The Need to Promote Peace Education in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

It is the desire of every nation and people to be in peace. Unfortunately there are many challenges to peace. Cameroon,, a beacon of peace in Central and West Africa, is plagued with a series of conflicts. Some of these conflicts include; Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North Region of the country, sporadic cross-border attacks perpetrated on the population in the East Region of the country by rebels from the Central Africa Republic (CAR), the post-2018 presidential electoral crisis orchestrated by the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CMR) in several French-speaking regions of the country, inter-ethnic conflict between the Mbessa and the Bawock community, the lingering Anglophone Crisis plaguing the North West and the South West Regions of the country, and the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic that has adversely affected the country's economy and other sectors of national life. All these are clear indications that there is no peace in Cameroon. To teach, nurture, and reduce or eliminate a culture of violence in Cameroon, one possible way is to promote peace education. Peace education can transform people's mindsets, values, attitudes, and behaviors that could lead to peace.

Keywords: Need, peace, peace education

Since independence, the search for unity and peace has been in the Cameroon government's political agenda (Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 1996). For example, the motto of the Republic of Cameroon; "Peace-Work-Fatherland" as well as the first verse of the National Anthem of Cameroon, all contains statements that emphasized the need for peace. To further promote national peace and social cohesion, the government of Cameroon has introduced a lot of programs and projects, including the introduction of human rights and citizenship education in schools.

Other Programmes and Projects to promote peace are the creation of the National Civil Service Agency for Participation in Development (NCSAFPD in 2011), the implementation of the National Good Governance Programme in 2012, the creation of the National Anti-corruption Commission. More recently, the creation of National Commission for the promotion Bilingualism and multiculturalism (NCPBM), and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission abbreviated (DDRC) in 2018. In spite of some of the measures described above, Cameroon's socio-economic and political situation remains precarious. Boko Haram activities in the Far North Region of the country are a menace to the population. The Anglophone crisis is still far from ending, and the Coronavirus pandemic is still a threat to people's health and to peace. The increased growth of violence and conflicts has

severe consequences on the socio-economic and political developments of Cameroon. Human Rights Monitors have documented armed groups killing traditional leaders and targeting civilians who are perceived to support or work with Cameroon's government support or work with Cameroon's government HRW, 2018). Overt marital conflict is linked to children's poor emotional and behavioral adjustment, problematic relationships with parents, and aggressive behavior. Several schools and villages have been burnt; several schools have been closed down due to fear and insecurity. Thousands of children of school-going age have been displaced, many youths, most of whom are secondary schools students, have been killed. Several cases of kidnappings and killings are reported every day. Human Rights Watch (2019) reported that about 5000 persons had been killed due to the armed conflict. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC, 2020) reported that about 6, 80,000 people have been internally displaced due to the armed conflict.

We are considering that the military and other measures adopted by the government to resolve burning issues have seemingly not yielded the desired results. We think that promoting peace education could serve as the alternative. This is because peace education has the potential to proffer lasting solutions to violence and conflicts in a society

The Need for Peace in Cameroon

Cameroon is a pluralistic society, comprising various tribes, languages, cultures, and diversity because it consists of various religions and beliefs. Cameroon's diversity is a potential source of friction, conflict. In varying degrees, there are often tribal, intercultural, and religious conflicts. In the following discussion, we give a detailed analysis of the conditions that justify the need for peace education in Cameroon. They range from environmental, human rights, social justice, and violence-related issues.

Conflict, violence, terrorism, and war have been significant societal problems in Cameroon in recent years. This has been a source of worry to many, including teachers, parents, educators,

and politicians. The need for peaceful education, therefore, stems from the continuing issues concerning violence in schools and society; the realization that students should be educated in the art of peaceful living and, most recently, developing students' emotional, social, moral, and humanistic aspects has been a costly mistake. These mistakes were articulated in the 1998 Education forum, where the Cameroon education system was reformed. Section 5 of Law No 98/004/ of 14th April 1998 states that schools should provide an introduction to democratic culture and practices, respect for human rights and freedom, justice and tolerance, the fight against all forms of discrimination, love, peace, and dialogue, civic responsibility and the promotion of regional and sub-regional integration. The fallout of this forum was the inclusion of human rights education and citizenship education in schools (Cameroon, 1998). However, the Ministry of Secondary education has been unsuccessful in its efforts to eradicate violence in schools. Studies show that violence remains a problem and a threat to the school and public safety.

One of the conditions that have given rise to the urgent need for peace education in Cameroon is the Anglophone crisis. This crisis that erupted some five years ago due to the Anglophone teachers and Lawyers marginalization. This conflict has brought untold suffering to many families. So many lives have been lost, and several thousand have been displaced internally. The lockdown operations in the North West and southwest regions have caused further displacement. On the eve of the lockdown declared by the separatist between the 15th of September and the 2nd of October 2021, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2021) reported that about 700 people fled their villages to the West and Littoral regions and about 1,800 persons moved to urban centers or safer localities within the North West and the South West Region. Another reason why peace education is needed is the continuous violence in schools, and the decline of moral values. For example, Pupils of a government primary school in the Bafut sub-division in the North West Region of Cameroon were reported to have seriously

beaten their head-teacher, accusing him of killing their mate (CRTV National News, 11th, May, 2011). Furthermore, on April 29, 2019, Rochman Bleriot, a form five student of Government Bilingual High School Deido, stabbed his friend after a squabble broke out between them (CRTV, 2019). Also, on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, Njomi Tchakounte Boris Kevin, a Mathematics teacher at Government High School Nkolbisson was stabbed to death by a form three student (CRTV, 2020). In addition, at Government Bilingual High School Obala, a student, Mbappe Arnold's finger was chopped off by his classmate with the aid of a machete (CRTV, 2020). Out of school, there have been sporadic inter-tribal disputes between Bali and Bawock tribes and between the farmers and grazers over land. Again, according to the International Crisis Group (2019) and Human Rights Watch (2020 the a persistent increase in the prices of essential commodities. In 2008, Cameroon was plunged into a nationwide strike and civil disobedience that led to wanton destruction of public and private properties and loss of lives. The February 2008 violence in the larger towns of Cameroon was the worst in recent times, as rioters were ostensibly protesting against increased prices in fuel and basic commodities. After looting and destruction in both public and private institutions, the police and later the army responded in their best-known way, by shooting down demonstrators: twenty were killed during a week protest (Africa Confidential, 2008).

According to the Encyclopedia of Nation (2011)-; "Cameroon has 18 national parks and equivalent protected areas covering about 2 million hectares, about 4.4% of the country. …., poaching is a significant problem. Destruction of the remaining forests is heavy… Fires and commercial exploitation of the forests result in eliminating 200,000 hectares (494,200 acres) per year. Overgrazing is degrading the semi-arid northern rangelands. By the mid-1980s, Cameroon had lost 40% of its mangrove swamps."

Cameroon is beset with two violent conflicts. The first is between government forces and separatist fighters in the country's English-speaking North West and South West Regions. The second is

orchestrated by Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Both conflicts have led to the death of over 3000 people and displaced over 600.000 (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In the Anglophone regions, over 800.000 children are reportedly out of school, and one of the three of the four million people needs aid. This conflict has resulted in the destruction and burning of villages, hospitals, the killing of thousands of persons, kidnappings, displacements of persons, extrajudicial killings, etc. (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The US Department of States' review on the 2019 state of human rights in Cameroon holds that:

> *"-Human rights abuses included security force torture, beatings, and other abuses, particularly of detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. Authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens advocating secession, local human rights monitors and activists, persons not carrying government-issued identity cards, and other citizens……incidents of prolonged and sometimes incommunicado pretrial detention and infringement on privacy rights.*
>
> *…..restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, and harassed journalists……. impeded freedom of movement…..widespread official corruption; societal violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation (FGM); trafficking in persons, primarily children, and discrimination against indigenous people, including pygmies and homosexuals…..restricted worker rights and the activities of independent labor organizations. Child labor, hereditary servitude, and forced labor, were problems".*

The Post 2018-electoral violence orchestrated by the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) opposition political party has instead made matters worse. The human rights situation, as observed by International Human Rights Watch (2019) has deteriorated. On February 27, 2020, HRW reported that at least 21 people were killed in an attack on Ngarbuh village by elements of the Rapid Intervention Battalion, HRW (2020). Again in 2018, some school pupils were killed in a school in Kumba in the South West Region of Cameroon. Again, the

corrosion of values can be closely linked to the kind of education we provide to our children. When one looks at the Cameroon education system, one can see a decline in human values. Values are the essential assurance of human rights and human dignity. All the above conditions nesscititate the promotion of Peace Education in Cameroon.

Why the Search for Peace Requires Education

It is the desire for every person, every nation, to be in peace. But this peace most desired does not come by so quickly. To be in peace means that some peaceful knowledge must be acquired, skills must be learned, and some values, attitudes, and competencies mastered. Unfortunately for us peace has ended in the lips of our politicians. They have forgotten that to have meaningful and durable peace, this peace we so desire must be nurtured, preserved, and maintained. And there is no best way this can happen rather than through education. Peace does draw from the power of education to help students understand, appreciate, and act. Education has the power to contribute to the efforts for advancing peace. Education can enable students to understand the causes of injustice and violence in past history and in present situations through a careful study of history and social sciences. It can assist students through the study of philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences and understand human nature and the human institution that causes violence and injustice. Education can aid in understanding the strategies or remedies that have helped to overcome injustice. Thus all academic disciplines have their contributions to make to peace education.

Pursuing peace has the capacity of going beyond the intellectual understanding to enable us to feel appreciated, sense, perceive, and imagine the evil of justice and violence in society. It can be stressed that understanding needs to be accompanied by a deep sense of anger, outrage, and resentment about justice. Understanding is valuable but in itself may not be sufficient to move people to action. Education can also give students an inner feeling for motivation and the personal power of

the individuals who have struggled to work against injustice and violence in its many forms. It is the wish of everyone to be at peace. This depends on the learner's situation, interest, needs, and experiences. These gabs can only be filled through education.

Through education, the knowledge base for peace education should include an understanding of the following: Conflict, power, gender, war, race, nuclear issues, and ecology injustice. It is through education that important skills like critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, proper assertiveness, and conflict resolution. Attitudes, self-respect, respect for others, ecological concerns, open-mindedness, vision, and commitment to peace can be fostered.

Finally, the search for peace requires education because in our contemporary world is the primary carrier of culture. Only education can enable societies to understand the culture of violence which has blighted our past, debased our present, and threatened our future. Through education, the people of the world will be able to drive and prepare to pursue the vision of a culture of peace. Education is also the primary vehicle for peace because education happens to occur everywhere all the time. Education remains the only way to unmask the insane illusion of martial glory and to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. To emphasize what the secretary General of the United Nations once said. "In order to combat the culture of violence that pervades our society, this generation and those to come deserves a radical type of education, one that does not glorify war but educates for peace, nonviolence, and sustainability.

Peace education and its Relevance

The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations (1945), the Constitution of UNESCO (1945), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) all contain statements that emphasized the significance of peace education. The value of peace education has been affirmed in official documents of UNESCO, the United Nations General Assembly, and the Hague Appeal for Peace. These documents show an international awareness of peace education and an inherent value recognized in the notion. Laing,

(1978), opines that, "Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on a scale ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures". Schmidt and Friedman (1988) maintain that "Peace education is holistic. It embraces children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth within a framework deeply rooted in traditional human values. It is based on the philosophy that teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation, and reverence for our beautiful planet's human family and life. "Peace education is skill-building. Though recognized and recommended by the United Nations, Peace education is not entrenched in the Cameroon Society. First, there is a lack of political will to teach peace education as part of the school curriculum and establish peace infrastructures. Secondly, there is a lack of training in peace-building and expert knowledge on peace-building and peace education. Thirdly, there is little or no collaboration with the local leaders in the course of peace education and non-violence and the low levels of participation of women in the exercise of their political and economic power within national institutions and promoting the involvement marginalization of social actors, civil society, women, and youths.

It is time to create the conditions in which the primary aim of the United Nations, to serve the succeeding generations from the scourge of war, can be realized. Hague Appeal for peace (1999), Peace education is a fundamental requirement to be used if peace is to be attained. Peace education is aimed at introducing new audiences to the concept of peace. Considering that there is a need to end all violence and conflict, peace education becomes an absolute necessity. The United Nations One-time Secretary-General Kofi Annam once observed correctly that 'Peace Education is quite simply, peace-building by another name'. Our society is characterized by a very high rate of vandalism, insecurity, injustice, marginalization, social exclusion, tribalism, poverty, unemployment, corruption, gender inequality, human rights violations, lack of accountability. You will agree with me that the issues I just mention above are obstacles to Cameroon's socioeconomic and political development. To address these issues, this is what Kofi Annam once said *'To combat the culture of violence that pervades our socoeites,the coming generation deserves a radically different type of Education, one that does not glorify war, but educate for peace,non-violence, and International Cooperation.* This is because peace Education teaches compassion, love, respect, deep listening, anger control, responsibility, intercultural solidarity, and other values. Peace Education refers to a system and or process of education that enables participants to empower themselves with knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs, which build a culture of peace on violence and sustainability. It enables learners to critically analyze the root causes of violence, war, conflict, and social injustices. "*In order to combat the culture of violence that pervades our society, the coming generations deserves a radically different education, one that does not glorify war, but educates for peace, non-violence and international cooperation""Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that sound abstract- and turn it into reality for all the worlds' peoples".*

When peace education is promoted in society,it will unmask the insane illusion of marital glory, reveal war horror and abomination, strengthen intellect, and nurture compassion and awareness of the oneness of humanity. Peace education teaches alternative ways and methods of avoiding war and promoting peace. Peace education constructs thinking and emotional readiness for peace. It teaches students, teachers, and others to dismiss the effects of violence on their own personal lives and views it as a neutral, normal, and even healthy course of life. It prepares students psychologically for peace in a variety of ways. Peace education enables one to think critically, make decisions, solve problems, plan with an integrated approach, resolve conflict, communicate effectively, collaborate and cooperate with others, move from awareness to action, have a systemic view of the World, and motivate others to be peaceful. Above all, peace education will enable people to develop skills of dialogue, negotiation,consensus-building, and peaceful resolution of differences. It helps in

advancing understanding, tolerance, and solidarity among all peoples and cultures.

Peace Education enables learners to empower themselves with the knowledge skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs that build peace, nonviolence, and sustainability cultures. Education enables learners to critically analyze the root causes of violence, wars, conflict, and social injustice. Peace Education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on a scale ranging from local to global. Peace education is about exploring ways of creating a more just and sustainable future.

How to Promote Peace Education in Cameroon

Empirical studies reveal that Cameroon needs peaceful education. It is the desire of every Cameroonian that peace should return to Cameroon. Promoting peace education and peace-building appears to be the best alternative. There are several ways in which peace education can be promoted in Cameroon. The most critical place is the school. It can be promoted by integrating peace education content, concepts, and methods in the curriculum. The formation of peace clubs in schools and the celebration of International Day of peace could also promote peace. Also, the teaching of non-violence and compassion could help build a culture of peace in schools. Again, teaching pupils and students about the Golden rule, which says, "Treat others the way you want to be treated as it is a fundamental principle that addresses critical issues such as democracy, human rights, respect for each other, gender equality, social development constructive dialogue among others. Peace education can also be promoted through homegrown approaches. For example, children should be taught the principle of living together. This principle tells us that our lives are connected, and for us to move forward, we need to find a consensus. This principle includes sharing resources, caring, and respect for one another. Peace education can also be promoted through arts and sports. In football programs, for example, children and students develop peacemaking skills with an emphasis on negotiation. It encourages a competitive spirit without harming others. It also promotes teamwork, perseverance, discipline, respect for rules, a sense of responsibility, and compassion. Football also fosters fair and peaceful play among participants. Peace education can also be used in drama and music with themes of reconciliation and peace.

CONCLUSION

This paper tried to explore the need and relevance of peace education in Cameroon. It also tried to argue why peace education should be introduced in Cameroon's formal and informal education sectors. The article also s some perspectives through which peace education can be introduced, given that Cameroon conflicts. Finally, this paper concludes that while military measures have failed to end the ongoing conflict, peace education can serve as the best alternative to bring back peace in Cameroon.

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