

PEACE EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The world has been threatened by various forms of conflicts, crisis and unrest emerging from insurgency and terrorism lately. Nigeria have had its own share of the crisis since its independence in 1960. These vices, no doubt has far reaching effects on the pace of development in the country, because no nation can achieve a sustainable development in the face of conflicts, crisis and violence. It is against this background, that this work examined the role of peace education in creating an enabling environment for sustainable development to thrive. The paper also looked at some strategies that can be applied to resolve conflict issues, and the importance of peace education. In conclusion, it recommended among others that peace education should be introduced in secondary schools and should be made a core subject just like english and mathematics.

Keywords: Peace, Peace Education, Development, Sustainable Development, Conflict Resolution.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the world has been threatened by various forms of conflicts, crisis and unrest emerging from the renewed threats of insurgency and terrorism. Almost every country of the world has at one time or the other had conflict issues either internally or from external forces. Nwafor (2012) observed that the global trends of conflict differ in magnitude and dimension, hence some are revolutionary/ideological in nature, others are either factional conflicts or identity/secessionist conflicts. Since independence in 1960, the Nigerian nation has had its share of conflict situations in different dimensions ranging from the many military coups, the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, and the activities of the diverse ethnic and religious militancy groups such as the Niger-Delta militant group in the South-South, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra(MASSOP) in the East, the Odua People's Congress(OPC) in the West, and of recent and the most dreaded so far, the Islamic fundamentalist and extremist militant group (Boko Haram) in most parts of the North which claim that western education is evil and harmful. These crisis situations have led to the loss of many lives and wanton destruction of valuable properties. No nation can achieve development in an atmosphere full of crisis and unrest. It is against this backdrop that it is important to institute a culture of peace, unity and oneness in the citizens of a particular nation. Nair (2005) asserted that, the need of the hour is to develop the young generation with peace consciousness, together with the importance of institutionalized peace culture. We will look at some basic issues that collectively forms the central thought of this work.

Peace

Peace as a concept lends itself to many definitions. According to Ibeanu (2006), philosophers are not in agreement yet as to a universally acceptable view of peace. Peace can be seen as a state of harmonious co-existence between different groups that are characterized by lack of violent or conflict behaviours. Nwafor (2012) views peace as the absence of conflict or violence at a

particular time and place. He further asserted that peace evokes the climate of freedom from fear, intimidation and harassment, oppression and brutalization by external forces or agents. David (2006) in Igbuzor (2011) defined peace as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence.

Peace Education

Peace education is the process of acquiring the values, knowledge, and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviours which would assist one to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the environment. Nsikak-Abasi and Nneji (2010) described peace education as those aspects of formal and non formal education in school and out of school aimed at the elimination of groups' prejudice, stereotypes and hatred which make people prefer war to peace, violence to non violence, exclusion to cooperation, and destruction to construction. According to UNESCO (2002), peace education entails the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitude and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youths and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural so as to resolve conflicts peacefully, and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, national and international levels. In the words of Ezeoba (2012), peace education has to do with the training on the avoidance and management of violent conflicts, better human relationship, unity and internal cooperation among the various tribes of the country.

From the foregoing, one can conveniently conclude that peace education is the type of education that teaches one the importance of peace, the disadvantages of violence and the strategies to engage in order to maintain peace. It equips recipients with the ability to shun evil and employ constructive means of settling disputes. Through the teaching of conflict/crisis management skills, peace education builds into its recipients a defensive mechanism against the effects of violence. While there are several strategies that can be put in place to make sure that violence is reduced and a peace culture instituted, it is argued that peace education has the highest rate of success.

Development

The concept 'Development' is amenable to many interpretations. But, in this work, development shall be viewed in terms of economic growth and human development (ie, empowering the citizens of a nation with the needed ability to understand and manipulate the environment and natural resources usually through education).

Peace Education and Development

The indispensability of peace and unity in the process of nation building and development of a nation is no longer an issue of debate. No nation can achieve development, not to talk of a sustained one in the face of crisis, unrest, and violence. Businesses cannot thrive, organizations cannot operate, industries will shut down production, academic activities will be put on hold, even developmental projects will be suspended in an environment full of violence. It is a common knowledge that no meaningful development can be attained in an atmosphere devoid of peace. Nair (2005) asserted that, lack of peace destroys the identity of a nation since mental creative energies and resources are directed from useful activities to destructive ones. The impediments to

a sustainable development necessitated by the various forms of violence, crisis and unrest in our society have therefore made peace education in our schools imperative. Nair (2005) rightly perceived that the need of the hour is to develop the young generation with peace consciousness, together with the importance of institutionalized peace culture. Nwafor (2012) seems to agree with the above observation when he opined that peace education in the present circumstance is inevitably necessary because every citizen should be educated so that he/she can understand the society and the dynamics of social harmony. Schools should therefore incorporate peace education into their education curriculum to instill in the mind of our citizens the culture of peace. According to Adeoluna (2006), it is expedient that educational planners make peace education an integral component of school subjects so that Nigerians can be educated on how to peacefully live together as one. It should be incorporated right from the basic education curriculum to the highest level of education, this supports the slogan that goes this way: 'catch them young'. The basic education level is the formative stage in a child's development, and anything that the child learns at this stage (whether good or bad) seems to stick to the mind, hence, the importance of introducing peace education at this stage. Since war starts in the mind of men, peace should be instilled in the mind of the child at an early stage so as to minimize or totally eradicate violent tendencies in life. For sustainable development, it is essential to understand, realize and get sensitized about the horrifying effects of war and conflicts.

Although there are many keys to development, such as good governance, infrastructures, social amenities etc, peace education remains the most important key to a sustainable development because it tends to restructure the values, mindset, and behaviours of the recipients towards the need for a peaceful co-existence. Peace education is critical for sustainable development. The relationship between peace education and development can be likened to that of an obstetrician and a pregnant woman. Just as an obstetrician assists the pregnant woman medically through out the gestation period till delivery, that is how peace education prepares an enabling environment that makes development possible. It will bring about tolerance which will always enable individuals resolve disputes peacefully. Tolerance will further ensure a culture of peace. The diversity of our nation's culture when put into consideration will enable one understand the differences in people and why people behave the way they do. The recognition of these differences will further make one accommodate the peculiarity of others, this will go a long way in replacing the culture of constant disagreement and its resultant violence to the culture of peaceful co-existence. In an era of peace, our education system which is one of the paramount determinants of development will flourish and will produce graduates that will serve as the manpower needed for the development of the country. Also, industries will keep producing, developmental projects will be embarked on, and businesses will thrive. The success of these businesses will in turn contribute to nation building and sustainable development through taxes paid, reduction of poverty rate with a visible increment of employment rate among youths, creation of wealth through industrialization etc.

Strategies that can be adopted to resolve/curtail Conflicts

Governments usually employ military responses to conflict situations. But military option is not enough because it does not address the underlying causes of conflicts and violence. Some suggestions are pointed out here as possible means of resolving conflicts in our society, among them are:

- In the case of the current Boko Haram issue, peace education should be introduced to the curriculum of the Almajiri schools and attendance to the school should be made compulsory just as it is in the Universal Basic Education.
- Creation of job opportunities for the products of the Almajiri schools that will suit the contents of their education curriculum.
- In a situation where the government has to intercede in a mediation to reconcile two conflicting groups, care should be taken to accept and respect that individual opinions may differ. Mistake of forcing compliance should not be made, the mediator should work to develop common agreement.
- The conflict situation should not be reviewed as a competition where one has to win and another lose. The mediation committee should rather work towards a solution where both parties can have some of their needs met.
- Dialogue can be employed by any aggrieved party to make their needs and reasons for agitations known to the government. Often, conflict arises due to lack of communication. The government on its part should encourage this strategy by lending a listening ear to the complaints of the people. The point here is not that government must attend to every request made, but can look into the matter critically to know if such requests are justifiable or not. In a situation where the requests made are not justifiable, it is still the function dialogue and proper communication to make the group understand that their requests are not within constitutional provisions or what can be handled at the moment.
- Compromise- the both parties (ie the aggrieved group and the government) can shift grounds on a particular matter to ensure that peace is maintained. This strategy results to a win-win situation. This strategy demands a strong commitment from both parties, none of the parties should renege on the agreement reached.

The Importance of Peace Education

With the recent security challenges in almost all parts of the country, and with the perceived ability of peace education to curtail these crisis and unrest, you will agree with us that peace education is important for these following reasons:

- Peace education equips students as catalysts of peace with the tool of mediation in the larger society.
- As a practice, peace education tends to address the issue of violence with the aim of resisting it.
- Peace education imparts on its recipients the values, skills and behaviours needed to nurture a peace culture.
- Peace education promotes the knowledge and skills that will enable its recipients to prevent the occurrence of conflict and creates social conditions conducive for peace. In other words, it helps its recipients take proactive measures against conflicts and crisis.
- It develops in the recipients the spirit of tolerance.
- Peace education is important because it will bring about the evolution of a stable polity which would in turn ensure a sustainable socio-economic and political climate needed for a sustainable national development.
- When properly implemented in our schools, peace education can eradicate or at least minimize the incidents of school violence culminating from cult related activities which in many occasions have disrupted academic activities in our higher institutions.

CONCLUSION

Peace education among other strategies has shown to be the most important key for ensuring the development of a nation. This is because peace education imparts in the citizenry the culture of peace and tolerance which makes the nation a good ground for a development that can be sustained to thrive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Trends in Nigeria shows that government seldom adopts a proactive measure in tackling conflict and crisis situations. It is therefore recommended that:

- Government through its appropriate education agency should design a curriculum making peace education a core subject in secondary schools just like English and mathematics.
- Peace education should be introduced as a discipline within a faculty in our institutions of higher learning, and not just a one semester course.
- Government should ensure that no section of the country is marginalized in allocation of resources and in appointment of offices so as not to instigate violence which has the ability of escalating.
- Grants should be made available to researchers working on peace and conflict resolution issues.
- Government should create employment opportunities for unemployed graduates, and also create an enabling environment that can encourage private organizations to establish ventures that can employ youths.

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