

**PEACE EDUCATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Education is said to be everybody's right and it should be accessible to every individual in the society, regardless of ethnic, socio-economic, gender and geographical inclinations. In this regard peace is also every body's right and peace education should be the major panacea to all social conflicts in the society. This paper focuses on the issues of conflict, conflict management and the possible means of promoting peace through conflict management strategies. The problems and causes of conflicts are discussed and the use of peace education for conflict management is examined for the promotion of sustainable development. Thus, peace education is identified as an effective tool for conflict management and sustainable development in the society. Lastly, the paper made some recommendations on the use of peace education and conflict management for the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Considering the nature of Nigerian society, it is made up of different other micro-societies or multi ethnic groups, with differences in geographical distribution, natural resources and differences in human environments and cultures. It is obviously clear that the coexistence of Nigerian society is a historical factor melted out of the series of struggles, within and between different ethnic groups for survival and coexistence, which has led the nation to sustain its development. One effective channel of resolving the problems of social differences and promoting understanding, respect for every individual, irrespective of social status, ethnic groups and privileges is the social institution of education. In view of the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, one means of

achieving peace is might be unity in its education system, through the role of education as a means of attaining social integration and cohesion in society. it is pertinent to understand that no meaningful development is possible under the state of unrest, confusion and conflicts. Generally, in all societies of the world man has experienced and is still experiencing conflicts from time to time. However, factors that precipitate conflicts in any conceivable manifestations are inherent in man. Development in society must be seen to be able to manage conflict itself, to a minimum level of utilizing the experiences for further development in the society. Generally, pluralistic societies faces challenges in terms of conflict management, but the possible implication of its management through education resulted to sustainable development. The aim of this paper therefore is to analyse the role of peace education in the management of conflicts in society vis-à-vis sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Conflict**

The term conflict means dispute. Conflict varies in nature and scope and this makes it un-wanting issue in the environment, where peace is to reign. Dispute can be between parties on specific issues, between states, clans and organizations or groups. It arises from differences in outlook, opinions and values, with respect to specific issues of interest. These issues can be cultural, social, political or economy. However, it can be individual or at national level. According to Otite and Albert (1999) in Otite and Ogionwo (2006) conflict arises when individuals and groups pursue different goals and maintain different aspirations in specified social environment. In this respect, where the interest of two different people is the same towards a goal, the end result may lead to misunderstanding and might further lead to conflict of interests and struggle to gain first chance.

The concept of conflict can be viewed in different ways, depending on its background or usage by various scholars. Conflict interpretation can simply be quarrel, inconsistency, dispute, violence, aggression and even struggle over certain factors, such as power, resources by two individuals or groups. However, where there is no peace there is conflict. This situation result from the struggle and competition over scarce resources and inequalities among groups in a community that consist of more than one group or ethnic settings. According to Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2004) conflict is a direct confrontation of a person to another; it sometimes spread widely to involve larger groups, organizations, local governments,

states and even international communities and this is when it is said to have taken a wider perspective scope.

### **Conflict Management**

The Committee on equal opportunities for women and men (2004) maintains that conflict management is an effort to prevent a dispute or misunderstanding from running out of hand, from erupting into a violence or crisis. It is equally a means of cooling a violent act, crisis that has already been turned into violence by eliminating, neutralizing or controlling the means of tackling the violent. This is possible through preventing the group access to physical combat or by neutralizing the parties' grievances. The parties can equally be called to order. This is by way of having meeting with both the parties at different places, time and day to discuss issues for peace. Conflict management refers to the effective handling and the long-term management of conflicts. It is also the use of various ways to handle grievances, standing up for what is considered to be right, against what is considered to be wrong and unjust.

Conflict is an omnipresent trait of human societies, since it is almost impossible to find two parties with entirely overlapping interests. Thus, a general strategy and theory for bargaining and negotiating conflict issues is useful in all the fields of study, economics, psychology, sociology, international politics and business management (Retrieved from Internet).

### **Conflict Resolution and Prevention**

Other relative concepts in the course of conflict are the conflict resolution and prevention. In the view of Otite and Ogionwo (2006) conflict resolution is essentially aimed at intervention to change or facilitate the course of conflict. Thus, it is noted that dispute settlement and conflict resolution are having the same techniques and principles. They are two different words but can still be used interchangeably to mean the same thing. In many cases, conflicts are not resolved until their root causes are eliminated and this is properly done through dialogue as well as the application of negotiation. Another relative term is conflict prevention, popularly known as *Preventive Diplomacy*, it is a combination of efforts directed at containing, managing and resolving misunderstanding, before they go out of hand and become violence. Early intervention into crisis by various organizations such as, governments, international organizations can prevent and save lives. However, professional strategies of managing dispute carries the message of prevention and resolution

together, as the nature or situation becomes complex, different strategies are employed. Despite all these, the formal information strategies, through schooling remain the strongest weapon to disseminate proper information for sustainable development by means of having peace and stability. School is therefore having the greatest responsibility of bringing and maintaining peace, development and stability in various groups and communities in Nigeria.

### **Causes of Conflicts in Society**

- Most of the conflicts and riots appear to be ethnic, but the underlying factors behind all could be motivated politically. The activities from the affected rival parties go along way to affect the relationship of various groups in the society. Akinyele (2000) states that, this affect the integration of people in other parts of the nation. Otite and Albert (1999), in Otite and Ogionwo (2006), maintains that, this factor result to cultural shock and people become suspicious of themselves in the land.
- The denial of human needs and fears, anxieties and insecurities. As the outcome of conflict results, produces social instabilities and restless feelings in societal groups. These situations are termed in a single word Anomies by Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) in Schaefer (2005) referring to the loss of social direction that a state or society falls into. In this case the social control goes out of hand, individual behaviour becomes ineffective and thus, leading to lawlessness and disorder. Indeed this might be as a result of social inequality and alienation in the society.
- As a result of differences in groups and political powers in state, there is the unwillingness of the state political leaders to fulfil societal requirements for individual and other groups to meet their social development. These groups are under represented; they are not recognized as full members of the society. These factors could also lead to crisis and conflict in the society.
- Some other factors could be seen under micro and macro perspectives of the society. Considering the nature of Nigeria's complexity, both in ethnic distributions and geographical settings, to identify a single factor may not be possible. Therefore conflict in Nigeria could be attributed to cultural interest, values and preferences as well as the claim to control national political positions and economic resources.

### **Conflict Management Techniques**

The wisest decision process for conflict management is not to judge anybody wrong or right, and therefore, the situation at hand or in question determines the strategy to adopt at a particular time and place. However, the following techniques are adoptable for the purpose of conflict management.

- It is good to accommodate every individual in the process, but not to result to the competition of facts. This means that there should be room for the respect of others, even if issues are not important. In addition, attempt should be made to learn, to accommodate first, and the view and feelings of other people and groups.
- The use of avoidance, it is unassertive and cooperative. When using avoidance is when more important issues are pressing or when one is taken by surprise. When one is too emotionally involved and other members can solve the problem more successfully. At this juncture avoidance is necessary.
- Collaboration is both assertive and cooperative. Collaboration involves an attempt to work with the other party to find a solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both parties.
- Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The use of this implies a process of finding some expedient, mutually acceptable solutions, which partially satisfies both parties. This fall in the middle group between competing and accommodating.
- Competing is assertive and uncooperative, various parties pursues personal concerns at the expense of other people or groups. This is a power oriented mode in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win ones own status (Horung (nd)Retrieved from Internet).

### **Peace Education as a Panacea to Conflicts in Society**

Quality and well meaningful planned education is the educational system and programme that can prepare future generations to improve their living conditions as well as bring about social integration in society. This will fight against problems, such as, poverty, disease, war, and environmental destructions. Education can be used to elaborate and implant peace programmes, to cultivate inclusive citizenship, de-segregate the mind and build a culture of peace and tolerance. According to Bush and Salteralli (2000) education carries along two faces, namely, it can be positive and negative. Formal education can become dangerous and destructive when it is unequally distributed. That is to say, when it is used by politicians as a weapon of cultural repression, when other parts and groups of people are denied access to it,

when the contents of the curricula are deliberately manipulated for political aims or when it is designed to satisfy some groups at the expense of other groups.

Furthermore, according to UNESCO (2000) education remains a justified response to emergencies and reconstruction, namely,

- education helps to meet the psycho-social needs of children and adolescents that are affected by conflicts or disasters that have disrupted their lives, studies and social networks.
- education is a tool for protecting children in emergencies.
- education as a vibrant channel for conveying health and survival skills. Teaching new strategies for social improvement remains a primary concern of education. For example, values, peace, tolerance, environmental conservation, democracy, conflict resolution as well as every possible human rights.
- education which is designed for all, is a tool for social cohesion, whereas educational discrepancies lead to poverty for the uneducated and fuel all sorts of civil conflicts and tensions.
- education for the reconstruction of the social and economic bases of the family, local and national life, and for sustainable development and building of peace and stability.

However, every nation's economy and social development is strongly linked to its nature of peace. No meaningful development can take place without peace. Violence and instability are vices to the existence of peace in the society. Peace education, therefore, remains a major and lasting solution to the urgent quest for social stability and the good living conditions of millions of Nigeria. According to UNESCO (2000) peace education is aimed at creating conditions for building peace, resolving conflicts in its different forms, by tracing its root, causes and consequences and dealing with ethical, religious and philosophical ethics of human rights.

Peace education is difficult to define but it is a unique process of resolving conflicts and promoting meaningful development in the community. Development, both at national and individual levels needs knowledge and skills to maintain and sustain it. This is by the identification of its values and importance through peace education in schools, public lectures, workshops and conferences, social mobilisation and sensitizations.

The term peace and peace education are not directly identified with a particular concept or meaning, but it is acknowledged that both peace and peace education are

simply defined based on their characteristics, approaches and methodologies of initiation.

According to UNESCO (1995) peace education is seen as an incitation to consciousness and to action for the elimination of all forms of violence, direct, indirect. The education is based on multidisciplinary contents with skills and values universally acknowledged and shared. Peace education contents carry the following aspects:

- human rights education and education for human dignity. Consideration of various rights and groups' rights in society.
- inter-cultural and inter-racial. This means that, the education should be one with anti-prejudices features and characteristics.
- peace education should have a global factor, considering global education for social justice both within, local and international contexts.
- religious education for moral development, personal and inner peace.
- democracy and citizenship education. This carries the civil education contents for the respect of the existing variations and differences among individuals and groups.
- peace education should lead to environmental and sustainable development and the proper maintenance of various interests among groups.
- the education should geared toward education for non-violent, conflict free, social transformation and integration in the society.

### **Peace Education for Sustainable Development**

Peace education embraces the general developmental projects and programmes for the wellbeing of individuals and groups in the society. The general development of the state, national, and international, is because the education contains the attributes and values for development, by providing the entire requirements for sustainable development. According to UNICEF (2002) if access to education is more than a right for the children, then lack of quality education is a denial of this right. Quality education contributes greatly to human learning and development. Quality education is both in classroom and outside the classroom. Peace education is part of quality education; it involves knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are aimed at developing the entire human race. Peace education is therefore, important for sustainable national development.

On the other hand sustainable development can only be attained with full concept of the value of education. Thus, sustainable development implies the protection of

physical and social environment for human comfort and peace. This further means, the acquisition of knowledge and skills for human empowerment and for all round development of the citizens. Therefore, it has to contain the provision of good water, roads, health facilities and security in the society. Peace education and sustainable development are strongly related to one another. By implication, quality education which is peace education is a vibrant factor to be considered in the quest for sustainable development in the society.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the enormous role of peace education in conflict management for sustainable development in society, the following recommendations proffered:

- For every nation to develop and have understanding with regard to the prospective needs of the society, peace education for sustainable development should remain an integral part of its educational system. It is important to understand, peace and conflict to be two sided of the same coin. Any where that conflict exist peace and development suffers the disadvantage. For this reason, meaningful peace and development implies sound education for sustainable development. The attributes of peace education will go a long way to help in promoting social integration in society. It will prevent conflict and manage all existing social problems of the society.
- Sustainable development is may only be possible and likely to be attained where there is less misunderstanding. The promotions of good inter and intra-groups relationships as well as a well designed programme for better living should be integrated into the educational system.
- Peace education should be geared towards good value promotion and respect in society. Peace education is therefore, capable of building the younger generation towards a conflict free society. However, education systems and programmes containing peace messages are more likely to bring about development in the society. Development is only feasible with stable social phenomenon and constructive educational programmes that are geared towards peace and sustainable development.

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