

## **Peace Education and Contemporary Issues in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and regional level. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable future. This article critically examined peace education and contemporary issues in Nigeria. Nigeria as a country is faced with a lot of security challenges. Education sector can not thrive best in Nigeria, if there are insurgent attacks on the masses, especially on school children. The present security challenge in Nigeria could be appropriately tackled in the classroom through peace education. Peace education empowers learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to end violence and injustice, and promote a culture of peace in the country. A culture of peace must take root in the classroom from an early age of every child development. It must continue to be reflected in the curricula at all levels of education. It means providing both learners and teachers with an understanding of and respect for universal values and fundamental human rights. The paper highlighted the concept of peace education, content and methods of peace education and aims of peace, education among others. The conclusion of this paper is based on the relevant-issues raised, and as they affect current education programmes in Nigeria.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Education is the key to uniting nations, bringing human beings closely together. In many parts of the world, civil society suffers because of situations of violent, conflicts and war. It is important to recognize the crucial role of education in contributing to building a culture of peace and condemning instances in which education is undermined in order to attack democracy and tolerance (Clarke, 2021).

A culture of peace and non-violence goes to the substance of fundamental human rights: social justice, democracy, literacy, respect and dignity for all, international solidarity respect for workers rights and core labour standards, children's right, equality between men and women, culture identity and diversity, indigenous people and minorities rights, the preservation of the natural environment to name some of the more obvious thematic (Salomon, 2019). These are all issues of concern to education international and its member organization, as reflected in many resolutions endorsed at education international world congresses as well as at regional education international supported events which Nigeria is included. Education International affirms the right to peace and pledges its support for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and corporation.

Presently, Nigeria is facing a lot of security challenges which in many dimensions affect peace education of the country. The Chibok school girls' abduction of 14 April, 2014 is clear evidence, and it has attracted world attention.

### **Concept of Peace Education**

Peace education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the natural inhabitants of an environment. Harris and John (2020) described peace education as a series of "teaching encounters that draw from people:

- Their desire for peace
- Non-violence alternative for managing conflict and
- Skills for crucial analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality.

Then James (2019) suggested peace education to be thought of as "encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace, as informing

the students on the consequences of war and social justice, as informing the students on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structure, as encouraging the students to love Nigeria, the world and to imagine a peaceful future, and as caring for the students and encouraging the students to care for others.

Often the theory or philosophy of peace education has been assumed and not articulated. John (2021) suggested that no theory for peace education existed and that there was clearly an urgent need for such theory. More recently there have been attempts to establish such a theory. Joachim (2021) suggested that a philosophical basis for peace education might be located in the Kantian notion of duty. James (2021) suggested that a rational for peace education might be located in virtue ethics, aesthetic ethics and the ethics of care.

Since the early decades of the 20th century, "peace education" programmes around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity co-existence and gender equality, among others (Roche, 2019).

Matsuura (2008) also addressed spiritual dimension of inner harmony, or synthesized a number of the foregoing issues into programs on world citizenship. While academic discourse on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for a broader more holistic approach to peace education, a review of field-based project reveals that some variations of peace education are most common conflict resolution training, democracy education, and human right education.

### **Contents and Methods of Peace Education**

Peace education brings together multiple tradition of pedagogy, theories of education, and international initiatives for the advancement of human development through learning. It is fundamentally dynamic, interdisciplinary and multicultural and grows out of the work of world educators such as Dewey (Groff, 2022). Building on principles and practices that have evolved over time responding to different historical circumstances, peace education aims to cultivate the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to achieve and sustain a global culture of peace, understanding and transforming violence is central (Brabeck, 2021).

Peace is understood not only as the absence of traditional form of direct violence, but also as a positive presence. Peace is a state of harmony characterized by the lack of violent conflict and the freedom from fear of violence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationship, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality, and a working political order that serves the true interest of all (Rao,2012). In international relations, peace is not only the absence of war or violent conflict, but also the presence of positive and respectful culture and economic relationships (Galtung, 2012).

### **Aims of Peace Education**

Peace education as a sine qua non in human existence and development of Nigerian education has the following aims:

Promoting peace education in the classroom but lessons for life of immediate relevance, empowering individuals to achieve a just society in which all human right of all persons are valued and respected.

Peace education applies to the contents of each individual: peace education should be extended to all learners, including refugee and migrant children from minorities and disabled with the objective of promoting equal opportunities through education. The training of teachers, education workers and all education stakeholders, including staff from ministries of education is crucial. Educators promote the development of the whole person, so as to enable everyone contribute to society in a carrying and responsible manner. In order to recruit and retain the best teachers, governments should give priority to adequate salary, which must provide teachers with a reasonable standard of living for themselves and for their professional qualifications by developing their knowledge and improving their cultural resources (Danesh, 2020). Governments must also focus on providing attractive working conditions including small class sizes, career paths and more opportunities for professional growth and development, financial and other incentives and support system for new teachers such as mentoring programs (Kevin, 2021).

Education is a participatory and interactive process of instruction and learning, and the curriculum and pedagogy should given prominence to understanding the wealth of distributive culture and linguistic characteristics in response to globalization.

The educational context should provide programs addressing psychological and physical violence, including cyber bullying, through violence prevention, conflict resolution and medication in all levels at education (Danesh, 2020:16).

Building dialogue and understanding between cultures has been a priority and a programmatic activity of education international organized its first international conference activity of EI for years. In 1997, Education international conference for affiliates in central and Eastern Europe, entitled "Democratic societies living and

learning together” the Bled conference highlighted the role and responsibilities of teachers and their union in combating racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

Similarly the second such conference was organized in Malta in 2002. Over Ibo participants from all regions of the world challenged each other to enter into true dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religion and to face up to the dangers of unequal opportunities. Workshops provided participants with examples of best practice of Education international union in terms of respecting cultures and honoring differences of human rights and access to education of asylum seekers and refugees (Brabeck, 2021).

### **Conflict Resolution Training**

Peace education programs centered on conflict resolution typically focus on the social-behavioral symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve interpersonal disputes through techniques of negotiation and mediation. Learning to manage anger, fight, fear and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-talking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of these programs.

In general, approaches of this type, aim to alter beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors from negative to positive attitudes towards conflict as a basic for preventing violence (Synott, 2020). There are various styles or approaches in conflict resolution training that can give the practitioner the means to accept the conflictual situation and orient it towards a peaceful resolution.

### **Democracy Education**

Peace education programs centered on democracy education typically focus on the political processes associated with conflict, and postulate that with an increase in democratic participation the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases. At the same time “a democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflict as well as the necessity for tolerance”. Therefore peace education programmes of this kind attempt to foster a conflict-positive orientation in the community by training students to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth (Reardon, 2019).

Approaches of this type, train students in the skills of critical thinking, debate and coalition-building, and promote the value of freedom of speech, individuality tolerance at diversity, compromise and conscientious objection. The aim here is to produce responsible citizens who will hold their government accountable to the standard of peace primarily through adversarial processes. Activities are structured to have students “assume the role of the citizen that chooses, make decisions, take position, argue positions and respect the opinion of others” (Smoker, 2021).

### **Human Rights Education**

Peace education programs centered on raising awareness of human rights typically focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity (UN, 2013).

Approaches of this type familiarize participants with the international covenants and declarations of the United Nations System: train students to recognize violence of the universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote tolerance, solidarity, autonomy and self-affirmation at the individual and collective levels (Reardon, 2019).

However, human rights education “faces continuous elaboration, a significant theory-practice gap and frequent challenge as to its validity”. Danesh (2021:20) maintained that:

Human rights education does not work in communities fraught with conflict unless it is part of a comprehensive approach... in fact, such education can be counterproductive and lead to greater conflict if the people become aware of rights which are not realized. In this respect, human rights education can increase that potential for conflict.

Therefore, to prevent these outcomes, many such programs are now being combined with aspects of conflict resolution and democracy education schools of thought along with training in non-violence action (Groff, 2022).

### **World Transformation**

New approaches to peace education are starting from insight leaned from psychology which recognizes the developmental nature of human psychosocial disposition. Essentially, while conflict-promoting attitudes and behaviours are characteristics of earlier phase of human development unity-promoting attitudes and behaviours. Danesh (2022) proposed an “integrative theory of peace” in which peace is understood as a psychosocial,

political, moral and spiritual reality. Peace education therefore, must focus on the healthy development and maturation of human consciousness through assisting people to examine and transform their worldviews. Worldviews are defined as the sub conscious lens through which people perceive four key issues:

- a. The nature of reality.
- b. Human nature.
- c. The purpose of existence.
- d. The principles governing appropriate human relationships.

Surveying a mass of material, Danesh (2022) argued that the majority of people and societies in the world hold conflict-based worldviews, which express themselves in conflicted intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and international relationships. The scholar subdivides conflict-based worldviews into two main categories which he correlates to phases of human development, the survival-base worldviews and the identity-based worldview (Danesh, 2021). It is through the acquisition of a more integrative unity-Based worldview that human capacity to mitigate conflict creates unity in the context of diversity and establishes sustainable cultures of peace is increased, be it in the home, at school, at work, or in the international community.

### **Women Engagement in Peace Building Policy**

It is important to note that the UN resolution 1325 recognized the relevance of gender in peace and security matters, and mandated all United Nations member-states to ensure full participation of women at all levels of decision making in conflict resolution and peace processes (UNESCO, 2013). It also called for the protection of women and girls against violence during and after conflict, and for the adoption of a gender perspective to prevent and mitigate impacts of conflict on women. While progress has been made at policy levels, translating the goals of resolution 1325 into reality in conflict affected countries remains a challenge especially in Nigeria.

In the education sector, more efforts must be made by government to identify and strengthen the right methodologies for empowering both male and female teachers to create a safe and secure school environment for girls and boys in atmosphere devoid of insecurity. Therefore, synergies must be created between experience and policies to cement the cause of insecurity in Nigeria.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform of Action recognized education not only as a human right but also as an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality development and peace. "Literacy of human is important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making and society".

According to International Peace Bureau (2019), this issues raised at the UN Beijing Conference remain relevant. The conference identified some critical areas of concern. Each concern revealed that women's human right are very much comprised and at risk in a prevailing culture of violence, and women remain systematically disadvantaged and discriminated against solely on the basis of gender. The conference concluded that equality between men and woman could not be achieved unless the rights of woman are fully respected.

Similarly, the 2011 Education international conference "on the move for Equality" highlighted that women's civil society organization are an important vehicle for the promotion of women's participation and gender-friendly policies, both important for-long-term peace and democracy. Burundi and Nenal are two post-conflict counties that are notable for the large number of women engaged in civil society (2019). In these countries women's organization have been a driving force behind women's engagement in public and political life, and for the adoption of laws protecting women's right. Yet, the impact and sustainability of these organizations are hampered both by a lack of political will, and by insecure and inflexible funding regimes particularly in Nigeria.

*Education International Declaration* "Schools shall be safe sanctuaries"

Schools must be safe and secure to ensure the best possible situation for teaching and learning. It is incumbent upon Government and the international community to take action designed to prevent violence in schools and to facilitate an atmosphere where students can learn and teachers can perform their job in a positive, healthy and safe setting (Smoker, 2020).

Since September 2008, education international has engaged in multiple cohesive initiatives to protect teachers, students and education worldwide in a context of increased targeted attack against education.

In 2008 therefore, EI adopted a declaration "school shall be safe sanctuaries demanding that schools be respected and protected as zones of peace. EI's declaration focuses on violent policies and military attacks against schools and education institutions, students, teachers, academics and all other education personnel, including education aid workers. It is the responsibility of all government to ensure that students, teachers, schools and universities are protected, that the perpetrators of attacks are punished and that education becomes a force for peace (UN, 2013).

In 2011, EI developed an analysis of the Education for All Global monitoring report which focuses on the impact of armed conflict on education. The EI publication is meant to be a reading guide to the Education

For All Report Worldwide which Nigeria is a member country. It however highlighted some major issues and helps teachers' unions use these findings to protect education in Nigeria and the teachers and learners in conflicted-affected countries. The publication also highlighted education international initiatives to keep education going in all corners of the world, and to make schools safe sanctuaries that guarantee the peace and security of learners, girls and boys, teachers and support staff communities (UNESCO, 2013)

### **Current security challenges in Nigerian education**

The situation in Nigeria, specifically in security sector, it is worrisome. Thereupon, between 2014 and 2021 at least 1,119 students were abducted in Northern Nigerian. After the infamous chibok abduction about 110 school girls were kidnapped in February, 2018 by Boko Haram fighters from the Government Girls Science and Technical College (GGSTC) Dapchi, Yobe State (Punch Newspaper 14-15 April, 2014).

Similarly, in March, 7<sup>th</sup> 2024 about 287 school children were abducted in one of the schools in Kuriga town in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The Kidnapping of school children have continue to occur repeatedly in various part, especially in the North East and Northwest of Nigeria respectively (Vanguard; Newspaper 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2024).

The insecurity situation in Nigeria is really on the increase on daily basis. On 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 one Professor and a Deputy Vice Chancellor (Prof. Yusuf Saidu) of Usuman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, Nigeria was abducted and killed by bandits on his Official assignment from Sokoto to Kaduna State (Punch, Newspaper 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2024). All these activities of the bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram fighter have affect peace education in various degrees. For instance, many schools have been closed down, many teachers have resign teaching to save life. In fact the security situation is a threat to Peace Education, considering the magnitude of lives (teachers, students and others) lost to various groups of terrorists in Nigeria.

## **II. Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made on the paper based on the issues discussed.

- (1) The education sector in Nigeria should be properly guided by the government.
- (2) There should be proper teaching and learning on the importance of pace education in Nigeria schools.
- (3) There should be a regular seminar on the host communities of every school to understand the need to protect the teachers in their schools.
- (4) There should be a regular workshop to teach the youth the consequences of terrorism.
- (5) Schools should be guarded by the security personnel to reduce the frequency of kidnapping and abductions of school children.
- (6) There should be a parameter fence in every school in order to reduce the easy access of the hoodlums into the school premises.
- (7) Teachers, students and parents should be security conscious within their environment.

## **III. Conclusion**

Peace education does not teach learners what to think, but rather how to think critically. In the process, its holistic and participatory approach may conflict with more traditional curriculum design or strict standard-based schooling. Peace education aims not to produce but transform. It consists of people consciously striving to educate their successors not for the existing state of affairs but so as to make possible a future better humanity.

Evidently, one way to meet the challenges of peace education is to build bridges of support among key participants. First as learning takes place in a broader social context and not exclusively in schools or classrooms, so peace education relies on families, communities and social networks to affect positive and lasting change in Nigeria. The notion "Think globally, act locally" is central to educating for a culture of peace in that it links theory with practice, international issues to individual efforts. As the international peace education community is active and growing through networks, publications, global campaigns, national initiatives and international programs. Concerned citizens of Nigeria, educators and activists of all ages and around the world at large are promoting and building peace through education.

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