



Kpakpando Journal of History and International Studies

Intergenerational Partnership in Civil Service: A Poverty Eradication and Peace Culture-Building Tool

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Abstract

Nigeria is blessed with an abundance of human and natural resources. It is the 6th largest exporter of crude oil, formerly the largest exporter of palm oil in the world. It has the gas reserves in Africa including a vast accumulation of other natural resources and a population of about 147 million people, but it is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. This contradiction seems to evidence the fact that resources alone are not sufficient to engender growth and national development to occur, the resources (human and material) must be employed to serve the positive needs of man. The human resources, both young people and older generation must be encouraged to work, initiate, to interact and direct material resources towards solving practical problems and creating conveniences for man. There is need to create and promote opportunities for constructive interaction between young people and older generation and promoting intergenerational communication at work. The reality is that except everybody is given an opportunity to contribute his or her own quota toward meeting individual and collective needs, the number of poor people will continue to increase sporadically and crime rate escalates outrageously. The paper addresses the problem of poverty and inequality among civil servants in the South-East region of Nigeria. Selected members of the civil service were interviewed. The study revealed that the state of things implicitly and ultimately speaks of a class-society where communal association becomes a basis for enjoying social benefits and good leadership positions. This, in turn, creates unnecessary violence and conflict among the workers. Also, the salary structure of an average worker is in no way commensurate to the cost of things in the market. This paper contends that the absence of intergenerational partnership and solidarity portends serious negative problem.

Keywords: Intergenerational, partnership, civil service, poverty eradication, peace culture

Kpakpando Journal of History and International Studies: Vol. 1 no. 4 July, 2024. ISSN: 2437-1750

Introduction

Solidarity between generations at all levels-families, communities, workplaces and nations is fundamental for peaceful co-existence for all ages and the achievement of a stable socio-economic environment. Intergenerational partnership, dialogue and reciprocity are of great importance not only to the developed nations but also the developing ones. Nigeria is bedeviled with many challenges ranging from insecurity, violence, kidnapping, political instability, robbery and ritual killings.

There is no gainsaying the fact that poverty is violently ravaging the country. The rate of food scarcity, insecurity, lack of cash flow, inflation and crime rate is quite alarming. Eco-violence which incorporates social and environmental injustices is not left out. Boko haram insurgency is still on the high increase, conflicts between farmers and fulani herders has taken a new perspective.

In the recent past, hundreds of villages and urban centres including farmlands in nearly all parts of Nigeria were inundated by devastating floods, displacing over 1.4million people, killing over 1000 and injuring more than 2,400 people. It is the harshest spinoff of climate change Nigeria

has witnessed since the 2012 disaster. This has also added to the many socio-economic challenges affecting everyone in all sectors of the society. A bag of rice is sold at fifty thousand naira (N50,000.00), and most recently, a litre of fuel at three hundred naira (N300.00). Little wonder, hunger, sickness and mortality rate are on a great increase in Nigeria.

When we look at the current demographic and socio-economic changes in Nigeria, the importance of intergenerational partnership in civil service comes into sharper focus. Intergenerational conflicts between the older and younger generations as they compete for jobs, positions and resources in the civil service commission is on the increase. Members of the powerful generation act as gatekeepers for the distribution of power and resources.

Research has shown that the majority of civil servants live in extreme poverty, the cost of living crisis has resulted in some engaging in menial jobs, shuttling neighbourhoods to augment meagre salaries. Civil servants' mortality rate has also escalated so much. According to the National President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke (2022), on the

10 university lecturers who died during the 8-month ASUU strike,

Some of our colleagues who have died because there was no money to take care of their health, who is going to bring them back to life or

compensate their families? Those who lost their relatives because they did not have money to take care of them, or those who have been driven out of their accommodation because they could not pay their rent, how would they be compensated?

Conflicts, violence, suppression, inequality, among others found among civil servants are a great threat to personal and institutional developments. Also a class-society where communal association is the basis for enjoying social benefits and good leadership positions is commonly practised. This paper, however, explores intergenerational partnership and stands on the point that quality intergenerational dialogue, cooperation, partnership and mentoring are a great synergy and would contribute immensely to social integration, building a peace culture and eradicating poverty within the civil service commission, our communities and Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Intergenerational Partnership: An Overview

Intergenerational partnership or solidarity is defined as social cohesion between generations. Solidarity is the opposite of conflict. It is at the centre of intergenerational collaboration and knowledge sharing from which intergenerational opportunities are derived. The relatively recent concept is hinged on the premise that one cannot fully understand the idea of intergenerational opportunities without an appreciation of intergenerational partnership and the background that led to it. Consequently, to reconstruct the term, intergenerational partnership and its derivatives, we must give construct to modern capitalism that threw it to the fore. Invented in the 16th century by a Scottish political economist, Adam Smith, modern capitalism is a term used to describe a type of capitalist society in which a capitalist class of elites who are concerned with maximizing their wealth, secures a political system that serves and protects their interests, leading to the development of a wage-earning class.

In the context of the development, the focus of intergenerational partnership is that people

of different generations should work together to address social problems. Rather than have philanthropy of the rich to the poor, intergenerational partnership enjoins collaboration of different generations towards the achievement of a common goal of better living standard and equitable income. Intergenerational partnership is holistic in approach and recognizes that the multi-faceted challenges facing the society require solutions that involve all generations within their social support networks, working together in a coordinated manner to think fresh, spot opportunities, and creatively find new path to ensure the well-being of all. The concept does not contemplate that generations must be related. Rather what it seeks is the working together of the different generations. Below are the generations defined by name and birth year:

Generation	Birth Year
Traditionalists	(1926-1945)
Baby Boomers	(1946-1965)
Gen-Xers	(1966-1980)
Millenials	(1981-2000)
Gen-Zers	(2001-2015)

(Culled from

shrm.org)

Managing a multi-generational workforce with so many different perspectives, experiences, values and goals poses a unique organizational challenges for managers and directors but intergenerational partnership bridges the gap. Hence, this study is of great benefit in a reciprocal way to each of the generations. Through the creation of a society for all ages where both young and old are involved in policy design, monitoring and evaluation, intergenerational partnership seeks to develop new economic and social opportunities. This was the kernel of the statement credited to Kofi Anaan (2004), former secretary-general of the United Nations, to the effect that without prosperity and opportunity that are widely shared, peace cannot last long and democratic institutions cannot truly flourish.

Intergenerational partnership is captured in these popular Igbo adages, "Anyuko mamiri onu, ogba ufufu." It translates to, "unity is progress." There is also "otu osisi adi eme ohia", meaning "a tree cannot make a forest." These adages are what we have reflected in the philosophy behind intergenerational partnership for inclusive growth. The drivers

of intergenerational collaboration in the civil service can be articulated as follows:

- to meet the challenges of the rising poverty, inequality, deprivation and social exclusion particularly in the civil service commission, which has resulted in conflict, violence, suppression, sicknesses, death, etc, among civil servants.
- to meet the growing digital divide challenge in the way it is separating generations and civil servants in workplaces.
- to meet the problem of youth migration from rural settings to the cities, experienced civil servants migrating to abroad with its attendant consequence of depriving traditional systems of opportunities to share indigenous knowledge and experiences.
- to meet the deepening impact of intergenerational transmission of poverty in which poverty is passed down from one generation to the next.

- enhance increase of understanding of others in ways that help to remove/ reduce negative stereotypes in civil service commission.
- Support the development of new skills and competencies.

Civil Service

The term, 'civil service' originated from China and was developed further in the 18th century by the British. It is a collective term given to a sector of the government which composed mainly of career civil servants hired on professional merits. The major function of the civil service is to transmit government policies and programmes into services to the people. It is divided into departments called ministries. The political head of a ministry is called a Minister or Commissioner while the administrative head is called a Director General or Permanent secretary. Examples of civil service include: the military, the police, teachers, health workers and public enterprises.

Culture of Peace

Culture is the way of life, beliefs, values, norms of a social group. Relevant to this study is Iwundu's definition (2005) which

says that culture is whatever it is, one has to know or believe, in order to operate in a manner acceptable to the members of that particular society. They include: norms, language, social practices, etc. Furthermore, UNESCO (2001) defines it as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses not only arts and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, values systems, traditions and belief.

Peace, on the other hand, is more than the absence of war. It is the promotion of values, attitudes, behaviour and institutional arrangements that promote mutual caring, well-being, appreciation of differences, access to justice and equitable sharing of earth's resources with all human beings.

According to Adam (2003), at its General conference in 1995, UNESCO introduced the concept of a culture of peace which it used to refer to values, attitudes and behaviour that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity.

Theoretical framework

Intergenerational Solidarity orientation submits that the degree of closeness, support and understanding between the younger and the older generations in the society improves human life and helps create a world for every age. It allows different generations to come together, learn from one another and form new friendships. Rooted in Emile Durkheim's Functionalism (1887) which states that societal power and structure is predicated on cooperation, interdependence and shared goals or values, intergenerational solidarity theory holds that, to promote prosperity and quality of life for all, institutions should construct administrative acts that balance the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations. In yet another theory, the intergenerational conflict theory which is a social theory developed in 1980, Durkheim posits that conflicts between older and younger generations occur as they compete for resources and jobs. The human society comprised different groups that compete for resources and despite social attempts to portray a sense of cooperation, a continual power struggle exists between the social groups as they pursue their divergent and competing interests. Moreover, the social

groups will use resources to their own advantage in pursuit of their own goals, even if it means taking advantage of another group of people. Intergenerational partnership and solidarity is the way forward in a society bedeviled with conflict, violence, power tussle, jealousy and extreme poverty.

Methodology

This study combined the use of questionnaire, interview with on-the-spot observation of relationship behaviour like open communication between the civil servants, honesty, trust, jealousy, lack of support and respect. The questionnaire tagged Civil Service Response Questionnaire (CSRQ) is made up of two sections, i.e. personal data and the question items. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher. There were twenty question items with the columns of the likert scale type ie. strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Some were retrieved almost immediately while some were collected later. Four ministries were chosen and they include, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women Affairs. A total of a hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered but one hundred and thirty-six

were retrieved. The junior officers covered the range of Chief Clerical Officer to Office Assistant.

Some Senior officers were interviewed to gather data on their relationship with their subordinates in the workplace. The period of administering the questionnaire and the time of waiting to interview the Senior officers was used to carry out on-the-spot observation of the relationship between the civil servants, old and young in particular.

Data analysis and Findings

The 'strongly agree and agree' responses of the junior officers on their attitude towards intergenerational relationship with the senior officers were regarded as positive declarations while the disagree and strongly disagree responses were taken as negative declarations. Also, the 'the very great extent', 'great extent', 'low extent', 'very low extent' and 'no extent' were used to show the extent or the degree at which intergenerational partnership is seen as the solution to the establishment of a peace culture, eschewing inequality and conflict among the senior officers and their subordinates in the civil service commission. The following tables were generated.

Attitude of Junior Civil Servants to intergenerational partnership in the Civil Service Commission

Table 1.

No	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
136	25	33	58	40

Table 1 shows the number of respondents are 136. This result vividly depicts that 58 junior civil servants show positive attitudes towards developing intergenerational partnership in civil service while 78 of the sample population have negative attitudes. This is expected because the greater part of the sample population are of the opinion that the existence of multiple generations in the civil service commission causes perennial clashes and interpersonal tensions because it increases the diversity within the commission which sometimes results in conflict and violence.

Table 2

To what extent can intergenerational partnership eradicate poverty and build a culture of peace in the civil service commission?

No	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	NE
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	4	3	2	1	0
136	30	35	20	15	40

The above table shows the extent at which Junior Civil Servants believe that intergenerational partnership can eradicate poverty and help build a culture of peace in the civil service commission. Very Great Extent and Great Extent show the degree of positive responses while Low Extent, Very Low Extent and No Extent portray the negative responses. The negative responses are as a result of a list of factors including intimidation by the Senior officers, suppression, lack of promotion, violent struggle and monopoly over resources and positions in the ministries. Though an average young worker in the ministries wants to be relevant on his field of work, to be valued, accepted and promoted, and to climb the socio-economic status ladder in this 21st century but the senior officers act as sole gate keepers. The general attitude to the application of intergenerational solidarity, skill and knowledge sharing and interpersonal development as maxims of relationship in the ministries is positive.

Question number 3 of the 'CSRQ' enquires on the benefits of intergenerational solidarity among civil servants. The data revealed that

60% of the responses were in the affirmative. The civil servants are eager to embrace the new concept and maxim of work. It creates room for understanding, mutual respect, building a culture of peace in the work place, interpersonal development and poverty eradication.

Conclusion

This study has revealed to a great extent that intergenerational partnership and solidarity is an extraordinarily noble, fashionable and well-accepted requirement for sustainable development in Nigeria today. It promotes synergy and cooperation between the young and the old. It brings into existence a multigenerational society where every age is important. It is age-inclusive with different generations recognizing and acting upon their commonality. Despite the degree of corruption, silent revolutions, extreme poverty, inequality, suppression, struggle for power and positions prevalent in the civil service commission, intergenerational solidarity seems to bridge the gap since its focus in this work, is to strengthen economic and social ties. In 2009, the UN International Experts Group meeting on Family Policy in a Changing World: Promoting Social Protection and Intergenerational Solidarity,

recommended building partnerships and cooperation between youths and older person's organization. In view of this, the researcher is of the opinion that instead of bickering, antagonisms, conflicts, struggle for power and positions, seniors officers should be able to accommodate and share knowledge, ideas and resources with the junior officers. This will ensure interpersonal, institutional and national growth and development.

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