



The role of peace education in community development

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Abstract

Numerous conflicts across the globe including Nigeria has led to the suffering, displacement and even death of millions of children, youth and adult as a result of political thuggery, insurgency, religious rivalries, economic meltdowns, militancy, kidnapping, theft, murder and so on, which poses a great threat to peace. Peace education plays a great role in enhancement of peace and national development through either formal, non-formal and informal education. Peace education is aimed at developing trust, safety and social cohesion within communities and seek to influence attitudes and behaviours through promotion of values of peace and tolerance. The term peace education covers several areas such as advocacy, law, reform, basic education and social justices.

Keywords: education, peace education, community, community development

Introduction

It is evident that no community, state or Nation can achieve a fast growth where it is faced with series of crises and conflicts; it is on this premise that, peace education is supported as the basis of development in any community. Since 1960, Nigeria as a nation has been through different forms of violence ranging from inter-communal, to religious, militancy, Islamic sects, banditry and so on. There is a growing concurrent among scholars that, these crises are supported by woeful failures in governance and democratization by our political leaders (Alabi, 2007) ^[4].

Epelle (2011) ^[15] argued that, democracy has increased the culture of impunity in some political office holders, while political differences are believed to have fueled some of the violence and conflicts that have erupted in Nigeria. In May 1999, when Nigeria returned to democratic rule, the political transition was welcomed with fresh hope and optimism. This fresh hope was predicated on the fact that, democracy would guarantee employment for the jobless youths, freedom for the marginalized groups, liberty, attention to several agitations, succor to the poor masses and enthronement of a sustainable peace that would enhance rapid national development.

Tragically, this hope seems to be an apparition as Nigeria is presently threatened with crises and conflicts ranging from bloody clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and the host communities in Agatu, Logo and Gwer local government areas of Benue State, ethno-religious crisis in (Jos) Plateau State, civil unrest occasioned by the activities of the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC) in the South-Western Nigeria, terrorism and insurgency perpetrated by Islamic religious group (Boko Haram militants) in the North East of Nigeria among others (Annan and Danso, 2013).

The most concerning issue is that, religion which preaches peace and love, and should be on the vanguard of maintaining peace and conflict-free society, has itself, become one of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria. This is characterized by heartless bombing of places of worships, homes, markets, parks, schools and hostage-taking by the Islamic militants.

Though, the Government, Military, and NGO's have made considerable effort to checkmate these crises and violence through several peace meetings and processes. In spite of these noble efforts, violence and conflicts have continued to rise astronomically in bounds and widths of Nigeria. It is on this premise that this paper examined the importance of peace education as a tool for community development.

Concept of Education

The word education is derived from the Latin word "educare" meaning to draw or lead, to guide, and to instruct (Bass, 2012) ^[7]. Okafor in Nzeneri (2012) defines education as to embrace all experiences through which an individual acquires knowledge or ideas, develops his intellect and strengthens his will.

Aminigo (2002) ^[5] sees education as a process that develops the human mind, the personality, the potentials and inculcates useful and relevant skills to individuals thereby enhancing the growth of the society. It prepares the human mind to enable it cope with future challenges by meeting individuals and communal needs being the means through which social change can be achieved and the means through which needed social change can be introduced. There are three forms of education, formal, informal and non-formal in whichever way it is being

acquired, it remains an eye opener and a liberating force. Liberating man from constraint, from ignorance and from exploitation. It is a great unifying force for individuals, communities and the nations at large.

Ogunode (2020) defines the term education as an enabling agency by which the Africans could revive their self-confidence, and make those who doubted the humanity of Africans begin to revise their views and learn to respect Africans. Therefore, education is a style of training given to an individual that makes him/her useful in the community or setting they find themselves.

Ogoh (2008) ^[29] sees education as the systematic process of acquiring knowledge for the benefits of individual and society at large. He contends that, the concept of education must provide the formation of a wide alliance of actors, which can collectively tackle problems relating to marginalization, injustice, intolerance as well as violence.

Education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (NPE) document can be seen as an instrument for change for the nation as a whole, given its lofty goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). For purpose of clarification, the goals are outlined as follows; a free and democratic society, just and egalitarian society, united strong and self-reliant nation, great and dynamic economy and land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2004).

It is based on these goals that the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2012 maintained that, education is a veritable tool for social change, National integration and development.

Education must seek to promote peace, friendship, common values, social justice, equal opportunity, respect for nature and tolerance as this will become instrument of liberation and emancipation of people from the clutches of conflicts and violence. Imperatively, education is naturally tailored to meet the needs of an adult who is willing to take responsibility for his learning needs. Learning new ideas is key to human and global development as knowledge is power and the power to bring about positive change in the way adult thinks, acts and of course worldview about fellow human. The concept of education connotes, a practice in which learners engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of skills, knowledge, attitudes or values (Meremi, 2002). The central connotation here is, the acquisition of new positive attitude and values on how to relate maturely and peacefully with other people.

Indeed, the deductions gleaned from the various discourse above, presupposed that, the goal of education and of course, peace education may be for the growth of the society to enable its citizens keep up with societal change and maintaining good social order. Peace education in Nigeria presently, is geared towards national development. The objective of the process of education and national development is to get the citizens either as individual or group (communal) to learn and through learning, they acquire durable changes in their attitudes and behaviour. The central idea here is “desirable change in attitude and behaviour’ to a responsive citizen that will be useful to the individual and society at large. However, education creates an enabling environment necessary for peaceful co-existence and national development.

This notion is clearly captured in the National Policy on Education which summarizes the objective of education as equipping the learner with everything needed to be relevant in his society. In this regard, education is conceived as a veritable instrument of developing the human mind, knowledge, attitude, skills, behavioural pattern and necessary ideas capable of solving human and social problems to achieve peaceful coexistence.

What is Peace?

In order to have a deep understanding of the issue, it is necessary to know its true meaning. Peace is used in a wide sphere. It seems that peace has a variety of meanings that are different in accordance with the context of usage. Literally, the word peace is derived from the Latin word ‘pax’, which means a pact, a control or an agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations or two antagonistic groups of people. (Bloomsbury, 1995). Peace could also be seen as a quiet and calm state of mind. Agreement and harmony among people. A state of security or order within a community provided by law or custom.

Albert Einstein views peace as not only an absence of war, but includes the presence of justice, law, order or government in the society (Vesilind, 2005).

Martin Luther described peace as the absence of the unhappy situations. In his view, peace must include justice in society too as in his saying true peace is not merely the absence of tension: It is the presence of justice. (Coretta, 2008).

Community Development

Like the concept of society, the concept of community is loosely defined and used in social sciences. It is a term having numerous meanings both sociological and non-sociological. It is used to refer to a wide variety of specific social units. In common parlance, the word ‘community’ is used for a collection of people who do related kinds of work, such as the “teachers community” or the “doctors community”. It is also used to denote a collection of people who share something in common as the “Hindu community”, the “Parsi community”, or the “Christian community” without necessarily living in a particular area. Sometimes, it is used to describe a supposedly coherent group, such as ‘international community. Such loose use of the word community is always misleading and indicate just to amorphous mass.

The term has been used in the sociological literature to refer directly to types of population settlements, such as rural community or urban community, to supposedly ideal-typical ways of life in such places; and to social networks whose members share common characteristics apart from or in addition to common location.

It has also been used to focus primarily cultural differences as traditional communities and modern communities. A nineteenth century sociologist, Tonnies, sees it “as an organic, ‘natural’ kind of social collectivity whose members are bound together by a sense of belonging, created out of everyday contacts covering the whole range of human activities”. which is consciously organised for specific purposes and whose members are bound together by common regulations or interests. Frankenberg in Onyeozu (2007) defines community as a territorially bounded social system within which people live, sharing common social, economic and cultural characteristics. Louisian community network (2021) sees community as people who live in the same locality, share common interests, jointly own or participate in something, share common characteristics or have mutual relationships. Oni and Bello in Onyeozu (2007) listed four characteristic of community as

- Population, whatever the size
- Geographical limits, whatever the size
- Common socio-economic problems or characteristics such as poverty or affluence, highly industrialized or agricultural, lacking infrastructural or having lots of infrastructural facilities, highly socialized or very apathetic.
- The feeling of oneness among members or a great sense of belonging, which enable them to pursue common goals such as development of the people and their physical environment.

A community may have more than an ethnic groups, which may have different ways of life, the social and economic problems which they face and corporately solve remains the common bond that tie them together. While development is a continuous process of positive change in the quality and span of life of an individual or group of individuals. It is dynamic in the sense that it involves a change from one state of condition to a better state of condition, an improvement or positive change as such contributory factors are economic, social, political, technological, cultural, peace etc. Development according to Louisian community network related to realizing potentials, growth or expansion of something or making something more effective. Community development means the act of growing, expanding or making more effective groups of people who have natural interest.

Mbuba (2021) defines community development as process where community member come together to take collective action, generate solution to common problem and improve the various aspects of the community focusing on building strong and resilient community. Development could also be seen as the transformation of social, cultural, economic development of a community to a desired standard that would make the inhabitants of such community comfortable.

Overview of Peace education

Generally, peace education is the process of acquiring the values, knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, others and the natural environment (UNESCO, 2014).

UNICEF (1999) sees peace education as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that will enable children youths and adults prevent conflict peacefully and create the condition conducive for peace, whether at an intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, national or international level.

Adult educators render service conducting advocacy visits to various communities and initiating conversations and discussions on elements of peace education and keys for promoting peace and non- violence. Peace education as process involving skills, including listening, reflecting, problem solving, cooperation and conflict resolution. The process involves empowering people with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment. The philosophy of peace teaches non-violence, love, compassion and reverence for all life. Peace education is taught in many different settings from nursery school to colleges and beyond. Community groups teach peace education to adult and children (Harris and morrson 2003).

The Asian conference on education (2013) on peace education, community development and national prosperity informs that the participated students reported the following ten most important learning outcome in their testimonies.

1. Developing social interaction on deeper level, freedom of speech, no prejudices.
2. Building bridges and capacities with others based on common points.
3. Respecting others even when disagreeing with them or misunderstanding them.
4. Enjoying living together not only tolerating but fully embracing the others.
5. Widening knowledge about other religious accepting different ideas and perceptions.
6. Appreciating diversity, human right and women’s right.
7. Importance of dialogue for solving problems.
8. There is tire need to communicate even if we are difference. Difference does not mean conflict.
9. Diversity does not have to lead to dispute but to coexistence and respect.
10. What matters is our knowledge and behaviour regardless what we believe in.

Harris and synot in Ugwu and Mbalisi (2016) inform that peace education should emphasize the desire for peace, non-violent alternative for managing conflicts and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize justice, equality and raise awareness on human rights. This indicate that peace education inculcate in the learners skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that hinder violence, injustices and promote culture of peace.

Ogoh (2008) ^[29] affirms that, peace education inculcates in the learners, the need for collective responsibilities, which must include good governance by the political leadership and effective loyalty by the people. In this connection therefore, it is suggested that, peace education should be incorporated in the National Education Reforms and Curriculum Reviews as a separate subject-content, different from civic and citizenship education. The inclusion of peace education in our national school curriculum will enable the learners to translate knowledge, skills, values and attitude acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning process into action to enable cooperation among people. Peace education according to UNICEF (2010) should be part of every country's school curriculum content. The implication of this directive by UNICEF is that, peace education should have a place in all societies, not only in countries that are undergoing armed conflicts and emergencies.

Peace education attempts to work on the learners' mind against the evil effects of violence by teaching skills that are necessary for managing conflicts in a non-violent manner, thereby creating the desire to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts. This also involves the holistic process of teaching and learning to stop violence by developing a peace consciousness that can provide the basis for a just and sustainable future.

In this direction, the Global Peace Educators (UN) have a major role to play in addressing and combating conflicts and violence in the international community. Peace educators have overtime posed a 3-way test questions thus, must it be this way? Aren't there nonviolent ways of resolving conflict among the people? How do we get to these other ways? If these questions are properly attended to, then peace will be engraved actively in the minds of citizens and in the hearts of world leaders for eternity.

Peace education often addresses the sources of immediate conflicts and provides the knowledge and strategies to combat these conflicts for peaceful coexistence. Peace education has both long and short term goals. Looking at the long-term goal, it tends to build in the learner's mind a commitment to engage in non-violent activities from youthful age to adulthood. While on the short term goals, peace education enables learners to critically analyze the very root causes of violence, wars, and conflicts and develop alternatives to violence (Kadiri, 2007). Peace education helps to bring peace and harmony into the minds of the youths, children, and adult for peaceful coexistence and sustainable national development. There is a paradigm shift in the teaching and learning of peace education recently. In the beginning of the 21st century, the pillars of peace movement (The UN) shifted attention from environmental education with its attendant consequences in ecological catastrophe to peace education with a serious concern of resolving civil and domestic violence through conflict resolution education.

Interestingly, all these different forms of peace education have common goals in terms of teaching and learning the root of violence and adopting strategies for sustainable peace movement. However, the major tenet of peace education is to address the complexity of conflict through empowerment, advocacy, non-violent interventionism, de-radicalization of militants groups, giving emphasis to value re-orientation and persuasion through the instrumentality of peace education. It is hoped that, when peace education is effectively taught, it will address the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflicts and violence, thereby bringing to an end the cycle of violence and crisis in our local communities and society, and of course at the international community.

Purpose of Peace Education

The purpose of incorporating peace education into the curriculum at primary, secondary, adult literacy schools and advocacy in communities is to raise the awareness of peace as a strong ideal for children, youth and adult to aspire to better the social environment in the nations.

To motivate the pupils to take responsibility of their own behaviour and actions; to handle conflict resolution and make good sustainable choices in their everyday environment that adds to a peaceful coexistence. This is a prerequisite for a good learning process.

Importance of Peace Education

1. Peace education is important for everyone, but particularly for children who are still building their identity and the values they hold. When children are taught to be peaceful, it allows them to be a positive role model for adults around them.
2. Peace education can be an essential part of education because of the immense impact it has on students in their classroom and in the communities around them.
3. When we teach youth the value of peace along with the skills they need to be healthy conflict resolvers, we equip the next generation with the tools they need to be a society that values relationship over competition and well-being over accomplishment, When these values are shared, some voice concern that society is becoming soft and unmotivated to succeed, but when we work with those around us to collaborate, we can achieve greater things while still maintaining our individual and collective health.
4. Peace education can give youth concrete skills to use in group work and in conversation with those around them so that they are collaborators instead of competitors in school and beyond.

Conclusions

The integration and implantation of an effective peace education programme in the national school curriculum and peace advocacy in communities are inevitable, given the high rates of insurgency, social injustice, communal clashes and militancy in our communities in Nigeria. The education programme would serve socially constructive purpose to prepare citizens to actively participate in the process of social, cultural and economic development. Peace education contributes positively towards building a culture of peace, solidarity and

tolerances within a framework of multi-ethnicity, cultural and linguistic diversity. Where the content of peace education and conflict resolutions are inculcated and as well practiced by individuals, there will be applicable level of development in order to promote national security and development in communities and the nation at large, there must be peace which promotes an atmosphere of tolerance, equality, justices, harmony, fairness, co-existence and mutual development.

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