Peace Education as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades of Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule, the country has experienced series of conflicts, crises and crashes. The repeated inadequacies of the government to tackle this menace has disillusioned many Nigerian citizens. It appears the efforts made by the government are not good enough. The thrust of this paper is to look at peace education as a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper looks at the concepts of peace and peace education, strategies for peace education, sustainable development as well as peace education and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that Nigerians must embrace peace education in all facets of our daily life until lasting peace is attained in the country.

Keywords*:* Peace, Education, Catalyst, Sustainable, Development

Peace education is no doubt, a catalyst for sustainable national development in Nigeria. It is generally asserted that education is a major catalyst for individual and national development because it is the process of transmitting knowledge, skills and attitude of value that engender positive transformation. Education is also regarded as the most important instrument for preparing individuals for life as well as reforming the society for relevance, adequacy and competition in the world. This is why the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) states that education is the prerequisite for a successfully engineered national system and is the answer to ignorance and servitude; the gateway to the future and the key national development. In view of the above, the broad national objectives of the country are aimed at achieving the following national goals: A free and democratic society; A just and egalitarian society; A united, strong and self-reliant nation; A great and dynamic economy; A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. The Nigeria education system has undergone many changes in the last few years and no doubt there will be many more changes by the end of the century. Since a national policy on education is the government way of achieving that part of its national objectives that can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the nation. In order to enhance the realization of the above goals the national education aims and objectives are identified as follows:

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;

2. The inculcation of right type of values and attitude for the survival of individual and the Nigerian society;

3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and

4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, competences both mental and physical and equipment for individual to live in and contribute positively to the development of his society and nation building (FRN, 2013).

Peace education, according to Ikechukwu (2014) is a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that would enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural to resolve conflict peacefully and to create the conditions conducive for peace. Asamonye, Osuagwu and Kalu (2014), regards peace education as a deliberate attempt to educate chidlren and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace making skills in homes, school and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instrument of socialization. She further opined that peace education is about the creation, sustenance and management of positive attitudes to peace among and between different levels and segments of the society. Peace is the expression of love, cooperation, unity and harmonious co-existence. It is the absence of war, injustice, violence, greed and bad governance. Peace education will enable students to adopt a positive attitude regarding the different issues they face in life and help develop skills necessary for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Peace education is important for cultivating the culture of peace. Peace education can be taught formally or informally through media, workshops, conference, adult literacy programmes and family education.

Sustainable development has been defined as the management of the natural resources in a manner that meets the needs of the present generation while protecting and restoring the natural environment for future generations. Vinceta Singh (2014) avers that sustainable development means attaining a standard between the present and future needs. According to the author, it means equity in development and sectoral actions across space and time. It requires the integration of economic, social and environmental approaches towards development.

Sustainable development is the process of judicious use and conservation of natural resources for the overall improvement in the quality of life for the present and future generations in long term basis. The concept of sustainable development was formulated as a holding tool as well as framework for the realization of economic growth in an environmentally viable world. Three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development are recognized world-wide in the transition towards a sustainable society. There is economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability, within this concept, the environment dimension lays a significant role being the natural system which serves as the surrounding medium in which the social and economic systems are embedded. The environment is a condition for sustainable development. Society is the end for which development is undertaken and economy is the means to achieving that end. The maintenance of environmental structure is therefore crucial for long term economic development. Because life on earth is conditioned upon a healthy environment, the environmental pillar, must of necessity, be viewed as of utmost importance to the economic and social pillars of sustainability (Ogunjemilua, 2021).

Concept of Peace and Peace Education

The concept of peace lends itself to several meanings and definitions, which cannot be exhaustively discussed. Ordinarily, peace means the absence of conflict or violence at a particular time and place. It evokes the climate of freedom from fear, intimidation and harassment, oppression and brutalisation by external forces or agents. Ibeanu (2006), notes that philosophers are not in agreement as to a universally acceptable view of peace. Rousseau's position that peace implies the original state of existence in which man was born as "a free gentle savage" – "a state of nature", is synonymous

with a state of ignorance. For Thomas Hobbes, this "state of nature" was marred by frequent conflict and violence, which rendered life "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". In order to avoid this ugly situation, men decided to surrender their rights to an over-riding force, and thereby created a "social contract" for a more peaceful and orderly life. Plato, from the social context perspective, argues that justice is the fulcrum of ordered social life (Ibeanu, 2006). It is in this regard that Iwe in Nwafor (2012) states that "justice stands erect like a tree planted on the fertile ground of truth and liberty with all other virtues as its branches, rights and duties its fruits; and order and peace its harvest". In other words, where justice reigns, social order and harmony will prevail, while conflict and violence will be minimal, thereby giving room for both human and material resources development through formal educational activities. Hence, the presence of conflict and violence in any society necessitates peace education.

Peace education, in essence, implies efforts to promote peace, especially in conflict or violence – ridden areas through educational activities. There is no consensus among scholars as to what peace education means. As a result, the lack of conceptual clarity impedes educational attempts to promote peace (Porath, 2003). It is in the light of this that Dupuy (2011) states that: "There is no uniform concept of peace education and the international discourse on this topic is still in its infancy." He further posits that for a shared and clearer understanding to be achieved, the various socio-economic and political, historical and cultural contexts must be taken into account. This is because since after World War II, many educators have made spirited efforts to establish a humanistic theory and practice of peace education, but without success (Porath, 2003). This stems from the fact that different regions of the world place different emphasis on peace education programme. According to Salomon (2002), regions of relative tranquility stress education for cooperation and harmony, thereby promoting the idea of a general "culture of peace", whereas regions of conflict emphasise "education for violence prevention". Violence here implies the direct and the structural aspects.

For example, direct violence includes personal assault, rape, brutality, terrorism, murder, ethnic cleansing, institutional war, state sponsored terror, institutional war, industrial destruction of plants and animals (Dupuy, 2011). Indirect violence, on the other hand, is characterized by sexism, racism, discrimination, poverty, lack of education and health services (Ibeanu, 2006, Dupuy, 2011).

Concept of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development was first used in a publication titled "Our Common Future" a report from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. This report was also known as the Brundtland Report in recognition of former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland's role as Chair of the Commission that produced it. Brundtland Commission Report defined sustainable development as the development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. Another useful definition of sustainable development was given by Helen Bergsten.'Sustainable development is a perspective or a vision which provides room for many starting points'. The most interesting aspect of sustainable development is the fact that it puts in to consideration the present conditions of people as well as not compromising those that come later. Therefore, the concept of sustainable national Development remains the modern parameter of measuring development (Boyi, 2013).

Munasinghe in Boyi (2013) pointed out that sustainable national Development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems. Boyi (2013) identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize: increase capital income and employment, promoting human welfare satisfying basic needs; protecting the environment, considering the path of future generation, achieving equity between

rich and poor and participation on a broad basis in which development and decision making is important.

Sustainable development, according to Adedeji (2014) seems to be hinged on human solidarity, environmental sustainability, democratic governance, supporting technologies and secular and religious non-violence while violence is the main obstacle to development. Accordingly, Su (2002) explained that sustainable development involves materials, aesthetics, ecological systems, agriculture and forests and human health. Moreover, sustainable development appears to be all-encompassing as it covers diverse areas such as population and human development, cultural, social and security, financial, political, economic, ecological resources, ecosystem services and non-renewable energy, pollution, climate change and global environmental management. It equally covers food security, water, deforestation, gas flaring and desertification.

Moreover, Briggs (2008) noted that sustainable development is a socio-ecological process characterized by the fulfillment of human needs while maintaining the quality of life and the natural environment indefinitely. It takes into consideration human welfare and the long-term effects of today's activities including global cooperation to reach viable and long lasting solutions. Sustainable development also entails that resources need be explored and exploited with regard to the future such that they would not be totally depleted hence sustainable development is the development that is not truncated, aborted or short termed but is long lasting and affects the present and the future.

Sustainable development in Nigeria appears challenged because there is uncoordinated use of education and training capacities between industry and students which has led to massive graduate unemployment, insecurity and crime. Furthermore, it could create gaps and mismatch in manpower and students training bearing little or no relevance to the needs of the society and country. Thus societal expectation of graduates in terms of technological advancement and good reputation appears low

whereas the university is expected to jump-start development and eradicate poverty. Countries such as Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore have used university education in general and research in particular to achieve sustainable development. Research had been utilized as an engine of progress much that they have crossed the technology hurdle within one generation, crashed the poverty barriers and are joining the developed nations of the world (Adedeji, 2014). According to Nwokolo in Adedeji (2014), a country is said to be technically advanced when it has acquired the scientific, technological, and industrial infrastructure to manufacture and sell enough goods and expertise to sustain economic growth and is able to feed her people. Such countries have promoted university from skill and knowledge acquisition to empowerment as in the United States of America, France, Canada, the United Kingdom and South Africa. Their universities have consistently been listed among the world best 200 in all areas of human endeavour (Okebukola & Ibidapo- Obe, 2009). On the other hand, Nigerian economy is import-driven and relies on foreigners to drive almost all developmental projects even in sensitive areas such as exploration.

Peace Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The general saying that there can be no development where there is no peace is a truism. For any meaningful development of any nation to thrive, there must be peace. The volatile situation in Nigeria, orchestrated by political tensions, ethnic militias, religious and tribal violent conflicts, underscores the importance of peace education as a catalyst for development. It is often said that no meaningful development can thrive in an atmosphere of acrimony and rancour. To state the obvious, there is a correlation between peace and development. According to Obisike and Nwauzi (2019), peace education is now the subject of UN policy, research and training by UNESCO, the Council of Europe and ministries of education; various universities throughout the world…" because conflicts have crippled global economy.

The introduction of peace education into the curriculum of our educational system at all levels at this critical period of our nationhood is quite imperative. It should not be just a one-semester course tagged "Peace and Conflict Resolution", as it is presently offered in our universities. If properly designed and developed, it will meet the near-explosive situations which have been compounded by the challenging security problems and armed conflicts in some parts of Nigeria. First, peace education will, to a reasonable extent, address the problems of structural and cultural violence. Structural violence consists of deliberate policies and structures put in place by government that cause human suffering, death and harm, while cultural violence includes cultural norms and practices that create discrimination, injustice, etc. (Ibeanu, 2006). Peace education, if introduced, will create an awareness that could minimize the degree of poverty and social inequalities – the bases of social restiveness in many parts of the country.

Peace education, in the words of Nwafor (2012), would have far-reaching effects on the national economy. This is so because the curriculum contents, which should include among others; rights, civics and citizenship education, would frontally confront corruption – the endemic disease in our national fabric. Igwe (2010) observes that although corruption is viewed as illegal everywhere, but everywhere it is woven deep into the fabric of everyday life. According to Achebe in Nwafor (2012), corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage; Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is slightly indisposed. The war against corruption and other social vices will not end until it is fought in the sub-conscious minds of the individual citizens through peace education. Furthermore, peace education, when introduced and properly adopted, could minimize, if not eradicate, the incidents of school violence resulting from cult-related activities, and the attitudes or behaviours of some over-bearing teachers and unruly students. The result of these anti-social behaviours have in many cases.

Moreover, according to Olusegun (2014), peace education would assuage the spate of youth restiveness, ethnic and religious conflicts, communal and political violence in different parts of Nigeria, since appropriate informal means of inculcating moral values has failed. Kidnapping cases recorded in South-South Nigeria has made the region unsafe for investors. This explains why oil companies have refused to relocate their headquarters to the region despite government's pronouncements in that direction. As a result, the rate of unemployment has continued rise in the region.

In the political arena, politicians in this country have thrown morality, decorum, decency and probity to the winds, hence a needed panacea could be found in peace education so that future generations could save Nigeria from disintegration and economic collapse. The political leadership have encouraged many social vices such as tribalism (i.e., discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth), corruption, nepotism, assassination of political opponents, among others. These can be checked or drastically reduced through a comprehensive peace education programme, designed for our leaders, who should be given periodic orientation courses while in office to ensure that those in the echelon of power can speak and flow in the stream of peace education (Nwafor, 2012).

Additionally, over militarization of the Nigerian State has misled people to think that ethnic agitations can only be addressed through violent means, blood shedding, terrorism, kidnapping, vandalism, etc. The concept of peace education is aimed at reversing this ugly trend. Therefore, it is crucial to positively engage the youths at every stage of their development. Starting from their childhood, the concept of peace should be explained to them, accompanied by presentation of ways to amicably resolve conflicts, and how such positive behaviour can benefit them for sustainable development. To state the obvious, this variation of peace education underscores practical entrenchment of dialogue in the life of the child. This can be achieved by encouraging and orientating teachers and students to engage themselves in the process of dialogue in decision-making and by so doing the society will be transformed, which is the purpose of education.

This form of transformation makes the society less volatile, less unjust; its cognitive impact on the child will change his world view towards rights and agitations (Obisike & Nwauzi, 2019).

The following are the implications of peace education for national development in Nigeria as enumerated by Sulyman, Olaniyi & Eliasu (2020);

Stable educational system: With the culture of peace and other peace-promoting factors, educational system would be stable, safe, orderly and productive. There have been many situations where cultist battles or other violent activities led to the shutdown of the school programmes.

Citizen-friendly government: Many criminal activities are the products of non-challant government. For example, many youths become armed robbers because government fails to provide them job after graduation. But with good governance (that provides employment to the jobless) as a peace-promoting factor, the government becomes friendly to the citizens and peace reigns.

Uninterrupted economic activities: Trade, employment and other economic transactions become stable, progressive and productive where there is a peaceful atmosphere in the society, and this can be attained through peace education.

Beneficial international relationship: Peaceful life is the mother of fruitful relationship including international relationships on the social, educational, economic and political grounds.

Sound health: Peace is instrumental to physical, emotional and mental health. Peace itself is spiritual health.

Therefore, peace education should be in full operation at all levels.

Security: The absence of wars, conflicts and violence and the presence of peace makes lives and properties secure. This is part of national development. In fact, people prefer to migrate to and live where peace exists.

Peaceful coexistence: According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), the unity, harmony and world peace through understanding are among the values in the Nigeria's national philosophy which Nigerian education should actualize. Thus, peace education can promote unity, harmony and peaceful interactions and relationships among different individuals and societies for the prosperity of Nigeria.

Environmental peace: With adequate peace education, harmony and stability can be maintained and sustained in the interactions of physical and social components of the environment in Nigeria (pp. 143-144).

Strategies for Promoting Peace Education in Nigeria

The following can help to promote peace education in Nigeria, according to Asamonye, Osuagwu and Kalu, (2014):

Education strategy: The educational curriculum of all categories of education should be revised to include peace ethics-from nursery to primary to secondary to tertiary education. The revised curriculum must include qualitative values, attitudes, and behaviour of cultures. All these should be included in the curriculum, things like respect for elders, loving and caring for one another, greeting of elders, peaceful slogans must be taught and included in the curriculum. Teachers at all levels must teach and emphasize these values. The educational approach should also be geared towards promoting sustainable, economic and social development. Peace clubs, peace, societies must be encouraged and developed in schools.

Political/social integration strategy: There should be strategy interaction between the school and the community. There should be support for participatory communication and free information among students themselves, between students and management and between school and community. Peace education should be centred on democratic and conflict resolution principles. The society must be taught not to resolve conflict through violence and war but rather through dialogue. A democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflicts as well as necessary for tolerance. This kind of peace education should attempt to foster a positive conflict

orientation in the community by training students and community members to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth. Peace education programme of this kind should include training the participants in skills of critical thinking, debate, coalition building, promoting the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objective. The aim is to produce responsible citizens that could hold government accountable to the standard of peace. Activities should be structured to have students assume the citizens that should make decisions and respect the opinion of others. Freedom of interaction and sharing of information, democratic principles decrease likelihood of violence and wars and are indispensable for couture of peace.

Legislature strategy: the legal/judicial system should be made more responsive to issues of violence and disruption of peace in the country. New laws should be enacted and existing laws reviewed to ensure that justice is quick and punishment meted out to the culprits is commensurate with severity of the offense.

Government policy strategy: Government should make more responsible policies to the issue of peace disruption. They should be firm and fearless when handling the culprits. Favoritism or issues of political party alliance must be deemphasized.

Security strategy: Campus security/policy and protection services vary widely around the world. Nigerian schools must establish security policy services. Then aim should include the following:

- Provision of security in the school
- Assure safety of students, employees and guests
- Interact with local and external security agencies
- Provide education programmes on safety for students
- Patrol the school regularly
- Investigate any crisis trying to erupt in the school
- Provide safety programmes to students and teachers.

Other new strategies suggested to strengthen the existing strategies to address the issue of peace education in Nigeria, according to Ofoego and Ugwuegbulam (2020) include the following:

(i) In promoting peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance, the education planners should include peace education to the school curriculum. This should start from the primary school age so as to get the young minds while they are still innocent. The earlier the Nigerian child imbibes peace culture the better for this nation. To this end, supplementary readers and reading comprehension passages in basic education should be in such a way that peace culture would be emphasized.

(ii) While students are in schools, every effort should be made by the teachers and school administrators to make them love and cherish each other. This brings about unity and love amongst them even when they leave school and join the larger society such unity and love is important for national development. In essence, in Nigeria we need education that can psychologize individuals to respect the life of other people they live with. Such education should develop critical thinking in our youths. Osaat, Orlukwu, and lyleka-Jaja, (2018) has noted that most of the conflicts witnessed in the country stem from ignorance and illiteracy. When the masses are educated, it inculcates in them the spirit of sharing ideas, listening to one another, and respecting other people's views and opinions.

(iii) There is an urgent need to conduct experiments and researches from which instructive solutions could be found in these conflicts and crises. The government should adequately fund such researches. For instance, the usual militarization of crises where the use of police and military peacekeeping is the vogue, could manifest some level of calmness in our environment, the populace may not completely live in peace. The use of brutal force to remedy such conflicts should be cautiously done to avoid provoking greater political, religious, ethnic or tribal backlash. Reform is also needed in military strategy to deal with civil domestic

security situations especially when current rotational system often puts military officers from different parts of the country into local situations that they may not have the cultural sensitivity to manage.

(iv) Policy attention should also be directed to teacher training programmes with conflict resolution techniques as part of their programme and curriculum in all higher institutions especially military and police training institutions. This is because one cannot give what he himself does not know or have. It is when the teachers are knowledgeable in peace education that those under them would benefit. In a school situation for instance, whereby students are flogged or given one punishment or the other as a result of conflicts should be discourage by peace education. This is because punishment brings negative results to the course of peace education. It sends negative signals, like hatred, dislike, malice, repulsion in the minds of students. Instead, dialogue, should be used.

(v) The government should through the ministry of education and NGOs organize seminars, workshops, discussion forums with more focus on non-violence, conflict resolutions, tolerance, coexistence, and peace culture among others. In addition, the culture of get rich quick in Nigeria society should be seriously redirected towards human value where humans would empathize with their fellow humans and tolerate each person's dissimilarities. All forms of malice, hurts, offences and pains in the past should remain in the past.

(vi) Government policies and programmes should be based on the principles of justice and fair play. Similarly, human rights should be implemented in Nigeria for the enthronement of peace and unity in the society. The various issue of marginalization across the country should be seriously looked into and redressed. Among them is the issue of unemployment among the youths. These idle youths readily fall prey to politicians who use them to ferment troubles and violence in the society (Ofoego & Ugwuegbulam, 2020, p.176).

CONCLUSION

All over the world, peace is an inestimable value of each human society. It is a global significance that is highly valued, as no nation can hardly develop without peace. This is why efforts are locally and transnationally made to ensure that an environment bereft of violence, crises and war is assured. The development and achievement of peace and harmony create for us a win-win situation. This implies that everyone is a winner and no one is a loser. No country can achieve greatness unless peace education is provided to its citizens. The school therefore, should be seen as a place where students learn how to communicate freely without inhibitions and prejudices against people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Indeed, if peace education is incorporated in our curriculum, "schools would be able to play the critical role of teaching students how to manage and resolve conflict; how to manage and form interpersonal relationships; and how to enforce authority; as well as for communicating the value and the skill of peace building" (Dupuy, 2011). The need for peace education can therefore not be overstressed. There is therefore the need for Nigerians to continue to plan, strategize and incorporate peace education in all facets of our national life until lasting peace is attained in the country. Peace education is a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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