



UNESCO and Peace Education: UNESCO's Contributions to the Promotion of Peace Education in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary International Relations is characterized by the quest for peace within and among nations. This drive has set the precedence for the emergence of International Organizations like the United Nations Organization (UNO), with the primary objective of maintaining global peace through its specialized agencies like UNESCO. At a time that Cameroon is undergoing socio-political tension, it is just normal that the youths are educated to be lovers of peace. This study focuses on "UNESCO and Peace Education. UNESCO is active in the promotion of peace through education within its member states, and within this framework, the observation made on the promotion of peace in Cameroon brought to our attention the tremendous contributions of UNESCO. The Functionalist and Constructivism theories were exploited for this study which permitted us to understand that international organizations play a vital role in promoting peace within member states. In terms of methodology, a qualitative method of analysis was used. The data collected and analyzed permitted us to come up with the following results: Firstly, UNESCO is highly involved in promoting peace education in Cameroon, both in the formal and non-formal educational sectors. Secondly, UNESCO peace education efforts remain highly adaptable to the current socio-political and cultural landscape of Cameroon, which is characterized by the persistent rupture of peace. This paper, however, concludes by advocating for the greater implication of UNESCO and the government of Cameroon in peace education in order to guarantee long-lasting peace in the country.

Keywords: Education, Peace, Peace education, UNESCO

The 2018 Global Peace Index (GPI) Report finds out that the Global level of peace had deteriorated by 0.27% compared to the previous year. This report revealed that 92 countries had deteriorated, while 71 countries improved (GPI, 2018). Though the 2019 GPI witnessed a very slight improvement for the first time in five years, it revealed the emergence of new tensions within and between nations (GPI 2019). This reveals that the tensions, conflicts, and crises that have emerged over the past decades remain unresolved. In the same vein, violence, discrimination, and exclusion cause suffering to

millions of people across the world today. This equally reveals that the inability of men to live together in peace is due to the ignorance and neglect in the use of peaceful measures in resolving national and international conflicts (Danesh, 2011).

One of the significant challenges faced by Cameroon in recent years is that of insecurity. This insecurity emanates from the Boko Haram insurgencies in

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the far northern part of the territory, the activities of Anglophone secessionists in the northwest and southwest regions, periodic manifestations by opposition political parties, amongst others (Ekah, 2019). All these activities have negatively affected the peace and stability of Cameroon, thereby contributing to the country's relegation to the 138th (out of 163) position on the 2019 GPI. The involvement of the youths in these waves of Violence in Cameroon cannot be undermined. This justifies the need to intensify measures geared towards the consolidation of peace in the country. One of such measures is through education, and the support of the United Nations System.

Faced with the scourges of wars that have twice brought untold sorrow to humanity, the UNO was formed in 1945 with the primary objective to maintain international peace and security (UNO, 1945). The organization promotes the vision of a more sustainable and more just global community through different forms of education, public awareness, and training activities. It highlights the critical role of education and life skills programs in enabling communities to create sustainable local solutions to poverty, vulnerability, and insecurity (UNESCO, 2012).

The UN Specialized Organ in charge of education is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), established on 16 November 1945. As stipulated in Article 1(1) of its Charter, "The purpose of the organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science, and culture to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations (UNESCO, 1945). UNESCO provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens the educational system worldwide, and responds to contemporary global challenges through education. Since its inception, UNESCO has put in place and implemented several UN programs that promote education in general and peace education in particular. It suffices to

mention some of these peace education programs; During the World Education Forum at Dakar-Senegal, in April 2000, UNESCO launched the "Education For ALL" (EFA) program, from 2000 to 2015. The EFA goals contributed to the global pursuit for the eight "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) (UNESCO, 2014). Within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, the UN General Assembly in 2001 designated the years 2001–2010 as the "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World", UNESCO was in charge of the implementation. UNESCO equally adopted the Mid-Term Education Strategy (2014-2021), which has identified "Building peace by building inclusive, peaceful, and resilient societies" (UNESCO 2014). In December 2002, at the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly, there was the adoption of Resolution 57/254 that declared the period 2005 and 2015 as the "United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development" (DESD), UNESCO was named lead agency. In 2015, the organization launched the Sustainable Development Goal for Education 2030 (SDG), which handles the shortcomings of the previous education programs (UNESCO 2017). The Agenda of the SDG has 17Goals/Targets, out of which Goal-4 focuses on education in general, while Target 4.7 centers on peace education as highlighted; *"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development"* (UNESCO 2019).

Because building "Peace in the Minds of Men" remains the core value of UNESCO, this study addresses one of the channels through which the organization endeavors to achieve this objective, which is, contributing to peace through education. In the quest to promote peace, the UNO, through UNESCO, collaborates with member states. This collaboration via Regional Offices and National Commissions ensures the implementation and

promotion of peace education, among other goals. Cameroon is a member of the UN, with membership approved in 1960. This paper focuses on the role of UNESCO in the promotion of peace education in Cameroon. For better comprehension, understanding the notion of peace education remains pertinent.

Understanding the notion of peace education

Peace education is a global issue (Wahyudin, 2018). Peace education has been defined as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youths, and adults to prevent conflict and Violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, intergroup, national or international level (Fountain, 1999). Peace Educators hope to create in the human consciousness a commitment to the ways of peace. The goal of peace education, therefore, is to inject into the student's alternative measures of conflict resolution without resorting to Violence (Harris, n.d). Betty Reardon (1982) defines peace education as "learning intended to prepare the learners to contribute toward the achievement of peace". In addition, peace education can be defined as the process of providing knowledge about how to achieve peace, a means through which people can develop specific thoughts and dispositions that will lead to peaceful behavior (Harris and Morrison, 2003). According to Paulo Freire, "Peace education is a mechanism for transforming from a culture of violence to a culture of peace through a process of "conscientisation". It is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and Violence ranging from global and national to local and personal (Rajaguru, 2015). Peace education can equally be understood to mean the quest for durable peace. This entails the ongoing formal and informal education aimed at developing all the faculties of a human being to promote the basic principles of good human relations as world citizens (Columbia University, 2008).

UNESCO in 2005 defined Peace education as "a process of developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that enable learners to identify and understand sources of local and global issues and acquire positive and appropriate sensitivities to these problems, resolve conflicts and attain justice in a non-violent way, live by universal standards of human rights and equity by appreciating cultural diversity, respect for the earth and each other". Also, UNESCO in 2007 defined Peace education as "a concept directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations; racial or religious groups and furthers the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace" (Columbia University, 2008). Peace education hopes to create a commitment to the ways of peace in the human consciousness. Peace educators use teaching skills to stop Violence by developing a peace consciousness that can provide the basis for a just and sustainable future. Thus, to achieve a state of 'peace', especially in the present conflict-ridden world, it is being widely recognized that peace education is an essential aspect that would guide humanity to shun violence and live in a harmonious world (Baylis, 1982). Generally, the scope of UNESCO peace education covers the following aspects: The Promotion of Human Rights, Prevention of Armed Conflicts, Disarmament and Violent Extremism, The promotion of Citizenship Education, Peace-making and Sensitization against Violence, The Promotion of Personal Perspective on Peace, Promotion of Peace through Information and Communication Technology (ICT), The promotion of Education for Sustainable Development and Environmental Sustainability, Encouraging the Responsible use of the Internet, Discouraging the use of Science for War-like Purposes, Non-discrimination and Mutual Understanding, Promotion of Gender Equality, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity, The promotion of Humanitarian Education and 'Life-skills'/health Education, Understanding of Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 1991).

In the quest to promote peace, the UNO, through UNESCO collaborates with member states. In Cameroon, just as in other member states, this collaboration is visible via the UNESCO Regional Offices and National Commissions, ensuring the implementation and promotion of peace education, among other goals. UNESCO's peace education efforts in Cameroon are visible both in the formal and non-formal educational sectors.

The Elaboration of UNESCO's Peace Education Programmes in Cameroon

There is no peace without peace education. Hence, the elaboration of peace education projects constitutes part of UNESCO's mission. The organization's peace education mission combines both formal and non-formal education. As a result, the implementation of UNESCO peace education programs engages every citizen in all dimensions of life: in schools, workplaces, at home, at the national and at the community levels, in the public, private and voluntary sectors (UNESCO, n.d.). UNESCO's work in Peace Education is guided by its constitution, Target 4.7 of the 2030 Education Agenda, and the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (UNESCO, (2016). UNESCO's peace education encompasses educational development from pre-school to higher education and beyond (UNESCO, 2019), which includes not only formal education in schools but also non-formal education in the full range of the social institutions, including the family and the media." (UNESCO, 1998). It is essential to examine the organization's involvement in promoting peace education in Cameroon at the different educational levels, as well as in other spheres of national life.

The UNESCO Peace Education Efforts in the Basic and Secondary Educational Sectors in Cameroon

Koïchiro Matsuura noted that children themselves must be empowered to become actors, not mere spectators in shaping their visions and futures. For, by focusing on our children, we implicitly plant in them the universal values and practice of a culture

of peace and non-violence (UNESCO, 2002). Given the above, UNESCO peace education projects in Cameroon cover the primary and secondary educational sectors, among other spheres. As propounded by Paras, the State of disorder and confusion is affecting innocent children; Children naturally absorb evils of Violence; therefore, the need to nurture peace in the heart of children has arisen as an essential issue. Hence, the an urgent need to educate our children about peace from the very beginning so that when they grow up, they work towards peace and harmony (Paras, 2017).

The UNESCO peace education at the level of the Basic education sector is within the framework of Article 29 (1) of the *1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which states that: "the education of the child shall be directed to: The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin" (UNGA, 1989). Similarly, Target 4.7 of the SDG, which centers on peace education as highlighted; "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development. In fulfillment of Target 4 of the SDG therefore, UNESCO in collaboration with the Cameroon's Ministry of Basic education, organized from the 6-8 June 2018 a consultative workshop of stakeholders in basic education to propose measures through which the Target could be integrated into the education policies of the Basic education sector of Cameroon (UNESCO, 2018). As a result, during the Second Preparatory Meeting for the Launching of the 2018/2019 academic year, the Cameroon Minister of Basic Education declared that children at the primary education level in Cameroon would be taught some peace education concepts (Mforndip, 2018). Following this development, presently, in the basic education sector in Cameroon,

the pupils are taught core values that can lead them to peaceful behavior. The key aspects within this disposition include kindness, care, love for one another, and cooperation. As affirmed by Mr. Abunow Theophilus (2019) – the Head Teacher of Champions Nursery and Primary School, “We do everything possible to instill values of peace in the pupils, to create a violence-free, bullying-free, harmonious, and peaceful environment throughout the school community”. Also, within the Basic education sector, UNESCO organizes events that groups pupils from various primary institutions geared towards promoting activities related to peace such as poems, theatre arts, songs, among others. In March 2017, for example, the 3rd edition of the inter-schools theatre arts competition (*Palmes du théâtre scolaire*) was organized in Yaounde, under the theme “peace within school milieus”. The competition provided an avenue for the pupils of the participating schools to present sketches and other activities related to the promotion of peace in Cameroon (UNESCO, 2017).

At the level of secondary schools, the peace programmes of UNESCO are brought closer to the students through UNESCO clubs. At the global level, more than 3,500 clubs, centers and associations exist in over a hundred countries that promote the organization's ideals and efforts at the grassroots level (www.unesco.org/en/clubs). There exist over 764 UNESCO clubs in Cameroon, and about 80% are within the secondary schools. The clubs are found in all the ten regions of Cameroon, distributed as follows: 155 in the Adamawa region, 223 in the Center region, 25 in the Eastern region, 26 in the Far North Region, 15 in the Northern Region, 54 in the North West Region, 73 in the Western Region, 32 in the South, and 77 in the South West Region (*Répertoire National Des Clubs UNESCO*, 2018). UNESCO clubs have as principal objectives; to promote the ideologies of the organization especially in schools, to promote dialogue, instill a sense of civic responsibility among the youths, to ensure youth participation in social development and above all promote peace within the respective communities or establishments of operation (UNESCO, 2009). Each secondary institution with a UNESCO club has

at the head of the club a coordinator (or UNESCO Focal Points). Such coordinators are teachers of the respective institutions who are interested in promoting UNESCO values, youth development, and the promotion of peace. In an interview with Mrs. Ngwayap Jeanne, the coordinator of “Club UNESCO du College Gopal de Yaoundé”, she intimated that her interest in heading the UNESCO club is due to her desire to lead the youths towards peace which is not just a fundamental UNESCO value but also badly needed in Cameroon.¹

Generally, UNESCO peace education as promoted through the UNESCO clubs covers the following domains of activities: - Plastic arts projecting peace, - conferences on diverse topics, sketches/dramas that project the promotion of peace and non-violence, promotion of cultural games, campaigns against HIV and STDs, campaigns on the protection of the environment, commemoration of international days, promotion of responsible citizenship education (UNESCO, 2002). Such activities take place weekly, in the afternoons of Wednesdays, on different college campuses hosting UNESCO clubs.² At Lycée de Ngoa-Ekelle, the UNESCO club has over a hundred registered members (students), and its activities in the promotion of peace within the college campus attracts the attention of a good number of students. As confirmed by the club coordinator/UNESCO focal point, during the commemoration of the 2019 edition of the “International Day of Tolerance” (celebrated annually on November 16), the club carried out (on-campus) sensitization on core values such as intercultural understanding, living together, love for one another, non-violence etc. Placards projecting such values were equally brandished within the college campus, and the level of interest and attention manifested by the entire student body remained an affirmation of the positive impact of the sensitization exercise.³

Through the Cameroon Federation of UNESCO

¹Interview with Mrs. Ngwayap Jeanne, the coordinator of Club UNESCO du College Gopal de Yaounde. Monday, November 18, 2019, 10:15 am, Yaounde.

²Interview with Chimi Julie Edith, Secretary General of FECACLUBS-UNESCO. Tuesday, October 22, 2019 at 12:30 pm, Yaounde.

³Interview with Mrs. Amayana Josianne, Coordinator of Club UNESCO du Lycée de Ngoa-Ekelle. October 18, 2019, 9 am, Yaounde.

Clubs and Associations, UNESCO assembles the members of the different clubs as a way of promoting peaceful interactions and harmonization of their peace education efforts. Such convergence of UNESCO clubs is eminent as part of the organization's activities in commemoration of 'International Days' or events related to peace. To elucidate, as part of activities to mark the 2019 edition of the "International Day for Peace" (which is celebrated annually of September 21), a peace forum was organized at the conference hall of the National Commission for UNESCO, Yaounde (on September 19), which bough together over a hundred and fifty secondary school UNESCO club members, among other groups and personalities. The session witnessed competitions in diverse activities related to peace, including; quizzes, drawings, songs, poems, etc. To encourage the young ambassadors of peace, laureates were identified, with prizes awarded. Following the award of prizes on September 21, 2019, one of the laureates – Ekeme Afana, a student of Lycee du Ngoa-Ekelle was able to catch the attention of the judges with a work of art representing reconciliatory moves among students. In an interview with Afana, she affirmed that she had been greatly inspired by the club and had acquired sufficient knowledge on the need for peace and reconciliation. In explaining her drawing, she indicated her desire to promote peace among her peer; "les amis doivent réconcilier après un malentendu" (friends need to reconcile after a misunderstanding), she intimated.⁴ Such activities align with the UNESCO's Non-Violence Education program and the promotion of the Culture of Peace in Educational Institutions (UNESCO, 2002). In Cameroon as in other parts of the world, education continues from the secondary to university level. Hence, UNESCO equally extends its peace education activities to higher educational learning institutions.

UNESCO Peace Education Activities in Cameroon's Universities and Higher Institutions of Learning

Considering the fact that university campuses serve as hives for youths, engaging them in peace-

⁴Interview with Ekeme Afana. Laureate of UNESCO Peace Competition. Saturday, September 21, 2019, 2:40 pm, Yaounde.

related activities and empowering them to become ambassadors of peace remains a matter of necessity and urgency. According to Article 6(1) of the Law Guiding Higher Education in Cameroon (2001), "the basic mission of the higher education realm shall have among goals; Participate in the elimination of all forms of discrimination and shall encourage the promotion of peace and dialogue; Contribute to the emergence of a democratic culture, as well as a culture of peace, development, and tolerance. Coincidentally, this mission falls in line with UNESCO peace education objectives. Even though UNESCO supports higher education in Cameroon through research, granting of scholarships, infrastructural developments, amongst others, the organization's peace education activities are very evident in Cameroonian universities and other higher institutions of learning. In this light, UNESCO encourages the creation of UNESCO Peace Clubs at the different state universities and higher institutions. At the level of the state universities, there is the presence of the following UNESCO clubs; Club UNESCO de l'Université de Yaoundé I, Club UNESCO de l'Université de Yaoundé II-SOA, Club UNESCO de l'Université de Buea, just to mention these. Meanwhile, the following exists at the level of higher institutes; Club UNESCO de L'institut Polyvalant les Pintades (in the Adamawa), Club UNESCO de l'Institut NDJILO de Mbalmayo, Club UNESCO de l'Institut de formation artistique de Mbalmayo, Club UNESCO de l'Institut des Technologies, Sciences et Enseignements de Yaoundé, Club UNESCO de l'Institut MBE de Yaoundé, amongst others (Répertoire National Des Clubs UNESCO, 2018).

Unlike the UNESCO clubs in secondary schools, which are coordinated by teachers, at the level of higher institutions, UNESCO peace clubs are vested in the hands of the students who constitute an executive bureau and manage their activities under the tutelage of the FECACLUBS-UNESCO. According to Chimi Julie Edith – the Secretary-General of FECACLUBS-UNESCO, "The reason for entrusting UNESCO peace clubs in the hands of university students is because "UNESCO encourages the youths to be at the center of peace endeavors

since they can easily convince their peers on the need to shun violence”⁵ FECACLUBS-UNESCO has a special mission to link the youth, especially those in higher institutions of learning to events that are related to the promotion of peace.⁶ Thanks to the coordination of the Federation, Yaounde based UNESCO clubs in higher institutions of learning attended a conference on “The role of Cameroon in maintaining International Peace and Security”, which was held at the campus of the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), on October 21, 2019, in commemoration of the 2019 edition of the “United Nations Day”. The panel of experts on peace and security issues encouraged participants and the youths, in particular, to work for peace, because “to have peace, we must seek it”, as echoed by Minister Jacques Roger Booh Booh; former UN Special Representative to Rwanda (UN Information Center Yaounde, 2019). The enriching conference was attended by members of the UNESCO clubs of the University of Yaounde I and II, including the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Travaux Publics, amongst other higher institutions.

In a similar dimension, UNESCO clubs extend the activities of the organization to the different university campuses. This is done via on-campus sensitization on the need for peace as upheld by UNESCO. Such sensitization is done at different occasions such as; during sporting competitions, in commemoration of ‘International Days’ related to peace, or during cultural activities/events. Other initiatives are put in place by some club executive members as intimated by the president of the UNESCO club of Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Travaux Publics, “sometimes we move from one class to another and sensitize fellow students on the need to live in peace and harmony both on the school campus and wherever they find themselves; we equally use such sessions to encourage other students to get enrolled as members of the UNESCO club.”⁷

⁵Interview with Chimi Julie Edith, *Op. cit.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Interview with Ombede Ombede Guillaume Roland, the president of the UNESCO club of ‘Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Travaux Publics’, on Thursday, September 19, 2019 at 3:55 pm in Yaounde.

Still, in its peace education efforts, UNESCO organizes seminars, conferences and workshops on peace-related topics on university campuses in Cameroon. Such events serve as a melting point for university students and faculty to debate and exchange knowledge on the promotion of national and global peace. On May 19th, 2017, UNESCO organized a conference/debate at the University of Yaounde II (Soa), which was massively attended by both staff and students and in the presence of the interim director of the Regional Office of UNESCO in Yaounde (Madam Ana Elisa de Santana Afonso). The theme of the event centered on the problem of promoting the culture of peace among youths, with the main focus on “the role of youths in the promotion of the culture of peace” (UNESCO, 2017). The event aimed to instill a sense of consciousness on the need for peace among students of higher institutions of learning. Besides the above efforts, there are three UNESCO chairs in Cameroon: the UNESCO Chair in Education at the University of Buea (installed in 2008); the UNESCO Chair in Intellectual Property in Legal Studies at the University of Yaounde II (2004); and the UNESCO-NATUA Chair in Agronomy and Public Policy at the University of Dschang (1992) all of which monitors and promotes the elaboration of UNESCO peace efforts (UNESCO 2014) UNESCO’s commitment to promoting peace remains dynamic and flexible. The organization looks into the future by empowering and reinforcing the capacities of young Cameroonians, especially secondary and university students, to become agents of social change.

UNESCO Efforts in Reinforcing the Capacities of Cameroonian Youths as Ambassadors of Peace

Considering that inspiring young people help in the building of stronger communities and a brighter future, UNESCO supports the building of human and institutional capacities in all its fields of competence. This is achieved through the development of training programs. Such initiatives are undertaken at the global, regional, and national levels to promote the participation and empowerment of young women and men as

agents of positive change within their communities. The National Commission for UNESCO in Yaounde has not been indifferent in this perspective. The Commission organizes periodic seminars and training sessions bringing together Cameroonian youths, with the objective of injecting in them skills relevant to becoming agents of peace. This disposition was further confirmed by the Head of the Education Unit at the National Commission for UNESCO in Yaounde in the following words "...as part of peace education activities, UNESCO provides expertise knowledge through workshops and seminars that bring together youths, in order to reinforce their capacities in the promotion of peace"⁸

As part of the activities to commemorate the 2019 edition of the International for Peace (celebrated worldwide on September 21st), the Commission, in collaboration with the Federation of UNESCO clubs, brought together over 150 youths in a capacity-building seminar/workshop. On the 18th and 19th of September 2019, was reserved for a capacity building workshop which was captioned; "Workshop for the Training of Peace Ambassadors". The two days' workshop, which took place in the Conference Room at the premises of the National Commission, was greased by the presence of education authorities, UNESCO personnel, and other invited experts on peace education. The youths in attendance were schooled on the negative effects of violence, the importance of peace, and ways through which they could contribute to the fostering of peace in Cameroon. Generally, the main motive of the workshop was to reinforce the capacities of the young Cameroonians to serve as Peace Ambassadors in their respective schools, work milieus, and communities. Still in the domain of youth empowerment, from May 29 to 30 2019, upon the solicitation of the Social Youth Corner, through the Dschang Municipal Council, UNESCO trained thirty (30) youth as "UNESCO Ambassadors of Peace". During the capacity-building training, they were groomed on how to become actors of peaceful electoral processes and promoters of social cohesion in Cameroon. The youths were equally educated on

the notions of peace, conflict, war, gender, conflict resolution, reconciliation etc. (Sinotables, 2019). This UNESCO capacity-building workshop falls in line with the views of Monisha Bajaj, who in her *'Introduction to the Encyclopedia of Peace Education'*, posits that: "One of the founding principles of peace education initiatives is that learners can develop a sense of possibility that enables them to become agents of social change" (Bajaj, 2008). The peace education endeavors of UNESCO are not limited to the formal educational sector. The organization carries out a wide range of activities geared towards sensitizing the general public on peace values.

UNESCO's Peace Education Efforts in the Non-Formal Sector

Considering the fact that not all citizens are enrolled in school, and not all Cameroonian youths are opportune to attend training and empowerment seminars, UNESCO peace education efforts are given a broader spectrum in order to reach out to a cross-section of the population by integrating into a flexible and dynamic partnership with NGOs, civil society organizations, cultural groupings (UNESCO, 2019). Thus, in Cameroon, UNESCO partners with NGOs and civil society groups in the promotion of peace education. Meanwhile, to further reach out to the Cameroonian population, UNESCO embarks on public sensitization on peace.

UNESCO's Peace Efforts through NGOs and Civil Society Organizations/Associations in Cameroon

The growing influence of civil society groups, NGOs, and Associations in activities affecting public life cannot be overemphasized. These national groups play a vital role in educating citizens and in contributing to development. As stipulated in Article 3 of the UNO Declaration on the Right to Peace, it is the responsibility of UNESCO to ensure that national and local organizations, as well as the civil society, are fully engaged in the promotion of peace (UNO, 2016). Generally, UNESCO engages partnerships with NGOs, civil society organizations, and associations that are

⁸ Interview with Lisette J. Nkodo, Head of the Education Unit at the National Commission for UNESCO, Yaounde. October 21, 2019, 11 am, Yaounde.

active in its fields of competence at whatever level. Such national organizations are used in promoting UNESCO peace education efforts at the national level (UNESCO, 2019).

In Cameroon, UNESCO has built a formidable partnership with NGOs and civil society organizations. This partnership is evident through the formation of UNESCO clubs within national groups, such as; Club Civil UNESCO- Fondation MEKOUYOU ONDOA Joseph; Club Civil UNESCO- Wangari Muta Maathai (Amis de la paix); Club UNESCO de Référence Chantal BIYA; Les filles-Anges de la paix; Association des Jeunes Amis de L'UNESCO de Yaoundé; Association des Amis de l'UNESCO de Yaoundé; Association UNESCO Ladies First (A.U.LA.FI); Dynamique Unescosienne du Cameroun; Association Accord Parfait; (Répertoire National Des Clubs UNESCO, 2018) amongst other civil society organizations and NGOs. UNESCO always involves such groups in their peace education activities as veritable partners that could assist the organization in promoting peace at the national level and within local communities. UNESCO provides these groups with intellectual, financial, and/or material support for specific activities that are considered relevant to the constitutional objectives of UNESCO (National Commission for UNESCO Cameroon, 2019).

The involvement of national groups in UNESCO peace efforts in Cameroon was visible during the "National Campaign for the promotion of the culture of peace among youth in Cameroon" organized in May 2017. Through the event, UNESCO brought together over 1000 Cameroonian youths and a number of organizations like; The Pan-African Network of Youths for the Culture of Peace (PAYNCOP), Children's Right Cameroon (CRC), the Network of African Youth Organization of the Leaders of the United Nations (ROJALNU-Cameroon), and the National Council of the Cameroon Youth (NCJC). Activities included a sportive march and a debate on the culture of peace at the University of Yaounde II. The topic of the debate was "de-radicalization and the culture of peace in the face of threats of instability in Cameroon," which was well articulated. Generally,

the event centered on empowering national organizations interested in promoting peace and the sensitization of youths and the entire public on peaceful ideas and intercultural coexistence (UNESCO, 2017).

The "Association Accord Parfait" is one of such groups whose activities have continuously received support from UNESCO. This is an association that promotes peace among the youths through Slam music [music through spoken words of poetry]. Thanks to the financial and material support of UNESCO and other partners, in September 2019, the Association Accord Parfait organized a Slam Festival (also referred to as Slam Youth for Peace), in Yaounde. The theme of the festival was, "Paix et vivre-ensemble pour un monde prospère et l'atteinte de ODD" (Peace and living together for a prosperous world and for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals). The event, which brought together a handful of youth, promoted values of peace, living together, and inter-cultural dialogue in Cameroon (Kulture, 2019).

Also, the FECACLUBS-UNESCO works in close collaboration with youth movements towards preventing Violence. In this direction, FECACLUBS-UNESCO adheres its activities to youth groups with specific *modus operandi* through which the promotion of peace could be easily inserted. For example, the "UNESCO Civil Club of Friends of Peace" based in Yaounde is specialized in the domain of Drama. The FECACLUBS-UNESCO, therefore, ensures that in events involving their participation, the dramas should have specific messages related to peace. Also on the list of FECACLUBS-UNESCO's partners in the "Club UNESCO Nzotelle" music club. In collaboration with UNESCO, the club produces songs linked to International Days, especially songs that promote peace. UNESCO ensures that the activities of such clubs are tailored towards the promotion of peace, providing solutions to societal problems, and improving youth morality.⁹ In the same light, UNESCO equally promotes peace education in Cameroon via culture and music.

⁹Interview with Chimi Judith, *Op. cit.*

UNESCO Peace Education Efforts in Cameroon through Culture and Music

UNESCO peace education efforts in Cameroon are equally visible through culture and music, which are the organization's critical domains of operation. One of the principal missions of UNESCO in Cameroon is to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (UNESCO, 2016). The organization has made some strides in the domain of promoting peace through the support of cultural events. This was visible in the North West and Western Regions in 2017. The cultural unit of the UNESCO Regional Office in Yaounde supported in the "Nyang-Nyang Festival" in Bafoussam in the West Region (23 – 23 of February 2017). The organization equally supported the "Nikai Festival" in the North West Region (6 – 12 of March 2017). Such festivals greatly valorized by the population provided an opportunity for the organization to promote the cultural diversity of Cameroon, the use of culture as a uniting factor among communities, and as an element of peace (UNESCO, 2017). To add, UNESCO supported the "Ngoun Festival" in Foumban (5 – 11 December 2017), which brought together the Bamum people in the West region and nearby communities, as well as the Bamendjou cultural festival in the West region in January 2017 (UNESCO, 2017). The UNESCO endeavor in promoting the cultural festival in Cameroon conforms with the preamble of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which states; "cultural diversity is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels" (UNESCO, 2005).

UNESCO Equally promotes peace in Cameroon through the domain of music. In this light, UNESCO encourages young and talented Cameroonian musicians interested in peace activism through music. This is done by organizing music competitions on relics and wordings that transmit messages of peace; after all, music has the power to connect millions of people. Such competitions lure young Cameroonian musicians and peace activists to produce songs that can touch the hearts of fellow Cameroonians to embrace peace. The 2018 edition

of the "UNESCO music for peace competition" was won by Accord Parfait, who is known in the world of music as "My Name", also known as "the Slam Master". The Cameroonian uprising musician won the competition with his music titled "Mon cri de paix" (My cry for peace) (video clip available via <https://youtube.be/ujRivoWRxHE>). The particularity of the music centers on the artist's call for peace and national unity in Cameroon. In an interview with the Slam Master, he expressed the steadfast support he receives from UNESCO in recognition of his desire to promote peace in Cameroon through music.¹⁰ Besides promoting peace through music, UNESCO equally contributes to this drive-in Cameroon via the exploitation of public spaces (both physical and virtual).

The UNESCO Peace Education Efforts through the Celebration of International Peace-related Days

There are several internationally celebrated days. Many of such days are ascribed to the promotion of peace and under the auspices of UNESCO. Some of the international peace-related days celebrated by UNESCO are the following:

- ⊙ International Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, celebrated annually on May 21st.
- ⊙ International Democracy Day, celebrated annually on September 15th.
- ⊙ International Day of Peace, celebrated annually on September 21.
- ⊙ International Day of Non-violence, celebrated annually on October 2nd.
- ⊙ World Science Day for Peace and Development, celebrated annually on November 10th.
- ⊙ International Day of Tolerance, celebrated annually on November 16.
- ⊙ International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, celebrated annually on November 25th.

¹⁰Interview with Accord Parfait, Winner of UNESCO music for peace 2018. Saturday, September 21, 2019, 12 pm, Yaounde.

- ⊙ Human Right Day, celebrated annually on December 10th, amongst other internationally celebrated days (UNESCO 2019).

To promote peace and provide an opportunity for individuals, organizations, and nations to create practical acts of peace on a shared date, the United Nations established the 'International Day of Peace' or the 'Peace Day' in 1981 by regarding September 21 of every year as the International Day of Peace (UNESCO 2019). Celebrating the International Day for Peace always provides a unique avenue for UNESCO to sensitize and promote activities related to peace in Cameroon. Just like in the past years, the 2019 celebration in Cameroon was characterized by the mobilization of UNESCO Clubs and Associations under the patronage of the Regional office in Yaounde, coordinated by the National Commission for UNESCO in Yaounde and FECACLUBS-UNESCO. As part of activities to mark the celebration, UNESCO organized a peace walk across major streets in Yaounde, with banners carrying messages of peace. The peace

walk provided a unique opportunity for UNESCO to sensitize the general public on the necessity for peace in Cameroon. Banners were brandished by participants (UNESCO clubs and Associations) carrying messages of peace. Messages on banners included, "stop les guerre - stop les violences" (stop wars - stop violence), "Oui a l'éducation ou Nord-Ouest et au Sud-Ouest" (Yes to education in the North West and South West), "Oui au Dialogue Nationale" (Yes to National Dialogue). Other slogans on the banners included; "Solidarity", "Disarmament", "the Right to Peace".

In a related development, UNESCO sponsored (financially and materially) the celebration of the 'World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development' by the students of ISESCO/FUWI of the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC). The commemoration, which took place on May 21st, 2019, was equally marked by a peace walk across the main streets of Yaounde. With the use of a mobile van, the students of the Department of "Cultural Diversity, Peace and



Source: Ekah Robert (Researcher). Mobile phone photo Gallery, Yaounde, 2019.

Fig. 1: UNESCO-organized Peace Walk during the 2019 celebration of the International Day for Peace (Saturday, September 21, 2019)



Source: Ekah Robert (Researcher). Mobile phone photo Gallery, Yaounde, 2019

Fig. 2: UNESCO-organized Peace Walk during the 2019 celebration of the International Day for Peace (Saturday, September 21, 2019)



Source: Chimy Julie (S.G, FECACLUB-UNESCO). Mobile Phone Photo Gallery 2017

Fig. 3: UNESCO-organized Peace Walk during the 2017 celebration of the International Day for Peace (Saturday, September 21, 2017)

International Cooperation” under the auspices of UNESCO, circulated messages of peace, the need for Cameroonians to use the diverse cultures as an element for development, the need to consider the culturally diverse nature of Cameroon as a useful resource for development, the need for Cameroonians to live together peacefully. Similarly, in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (celebrated annually on November 25th), the Regional Office of UNESCO organizes sensitization campaigns on the elimination of violence against women. The organization sensitizes youths on the need to promote and live in a world free from gender violence (UNESCO 2017).

The UNESCO Peace Education Efforts in Cameroon through the Media

In order to mobilize the potential of communication and information to facilitate mutual understanding, respect for cultural diversity, and peace, UNESCO has continued to advocate for media and information and communications technologies as instruments for peace and dialogue within its member states (UNESCO 2013). Thus, as a peace effort, UNESCO encourages within its member state the free flow of information and freedom of the press, pluralism, and media independence without any obstacle to freedom of expression (Symonides, 2001). Considering that community radio plays a key role in many aspects of daily life in local communities, UNESCO has continued to help communities develop their own programs and organize debates on matters relevant to them in their own language. In Cameroon, UNESCO has over the years sponsored the opening of community radios as part of its commitment to sensitize peace. These UNESCO community radios have been established in all the ten regions of Cameroon. The organization equally supports the training of young Cameroonians to use the community radios to promote social inclusion, create platforms for dialogue and build societies where peace is given precedence over violence, the promotion of peace via social media and mobile phone networks (Symonides, 2001).

As a matter of illustration, the peaceful voice of UNESCO local radio is reaching the heart of troubled communities in the North and East regions of Cameroon. Terrorist attacks have led to deteriorating humanitarian and security conditions in these regions of the country, with thousands of Cameroonians fleeing their homes. The radio project strives at improving conflict prevention and inter-community dialogue between refugees and host communities and sensitizes young girls and boys who are vulnerable to recruitment for terrorist attacks. According to Cletus Tabe Ojong, Communication and Information Programme Officer in UNESCO's Regional Office in Yaoundé, “A UNESCO study of the situation in these heavily-populated regions reveals that one of the major problems faced is misunderstandings among and between different communities”. As a result, UNESCO and partners have mobilized the community and four local radios stations in the process of peacebuilding and education, chosen because of their power to reach the remotest area with information and education in local languages. Some of these local radio stations include the following; “Echos des Montagnes” (Echoes of the Mountains) in Mokolo, Radio Sava in Mora, Radio Kousseri and the regional station based in Maroua (UNESCO, 2019). The radio personnel has been trained in locally adapted programs in peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, education for non-violence, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and reconciliation. The four stations produce more than 60 programs on core peace-related programs, with the aim of linking different communities. On air, members from rural communities discuss issues related to community inclusiveness and non-violent conflict resolution. Some programs are presented by young ambassadors for peace, identified and trained by UNESCO, in order to educate their peers during school and post-school activities (*Ibid*).

Another example of UNESCO peace and non-violence education efforts in Cameroon was through the installation of community radio at the Bakassi peninsular. The project was implemented as part of

the culture of peace program by the Yaounde Office of UNESCO. The UNESCO community radio, which is active in the Bakassi Peninsula, is known as the 'Bakassi FM Community Radio', and broadcasting on frequency FM 90.0. The Bakassi FM Community Radio, which went operational in Isangele in February 2012 is received in all the Subdivisions of the Bakassi Peninsular, the Ndian Divisional Headquarters, and Mundemba (UNESCO, 2019). Still, in line with the media, UNESCO uses the mainstream media in Cameroon, especially the national radio and television, to promote peace education. As part of campaigns to mark the 2017 edition of the International Day for Peace, UNESCO used the national radio to sensitize the Cameroon population, most especially the youths, on the need to shun violence and to nurture the rich cultural diversity of Cameroon as a veritable instrument for peace (UNESCO, 2017). Similar sensitization exercises have been carried out by the organization as part of activities to immortalize important celebrations in Cameroon.

The Adaptability of UNESCO Peace Education in Cameroon

International norms are drafted at the international level, yet implemented locally. It is tempting and likely to uphold that some of such internationally drafted norms do not conform to local realities of some member states. However, judging from the scope of UNESCO peace education, the implementation in Cameroon, and the level of impact, it can be ascertained that to a greater extent, the UNESCO peace education programs and activities are adaptable to the Cameroonian context. This could be justified in the following ways;

Firstly, the necessity for peace among the Cameroonian youths prompted the Head of State to create a ministry for the youths. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education (known in its French acronym as MINJEC) was born following the government reshuffle on the 9th December 2011, with the elaboration and implementation of government policies in the domain of youth affairs, civic education, and the promotion of national

integration, being its main missions. This decision was justified by the fact that civic education and national integration are the bedrock of sustainable development. In the implementation of the "Great Achievement" policy, the Head of State, H.E. Paul BIYA, talked of an exemplary Republic, striving towards emergence. This exemplary Republic can be achieved through the assimilation of principles and values (love of fatherland, peace, solidarity, hard work, honesty, respect, tolerance, integrity et cetera) by every Cameroonian (MINJEC-Cameroon, 2015). Meanwhile, this vision clearly falls within the scope of UNESCO peace education as UNESCO encourages within its member states the active and responsible participation of youths in civic/political life, democracy, gender equality, tolerance, among others responsible civic behaviors (UNESCO, 1991). This therefore goes a long way to justify the adaptability of UNESCO peace education in Cameroon.

UNESCO peace education in Cameroon falls within the scope of the Head of States' "Vision 2035 Agenda". As part of this vision, it is believed that Cameroon's emergence by the year 2035 can only be achieved through its tolerant, united, vibrant, and harmonious youths, values that could be best attained through the spirit of work and in a climate of peace. The vision is equally aimed at "strengthening national unity and consolidating democracy by promoting the ideals of peace, freedom, justice, social improvement and national solidarity» (MINJEC-Cameroon, 2015). This vision is also ideally in line with the political scope of UNESCO peace education.

The UNESCO peace education programs suit Cameroon long quest for 'National Integration. As clearly stipulated in the "Cameroon's National Integration Strategy", in Cameroon, promoting national integration is to train citizens that are embedded within their culture, respectful of public interest, the common good, ethics, and the democratic values, essential for a harmonious living together and open to the world. National integration should help every citizen to fulfill him/herself as a citizen and to promote national unity

and the 'living together. Thus, the manifestation of a strong desire to live a community life in conformity with duties and the moral conscience, which is manifested in inter-individual relations and the activities performed by people (*Ibid*). In the same light, UNESCCO promotes education for mutual understanding. Social cohesion, respect for diversity, inclusive national identity (*Ibid*).

Today, the youths are confronted with various difficulties that are getting more and more complex by the day. In this perspective, the government of Cameroon accords great interest in building the capacities of youths by considering them in future development projects. As a result, The National Youth Policy, thus, appears as an efficient instrument in the global dynamics of the fight against poverty to which Cameroon is resolutely committed. The government takes into account such key concerns as the fight against STDs/AIDS, the consumption of drugs, gender mainstreaming, environmental protection, greater involvement of youths in the management of public affairs (MINJEC-Cameroon, 2015). UNESCO peace education is to sensitize the youths on the need to live healthy lives, primarily through the fight against the HIV-AIDS, prevention of substance abuse, respect for the health rights of others, gender equality, respectful relationships, environmental Sustainability, which covers the need to reconcile the human race with its planetary environment (UNESCO 1991).

UNESCO peace education programs are adaptable to the socio-cultural context of Cameroon. This is in the sense that the Cameroonian society is a replica of 'Unity in Diversity'; Diversity expressed by the presence of over 250 ethnic groups, diverse religious groups (Christians, Muslims, animists, and others), two grand linguistic groups (Anglophones and Francophones), (Lavngwa, 2016) all residing on the same territorial space. Since independence till the contemporary time, it has been the government's priority policy to ensuring that diversity remains an element of complementarity, solidarity, and faith in a shared destiny, and above all, to build a Cameroon where unity in diversity transcends geographical, historical, linguistic, tribal, religious or political bounds. Ensuring such a formidable

blend cannot be possible without reinforcing peace education. UNESCO peace education efforts in Cameroon, therefore, complement government's efforts in promoting the peaceful coexistence of Cameroonians despite their socio-cultural diversity, since the organization has a peace mission to promote dependence and interdependence among cultures and peoples, both at the national and global levels (UNESCO 1991).

In another dimension, despite the diverse nature of Cameroon, the country also accommodates foreign nationals, with a large number of Nigerians, Chadians, Refugees from the Central African Republic, just to mention these. Thus, promoting peace equally depends on the capacity of the State or the society to consider all citizens and foreigners on equal terms, to respect the differences. It is the government's policy to ensure that all non-Cameroonians are fully integrated into Cameroonian society. As a correlation to this drive, UNESCO Supports the development and implementation of policies that recognize and promote linkages between cultures, respect for diversity and sustainable social and economic development, as well as the elimination of all forms of Stereotypes and prejudices in the presentation of other cultures (*Ibid*).

UNESCO peace education is in line with Cameroon's quest for socio-cultural integration. It has been the long-time public policy of the government of Cameroon to unite the over 250 ethnic groups under a one and united Cameroon. Promoting socio-cultural integration remains the bedrock of living together, respecting the uniqueness and indivisibility of the country. UNESCO promotes the understanding of similarities and differences among people (UNESCO, 2017). In the same light, UNESCO promotes education for mutual understanding. That is social cohesion, respect for diversity, inclusive national identity. It also promotes multicultural/intercultural education, which covers aspects such as tolerance, respect for diversity, anti-racism, nondiscrimination, as well as the development and implementation of policies that recognize and promote linkages between culture and sustainable social and economic development (*Ibid*). Therefore,

UNESCO peace education activities fit like a jigsaw puzzle within the Cameroonian society.

The government of Cameroon considers the media as a critical channel through which peace and national integration could be promoted. For the government, the role of the media is to inform, educate, and convince the audience. The Head of State foresaw this role when he declared that *"the media must have as mission to galvanize the emergence of a national culture, proud of its diversity"*. The media could also play a negative role in national integration as has been observed in some countries by instigating tribal hatred and conflicts of identity (MINJEC-Cameroon, 2015). UNESCO peace education extends to the strengthening the role of communication and information, including the use of ICTs, in fostering mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation, and sustainable development, particularly in post-conflict areas, through promoting the development of free, independent, pluralistic, and community media (UNESCO 2014).

UNESCO peace education programs cover the government's policy of promoting gender equality in Cameroon. In a bid to promote gender, the government and the National Community are striving to ensure equitable representation of girls/women in all sectors, particularly in vocational training, higher education, and access to employment.¹¹ In the same light, UNESCO recognizes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as global priorities towards the maintenance of peace. The organization is mainstreaming the Promotion of gender equality in all of its programs. This includes promoting girls' and women's education; promoting women in science, women in decision-making, both in professional and public life, promoting women as agents of social transformations; promoting the full participation of women in cultural life, and promoting women in the media and the empowerment of women through ICTs. UNESCO is also combating violence against women in all its

forms and also provides guidance on advancing gender equality and empowerment of women in all of UNESCO's fields of competence (UNESCO, 2017)

CONCLUSION

UNESCO's area of operation in the promotion of peace is more encompassing and holistic, as it covers political aspects socio-cultural and scientific domains. The main objective of UNESCO is to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture, and communication in order to foster universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights and fundamental freedoms that are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion. As part of its educational vision, UNESCO is therefore active in the promotion of peace education within its member states, and Cameroon being an active member of the organization, is not left out in this endeavor. The elaboration of UNESCO peace education programs is visible in Cameroon in both the formal educational sector and in the non-formal sectors. Within the formal educational sector, the organization has implanted focal points whose primordial function is to implement UNESCO's programs within their educational institutions. Regarding the non-formal sectors, the organization promotes peace through the promotion of socio-cultural activities, sponsorship to NGO's and civil society groups that promotes peace education within Cameroon, and through the organization of public sensitization campaigns for the promotion of peace. The UNESCO peace education programs tie perfectly well with the peace visions of the State of Cameroon since, in recent times, the country is in great need of long-lasting peace. Considering the current socio-political situation of Cameroon, characterized by waves of violence, the intensification of peace education efforts remains an important gateway. Thus, to a greater extent, UNESCO peace education efforts are highly adaptable to Cameroon's realities even though there is a need for greater implications for long-lasting peace to be achieved in the country.

¹¹Government of Cameroon. (2013). 53rd Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of the African Union: 3rd Periodic Report of Cameroon within the Framework of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Banjul, 09 to 24 April, 2013, P. 8.

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