

PEACE EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

Dasuma Matthew Arida*

Dr. Cletus Usman Idoko*

Abstract

Over the years, there have been cases of heinous crimes, wars, terrorism, kidnappings, riots and deadly cultist activities in Delta state, Adamawa state, Yobe state, Plateau state amongst others in Nigeria. The consequences of all these have eroded efforts to create long term stability, peace and transformation in all the socio-economic and political structures of the nation. This paper therefore, examines the concept of peace, peace education, peace studies and national transformation. It further highlights on the relevance of peace education to national transformation, obstacles to national transformation amongst others. The paper recommends that tackling the security problem in the education sector and Nigeria society at large is a joint responsibility of everyone, at family, school, church/mosque, and non- governmental organizations. In addition, the problem of corruption should be ameliorated through leadership by example, probity, accountability and transparency, amongst others. The paper finally advocates that Nigeria should work hand in hand with her neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad Republic, and Cameroon amongst others, to restore peace in the country which will consequently pave way for transformation of the political, socio-economic and educational life of the nation.

Keywords: Peace, peace education, peace studies and national transformation

* Department of Political Science & Economics, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa

Introduction

The challenges to establish and maintain peace, security, law and order have been the concern of humanity since political communities emerged on the face of the earth. This has been occasioned by manifestations of conflict as part of human relations in the society and Nigeria in particular (Zabadi, 2009). In Nigeria, civil society suffers, because of such situations of violent conflicts and wars. This violence is experienced by individuals, groups, communities, countries and perhaps globally. The negative consequences of these come in the form of: lootings, killings, assaults on women and children amongst others.

According to Ason, (2002) buildings, roads, medical facilities, markets, educational institutions and public places are destroyed. Equally, social and economic activities are disrupted and the whole social system in a particular area pulled down. Marriages are sometimes broken down and fears and suspicion are on the increase. In fact, violence is on the increase and the intensity increases from low to very high level with deep pains. There is the prevalence of violence almost everywhere, threatening peaceful and harmonious co-existence at family, societal to global level. Under this situation, peaceful co-existence and cooperation that are necessary conditions for development and consequent transformation becomes difficult. In most of this violence taking place in the country; kidnappings, wars, bombings in Bornu, Adamawa, Yobe and other parts of the country, sophisticated weapons are used. Hence, the environment is degraded; social relations are spoiled by rumours and allegations. The worst of all is that, government may not use appropriate measure in handling the situation of violence, consequently leading to attacks and counter attacks in the country. That is why George-Genyi (2014) notes that one of the most significant challenges facing citizens of the world today and Nigeria in particular is how to live and work peacefully with others in all spheres of personal and public life.

According to George-Genyi, the tension arising from these challenges as a result of the fact that individuals, groups, communities or countries are pursuing the same goals and resources that others are looking for. This has often resulted into conflicts and violence. This situation cannot produce a conducive environment for national development and transformation in the country. Transformation can only take place when peaceful co-existence is maintained in a country. This has necessitated the need to promote peace culture through education in the world especially in Nigeria. This paper therefore, examines the concept of peace, peace education, peace studies, national transformation and the extent to which peace education can be a solution to the challenges facing transformation of the socio-economic and political life of Nigeria.

Conceptual clarification

Peace: According to Terkula (2014), peace is an occurrence of harmony characterized by the lack of violence, conflict behaviours and the freedom of fear of violence. In other words, it is seen as the absence of hostility and retribution. Peace suggests sincere attempts at reconciliation, the existence of healthy or nearly healed interpersonal or international relationships, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality, and a working political order that serves the true interests of all. According to Wortley (1967) it is that order that provides for the welfare of all men; it is that order which provides what is needed to sustain life and self respect; it is that order that produces a society that is free, harmonious, honoured by all, cultured and religious. According to him, peace cannot be kept by the use of force. It can only be achieved by understanding. There is peace in a society when each man gives to his neighbour that which he is due, when government gives to its citizens that which they are due and all are made to enjoy it and be happy. Peace in this context means justice in action.

Equally, peace can be seen to be concerned with harmony and tranquility. It is a state of law or civil government, a state of justice or goodness, a balance or equilibrium of powers. It is a state that is opposed to violence in all areas of human endeavour.

According to Oputa (2004), peace does not come of its own and does not stay of its own. Peace is always the result of great efforts and great sacrifice. Therefore, everybody must collaborate to win and preserve it and then make it advance and grow. This can be done through conscious learning.

Peace Education: This is simply the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviour to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the natural environment. In other words, peace education implies an active concept of peace through values, life skills, and knowledge in the spirit of equality, respect, empathy, understanding and mutual appreciation among individuals, groups and nations.

The philosophy of peace education according to Kukah (2006) is:

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which has brought untold sorrow to mankind.
- to re-affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person in the equal rights of men and women and of all nations both large and small.
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of national and international law are to be maintained
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as neighbours.
- to unite strength and maintain stability and security of the nation.

- to teach nonviolence, love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation and reverence for the human family and all life on our planet.
- to employ the machinery for the promotion of economic and social transformation of a nation and to build, maintain and restore relationship at all levels of human interaction.

If individuals, groups and the nation at large should gear their effort towards the fulfillment of these objectives, transformation of the socio- economic and political life of Nigeria would be a reality. Inculcation of peace in the minds of the people would lead to patriotism, loyalty, sacrifice, love, dedication to duty, free atmosphere for skill acquisition, amongst others. All these are ingredients which make the environment conducive for national transformation of the country.

Peace Studies: Peace studies, is simply an interdisciplinary and systematic study of the cause of war, conflict, violence and the conditions of peace. It is an interdisciplinary field that draws on political science, sociology, anthropology and psychology. According to Webel and Galtung (2001) theology or religion, philosophy, history and literature have offered the ground for a rich blend of education, action and the teaching of peace studies. Peace studies gear efforts towards addressing the critical issues of the sources of war, violence, social oppression and the challenges of promoting peace and justice internationally, domestically and personally. It focuses analysis on the individual, social groups and nations. All these groups play critical roles in events that when not properly managed may escalate into violence and conflicts, thereby truncating efforts towards national development. Peace studies, therefore, explores more equitable cooperative and peaceful methods that are capable of transforming unjust, violent or oppressive situations into a better one.

National Transformation: This implies fundamental change in the building block of a nation; change in the social, economic, infrastructural, political and educational landscape of a nation (Akunyili, 2012). In other words, transformation means a complete change from one situation to another, a total departure from the old order to a new one. Transformation does not come accidentally like manna from heaven, but require deliberate effort to change from a failure to a successful stage. It calls for performance of some activities that will facilitate the actualization of some dreams. It calls for practical action and it goes beyond mere expression or verbal pronouncement to a pragmatic and realistic one.

For Nigerians to change their behavior and begin to work together towards the development of a nation where justice, honesty and peace reigns, the role of peace education cannot be overlooked. Peace education is meant to reform the reformer who brings transformation to bear in his country. If the transformer is not first transformed, all policies initiated to transform Nigeria were mere nightmares and could not lead to achievement of the desired goals.

The Relevance of Peace Education to National Transformation

Education cannot take place in an environment that is chaotic, full of crisis, instability and war. Due to much violence in Nigeria (terrorism, Kidnappings, cultism, killing, maiming and bombings of innocent civilians) peaceful conflict resolution has become important and a prerequisite for national transformation. The importance of peace education is unequivocal for the cultivation of a safe and prospering future for Nigeria and the world at large.

According to Gaya (2004), peace education, equip students with necessary knowledge and attitudes to be respectful, tolerant, participatory and cooperative in their techniques and methods of doing things in life. The period when students fear and respect their teachers and ready to be disciplined in any form is gone. In this present globalised world, child rights are

emphasized, some of the children are no longer tolerant and respectful to their parents and even the teachers inclusive. Through peace education, the necessary tolerance and respect expected of the child will be inculcated, so that they can willingly surrender themselves to discipline and to be transformed for a better tomorrow.

Students are encouraged to shoulder their responsibility through peace education. Therefore, peace education is regarded as an opportunity to improve the social well-being and responsibilities of both the teachers and the students who are the reformers. This starts with an honest willingness to engage teachers and educators in the learning process, which is an essential and powerful way to transform them individually and collectively. According to Wright, (1990), peace education, foster real self learning and breaks up cultural generalizations held among members of the society that have prevented change for better.

In addition, peace education, foster human relations in the family, school, work place, within countries and across borders. We are living in a very complex and troubled world. The type of world we create in the future will depend on our ability to reject violent approach in solving problems. Peace education is therefore a central pillar in improving human relations at all levels for humans to achieve national transformation. This is because man is the transformer and at the centre of national transformation. If man is personally transformed then national transformation will become a reality. If man has not changed for better, whatever policy that is introduced to change the socio-economic and political life of the nation is illusive.

Consequently, to improve future human relations in all walks of life, the young generation has to play a pivotal role. The kind of knowledge and experience received by the young generation at their school age today will exert a huge influence on the actualization of a peaceful world society in the future (Atser,2012).

Arguably, when the school introduces and trains each child of society, into membership within such a little community, with understanding of peace and spirit of service and providing him with the instruments of effective self direction, the society shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, harmonious peaceful and transformed.

Consequently, the importance of peace education cannot be over-emphasized in cultivating a safe and prospering future for Nigeria and the world at large. Through peace education, the transformer is transformed to be able to further transform his nation economically, socially and otherwise for a better tomorrow. If the transformer, (human resources) are not first of all transformed, no matter how laudable the policy that is intruded in the nation is advocated, it will not work. A conducive environment must be maintained by the people through peace education before transformation of any kind can take place.

Hindrances to peace education and consequent national transformation in Nigeria

A number of reasons account for lack of peace education and consequent national transformation in Nigeria. Such reasons vary from corruption, insecurity, wrong attitude to work, poor leadership, and patriotism amongst others.

The most important is corruption. Corruption is a hydra headed monster that has eaten so deep into the bones and marrows of most Nigerians. It is like a cancer worm attacking our core values and sabotaging our efforts in every area of human endeavour. According to Haruna, (2013) the greatest destroyer of the Nigerian economy and people squarely is corruption and lack of purposeful leadership. To him, corruption is a more dreaded killer than the terrorist, ebola virus and HIV/AIDS. Corruption has found its ways into education. According to Eriba, (2007) stakeholders in education make policies which has no bearing with national problems, develop curriculum without recourse to the societal needs, embezzle money meant for the development of

the education sector, employ unqualified personnel, misplacing priorities, teachers are neglected and not adequately paid for their effective services, the schools lack facilities and students are made to stay under trees and sometimes made to stay in dilapidated buildings. Science and technical laboratories are not available for practical works, bribery and corruption among school workers coupled with examination malpractice which is the order of the day serves as a threat to peace education and national transformation in Nigeria. Other problems according to him include the followings:

- **Insecurity**; Insecurity in the country has reached a dangerous and alarming stage and it is a problem affecting national transformation. According to Akunyili (2012) insecurity has become very dangerous than can be imagined. Among the security challenges are increase in religious violence, terrorism (Boko Haram), kidnapping, deadly cult clashes, incessant communal wars, horrifying jungle justice, political violence of all kinds and several other heinous crimes. The criminals are doing whatever they like unhindered at the nose of the security agents. Innocent, poor Nigerians are murdered from one place to another every day and the only thing we are hearing the leadership saying is that “we are on top of the matter”. The problem will soon be a thing of the past. After bringing peace to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan to a great extent, Nigeria cannot rescue herself from this embarrassing obstacle to pave way for national transformation.

The dimension is so horrible now that the enemies of the nation have their allies among even the law enforcement agents, the Soldiers, Navy, Air force, police, amongst others.

- **Lack of loyalty and patriotism to the nation:** Another serious problem to national transformation and peace education is lack of loyalty and patriotism to the nation. People are loyal to their ethnic and religious movements rather than the nation. Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra struggles to better the life of the Igbos. Odua People's Congress has the interest of the Yorubas at heart, while the Arewa Consultative Forum struggles to better the lives of the Hausa/Fulani. Nigeria is united in theory rather than in practical terms. Nigerians are ethnically and religiously inclined rather than been loyal and patriotic to the country. Under this situation, national transformation is affected adversely. Until we are united and ready to put the nation first, the goal of changing the nation for better cannot be achieved.

- **Leadership:** Coupled with the above is the problem of poor leadership, wrong attitude to work, lack of accountability, responsive and responsible government. The leaders at various levels of the society are confronted with failure. People want to make it fast without corresponding work they are suppose to do. All these, serves as a threat to the transformation agenda of the president and if these problems are not properly addressed through peace education, national transformation with still remain a nightmare.

Recommendations

There is no alternative to peace and tranquility in the society, if such a society is expected to be transformed politically, socially, economically and otherwise. All the members of the society are expected to keep peace and give positive assistance in quelling any breach of peace

committed in their presence which will lead to violence and its unpredictable consequences. In view of this therefore, the following recommendations are made.

Firstly, the leadership should be responsible and responsive to the yearnings of the people. Their actions should speak peace rather than their statements. We are on top of the situation and no series action is taken to address the problems in education is deformation rather than transformation. Despite several conferences and communiqués to the government, the curriculum is not meeting the societal needs, the policies have no bearing with our problems and corruption in education has led to several strikes and riots. The leadership should inculcate peace education through probity, accountability and patriotism and the society will experience transformation in the best manner.

Secondly, the security challenges in Nigeria threatening peace education and national transformation are joint responsibility of every member of the society. We cannot fight Biafra War for three solid years to be united and use the very hands to tear the country apart through terrorism, kidnapping, violent religious and ethnic rivalry. The politicians who are involved in manipulating the youths to fight for them to satisfy their selfish interest must stop and wait for their turn. If we all know that it is our responsibility to join hands together and fight this menace and we are up to our responsibility, the problem will be a thing of the past soonest.

Thirdly, the world today is like a global village and there is nothing like internal affairs of a state. Nigeria should work hand in hand with the neighboring countries like Niger Republic, Chad Republic, Benin Republic and Cameroon to tackle her security problems. Through their joint force, the security problem can be ameliorated to pave way for national transformation.

Fourthly, since peace education is the major key to national transformation, religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, in the society should all be involved in the campaign

for peace education. National orientation agency should be in the sensitization and socialization exercise. Let us lay down our arms and give peace a chance and Nigeria will experience transformation for a better tomorrow.

Finally, we sincerely pray to almighty God, the author and provider of peace, the prince of peace to show us mercy and give us peace in Nigeria to make transformation to be realistic.

Conclusion

The major key tool to inculcate peace in the lives of the people is through peace education at all levels of human learning, from family level through primary to tertiary institutions. In short every member of the society is expected to be involved in the peace campaign and imbibe the culture of peace for national transformation to become realistic. Essentially, a state of order in society in harmony with man's reasonable nature through peace education is all that is needed to move the nation forward.

References

- Akunyili, D. (2012). National Transformation, the Challenges of our time. www.google.com 7/07/2014.
- Ajeleti, T. D. (2012). Promoting Peaceful Co-existence, Security and National Stability in Nigeria. In *Belt Journal of Education in Nigeria*, 3 ,1, 20.
- Atser, W. A. I. (2012) The Effects of Parental Negligence on Early Childhood Education in *Katsina-Ala Multidisciplinary Journal* 1(3):201.
- Ason, B. (eds)(2002). *Communal Relations, Conflicts and Crisis Management Strategies*. Makurdi: Aboki Pub.
- Eriba, J. O. (2007) Democracy and Education in Nigeria: Current Challenges for National Sustainability in *Journal of the National Association of Science, Humanities and Education Research* 5(1):14-16.
- George-Genyi, M. (eds) (2014). *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies*. Makurdi:Gwatex pub.

- Gaya, S. M. (2004). *Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*. Lagos: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Haruna, F. B.(2013). Corruption and its Effects on the Economic Development of Nigeria in *Ankpa Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*,15(1):11-18.
- Kazaure, R. M. (2004). Women Education and National Development in *Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development (NARD)* 3 (3): 80.
- Kukah, H. M. (2006). The UN, Africa and the Challenges of World Peace. *Guardian Newspaper*. Wed. January 2, 2006, 27 & 46.
- Oputa, C. (2004). Peace: Justice: Fair play-my Perception of Nigeria in a Democratic Order. *Daily Times Newspaper* Monday 12/06/2004 20
- Terkula, G. (2014). What is Peace? In M. George-Genyi (eds) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies*, Makurdi: Gwatex pub.
- Webel, C. and Galtung, J.(eds) (2001). *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*. London: Routledge pub.
- Worsrtley, B. A. (1967). *Jurisprudence*. Manchester: Manchester University press.
- Wright, Q. (1990). The Nature of Conflict in J. Burton and F. Dukas (eds) *Conflict: Readings, Management and Resolution*. London: Macmillan.
- Zabadi, I. S. (2009) *Evolution of Peace Support Operations in Peace Support Operations in the New Global Environment: The Nigerian Perspective*. Abuja; Mirage Graphics Pub.