achieved, dialogue must be a key practice and behavior amongst groups and individuals at different levels. Much can be resolved and achieved only through mutual respect and understanding in a sincere and committed society with prudent and dedicated leadership. According to Burbules (2000), “dialogue represents one’s view or another, a way of reconciling differences, a means of promoting empathy and understanding for others, a mode of collaborative inquiry, a method of critically comparing and testing alternative hypotheses; a form of constructivist teaching and learning; a forum for deliberation and negotiation about public policy differences… and political consensus” (Burbules, 2000:2-3)

To John Dewey or Benjamin Barber, dialogue is the fulcrum around which the imperatives of democracy can be reconciled with the facts of diversity and conflict. Mutual understanding is the seeming outcome of every respectable and sincere dialogue. It is the belief, acceptance and desire to truly work with another person or persons irrespective of the differences.

The process of dialogue and mutual understanding remains elusive where peace and tolerance as human essential values for relationship cross-culturally is not entertained. Contemporary civilizations and institutions whether political, familial, socioeconomic and cultural etc. must recognize the perpetuated individual’s differences in belief, religion, cultural practices, behaviors, language and class opinions ideally in society among other variables, even while they strive to live together. Therefore, everyone with a developmental mind whether as a youth, adolescent or elderly in this multi-ethnic and multi-culturally pluralistic society must imbibe the virtues of being transparent, accountable, displaying an attitude and behavior of integrity and dignity in operation and relationships. It should be a condition where individuals are socially, culturally and constitutionally allowed to independently participate in society’s good governance and exercise their human right-based responsibilities. When this is noted and upheld, it reduces youthful and socio-ethnic intolerance and uprising, conflicts, protest and violence. The universal
declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 states that: “Everyone has the right to freedom, to hold opinions and expression; and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers”. It is noticeable and worthy to state that the refusal by various governments and constituted bodies in our society today to use dialogue have resulted and plunge our nation and African continent as well as the global community into a violence dominated entity. This has shown a clear demonstration of lack of accountability, respect for others, intolerance, greed and lack of integrity. Typical of these are the uprising and violent civil yet youthful revolutions in countries like Somalia, Libya, Liberia, Nigeria etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fundamentally, no society thrives and progresses adequately with a restive youthful population prone to violence, unrest, destruction and high involvement on anti social vices. The youths are the future leaders of any society at any point and their behavioural conditions; care and upbringing determine the spate and direction of a nation’s development (Ojua, 2006; Lama, 2010).

According to Green, (2010), a restive condition can be created when individuals are uncomfortable with ongoing conditions of living or policy created either by the incumbent government or foreign intruders. The reaction to this condition may be violent or otherwise hence creating room for uneasy and uncoordinated relationship and distortion of life in society by the aggrieved people. Often times in recent years, the major reasons for the increasing youth restiveness had been attributable to many factors including complains of ethnic marginalization, economic recession and poverty, governmental neglect and policy misplacements etc.

Marginalization according to Adedeji, (1993) is the relative or absolute lack of power influence of a defined social entity, while being a recipient of the exercise of power by other parts of that entity. This is true but is not quite comprehensive enough to capture the direction of this paper with respect to the issues of youth restiveness and mutual understanding in society.

Marginalization also can be said to mean the deliberate disengagement of a group of people in a federation politically, socially, economically and militarily by another group or groups which during the relevant time frame wield power and control over the allocation of materials and financial resources at the center of the federation. This perceived discrimination and lack by a segmented group often results to complaints, tension/anxiety and resultant socio-economic revolt.

The worst woes cried out by the different youth groups and organizations often start from their ethnic complaints as earlier mentioned. Ethnic conflicts for Osaghae (1994) are conflicts arising from situations in which people from varying ethnic groups decide to employ their differences in the pursuit of competing interests. The careful and steady use of the word “Decide” by Osaghae to us is strong enough to summarize the underlying issues and reasons about conflict generation especially in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. This according to Angwom, (2010) is because ethnicity comes into play as a conscious ploy by actors. In as much as the argument above is plausible, it obscures the fact that it may be more characteristic of the major ethnic groups, who might use the advantage of numbers to exploit them.

Most common in the previous literature earlier reviewed are the emphasis on ethnic conflicts as the major factor in generating instability in society.

In furtherance to this, Mafeje, (1997) sees what he calls tribal conflicts as anachronistic misnomer which impedes cross cultural analysis by drawing invidious and highly suspect distinction between Africans and other groups across the globe. The current trend and spade of violence championed by the youths in different forms and at different zones of the country is one major area of concern. How can the society achieve development and social order when the feature leaders are the vanguards of war, conflicts, violence and destructions? Typical of this assertion in Nigeria for example are the violent activities of the Niger-Delta, OPC, Bakassi boys, Biafran frontiers, Arewa or the latest Boko Haram onslaught in Northern Nigeria to mention but a few. Olukoshi, (1996), contends therefore that it is high time efforts were made to resolve the lingering political and social crisis in Nigeria by groups and individuals inside.
and outside the country to achieve sustainable global development. Some arguments have been postulated that economic hardship and poverty are the factors amongst others that have caused youth restiveness and vulnerability, hence, adequate emphasis and efforts be geared towards handling of these identified issues as are peculiar to each segment of society and the country.

A study conducted in Ghana, Mozambique and Vietnam as reported by Peneiznueto, et al (2011), that it was discovered that youths in all three countries identified unemployment and under – employment – it is, lack of formal long – term, safe employment as most prevalent problems. These are limited to other problems like higher supply of labor than demand; incomplete or poor – quality education; and inadequate qualifications or work experience. Other key obstacles included the need for ‘connections’, insufficient funds to pay bribes (Ghana and Mozambique) and lack of political will to improve conditions for the youths (Ghana).

The economic hardships triggered crisis on and exacerbate serious difficulties already faced in different areas of youth development, includes education, potential job opportunities, nutrition and health. Young people’s frequent lack of a political voice has greatly compounded this vulnerability in society, and therefore, increase tension and their involvement in destructive and most times uncontrollable violent acts.

According to the World Bank (2007) report, about 1.2 million young people age 12 to 24 in the world today may be particularly vulnerable to deprivation and lost opportunities, hence, becomes restive and prone to violence. Retrospectively therefore, between ages 12 to 21, young people are still maturing biologically and neurological development continues throughout adolescence and into early adulthood (World Bank, 2007). Interestingly, researches differently have showed that emotional immaturity can lead young people to turn to substitute sources of support, such as gangs or military organizations, in times of family breakdown triggered by economic crisis (IRIN, 2007, in UN DESA, 2007).

YOUTHS, DIALOGUE AND THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SOCIAL ORDER

Some disturbing questions must be pondered upon in our minds some of these are that: when, why and who actually creates or initiates the process of dialogue? Why do we emphasize youth involvement in dialogue always? What should dialogue be centered upon and many more questions. We shall attempt to collectively proffer solutions to these and many more. For growth and development (especially with human face) to take place, the environmental condition relevant to such a situation and desire or need must be the foundation. The environmental condition may among other conditions refer to the psychological, political, cultural and indeed the socio-economic and physical arrangements of both individuals and structures that tolerates and permit co-existence of diversified behaviors. Every participant must as a matter of responsibility directly or indirectly ensure that there is positive purposeful relationship to achieve development.

Conducive environments always communicate descriptively the nature of the inhabitants and attempts to preempt the future of that society. Development does not take place in an unruly condition which Emile Durkheim described as an “Anomic society”. Lack of respect for one another creates tension, anxiety, violence and socio-economic breakdown and retrogression. A classical example of this is the condition noticeable amongst almost all the states of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. Must a violent and an anomic condition be in existence before dialogue and mutual understanding being introduced? The answer is No.

Different leaders must be sensitive enough, open and to a large extent truly transparent, accommodating and accountable to its population to reduce suspicion and violence. Some leaders at various levels either due to ignorance or deliberate wickedness do deliberately ignore other groups of her citizenry without consultation and dialogue especially the youths that constitutes the higher percentage of the working population. It is this lack of administrative sensitivity that often times results to social breakdown and economic destruction as a way of releasing out the accumulated repressive desire to be
recognized and be valued. The environment must at all times be conducive for and during dialogue that must be purposefully involved by the youths. Some researchers had proffered certain reasons for the youths active involvement in dialogue because of their dispositions as future leaders of the society. They are also the perpetrators of violent acts in most cases.

What participants in dialogue must do

    Every participant in every dialogue session must perform some responsibilities and also demand compliance/obedience from others, to ensure a smooth and increased collective living. Some of these needs are that they:
    
    i) Must participate with a sincere and free mind for development.
    ii) See such opportunities as avenues or privileges to contribute to the national development and not for personal, selfish gains and aggrandizement.
    iii) Must listen and be listened to, so that all speakers should be heard.
    iv) Must speak and be spoken to in a dignified matured and respectful manner.
    v) Avoid undue imposition of opinions and ideas on others through direct or indirect intimidation of others who are socio-economically, politically and financially inactive.
    vi) Learn about the perspectives of others and try to articulate these to their own positions. In other words, participants must not be too rigid in their positions, but display a great level of flexibility.
    vii) Reflect on the views of others in line with personal positions and dispositions to achieve a considerable progressive position.
    viii) Participants must be fair enough to communicate progressive issues of mutual understanding to others who never attended such dialogue gatherings.

What does it take to dialogue?

    Dialogue and mutual understanding demands some level of commitments from everyone or group that must achieve growth. Dialogue is a process that can occur spontaneously at all times including when groups are in polarized conflict.
    
    It takes people’s desire to explicitly agree to pursue mutual understanding rather than debating or rushing into problem solving.
    
    One should note that before beginning any dialogue session, participants must usually make communications and agreements that will help them achieve their stated goals.
    
    Dialogues are usually facilitated by a third party who does not engage in any form of interest display and desires or business gain; rather one with unconditional interest without a heart to get in return any direct/indirect benefit(s) accruable from such exercises.
    
    It takes sincerity on the parts of every group or individual(s) involved in the dialogue and every decision and agreement will automatically be respected to the later. Once this is done, it automatically displays mutual understanding and symbiotic relationship irrespective of the differences, will be automatically established.

Why violence does persist in societies

    It is basically clear that over the years violence has perpetuated itself in our various societies, without any chronological tracing in some societies. It is also noted that about 60% of the violent conditions of our society are personally or privately motivated but made to take a community, religious, national outlook, etc. In other words, these are the negative consequences of not engaging in dialogue, hence, leading to other chain problems. A violent condition is a condition whereby there is an absence of peace, understanding and dialogue. It is often times accompanied with a high level of irrational act or behavior just to pass across one’s displeasure or to react to an unpleasant, repressive or oppressive (unattended) condition. Violence is the failure action of lack of understanding and tolerance. Some factors below are responsible for the persistence of violence.
a) Lack of respect for one another.
b) Lack of sincerity of purpose, exploitation and inadequate or no attention at all to some people.
c) Lack of proper education about the ills of violence and misinformation or mismanagement of information.
d) Violence persists also due to wrong or bad or poor leadership that is repressive, exploitative, anti-human and anti-developmental.
e) Violence can also persist in society due to suspicion of leadership in being insensitive, anti-human and developmental policies, fraudulent and also in perpetual violation of the people’s human rights.
f) Complaints of perceived marginalization, deprivation and exploitation of natural resources by some majority groups against others in minority.
g) Violence can also occur where followers suspect leadership of corruption and nepotism in society.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AND YOUTH RESTIVENESS

It is worth examining at least briefly the consequences of youth’s conflict activities and the effects on the general society. To a larger extent one may ask, what is the primary reason for these violent youth’s acts in society? Fundamentally and to a greater extent, the youth restive activities must times are to and for their individual personal gains. Some of the consequences of these acts are:

- Results to destruction of lives and properties for which claims are made for the struggle to acquire/protect.
- Creates deeper tribal or ethnic and cultural differences, intolerance and distability.
- Violence and restiveness deteriorates the country’s developmental strides and plans, thereby leading to de-development.
- Promising leaders of the future are being destroyed and killed in the course of the violent acts especially such that degenerates to war condition.
- It results to sustainable economic hardship, destruction and crisis at both short and long run.
- It makes it difficult for socio-political, economic and health growth and stability, thus, creating room for continuous dependency on other socially and economically stable nations.
- It results to destruction of the nation’s cultural heritage and creates social disorder.

BENEFITS OF DIALOGUE AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

There are different benefits of engaging in dialogue and mutual understanding at governmental or organizational levels, as well as at individual level. A brief articulation of these gains shall be of great help to our discussions.

a) Government
   (i) Dialogue and mutual understanding grants government and leadership a peaceful environment and socio-political calmness for productive administration.
   (ii) It creates an atmosphere of collective responsibility in development for both the leadership at any level and the followers.
   (iii) Its platform of peaceful coexistence attracts other immigrants and foreign investors, which automatically increases the economy.
   (iv) It helps or gives room for human resource development and expansion of durable projects and programmes.
b) Individuals

(i) It affords individuals opportunities to participate directly or indirectly in the programmes of the government, hence, helping it for sustainability.

(ii) Communication skills that can be used in other conversations about decisive issues are understood and rechanneled for developmentally agreed programmes.

(iii) Greater mutual understanding, which may stimulate new ideas for learning and action are being inculcated to those in dialogue.

(iv) It destroys and reduces misunderstanding, rumour mongering and misrepresentation of facts as those who “representationally” participate can enlighten the others.

(v) Dialogue and mutual understanding teaches one core African values of human respect and cultural dignity at all times. Individuals’ opinions are respected in a reciprocal way which helps to maintain togetherness and unity of purpose.

(vi) It eliminates reactionary and violent minds and intentions especially among aggrieved persons in society leading to political and social harmony.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is very simple and clear that a society devoid of dialogue and mutual understanding remains perpetually retrogressive and their youths remain carriers of underdevelopment and destructions/violent acts. A man/woman who cannot dialogue remains isolated, anti-social and violent in nature. Therefore the following issues could be seen as our suggestions to the needs of the government and youths who are the leaders of tomorrow.

Government leadership at any level must recognized the youths’ human rights position and their integrity to commit themselves in development to avoid violent and destructive acts.

Dialogue after or during violent situations or conditions should be de-emphasized, while dialogue before violence should be our collective emphasis and target. What constitute proper dialogue is the mutual understanding as a result of a need or issues and not when a violent act is been taken. It becomes difficult and expensive to complete such a dialogue after an act of violence is initiated and unleashed causing wanton destruction of lives and properties. Ministries and agencies in charge of youth activities should be more pro-active and seek synergies with sector agencies, such as trade, agriculture, tourism, industry and education – as well as with the private sector – to seek ways in which new spaces and opportunities can be created for youth through more objective and better-targeted training and entry-level, work based programs.

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It is difficult, now and over the years to trust those in elected or appointed leadership positions, in terms of dialogue, transparency and accountability. Therefore leaders must keep themselves away from corruption and corrupt practices as well as dishonest official activities.

The leaders must be able to a large extent appear for an all embracing dialogue table, with a mind of implementing all agreed opinions and discussions with integrity. Rigid positions are not to be maintained during dialogue sessions if mutual understanding and relationship must be achieved.

Purposeful dialogue and mutual understanding must down play the human nature of greed and fraud in the part of all the participants. This desire once in place within an individual automatically negates the principle of truth and sincerity. This does not take into consideration the perspectives of the two groups, but the individual nature of each participant engaged in the process. It is greed and fraud that results to “settlement”, anti-party or group activities, compromise of personal satisfaction as against collective interest.

The youths must display a high sense of responsibility and dignity as well as discipline on smaller assignments given as to command respect and trust for greater responsibilities. Poorly executed assignments and responsibilities automatically disqualify one from holding a higher one tomorrow. It is
this lack of trust that results sometimes to youths not being consulted for issues of great importance, hence, they complain of political and economic marginalization.

Individuals must avoid creating a condition of mistrust, rumor peddling, and agents of evil associations as well as vanguards for illicit and evil political activities perpetuated by nefarious and evil politicians or leaders to the detriment of our society.

There should be a true and sincerely packaged programs executed after every dialogue session whether with any youth organization or group in society which will communicate a sense of responsibility of the participants of such dialogues in subsequent dialogue sessions devoid of political confusion, deceit and fowl play at all times.

CONCLUSION

One generally sees a society where the enterprising youths are dominating the affairs of the society daily. It is our conviction that a proper program put in place for youth training and capacity building to achieve creativity and good entrepreneurial skills will greatly put our society in high productive pedestals.

Dialogue should not only mean paper articulation, definition and intellectual discourse, it should be consciously put into practice at all levels of administration including family levels to make for knowledge and understanding as well as continuity in developmental policies and programs.

The youths have over the years watched the negative trend of corruption and poor leadership styles of their different leaders leading most times to economic hardship, deprivation, marginalization, unemployment and socioeconomic extortion. Their vulnerable economic and political conditions have led to frustration differently, hence, a determined resolve to change the ugly trend through alternative means against dialogue. Also, some successes achieved by some youths in some African countries and beyond as they involve in violent protest and activities have become as examples for others in neighboring countries to imbibe or emulate, hence, leading to chains of uncontrollable violence, killings and destructions of lives and public/private properties.

Youths must be made to pass through the various segments of human learning, training processes and procedures, avoiding placements of mediocre to positions of service to destroy the developmental spirit foundation laid down due to favoritism and “god-fatherism”. Let us clearly state that issues are qualified for dialogue especially issues that concerns security and top administrative needs. It is also note worthy of mention that constitutional issues that may jeopardize the sense of collective living or togetherness cannot be reduced to sectional dialogue and so on, except to strengthen national unity.

Youths must have a sense of high self-esteem no matter their socioeconomic status and not to be used as political, religious, ethnic or personal cultists, thugs and as tools to settle cheap political and economic differences and personal ambitions to the detriment of their personal future stability, growth and development as well as that of the larger society.

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