

The Place of Peace Education in Overcoming the Challenges to Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The essence of interaction amongst human beings and their mutual co-existence cannot be overemphasized. It forms the basis for mutual transactions that characterizes human endeavour. Social Studies was introduced into the Nigeria school curriculum to replace History, Civics and Geography at the primary and lower secondary levels. The purpose was to instill desirable attitudes and values in the learners and to produce functional citizens' devoid of negative feeling towards fellow Nigerians. However, the subject has not fared well in accomplishing its set objectives, perhaps as result of incompetency on the part of the teacher's poor teaching strategies and techniques and falling academic standard among others. The paper suggested ways through which Peace Education will be effectively taught such as admitting students on merit institutional-based placement test. Lessons on Peace and conflict concepts should be made practical enough to stimulate the learners.

Keywords: Peace Education, Sustainable development, Social Studies

Human beings and other creatures are naturally inclined towards peaceful co-existence. Sociologists have also identified gregarious nature in lower animals such as ants for establishing dynamism of group behaviour. Even in the plant kingdom, species of different backgrounds and origins with varied characteristics dwell together in peaceful atmosphere of serenity. This instinctive inclination towards peaceful co-existence exhibited by the living creatures further confirms the purpose of creating the universe by the Creator. This is to provide for all creatures to harmoniously co-exist with equal opportunities.

However, the display of this divine gift is under seriously attack in Nigeria and some other parts of the globe. This is manifested in the struggle for survival through

social and economic injustice, abject poverty, corruption, indiscipline and terror related activities. As such, the basis for group interaction and sacredness of human life on planet earth is being threatened. This is further compounded by the aggressive temperament of human beings. Meanwhile, Adesoji (2010) provides achronological data on the various uprisings in Nigeria since the Maitatsine crisis of the 1980s. These include Kano city riot of October 1982, the protest against Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986, Katsina - Kaduna - Zaria -Funtua religious riots of March 1987 and Kaduna Polytechnic riot of 1988. Others are the Kano riot of October 1991, the Zangon-Kataf crisis of May 1992, Kano civil disturbance of December 1991 and the Jos ethno-religious crisis of April 1994 which is recurring from time to time. In addition, there were about twenty-eight other clashes reported between 1999 and 2008, the most outstanding was the Shagamu crisis of July 1999.

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of peace is variously defined by different scholars. For Jacob (2004) peace is a condition of the mind and of society where harmony, security, accord and understanding exist. He further explained that this hinges on equity, social justice, equality and respect for fundamental rights and freedom of all citizens. From Sociological point of view, Ezeuzo (2011) conceptualize peace as a state of harmony in which there is no obstacle between individuals and the attainment of their personal and collective needs and desires. From the above, it can be deduced that peace is a situation in which human interaction and public good are ensured, lives and property secured. Peace is not a mere absence of war and violence but observance of justice, equity and the rule of law.

Peace education on the other hand is defined by Barash and Webel (2002) in Lawler (2013) as a means of developing new ways for cooperation and to minimize to some extent, organized and state –supported violence. Similarly, Jacob (2004) view peace education as a process of supporting learners to acquire skills and capabilities essential for attaining understanding, tolerance and good will among diverse groups in the contemporary world. To Ajala (2003) in Odejebi & Adesina (2009), it is a kind of education that transforms the learner's norms, values and attitudes in order to create conducive atmosphere for harmonious living. Peace education is therefore an attitudinal engineering process that equips the learner to imbibe the culture of peace and peaceful procedures in the achievement of personal and societal goals.

Scope and Purpose of Peace Education

Peace education is an interdisciplinary concept which covers a wide range of fields. Its concern according to Lawler (2013) is traceable to natural sciences and behavioural courses like psychology, Sociology, Social Studies, Religious Studies and History. Others are Political Science, International Relations as well as Security and

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Strategic Studies. There is no doubt that the pedagogical purpose of Peace education is to a large extent in concord with the general goals of education in Nigeria stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014). These are:

The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
The inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individuals and the Nigerian society;
The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;
The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and the development of mental, physical and social skills and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in.

Similarly, Odejebi & Adesina submit that Peace education is intended to promote set of values, attitudes, traditions, mode of behavior and ways of life based on respect for life. They also stress the need to promote non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation as well as fundamental human rights and freedom for all citizens. Thus, the rationale for the inclusion of Peace education in Nigeria's school curriculum are succinctly identified as follows:

- ❖ To develop the awareness of the processes (knowledge of issues) functional skills, attitudes and values necessary for violent-free society;
- ❖ To create indispensable conditions for peaceful co-existence at intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, national and international levels;
- ❖ To resolve conflicts and differences peacefully;
- ❖ To inculcate in the child the development of trust, sincerity, patriotism, social justice, security and self-actualization as essential principle for survival in the society.

The Nexus between Social Studies and Peace Education

Justifying the link between Social Studies and Peace Education, Fagge (2009:6) identify the pedagogical contributions of Social Studies to Nigeria education system to include:

Making individuals become socially functional members of the society and face the challenges of a complex environment;
Instilling desirable attitudes, skills, knowledge and actions the society considers worthwhile;
Equipping learners with skills of social competencies, moral value to effectively live, interact, interrelate and positively contribute to the economic, social, political and cultural development of the Nigeria society;
Providing balanced knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges of complex contemporary issues;
Instilling rational decision making skills and problem-solving techniques for improved social actions.

In a similar vein, Ahmed (2007&2009) submitted that the educational purpose of Social Studies includes:

Promoting responsible, effective and functional citizenship;

Acquisition of knowledge, functional skills and the right attitudes and values for a meaningful life;

Developing the power of evaluating facts and of critical independent thinking and judgment;

Promoting transmission of cultural heritage within and without the immediate community and

Inculcating in the learners the virtuous spirit of altruism, patriotism, honesty, truthfulness, accountability and probity.

These laudable objectives of Social Studies in Nigeria necessitated its inclusion in the school curriculum as a post war measure in the 1970s. Despite this, the country continues to experience one form of violence and crises or the other. These range from ethno-religious upheaval to political or electoral violence as well as environmental and land issues. Ikwumelu (2010:210), in a study, corroborated the above when he submitted that Social Studies have failed to inculcate skills and attitudes needed for non-violence characteristics in the learners. It further revealed that teachers and principals of schools are ignorant of the unique features and qualities of peace education. The inability of Social Studies to effectively deliver its pedagogical mandate is due to the fact that:

- Some Social Studies teachers do not possess the required expertise or competency to effectively handle peace and conflict related topics;
- Thought provoking, pragmatic and problem-solving techniques are not appropriately employed in the teaching and learning of Social Studies;
- Classroom situations in some Social Studies lessons are usually passive with the teacher at the centre instead of the learner being the focus of the process;
- Instructional materials and resources used in the teaching of the subject are inappropriate, inadequate and poorly presented;
- Teacher education is generally heading towards decline and destruction as majority of its clients (student-teachers) are of weak and poor academic background;
- Social Studies evaluation processes and outcomes are cognitive-oriented rather than affective and psychomotor which are essential for character transformation of the learners.

Consequent upon above, the following suggestions are made towards achieving the purpose of Peace Education in Nigeria:

❖ There is urgent need to overhaul the admission requirement for teacher education institutions. Admissions are to be based on reality (aptitude and interest) rather than paper qualification in previous examinations such as WAEC, NECO etc;

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- ❖ In-service training and re-training of teachers with related specialty to Peace Education should be introduced and properly monitored for effectiveness and efficiency. The training programme should also cover all categories of teachers from primary to university levels,(Odejobi& Adesina,2009);
- ❖ Innovative teaching methods and techniques should be employed by teachers to teach peace and conflict related concepts. The use of study technology technique (Ahmed, 2009 & 2010), Socratic (questioning) method of instructional (Cooperativa, 2009) as well as problem-solving, inquiry and simulation techniques and strategies accompanied with appropriate selection and usage of instructional resources will immensely improve the teaching and learning of peace education concepts;
- ❖ Schools should be well equipped with up-to-date equipments and infrastructure as a prerequisite for conducive learning environment;
- ❖ Education should be adequately funded as required by UNESCO to avoid student unrest and incessant strikes by teachers and other stakeholders at various levels;
- ❖ Special recognition should be accorded teachers with practical impact on the attitudinal behaviour of their students;
- ❖ In-house seminars, workshops, peer review round table discussions etc should engage the attention of peace educators in order to keep themselves abreast of the happenings in the field;
- ❖ Family values and morals which form the bedrock of a disciplined society should be inculcated in the younger generation of Nigerians.

Conclusion

The need to educate, enlighten and sensitize Nigerians on the benefits of peaceful co-existence as well as dangers of violent conflict is crucial to the country's sustainable development. No meaningful development and achievement can be recorded in an atmosphere of insecurity, rancor and chaos. It is on this basis that the assertion of Yusuf, Agbonna & Onifade (2010) that effective running of government requires the integration of peace and security concepts and strategies at all levels of basic education. The media and other socializing agents are to complement the effort of the education sector in this regard.

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