



## INTER-FAITH COMMUNICATION TO AND THROUGH THE YOUTH

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*"There will be no peace among the nations without peace  
among the religions. There will be no peace among the  
religions without dialogue among the religions" Ande I. (2009)*

### ***Abstract***

The central focus of this paper is to show the correlation and importance of interfaith communication to young people and through them. It also focuses on building leaders that will not be driven by religious sentiments rather by quality of work, dedication, honesty and commitment to service. This paper tries to encourage the spirit of enquiry, creativity and sharing, tolerance and patriotism in the society. This paper also lists aims and key points to note as regards youth participation and inter-faith communication towards the attainment of a peaceful co-existence. The paper tries to encourage the inculcation of virtues of discipline among youths, teachers, and leaders. Also to build a generation of youths with positive attitude, skills and tolerance, this will enhance peace. Finally this paper proffers positive steps towards lasting bridge building, while emphasising on the dangers posed by corruption, selfishness, indiscipline and religious sentiments. In conclusion, the paper posits solutions as a panacea.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the youth are leaders of tomorrow, they should be given the proper orientation and be adequately equipped for future leadership role which starts today. But it is disheartening to find in our various societies, productive group in our communities. It is also pertinent to note that they are also the group that is categorized as dropouts, unemployed, and even thugs or given other unpalatable names in the society. The history of interfaith dialogue is as ancient as religion itself, when men and women were not at war with their neighbours have always made an effort to understand themselves not least because, understanding is a key factor in defence strategy, but also because for as long as there is dialogue wars are delayed. History records many examples of interfaith initiatives and dialogue throughout the ages. According to Wikipedia (2010) Islam has long encouraged interfaith dialogue and action; Muslim

theologians have advocated inter-faith dialogue on a large scale, something which is new in a political sense.

**Interfaith dialogue:** This basically deals with the effective communication between two or more faiths, with the aims of achieving positive result(s) i.e. cordial relationship and harmonized goal. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, so also if there is no communication that will lead to some kind of compromise, achieving a lasting result and bridge-building will remain a fantasy. Interfaith dialogue or communication is absolutely essential, relevant, and necessary. Since it involves cooperation and positive interaction between people of different religions and traditions (i.e., "faiths") and spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both individual and institutional levels with the sole aim of deriving a common ground in belief through concentration on similarities among faiths, understanding of values. Commitment to the world dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions to increase acceptance of others, rather than to synthesize new beliefs. Wikipedia (2010)

**Youth participation:** Since the youth constitute a major force in our contemporary world, in addition to their intellectual contribution and capability to mobilize support, young people have a unique perspective when appreciated and positively engaged, youth can initiate actions that will undoubtedly result in unprecedented social growth and positive development. Ande I (2009)

### **CORRELATION AND IMPORTANCE OF INTERFAITH COMMUNICATION TO AND THROUGH THE YOUTH**

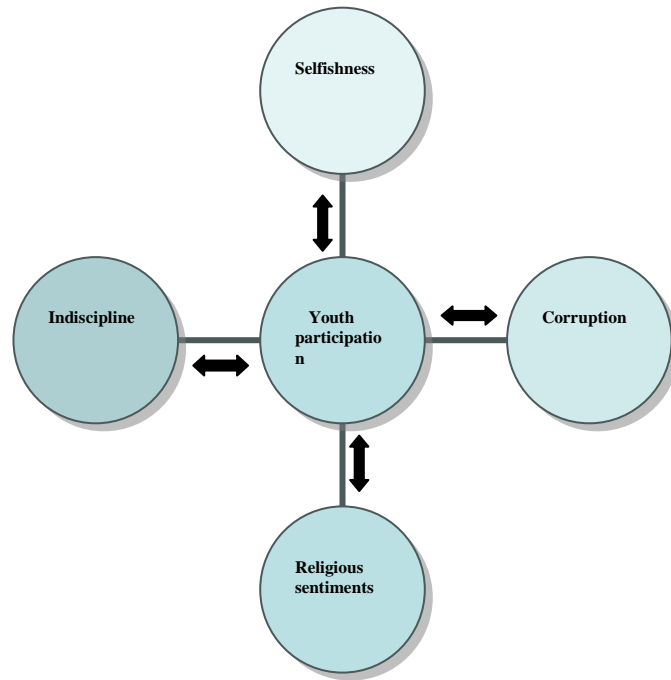
For the purpose of this paper, communication is a means of making your views understandable by your audience and your audience's reaction understandable to you. In other words, it is a two-way traffic or give and take system.

Throughout the world there are local, regional and international interfaith initiatives; many are formally or informally linked and constitute larger networks or federations. The often quoted humanity has entered a new age, a new era of interdependence of nations, and even interface, and in fact, we are in the era of internationalism. This age must be guided by the principle of interfaithism and interreligiousness. Inter-religious and International harmony are the most essential tools for addressing the many challenges that humanity faces today. Ogar O. (2009). They should be the primary concern of political leaders, politicians' community and religious leaders, policy makers, planners, administrators and stakeholders in general development, and of course including peace. Asad T. (2009)

**THE NIGERIAN YOUTH TODAY:** We recognize that youth are important and indispensable part of our communities that must be actively involved in processes and initiatives for social change and development. Interfaith cooperation among young people, key stakeholders will create and promote action plans for global transformation, thus making bridge building effective and lasting. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and religious communities ought to cooperate with schools, media and governmental institutions to motivate non-organized young people to engage in community-based intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, with the aim of promoting diversity and specifically battling religious inclined conflicts. Anyaegbu F. (2009). Below is an illustration of bridge building when youths are adequately equipped. Detailed diagram style gallery of some hindrance of youth participation to bridge building.

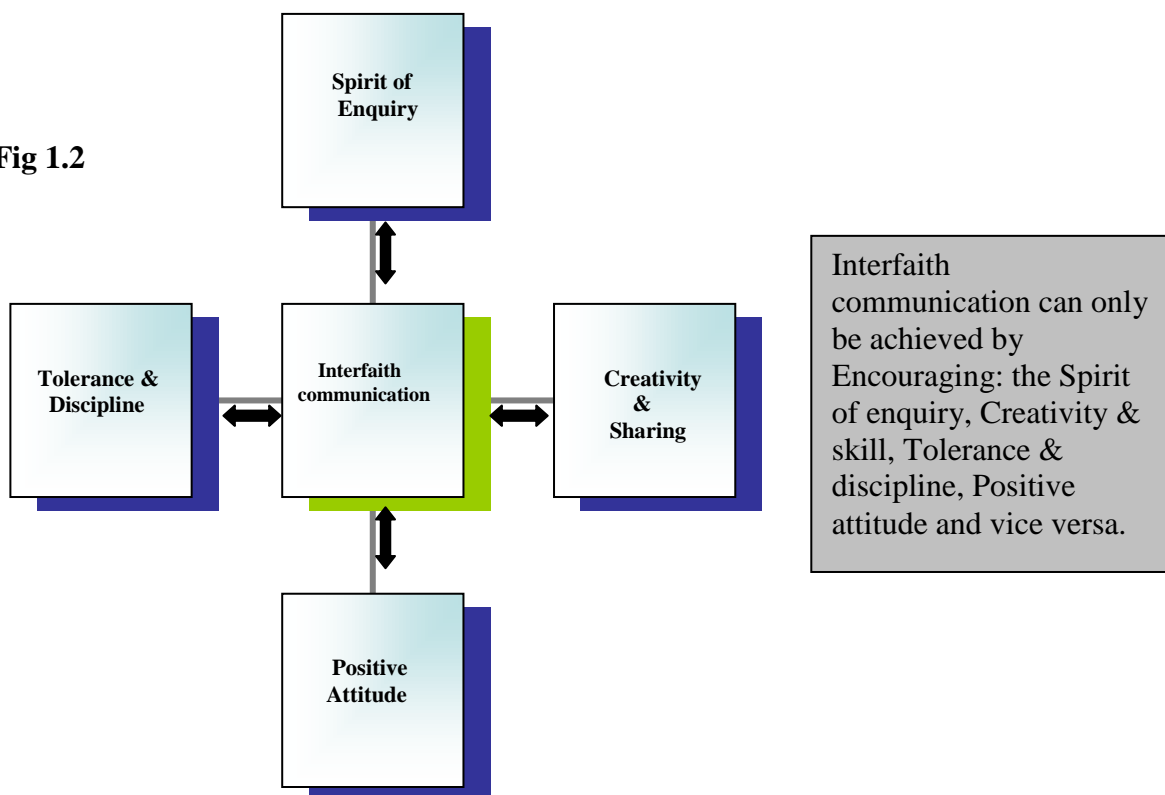
**Fig 1.1**

Selfishness, Indiscipline, Corruption & Religious sentiments hinders Youth participation in bridge building. While youth participation is an essential tool in fighting these vices.



These four cardinal points as illustrated in the diagram above Fig 1.1, will certainly create a deficit in your quest for quality leadership. Selfishness, corruption and religious sentiments are marks of indiscipline.

**Fig 1.2**



Interfaith communication can only be achieved by Encouraging: the Spirit of enquiry, Creativity & skill, Tolerance & discipline, Positive attitude and vice versa.

**Fig 1.2** illustrates the benefits derivable when effective and efficient interfaith communication is employed. Only a disciplined mind can tolerate.

## **POSITIVE STEPS TOWARDS LASTING BRIDGE BUILDING**

**Quality of work and dedication:** Many youth lack the enthusiasm and vigour to work. They do not really derive pleasure and satisfaction from their jobs. This goes a long way in affecting their performance. Due to the fact that they are not motivated, therefore, they are not dedicated. The quality of work to say the least is not only questionable but detrimental to the development of individuals and the society at large. These are the group of workers that embark on industrial action at the slightest opportunity. But when youth are motivated by way of adequately giving them quality education and creating conducive working environment, they can be dedicated to their assigned responsibilities and they will begin to derive satisfaction with maximum input into that exercise.

**Honesty & patriotism:** honesty is an act of being sincere or faithful. While patriotism is an act of genuine love for ones' society or country. However, we suffer the effect of dishonesty in our society on daily basis. It is sad to note that not much is been done to solve this unfortunate situation. Some of the conflicts that have erupted at one time or the other have been instigated and ignited on basis of rumours and lies. Teaching young people to stand for truth and the good of their country will actively involve them in the process of building a harmonious and united nation. We only engage in *do as I say and not as I do*. Nigerian youth today lack honesty and patriotism because our leaders (our parents inclusive) have not instilled these virtues in them, this result in disheartening events in our society. Honesty and patriotism are indispensable ingredients to building a lasting bridge.

**Commitment to service:** Commitment brings commendation. Most youth are in the service today for mere personal interest i.e. for what they can benefit individually. They are not really concerned with the way things are done and the right way they are supposed to be done. Youth should be advocates, they should be confident and stand for what they believe in. they should be able to challenge bad service, (bad governance) correct societal mistakes and take rational decisions. There should be no compromise what so ever in the discharge of their daily responsibilities. We do not just need a bridge for linkage; after all, it is only politicians that build bridges where there are no rivers, we deserve a strong, reliable, durable bridge that will go beyond linkage to a unique platform for collaboration at all times and at all levels of the society, ranging from the family, tribe, community, state, nation, and at the international levels.

**Virtue of discipline:** Indiscipline is more like a worm that gradually eats up deep in the structure and pattern of the youth's life and career. Discipline in any society cannot be overlooked or treated with the wave of the hand. The value system of our society has deteriorated so much that people careless about what happens with the actions they exhibit. The "get rich" syndrome as overtaken many so much that they can do anything to get rich quick. Discipline is a key pillar in building a dependable and functional bridge. Hence a disciplined mind tolerates and works towards achieving set goals or target for the interest of their nation states.

Getting to know each other, engaging in mutual interaction with the view of creating a community of conservation, learning from each other, mutual enrichment and correction etc. were among some of the goals when interfaith dialogue first came into prominence some decades ago. Some went further to envision the transformation of all religious tradition as the result of their encounters with others. Much of the subjects of dialogue were either doctrinal and theological or on common concerns that religious traditions faced together in the world, such as, issues of peace, justice, human rights, violence, environment, place of women in

religion and society and so on. Interfaith relationships, by and large, were among those who were open to and had a friendly disposition to peoples of other religious traditions. Looking at our past experience one would also realize that there were also three 'assumptions' in dialogue that have remained unexamined.

**Firstly**, even though one recognized, in principle, that there was no separation between the 'religious' and the 'secular' in most of the religious traditions, much of our dialogue has assumed this separation. In most interfaith dialogue events, we spoke as 'religious' people on 'religious' issues or as 'religious' people on issues that affected the world we lived in.

**Secondly**, even though we recognized that no one person or group can speak for a religious tradition we assumed that the persons in dialogue 'represented' their respective traditions; there is little evidence in our reports that we adequately and openly recognized the internal plurality of each of the religious traditions.

**Thirdly**, we unconsciously equated interfaith relations to interfaith dialogue thereby ignoring the massive and difficult task of building interfaith relations at several levels of societal life. The emergence of a global age is just beginning to cure us of our innocence; we are now faced with a much more realistic and yet a far more difficult task of building interfaith relations (Wesley, 2003)

**Conclusion:** There is no denying the fact that youth are indispensable assets that no nation worth its name can do without as they always replace the ageing leaders. The time of youth is a period of passions, emotions, activities charged with vigor; they should be trained to combine enthusiasm with patience. In other words, youths **MUST** be given sound discipline that embraces societal values. They should be made to see themselves as responsible citizens who will be committed to serve their country and not see it come to ruin. The youth should be thought to have an open mind, attitude and universal outlook, willing and ready to accommodate and learn new things that will be beneficial to them and their country. Having an open mind and knowledge of the differences that exist among different faith will exude an appreciation of this diversity and understanding to accept these diversities. The freedom of association of individuals to assemble with others in express, promote, pursue and common interests should not be seem as threat by anyone. Healthy relationship among multi-religious communities should be allowed to thrive and not manipulated for chaos. Respect for individual's rights should necessitate the freedom of each man to choose and pursue his religion without been discriminated against, condemned or judged for it. When assessing current trends in relationships among religions in Africa, the shift from 'let us forget our differences' to 'let us understand our differences and live with those differences in harmony' can be used as a characteristic for recent developments in African interfaith relationships.

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