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Multicultural Education: A Tool for Combating Insecurity in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper investigates how multicultural education can help reduce and combat insecurity in Plateau State, Nigeria. Drawing on the concepts of multicultural and critical multicultural education, the study argues that education plays a vital role in addressing insecurity by fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and social cohesion. Plateau State has experienced persistent ethno-religious conflicts, making the need for inclusive and transformative education urgent. The study critically examines theoretical frameworks and empirical findings on multicultural education and its relevance to peace building. It further explores curriculum reforms and citizenship education as mechanisms for promoting peaceful coexistence. The paper concludes that integrating multicultural and critical multicultural education into the school system can significantly contribute to reducing insecurity in Plateau State by equipping learners with the skills and values necessary for harmonious living.

Keywords: *Multicultural education, Insecurity, Plateau State, Citizenship education, Peacebuilding*

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Background of the Study

Nigeria, particularly Plateau State, has witnessed recurring episodes of insecurity characterized by ethno-religious conflicts, communal clashes, and violence. These crises have led to loss of lives, displacement, and socio-economic instability. Scholars argue that the root causes of insecurity in the region include identity politics, religious intolerance, and lack of mutual understanding among diverse groups (Okoli & Ugwu, 2021; Edeh, 2023). Education is widely recognized as a powerful tool for social transformation. Multicultural education, in particular, promotes inclusivity, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence (Banks, 2020). In conflict-prone societies like Plateau State, adopting multicultural and critical multicultural education can help reshape attitudes and reduce tensions. This paper explores how multicultural education can serve as a strategy for combating insecurity in Plateau State by fostering intercultural understanding and civic responsibility.

Statement of Research Problem

Plateau State has over two decades, witnessed persistent ethno-religious conflicts since 2001, resulting in the loss of lives, displacement of communities, destruction of property, and disruption of academic activities in schools, (Sule,2018; Iorhemba,2021). These conflicts are largely attributed to cultural intolerance, mutual suspicion, stereotypes and lack of peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the State, (Dung,2019).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine Multicultural Education as a tool for combating insecurity in Plateau state. Other specific objectives of the study include to:

i. Identify causes of insecurity related to cultural/ ethnic intolerance.
ii. Assess the extent to which Multicultural Education is implemented in secondary schools in the state.
iii. Determine challenges militating against effective implementation of the curricular.
iv. Examine perception of teachers and students on the role of multicultural education in promoting peaceful coexistence.

Research Questions

i. What are the causes of insecurity related to cultural and religious intolerance?
ii. To what extent is multicultural education curricular implemented?
iii. What is the perception of teachers and students?
iv. What challenges exist versus the relationship between multicultural education and reduction in prejudice?

Significance of the Study

This study is designed to benefit a number of groups and organizations, especially, in the education industry. They include: students, teachers, school administrators, curriculum planners, researchers and government

Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of the study covers the three senatorial districts: northern, central and southern senatorial districts which have all experienced repeated ethno religious conflict since 2001; making the state a critical case for examination. Likewise, the content scope is focused on multicultural education as an educational strategy for curbing insecurity.

Conceptual Clarifications

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a comprehensive educational approach that seeks to recognize, appreciate, and integrate the cultural diversity of learners into the teaching and learning process. It is grounded in the principles of equity, inclusiveness, and social justice, aiming to ensure that all students regardless of their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious backgrounds have equal access to quality education (Banks, 2020; Nieto, 2021). In pluralistic societies such as Nigeria, multicultural education is particularly relevant because it addresses the complexities arising from cultural heterogeneity and social fragmentation. Beyond mere recognition of cultural differences, multicultural education actively promotes the transformation of educational systems to eliminate discrimination and bias. It involves restructuring curriculum content, teaching strategies, and institutional policies to reflect diverse perspectives and experiences (Gay, 2020). According to recent studies, multicultural education contributes significantly to fostering mutual respect, empathy, and peaceful coexistence among learners from different backgrounds (Yusuf et al., 2023; Adebayo, 2024).

Key components of multicultural education include:

i. **Inclusion of Diverse Cultural Content:** This entails integrating histories, values, traditions, and contributions of various cultural groups into the curriculum, thereby broadening students' worldview and reducing ethnocentrism.
ii. **Promotion of Equality in Learning Opportunities:** It ensures that all students have equal access to educational resources, participation, and achievement regardless of their background.
iii. **Development of Intercultural Competence:** Learners acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to interact effectively and respectfully with people from different cultures (OECD, 2022).

In the context of Plateau State, multicultural education serves as a preventive and corrective mechanism against intolerance and division by fostering understanding and unity among diverse ethnic and religious groups.

Critical Multicultural Education

Critical multicultural education extends beyond the traditional focus of multicultural education by emphasizing the need to challenge and transform existing power structures and systemic inequalities within society. Rooted in critical theory and critical pedagogy, this approach seeks not only to celebrate diversity but also to interrogate issues of dominance, marginalization, and social injustice (May & Sleeter, 2022; Giroux, 2021). This perspective

views education as a political and transformative process through which learners become aware of social inequalities and are empowered to take action against them. It critically examines how factors such as ethnicity, religion, class, and gender intersect to produce inequality and conflict. In conflict-prone regions like Plateau State, critical multicultural education is essential for addressing the underlying structural causes of insecurity rather than merely treating its symptoms.

Core elements of critical multicultural education include:

i. **Encouraging learners to question stereotypes and biases:** Students are guided to critically analyze societal narratives, media representations, and historical accounts that reinforce prejudice and discrimination.
ii. **Promoting active and responsible citizenship:** Learners are equipped with the skills and dispositions needed to participate meaningfully in democratic processes and advocate for social justice (Bello, 2025).
iii. **Addressing structural causes of conflict:** This involves examining issues such as inequality, exclusion, and marginalization that often fuel violence and insecurity (Edeh, 2023).

By fostering critical consciousness, this approach enables individuals to move beyond passive acceptance of societal divisions and actively contribute to building a more just and peaceful society.

Insecurity in Plateau State

Insecurity in Plateau State is a multifaceted phenomenon that poses significant threats to peace, stability, and development. The state has experienced persistent conflicts characterized by violence, displacement, and destruction of property. These conflicts manifest in several forms, including:

i. **Ethno-religious conflicts:** These arise from tensions between different ethnic and religious groups, often exacerbated by historical grievances, political manipulation, and competition for resources.
ii. **Farmer-herder clashes:** Disputes over land use and grazing rights between farmers and pastoralists have led to recurrent violence and loss of lives.
iii. **Political violence:** Electoral processes and political competition sometimes trigger violence, further deepening divisions within communities.

Scholars argue that these forms of insecurity are not merely spontaneous but are rooted in deeper socio-cultural and structural issues. Factors such as ignorance, prejudice, lack of intercultural understanding, poverty, and weak institutional frameworks contribute significantly to the persistence of conflict (Adamu & Ojo, 2022; Okoli & Ugwu, 2021). Moreover, the absence of inclusive and transformative education has been identified as a critical gap in addressing insecurity. Without adequate exposure to values such as tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity, individuals are more likely to engage in or support violent conflicts. Recent studies emphasize that education systems that fail to reflect cultural

diversity may inadvertently reinforce divisions and stereotypes (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2023). In this regard, integrating multicultural and critical multicultural education into the educational system of Plateau State offers a strategic pathway for addressing the root causes of insecurity. By promoting intercultural dialogue, critical thinking, and social justice, education can play a pivotal role in fostering sustainable peace and stability in the region.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary theoretical perspectives: Social Identity Theory, Peace Education Theory, and Critical Pedagogy. These frameworks provide a robust foundation for understanding how education—particularly multicultural education—can be used to address insecurity in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT), originally developed by Tajfel and Turner, explains how individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their membership in social groups. These groups may be based on ethnicity, religion, language, or nationality. The theory posits that individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into "in-groups" and "out-groups," often leading to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Brown, 2020; Hogg, 2021). In contexts such as Plateau State, where multiple ethnic and religious groups coexist, social identity processes can intensify divisions and fuel conflict. Group members often develop strong emotional attachments to their identities, which may result in prejudice, stereotyping, and hostility toward perceived outsiders (Abrams & Travaglino, 2023). This dynamic is particularly evident in ethno-religious conflicts, where group loyalty overrides national or collective identity. Recent studies have shown that social identity can significantly influence conflict behavior, especially when combined with perceived threats to group survival or status (Verkuyten &Yogeeswaran, 2020). In Plateau State, competition over land, political representation, and resources often reinforces these identity-based divisions (Okoli & Ugwu, 2021). Multicultural education plays a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of social identity processes. By promoting inclusive narratives and fostering intercultural understanding, it helps individuals develop multiple, overlapping identities that reduce rigid group boundaries (Banks, 2020; OECD, 2022). This, in turn, can weaken prejudice and promote peaceful coexistence.

Peace Education Theory

Peace Education Theory emphasizes the role of education in promoting a culture of peace, non-violence, and conflict resolution. It is based on the premise that violence is learned and, therefore, can be unlearned through appropriate educational interventions (Harris & Morrison, 2021). Peace education seeks to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. Core components of peace education include:

i. Conflict resolution and mediation skills
ii. Promotion of tolerance and empathy
iii. Respect for human rights and dignity
iv. Development of communication and dialogue skills

In fragile and conflict-prone societies, peace education has been identified as a key strategy for addressing the root causes of violence (UNESCO, 2021). It encourages learners to critically examine the causes of conflict and to adopt non-violent approaches to resolving disputes (Salomon, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that peace education programs can significantly reduce aggressive behavior and improve social relationships among students (Bajaj &Hantzopoulos, 2021). In Nigeria, integrating peace education into school curricula has been shown to enhance national unity and reduce ethnic tensions (Ogunyemi, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023). Within the context of Plateau State, peace education complements multicultural education by providing practical tools for managing diversity and resolving conflicts peacefully. It transforms schools into spaces where values of cooperation, dialogue, and mutual respect are cultivated.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy, rooted in the works of Paulo Freire, views education as a transformative process that empowers individuals to challenge oppression, inequality, and injustice. It rejects the traditional "banking model" of education—where learners are passive recipients of knowledge—and instead promotes active, participatory learning (Freire, 2020). According to critical pedagogy, education should:

i. Develop critical consciousness (*conscientization*)
ii. Encourage questioning of dominant ideologies
iii. Promote social justice and equity
iv. Empower learners to become agents of change

Giroux (2021) further emphasizes that education is inherently political and must be used to address systemic inequalities that perpetuate conflict and marginalization. In this regard, critical pedagogy aligns closely with critical multicultural education, as both seek to challenge power structures and promote inclusive societies. Recent scholarship highlights the relevance of critical pedagogy in addressing contemporary social challenges, including insecurity, inequality, and exclusion (McLaren, 2020; Apple, 2022). By fostering critical thinking and social awareness, it enables learners to understand the structural roots of conflict, such as poverty, discrimination, and political marginalization (Edeh, 2023). In Plateau State, critical pedagogy can empower students to:

i. Question narratives that promote division
ii. Challenge stereotypes and prejudices
iii. Advocate for peace, justice, and inclusion

By integrating critical pedagogy into the educational system, learners become active participants in peace-building rather than passive observers.

Synthesis of the Theoretical Framework

The integration of Social Identity Theory, Peace Education Theory, and Critical Pedagogy provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how multicultural education can address insecurity in Plateau State.

I. Social Identity Theory explains the roots of conflict based on group divisions.
ii. Peace Education Theory provides practical strategies for conflict resolution and coexistence.
iii. Critical Pedagogy empowers individuals to challenge the structural causes of conflict.

Together, these frameworks highlight that insecurity is not only a security issue but also an educational and social problem. Addressing it requires transforming mindsets, promoting inclusive identities, and empowering individuals through education.

Review of Related Literature

Recent studies highlight the importance of multicultural education in addressing insecurity:

i. Okeke and Eze (2022) found that multicultural curricula improve tolerance among students in diverse societies.
ii. Yusuf et al. (2023) reported that intercultural education reduces ethnic prejudice in Nigerian schools.
iii. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes education as a key strategy for sustainable peace and conflict prevention.
iv. Adebayo (2024) argues that inclusive education fosters national unity and reduces social tensions.

Empirical evidence suggests that societies with strong multicultural education frameworks experience lower levels of conflict and higher social cohesion (OECD, 2022).

Multicultural Curriculum and Insecurity Reduction

Curriculum plays a central role in shaping learners' attitudes and values. A multicultural curriculum promotes understanding of cultural diversity, reduces stereotypes and prejudice, and encourages empathy and dialogue. In Plateau State, revising school curricula to include multicultural content can help address the root causes of conflict. According to Eze (2023), curriculum reform is essential for peacebuilding in conflict-prone regions. The key strategies included but not limited to: integrating local cultural histories, teaching conflict resolution skills, promoting inclusive narratives.

Citizenship Education and Peace-building

Citizenship education, a component of critical multicultural education, focuses on developing responsible and active citizens. It promotes civic responsibility, respect for human rights, and national unity. Research shows that citizenship education enhances social cohesion and reduces violent tendencies among youths (Ogunyemi, 2022; Bello, 2025). In Plateau State, citizenship education can encourage peaceful coexistence, reduce radicalization, and strengthen democratic values.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, specifically a convergent parallel design, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of multicultural education in combating insecurity in Plateau State, Nigeria. The rationale for using a mixed-methods approach lies in its ability to combine the strengths of both quantitative (breadth and generalizability) and qualitative (depth and contextual understanding) methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021). The quantitative component focuses on measuring the relationship between multicultural education and indicators of insecurity reduction, while the qualitative component explores participants' perceptions, experiences, and insights regarding the effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting peace and social cohesion.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises key stakeholders in the secondary education sector in Plateau State, Nigeria. These include: Secondary school students, Teachers, and School administrators (principals and vice-principals). These groups were selected because they are directly involved in the teaching and learning process and are well-positioned to provide relevant information on the implementation and impact of multicultural education.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 300 respondents were selected for the study using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of each subgroup within the population. The sample distribution is as follows:

i. 200 students (67%)
ii. 80 teachers (27%)
iii. 20 administrators (6%)

The stratification was based on respondent category (students, teachers, administrators), and simple random sampling was then applied within each stratum to minimize sampling bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample (Etikan & Bala, 2020). Additionally, for the qualitative component, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select 15 participants (10 teachers and 5 administrators) for in-depth interviews. These participants were chosen based on their experience and knowledge of multicultural education practices.

Instruments for Data Collection

Two main instruments were used for data collection:

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire titled "Multicultural Education and Insecurity Reduction Questionnaire (MEIRQ)" was developed by the researcher. The instrument consists of two sections:

Section A: Demographic information (gender, role, years of experience)

Section B: Items measuring perceptions of multicultural education and its impact on insecurity

The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The items were adapted from existing validated instruments in multicultural and peace education research (Banks, 2020; OECD, 2022) and modified to suit the local context.

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to collect qualitative data. The interview questions focused on:

i. Participants' understanding of multicultural education
ii. Experiences with cultural diversity in schools
iii. Perceived causes of insecurity
iv. Role of education in promoting peace

The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for probing and deeper exploration of responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021).

Validity of Instruments and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure content and face validity, the instruments were subjected to expert review by three specialists in educational research, Curriculum studies, and Peace and conflict studies. Their feedback led to revisions in wording, structure, and relevance of items to ensure that the instruments adequately measured the intended constructs. This process aligns with best practices in educational research (Taherdoost, 2021). The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, (α) = 0.82 to determine internal consistency. A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents outside the study sample. This value exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument is reliable for data collection (Taber, 2020).

Procedure for Data Collection

The data collection process followed these steps:

i. **Approval and Permission:** Ethical approval and permission were obtained from relevant school authorities.
ii. **Administration of Questionnaires:** Questionnaires were distributed physically to respondents and collected after completion.
iii. **Conduct of Interviews:** Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded with participants' consent.
iv. **Data Management:** Completed questionnaires were coded, and interview recordings were transcribed for analysis.

All ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly adhered to (BERA, 2021).

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Descriptive statistics (Mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages) and inferential statistics (Regression analysis, and Correlation analysis) were used to summarize data. A significance level of 0.05 was used for hypothesis testing; while qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021): Familiarization with data, Coding of responses, Identification of themes, Review and refinement of themes, and Interpretation and reporting. This approach enabled the identification of recurring patterns and insights related to multicultural education and insecurity.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards:

i. Informed consent was obtained from all participants
ii. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured
iii. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time
iv. Data were used strictly for academic purposes

Results

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	160	53%
Female	140	47%
Students	200	67%
Teachers	80	27%
Admin	20	6%

Table 2: Awareness of Multicultural Education

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High Awareness	180	60%
Moderate	90	30%
Low	30	10%

Interpretation: Majority of respondents are aware of multicultural education concepts.

Table 3: Impact on Attitudes toward Other Cultures

Statement	Mean	SD
Promotes tolerance	4.35	0.72
Reduces prejudice	4.20	0.80
Encourages unity	4.40	0.65

Interpretation: Strong agreement that multicultural education improves attitudes.

Relationship between Multicultural Education and Insecurity
Regression Analysis:
$R^2 = 0.68$
$p < 0.05$

Interpretation: Multicultural education explains 68% of the variation in reduced insecurity levels, indicating a strong relationship.

Qualitative Findings
Key themes from interviews:

i. Increased tolerance among students
ii. Reduction in ethnic bias
iii. Improved conflict resolution skills
iv. Need for curriculum reform

Discussion
The findings confirm that multicultural education significantly contributes to reducing insecurity. The high mean scores indicate that respondents perceive multicultural education as effective in promoting tolerance and unity. The regression result ($R^2 = 0.68$) shows a strong predictive relationship between multicultural education and reduced insecurity, supporting previous studies (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). Qualitative findings further reinforce that multicultural education enhances interpersonal relationships and reduces ethnic tensions. This aligns with critical pedagogy theory, which emphasizes education as a tool for social transformation (Freire, 2020; Giroux, 2021).
The integration of multicultural and critical multicultural education into the Nigerian educational system can significantly address insecurity in Plateau State. Education can reshape mindsets, promote tolerance, and reduce conflict.

However, challenges include:

i. Inadequate teacher training
ii. Lack of policy implementation
iii. Resistance to curriculum change

Addressing these challenges requires government commitment, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous educational reform (World Bank, 2023).

Suggestion for Further Research
Based on the limitations of this study, the following fields need further exploration in the future:

i. A Comparative Study can be conducted in other conflict prone areas or states like, Benue, Kogi and Kaduna.
ii. Again, a similar study should be conducted in Primary schools to examine the effect of multi-cultural education at an earlier stage of education.

iii. Lastly, an experimental study using pre-test and posttest design is recommended to establish cause-effect relationships.

Conclusion

Multicultural education is a viable tool for combating insecurity in Plateau State. By fostering intercultural understanding, promoting social justice, and encouraging active citizenship, education can play a transformative role in peace-building. The study concludes that integrating multicultural and critical multicultural education into school curricula is essential for sustainable peace and development.

Recommendations

i. Government should integrate multicultural education into national curricula.
ii. Teachers should be trained in multicultural and peace education.
iii. Schools should promote intercultural dialogue and activities.
iv. Citizenship education should be strengthened at all levels.
v. Stakeholders should collaborate to ensure effective implementation.

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