PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION

Dr. Grace Ajagun
Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)
Sheda, Abuja

Abstract

It is conventional to think of peace in terms of stability and rational order or problem solving. This approach to peace assumes that peace can only be guaranteed by institutionalised coercive powers. Nevertheless, peace education is rooted in the conception of peace as a conscious pursuit of values that foster communal cooperation; and are responsive to the challenges of human coexistence. The preponderance of civil disorders, religious riots, ethnic and communal clashes, in recent years, has disrupted human civilizations in many parts of the world including Nigeria. Presently, there is an increased global cooperation and shared concern for security, peace, human rights, civil liberty, democratic principles and values, and good governance. A critical global peace initiative is the deepening advocacy for creating a culture of peace through appropriate education that instills in people a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes. Peace education therefore encompasses human rights issues, the environment and development of persons, the community and a nation. This paper highlights Nigeria's response to the global peace education initiatives through well thought out and implementable curriculum. Notable amongst such efforts is the infusion of values and skills that promote peace and non-violence attitude into primary secondary education curricula; and very recently the inclusion of security education as a prominent theme in the National Values Curriculum for Basic Education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sustainable Peace, Education.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR
Dr. Grace Ajagun

Introduction

One of the critical global reform initiatives is the deepening advocacy for peaceful coexistence amongst and within nations and communities. Peace has been described as a state of undisturbed quiet and calm. It is often associated with an absence of war, and understood in terms of an absence of gross violations of human rights. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English describes peace as a combination of the following:

❖ A condition in which there is no war, violence or hostilities;
❖ A state of freedom from disorder within a country;
❖ A state of agreement of friendliness among people living or working together;
❖ Calmness, quietness; freedom from anxiety or troubling mind;
❖ General security of life and property.

Other commentators have suggested that peace is not just a state of the human mind, which is personal, but also that which could be interpersonal, inter – communal, international and global (Ololobu, 1994). Peace is not just the absence of war, violence and hostilities, but also the presence of tranquility, harmony, and lack of tension in the family/home/nation. It connotes the presence of friendly and communal dispositions, righteousness and the love and fear of God, justice, equity and fair-play (Crowall, 1982). Apparently, if there is peace among a group of people, they live and work together in a friendly manner without quarrel.

Conflict on the other hand, implies argument, war or battle; caused usually by a feeling of injustice, denial or violation of rights. The search for peace is as old as the human race itself. The origin of almost all human endeavours and development could be traced to the search by man to attain stability. The developments in agriculture, medicine education and science and invention of weapons are classical attempts by man to contain his environment for the purposes of peace and stability. However, human development, values and interests differ between individuals and communities. These differences often constitute the source for violent conflicts. Thus, conflict is also defined to include: (i) state of struggling, fighting; (ii) disagreement, controversy, opposition; and (iii) differences, clash of opinions and interests.

Quest for Peace: Peackeeping or Peacemaking

Conventional approach to peace is underpinned by secular intellectual constructs. The tendency is to think about peace in terms of rational order or problem solving predicated upon reason and expediency. Where institutionalized order cannot be guaranteed, as in political conflicts between core and peripheral nation states, preponderance of coercive power is viewed as a necessary, albeit arbitrary, arbiter of intractable disputes. Miall (2006); a conflict management theorist, see conflicts as ineradicable consequences of differences of values and interest within and between communities.Miall's definition presupposes that conflicts are irresolvable, and that perhaps the best that could be done is containing the conflict by ending violence.In this approach to peace, the underlying assumption is that peace can only reign if reason continues to achieve triumphal victories in an ongoing war against passion – for example, against tribalism, ethnic conflict and ideologically based competition. This approach has been criticized for putting too much faith in institutional formulas and competition, and too little emphasis on communal cooperation and the conscious pursuit of values (**Said and Funk, 2001).** In contrast to the conventional peacekeeping approach, where peace is equated with stability and order guaranteed by hegemonic

influence, is advocacy for a culture of peace that utilizes Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) strategies. **The ADR approach** utilizes common strategies for peacemaking like negotiation, mediation, arbitration community conferencing and dialogue, collaborative law, negotiated rulemaking, etc; that are responsive to common challenges of coexistence within and among the world's many traditions. Creating a culture of peace connotes instilling in people through appropriate education, a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations (UN Resolutions <u>A/RES/52/13</u>: Culture of Peace).

Background to peace Education

Peace education encompasses peace and conflict, human rights, issues of development and the environment. It has its genesis in some events that have helped to shape the course of human history. These events include:
- The American war of independence (1775 -1783)
- The French revolution (1789-1815)
- The first world war (1914-1919)
- The second world war (1939 – 1945); and in more recent times;
- Cross-border crimes, international terrorism and proliferation of small arms/light weapons; inter–tribal wars and ethnic conflicts (Hamad, 2005).

The devastations, and colossal sufferings as well as the brutality, banditry, insensitivity, arson and murder, which stemmed from wars(particularly the two world wars, the American war of Independence and the French revolution) have a great impact on the quest for peace and peace education. The need for global peace and recognition of human rights substantially informed and necessitated the formation of the UNO immediately after the Second World War in October 1945.

Some of the principal actors during the Second World War especially America and Britain realized that their societies have been greatly dehumanized with great depth of moral decadence and lawlessness by happenings during the war years in which the scientific and technological knowledge were greatly encouraged at the expense of other equally important disciplines. High crime rates, upheavals and violence became the order of the day in these societies. To arrest the situation, the American government, through the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) revised and vigorously implemented its programmes in social studies and citizenship Education in the schools. This timely initiative positively changed the attitudes and value orientations of the American people.Taking cognizance of the reforms in education in America after the war years, the British government took prompt actions to review its curricula especially in social studies and the languages. Other countries that followed the American example with a considerable amount of achievement in peace education curricular objectives include France, Russia, the Scandinavian countries, and Japan.

Africa was not left out in the records of upheavals and violence of the past. There have been numerous social and civil disturbances in Africa since the emergence of nationalism, demand for self-rule. From early 1960s until now, most of the disturbances were as a result of agitation against foreign dominance/governance, oppression, misrule, political and economical injustice, the plunder of human and material resources, and other forms of vices which often led to decimation of human populations, increased violence, insecurity and abuse of human rights. It is not surprising therefore that greater concern is now being shown by African nations towards embracing peace and respect for human dignity.

Consequent to the preponderance of civil wars, civil disorders, ethnic wars and religious riots have disrupted human civilizations in many parts of Africa including Nigeria, in recent years; is an increased regional cooperation and shared concern for security, peace, human rights, civil liberty, democratic principles and values, and good governance. These efforts culminated in 1999 in the ratification of the "*protocol relating to the mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security*" by ECOWAS member states in the West African sub-region.

Promoting Peace: The Role of Education and Training

There is an intricate relationship between culture, education and development. Education can be described as the transmission of human or cultural heritage from one generation to another. It is the tool par excellence for bringing about social change leading to development (NPE, 2013), while culture provides the medium for that transformation. Issues that are pertinent to peace education include the development of trust, sense of security, positive values and self-esteem, large generosity of mind, care and compassion. Promoting peace through education implies ennobling the mind for peaceful, non – violent life. Hence, the Charter establishing the UNESCO in 1945 states:

> Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men
> that defenses of peace must be constructed".

It is culture that gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and values of a people. Peace, as a way of life can become part and parcel of culture. In acknowledgement of this fact, the United Nations (UN) Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (UNESCO, 2003), identifies seven action components for promoting a culture of peace and non – violence through formal education as follows:

i. Training, decision – makers and educators (teacher trainers, facilitators and youth leaders in the skills needed to promote peace and non – violence;
ii. Revising curriculum materials, particularly history textbooks, to promote mutual understanding and remove bias or stereotypes;
iii. Creating new curriculum materials addressing peace, non – violence and human rights;
iv. Producing and disseminating educational materials and textbooks on education for a culture of peace and human rights;
v. Promoting linguistic pluralism and encouragement of multilingualism;
vi. Promoting networking among national institutions, non – governmental organizations (NGOs) and civics education specialists; and developing new methods of non – violent conflict resolution that include traditional peaceful approaches.

The above key action areas are to underscore any meaningful attempt at sustainable peace education curriculum. Thus, in trying to answer the traditional curriculum question: what knowledge is of most worth? Attention must be drawn to the selection of the most important experiences of human heritage for purposes of transmission. In Nigeria today, issues that would readily come to mind in selecting content for a peace education curriculum include, discipline, fight against corruption, poverty and diseases, respect for tradition, human rights democracy and life - skills acquisition.

Nigeria's Response to Peace Education Initiatives

In recognition of her statutory mandate, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) was charged with the fundamental role of forging a peace education curriculum which will systematically be mainstreamed into formal and non-formal education in Nigeria. Government went further to appoint NERDC into the Presidential Implementation Committee for Mainstreaming Peace and Conflict Prevention in the country. Specifically, NERDC was assigned the tasks of:

❖ developing a Peace and Conflict Resolution curriculum at the pre – tertiary level;
❖ developing strategic materials for peace and conflict prevention;
❖ re-tooling school teachers and managers to implement the initiative; as well as
❖ building the capacity of major operators, especially in the flash points of the initiative.

The development of a functional and sustainable curriculum for peace and human rights education in Nigerian schools, a number of issues such as the existing milieu; setting the goals and objectives of peace education; value clarification and attitudinal changes; curriculum assessment, review and evaluation of the progamme needed to be adequately addressed.An examination of existing value system of Nigerian youth vis-à-vis the desirable national and cultural norms guided the identification of what should constitute the content the curriculum with respect to the inculcation of right values that would engender peaceful and non-violent life. The curriculum for peace education, developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), therefore focused on emergent issues such as peace, conflicts resolution, and human rights issues, entrepreneurial skills. This strategic focus, which is also the kernel of Peace Education in Nigeria, is in compliance with the noble elements of Nigeria's National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which underpins value re-orientation, using education to empower the people. This also is in conformity with new thinking in curriculum reforms in the global context that the school curriculum should systematically drive and promote peaceful living among and within communities.

Similarly, in setting goals and sub-goals, answers to the following are pertinent questions that provided the signposts for establishing a culture of peace in Nigerian schools: What goals, sub-goals and objectives should a curriculum on peace education seek to address? What constitutes a culture of peace? How can we know whether or not we are moving in towards the attainment of a culture of peace? The first step towards setting of goals was the understanding and acceptance of the basic principles of the mechanism for collective security, peace and human rights. Some of the principles contained in the protocol agreed to by ECOWAS (1999) member states, and include the following:

(a) That economic and social development and the security of peoples and state are inextricably linked
(b) Promotion and reinforcement of the free movement of persons, the right of residence and establishment which engender good neighborliness
(c) Promotion and consolidation of a democratic government as well as democratic institutions
(d) Protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the rule of law.

These principles served as the goals and sub-goals of a mechanism for peace education in Nigeria.
In respect of the implementation of peace education in Nigeria,NERDC will continually pursue six action areas of:

1. teacher training;
2. curriculum and instructional materials review, restructuring and realignment;
3. infusion of emergent issues and entrepreneurial skills,
4. promotion and production of books and learning materials devoid of stereotypes;
5. promotion of the use of language of the environment for teaching, and multilingualism education; and
6. encouraging community participation in shaping intended education content for children by expanding, dialogue, consultations, and participation in policy formulation to states, local communities and private entities.

Conclusion

In summary, most factors militating against peace in Nigeria can be addressed and minimized through well thought out and implementable curriculum. It should be noted that most societal reforms, particularly in civilized and developed societies are done through well – articulated, well implemented curricula. The inculcation of values and skill that promote peace and non-violence attitude should start very early in life. It is at this stage of human development that the human mind is most receptive to information. Knowledge, skills, values and attitude acquired very early in life tend to remain with the individual throughout life. The curricula that would promote sustainable peace should reflect our traditional values for peaceful coexistence.

The pedagogical techniques entrenched in the curricula developed by the NERDC allows active participation by learners, encourages freedom of expression and the development of team spirit through group learning strategies. Group work is encouraged to instill in learners some level of tolerance, spirit of sharing and cooperation, which are necessary ingredients for sustainable peace. Plans are also on ground to constantly build the capacity of teachers for effective delivery of the curricula.

On the whole, peace, security of a nation is our collective responsibility. We are all expected to promote peace and curb incidences that could lead to hostilities – hostilities are hatched in men's heart, also in the hearts of men must peace begin.

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