



Peace education in Nigeria: Challenges and strategies for improvement

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Abstract

This paper examined peace education in Nigeria, putting into cognizance the challenges and strategies, especially in schools and societies. The concepts of education, peace, and peace education were examined. The paper went further to look at the existence of peace in society, which called for peace education and how it affected national development. Therefore, the article identifies the multidisciplinary agencies that can be involved and interacted with in order to promote peace education for national development. It was, however, concluded that peace education was not accorded high respect in Nigeria. It was suggested that qualified consultants from educational institutions and universities should be involved in drawing up of relevant syllabi for the various courses to make police officers and other security agencies meet the current needs of the force.

Keywords: education, peace, peace education, challenges, strategies, improvement

Introduction

Peace stretched its existence from all ages, the ages of old stone, middle to the present. Invariably, it is paramount and indispensable. Peace cannot achieve its desirable ends if not processed by veritable agents. Convincingly, the wheels of peace are education and socialization. Peace is impossible to substitute for it, and peace heralds the socio-economic development of a society. Ogundele, Musa and Jimba (2015) ^[13] argued that, for peaceful nationhood, there must be peace at home. There will be peace in the town when every home is peaceful. When towns are peaceful, there will be peace in the local government areas; and when local government areas are peaceful, the states will have peace; and when every state is peaceful, such a country will also be peaceful; and when every country is peaceful, there will be global peace. This logical geography of peace suggests that deliberate, rational, and relevant mechanisms, as well as integrative mechanisms, are not only necessary, but will inevitably be implemented.

This discourse, therefore, is considered ripe to add to the volume of literature on the imperative of peace education in Nigeria, especially in a country that has been hit by conflict of different types. The most critical challenge facing Nigeria is the terrorist activities of the faceless religious group called "Boko Haram" in the northern part of the country. Also in the southern part are the militant groups, the Niger Delta avengers, and the Oodua people's congress. All these groups constitute one problem or the other, which affects the well-being of Nigerian citizens.

In order to solve these problems, among others, it is imperative to include peace education in the national curriculum to empower the next generation with the necessary skills to resolve social issues. Peace education is crucial for the Nigerian educational system to achieve in schools.

It has to do with training on the avoidance and management of violent conflict; better human relationships; unity and internal cooperation among various tribes; and those aspects of formal and informal education in school and out-of-school aimed at the elimination of group prejudice, stereotypes, and hatred (Ezeoba, 2012) ^[6]. Therefore, peace

education is education for peaceful and non-violent co-existence.

Conceptual Clarifications

The following concepts inherent in the title were explained:

The Concept of Education

It is generally agreed that education is the acquisition of the civilization of the past, stretching to the civilization of the present as well as the civilization of the possible future. It is a way of preparing the younger generation to assume and perform their proper roles and functions in the society to which they belong. According to Fuandai, Bulus, and Gbari (2017), education involves the wholesome training of an individual that makes him/her useful to himself, the community, and the nation as a whole. The authors stressed that education equips individuals with the requisite skills and knowledge to function maximally in the society in which they belong. It is a prerequisite for peace and meaningful national development.

The Concept of Peace and Peace Education

Peace means the absence of conflict or violence at a particular time and place. It evokes the climate of freedom from fear, intimidation, harassment, oppression, and brutalization by external forces or agents (Ibeanu, 2016) ^[8]. Peace implies the original state of existence in which man was born as a free, gentle savage; a state of nature that is synonymous with a state of ignorance. Peace is an expression of love, cooperation, unity, and harmonious co-existence. It is the absence of war, injustice, violence, greed, and bad governance. Peace as seen by Kaitholil (2009) means tranquility, a state of undisturbed well-being of daily experience, one's brother or sister, and one God. Peace is security, self-assurance, freedom from fear, and undue restraint. It is one of the deepest desires of every person and the basic yearning of the human race. Peace is the expression of love, cooperation, unity, and harmonious co-existence.

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Peace education is difficult to define, but it is a unique process of resolving conflicts and promoting meaningful development in the community. Development, both at national and individual levels, needs knowledge and skills to maintain and sustain it. Ikechukwu (2014) identified peace education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavioral changes that would enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive for peace. Other scholars opined that peace education is a deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peacemaking skills in homes, schools, and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization (Jimba, Agada & Inyang, 2020) [10]. The authors further remarked that peace education is about the creation, sustenance, and management of positive attitudes towards peace among and between different levels and segments of society.

According to UNESCO (2015) [15], peace education is seen as an incitation to consciousness and to action for the elimination of all forms of violence, direct and indirect. Education is based on multidisciplinary content with skills and values that are universally acknowledged and shared. Peace education carries the following aspects:

1. Human rights education and education for human dignity Consideration of various rights and groups' rights in society
2. Inter-cultural and inter-racial. This means that education should be one with anti-prejudice features and characteristics.
3. Peace education should have a global factor, considering global education for social justice both within local and international contexts.
4. Religious education for moral development, personal and inner peace.
5. Democracy and citizenship education. This carries the civil education curriculum for respect of the existing variations and differences among individuals and groups.
6. Peace education should lead to environmental and sustainable development and the proper maintenance of various interests among groups.
7. Education should be geared towards education for non-violent, conflict-free, social transformation and integration into society.

Conditions of Peace Education

Because Nigerian society is sometimes infested with traces of violence, peace education and peace culture are essential in schools. Teachers as surrogate parents promote peaceful coexistence among students by resolving conflicts justly in the class.

Mutual respect, tolerance, and observance of children's rights help to create love, happiness, and a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. Children learn peace culture through discipline, avoiding aggressive tendencies and developing team spirit through academic activities in schools.

Peace education helps to create democratic leadership in the classroom, order, gender equality, and healthy interactions. Peace education and peace culture are global targets capable of achieving quality economic output and good

technological and social development. Therefore, inculcating a peace culture in students is the root of quality human resources, civilization, and peaceful coexistence. Thus, in every available space in human culture, societal agents should:

1. It creates a desirable society because a successful school education engenders the critical spirit required in judging issues impartially and with objectivity. The gullible acceptance of facts, positions, or views is resisted. It means citizens are not passive; rather, they contribute to seeing the points themselves.
2. This will create an interactive and better learning environment. Peace-like traits in society require interactive learning to thrive; that is, teachers, learners, and members of the educational community deliberately engage each other positively in joint cooperation in all teaching and learning activities. Where disagreements arise, the critical spirit will sort out multiple alternatives that can be explored.
3. Inculcate open-mindedness: In the peace education process, participants should/can be disposed to developing a capacity for open-mindedness; points of decision are driven by an individual's judgment. Peace education should endeavour to keep an individual's mind open to new facts and ideas.

Dimkpa (2014) [5] in affirmation of these conditions identified the importance of each of these conditions, rightly understood, and would mean: improved security conditions for lives and properties, expected to be conveniently safe; no strife; no role confusion and tension. Inevitably, the people's quality of life in the polity demonstrates manifest agreement with the conditions of peace, and everyone in the small or large peace space works assiduously in their own little way for peace (Dimkpa, 2014) [5]. In the light of security, quality of life, and division of labor, life expectancy is guaranteed because working conditions can be adjudged just and fair, as well as citizens being gainfully engaged, having prospects for savings, and individuals taking rational regarding their environment. The interplay of these conditions can embark on peace-building.

The relevance of peace education to an individual, the family, society, and the world usually manifests itself in the total eradication or reduction in the rate of crimes such as inner-tribal/religious disunity within the country, militancy, occultism in schools, theft, political crisis, rape, and killings. Others include hatred, prejudice, pride, and murder, which peace education is capable of replacing with love, patience, tolerance, dialogue, and understanding.

The Benefits of Peace Education

Peace education has the following benefits, which include:

1. Enhanced security conditions
2. Improved quality of life-inner peace;
3. worker dignity;
4. Higher life expectancy;
5. Improved working conditions.
6. Increased employment opportunities;
7. Higher savings;
8. Better decision-making.

However, according to Akano (2019) [2], peace education could contribute in five key areas to ensuring world peace and a sustainable use of the earth's resources. These areas include:

Raising Global Citizens

Because today's security issues are global in scope, finding answers will need a global shift on how people think about and behave in order to take care of the planet and the people who live on it. We will require education that develops in us the humane traits that lead to respect for human rights, diversity, and gender equality if we are to confront the difficulties of today. This education must go beyond teaching us the basics of math and literacy. Individuals who become peace activists and perceive their identity as transcending beyond their national territorial limits to that of the growing global community can be produced through peace education's transformative education.

Raising a culture of peace

Peace education could be used to achieve global security because it seeks to instill a peace culture in all adherents. The Seville statement on violence remarks that war is not a fatality determined by genes, violent brains, human nature, or instincts, but is rather a social invention. Therefore, the same species that invented war is capable of inventing peace (UNESCO, 2002) ^[14].

Creating economic development and poverty eradication

There exist some clear linkages between education, poverty, and violence. Extreme poverty has been found to be at the root of terrorism, violence, and wars, but education has always been a way to boost economic growth. A purposeful and transformative education has the capability to change people's lives by equipping them with skills and a mindset to lift them from poverty. When people are given the opportunity to have a proper education, then they have a good chance of having an improved standard of living. This does not only influence them personally, but society as a whole is delivered from the pangs of human deprivation. Besides, peace education also raises peace and human rights activists who pressure their various governments for good governance, and good governance enhances human and global security.

Acquisition of conflict resolution skills

Conflict is a normal part of any healthy relationship. Violence and wars only result when conflicts are mismanaged. Good conflict resolution skills could help to build the bonds of peace and fraternity. Thus, the main threat to global security is not conflict but a lack of people with good conflict resolution skills to manage them. Peace education; therefore fills this gap by equipping learners with skills in dialogue, mediation, and negotiation.

The Role of Stakeholders in Education as Agents of Peace

Meaningful education could be necessarily termed as a catalyst to boost the sustenance of peace through various stakeholders, to mention parents, students, teachers, political and other public office holders, religious leaders, and community heads. Generally, the business of promoting peace is the task of every party and peace-loving member of society. Apparently, education as an agent of peace through its stakeholders plays a critical role in cases of conflicts, peace, and resolutions. The process of peacemaking involves subtle, diplomatic ways of dialogue, adjudication, and understanding rather than resorting to wild, aggressive, and inconsiderable approaches in handling wrangling issues

other than a muscle-flexing approach. To this end, the settlement of various labour disputes is peacefully organized, such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), as all could attest to the sustenance of peace. All forms of student peace protest bear their good fruits from the branch of education as a tool for promoting peace.

Multi-Agency Strategies for Managing and Planning Peace Education

For Nigeria to move forward, there is a need to plan and manage peace education well in Nigeria. According to Asamonye (2014), the following can help to promote peace education in Nigeria: The educational curriculum of all categories of education should be revised to include peace, and ethics—from nursery to primary, to secondary, to tertiary education. The revised curriculum must include qualitative values, attitudes, and behaviors of cultures. All these should be included in the curriculum. Things like respect for the elderly, loving and caring for one another, greeting the elderly, and peaceful slogans must be taught and included in the curriculum. Teachers at all levels must teach and emphasize these values.

Political/Social Integration Strategy

There should be strategic interaction between the school and the community. Participatory communication and free information should be encouraged among students, between students and management, and between the school and the community. Peace education should be centered on democratic and conflict resolution principles. Society must be taught not to resolve conflict through violence and war but rather through dialogue.

Legislative Strategy

The legal and judicial systems should be made more responsive to issues of violence and disruption of peace in the country. New laws should be enacted and existing laws reviewed to ensure that justice is quick and punishment meted out to the culprits is commensurate with the severity of the offense.

On the issue of peace disruption, the government should adopt more responsible policies

They should be firm and fearless when handling the culprits. Favoritism or issues of political party alliance must be deemphasized.

Campus Security Strategy

Campus security policies and protection services vary widely around the world. Nigerian schools must establish security policy services. Then your aim should include the following:

1. Security measures in the school
2. Assure the safety of students, employees, and guests.
3. Interact with local and external security agencies.
4. Provide education programmes on safety for students.
5. Patrol the school regularly.
6. Investigate any crisis trying to erupt in the school.
7. Provide safety programmes to students and teachers.

Challenges of Peace Education in Nigeria

The most noticeable challenges in peace education in Nigeria's secondary schools include:

1. Inadequate knowledge about the concept of peace education as well as its aims and objectives by both policymakers and members of the general public and government. In other words, there is limited expertise and capacity for peace education available in most parts of the country. This is why Baldo and Fumiss (2018) affirmed that peace education is most effective when the skills and knowledge of peace and conflict resolution are learned and known by the planners as well as the implementers. This implies that the planners give a clear picture of how the program will be conducted and how it will be modeled by the school in which students are taught. Of course, school managers and teachers are the key actors in the implementation of these, so, they cannot give what they do not have.
2. There is a lack of acceptability of the peace education concept by governments in West Africa (Nigeria inclusive). Adeleke (2010) ^[1] opined that if Nigeria's government had accepted peace education as it is being talked about, the rate of insecurity would have been reduced to its barest minimum and legal or pragmatic efforts would have been in place to enforce it.
3. There is a lack of political will to adopt it as part of the education policy despite the increasing appreciation of its positive impact on the psychosocial behavior of children who have already benefited from the programme.
4. Inadequate funds, especially funding dedicated to peace education, are a major problem. Yepwi (2017) ^[16] posited that money is an absolutely crucial input in any educational system. It provides the essential purchasing power with which education acquires human and material inputs. With too little money, education can be helpless. With an ample supply, its problems become more manageable even though they do not vanish.
5. Another challenge is the lack of an appropriate and comprehensive peace education curriculum that can be used to suit the needs of the country. A number of countries have developed peace education curricula for schools, usually consisting of activities such as communication, cooperation, problem-solving, etc., without which the objectives of peace education would not be achieved.

Conclusion

The UN Charter was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 to: To promote international peace and security; protect against war and promote human rights, and promote social progress and a better standard of life for all men and women, and their posterity. Peace education is an education directed at the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all people and nations, including racial and religious groups, and furthers the activities of Nigeria for the maintenance of peace and national security.

Recommendations

Based on the following discourse, the following recommendations are made:

1. Qualified consultants from educational institutions and universities should be involved in the drawing up of relevant syllabi for the various courses to make police

- officers and other security agencies meet the current needs of the force.
2. The government should direct more of the funds spent on maintaining security through military tactics and strategies to provide those things that cause insecurity, for instance, unemployment, hunger, deprivation, and illiteracy.
3. It is the role of education to enlighten people through relevant school subjects. For instance, "peace education" teaches law enforcement and security operatives that they are partners in progress and not enemies or government agents assigned to harass law-abiding citizens.
4. The teacher education programme needs to be incorporated with courses in peace education to enable teachers to be conversant with peace culture.

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