

Peace Education and the School Curriculum

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Abstract

This study examined the role of school disciplines in the implantation of peace education. The study looks at the goals of peace education and highlighted the tenets in school subjects such as Social Studies, Government, History and Religious Studies, which go well with the achievement of peace in the society. The study also examined problems militating against the existing school subjects and raised appropriate recommendations towards achieving peace in the Nigerian society. The work concluded by ranging the advantages in the teaching discipline

Introduction

Peace Education is the type of studies that essentially inculcates discipline in people. It is that course that teaches the past and the present conflicts or wars noting the cause(s), the effects and recommendations towards averting such social ills. It also teaches the expectations of citizens in general, and more specifically, the duties, roles, obligations, activities of individual leaders and followers. In Peace Education, essential are the knowledge of fundamental human rights of citizen; the rise and fall of political entities such as the empires in the pre-colonial days; the importance of the rule of law, separation of powers and the menace of bad leadership.

Purpose of the Study

This position paper is specifically meant to extray the problems of peace in Nigeria and makes a case for school disciplines as measures of reducing rifts and rancor in the country. The intention is that school subjects could serve the purpose of 'catch them young' for school children who are expected to be future leaders and live harmoniously with their kinsmen in later life.

Relevant literatures were reviewed and many cases of peace disturbances were identified. The efforts of quenching conflicts and turbulence seem not to have yielded significant results as political crises, economic problems as a result of disturbances and social injustices are still predominant in the country. The involvement of many youths in ethnic militia forces is an indicator that peace problems are increasingly eminent and needed to be curbed

Aspects of peace education, therefore, should be included in the school curriculum in Nigeria. In the secondary school for example, subjects like History, Social Studies, Geography, Government and Religious Studies, to mention a few are studied. More of the aforementioned school subjects instill in one form or another, aspects of peace education. The areas of inter-relationship between school subjects and peace education are explained below.

Peace education in Nigeria

The term "Peace" according to Oyebamiji (2001), is a state of quiet, calm, repose, public tranquility, freedom from war, and concord of ideas among different people. It is a condition in which there is no war between two or more groups or nations. Also, peace according to Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary (1974) is a form of developing a deep sense of concern and solidarity with the less privileged, courage to act in a non-violent way against injustices in one's own community and in the nation, and acceptance of responsibility by each individual for the maintenance of peace. The General Assembly's resolution 23/243 of 1999 Article 1 wrote in line of peace education, which is meant to promote set of values, attitudes, traditions, mode of behaviour and ways of life based on respect for life, promotion of non-violence through education dialogue and cooperation, promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ajala (2003) stated that peace education includes all the values, attitudes and forms of behaviour, way of life, respect for life, reflection of violence, commitment to principle of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance among people and between groups and individual. Hick (1988) explained that the objective of peace education can be grouped into three namely; acquisition of skills, knowledge about issues and development of attitudes. This is in line with Oyebamiji (2001). Ajala (2003) defined peace education as the type of education that impacts in learners all norms, values and attitudes that could bring about a conducive environment for human living.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society. This factor has a lot of implications on the unity of the country. Kadiri (2003) posited that in Nigeria, most of the ethnic crises are caused by no factor other than tribal sentiments, greed, selfishness and chauvinism. In Nigeria, there have been cases of inter-ethnic crises. A good example of this is the crises between Hausas and Yorubas in Lagos with a spill over effect in Kano. Cases of ethno-religious riots are common in the Northern part of Nigeria; Good examples of other crises in Nigeria include the Tivs and Jukuns tribal wars of 1991, 1992 and 1993; the Kataf and Hausa; Fulani in Kanfachan 1988; the Ijaws and Itsekiri clashes of 1991 and 1992. There are many cases of boundary disputes such as the one between Modakeke and Ife, Ipoti and Iloro in Ekiti State just to mention a few.

The crises between school children and school authority is rampant while political crises disrupt progress in all ramifications almost at all times. These are also source of disturbances to the peace of Nigerians, the common occurrences of armed robbery, ritual killings and incessant fuel crises. There is no doubt that there is a problem of peace in Nigeria. The need for solutions to the numerous problems that cause disturbances in Nigeria is, therefore, evident. Peace should be conceived as something common to all, a global state peace must be the goal pursued (Galtung, 1974) by Nigerian government and Peace programmes. Several efforts have been made towards making peace a reality in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (2004) for example, explained the role of education in this regard. The policy stated that all levels of Nigerian educational system must inculcate the values of respect for the worth and dignity of man and liberty, and develop moral and spiritual values of inter-personal and human relations. Along the line, school subjects such as Social Studies, History, Religious Studies Moral Education, and Geography to mention a few were introduced into the school curricula. Also, the use of military forces in turbulent areas such as Modakeke and Ife communities, Ijaw and Itsekiri areas, Kano and Kaduna during religious crises was a common measures to curb such incidences.

To further maintain peace and interpersonal relations the government constituted many Commissions such as Ibidapo Obe and Olabode George panel of enquiry to Modakeke-Ife crises and boundary commission for the settlement of boundary problems. The local, state and national courts have made settlements in cases involving chieftaincy titles such as positions of Olowo in Owo. The Sultan of Sokoto; Deji of Akure and a host of others. In the school system, panels of enquiries have been set up to settle rifts between the university students and the school authority. Also, cases between students and other people living within the school communities have been settled by government agents. Examples include the rifts

between the people of Iree and students of the Polytechnic located in the town. The concern of this study is the role of the curriculum towards peace education.

Relationships between school curriculum and peace education

Peace Education could be inseeded into the students using the exiting subjects in the school curriculum in Nigeria. Subjects, such as History, Social Studies, Geography, Government and Religious Studies are relevant in this case. In History, students are made to understand the past and present happenings in their communities and use the knowledge to better their future. History would make students appreciate the factors that make for national unity and global understanding (WAEC, 1998; NECO, 2002). The contributions made towards lasting solutions to peace problems studied in History cannot be exaggerated. Social studies is meant to transmit a body of knowledge, skill and values that aim at developing effective broad-minded patriotic citizen that will have as objective national integration, promotion of national unity and progress (CESAC, 1993). It is also a very good area of specialization that impacts the values of Peace Education. It is a subject that teaches learners the development of an understanding of their immediate surroundings. It also makes students develop skills which will enable them deal with and manage the forces of the world in which they live.

Social Studies would make learners learn how to live harmoniously in a society where many different groups co-exist. Students learn topics such as socialization, conflicts, co-operation, heroes, heroines, ethnic diversities, human rights and emergent problems in the society. Social studies is supposed to instill in learners the acts of discipline, tolerance and such acts that would encourage peaceful co-existence of people in the society. All the above are included in the objectives which peace education intends to achieve. The objectives of peace education, according to, UNESCO (1981) are summarized as:

Combining learning, training, information and action, international education should further the appropriate intellectual and emotional development of individual. It should develop a sense of social responsibility and of solidarity with less privileged groups and should lead to observance of the principles of quality in everyday conduct. It should also help develop qualities, aptitudes, and abilities which enable the individual to acquire a critical understanding of problems at the national and the international levels, to work in a group; to accept and participate in free discussion; and to base value judgments and decisions on a national analysis of relevant facts and factors (p.132).

Looking at the objectives of peace education above, one can see the inter play with school subjects like Social Studies, Religious Studies and Government. History equally helps to bring information; action and international education. UNESCO (1981) stresses that education should include critical analysis of the historical and contemporary factors of an economic and political nature underlying the contradictions and tensions between countries together with the study of ways of overcoming these contradictions, which are the real impediments to understanding true international co-operation and the development of world peace.

The intention of UNESCO favorably support school disciplines such as History, Religious Studies and Political Science in learning the values. WAEC (1998) pointed out that Government syllabi aim at assessing, accommodates ability to recognize role as an informed citizen and his contribution towards the achievement of national development. NECO (2002) highlights the aims of Government as a school subject by writing that the subject would develop in the minds of the students' positive attitude towards the achievement of national unity and nation building. UME (2002), suggests that Religious Studies would guide candidates in the acquisition of the knowledge and understanding of the tenets in the subject as contained in Quran or the Bible, and the ability to apply these tenets to the context of life in society. The assertion fits in favourably in peace education objectives.

Problems of peace education in Nigeria

The achievement of peace goals has been a difficult thing since the existence of mankind. While it is true that school subjects have been in existence for the past many decades and peace problems have consistently remained in Nigerian societies. It does not mean that the solution to the problems of peace could not be achieved using school subjects as a measure. Oyebamiji (2001) explained why school subjects have probably not achieved the aims of peace education. He explained that the present educational system has failed to serve as a means of transmitting the main ingredients of the Nigerian culture to the younger generations. The contention of Oyebamiji is that the system of education in Nigeria does not prepare the youth towards the real role they ought to play in the society. He therefore, sees education as not fulfilling the ideal objective and so adults become tools of oppression, intimidations and political demagogues. From the analyses above, the ingredients for peace education in the school curriculum have failed to yield peace amongst the people because of the poor teaching methods employed by teachers and the inability of some teachers to drive home their points towards solving the problems or facing the reality of the world.

It is in this regard that the following recommendations are made towards making teachers functional in peace programmes.

- (i) Orientation courses should be mounted for teachers and emphasis should be laid on the teaching of values of peace.
- (ii) The techniques of teaching recommended for Integrated Social Studies should strictly be followed. The teaching of school subjects against the recommendations of the 6-3-3-4 system would not make the Nigerian school curricula achieve the natural goals. Peace is a major objective to be achieved. Most teachers still teach their subjects using the old methods of teaching before the 6-3-3-4 education system.
- (iii) Teachers need to be trained before they are allowed to practice in schools. The training should reach the university teaching staff, as it is the base where reconstruction of ideas along the line is most viable.
- (iv) Curriculum planners should suggest ways and manners, which subject teachers should use to achieve their class goals.
- (v) Teachers should be well recognized. This would allow them the chance of performing their duties diligently and satisfactorily.
- (vi) Schools should be well equipped. It is then that proper teaching could take place.
- (vii) Education should be well funded so that students unrest would be reduced to the barest minimum.
- (viii) Symposia, conferences, debates, seminars, talks and displays of instances of war and outcomes of peace should be encouraged in the field as the existing teachers will be saddled with the role.

Conclusion

It is, hereby, concluded that if peace education were taught via the existing subjects such as Geography, History, Government, Civics and Social Studies it would not only relief curriculum planners of the problem of duplication of school subjects and concepts in the curriculum, it would also bring about an economy of teaching staff. It therefore means that subject associations in these areas should find a way of including peace components in their curricular.

Teaching strategies such as Advance Organizers Learning Strategies, {Adesina & Ogbondah,(2005); Adesina (2003); and Olaosun (1996)}: Inquiry Guided Discovery; Concept Mapping; Games; Role Play; Discussion; Story Telling; Resource Persons; Cooperative Learning and Debate {National Teachers'

Institute, (2007); Kort,(1992); The Universal Basic Education Board, (2007) have been found useful in the teaching of these subject areas. When the methods are appropriately used in the teaching of students at the primary and post-primary school levels, the achievement of purpose would likely be realized. Resource materials such as video play, newspapers, pictures and computer information would also allow students understand deeply the effects of wars and the advantages in peaceful co-existence with others.

Also, by the time Nigerian government see the need to be positive in their decisions towards the yearnings of the electorates as incessant political crises, academic disturbances and social ills in the country increase at a high rate due to poor leadership and negligence on the part of the power that be in most cases, peace would likely reign in Nigeria.

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