

Peace, Peace Culture and Moral Education as a Panacea for Sustainable Nation-Building

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Abstract

The constant and ever-increasing rate of violence in Nigeria's socio-political and economic space is dangerously making life continuously very unbearable. The issues surrounding youth restiveness is yet to have a proper tackling roadmap or solution thereby bringing a worrisome concern on a daily basis. Furthermore, civic virtues in all spheres of life are completely in the decline in addition to the upsurge of incessant cult-related activities in the country and on various campuses of higher learning. Religious and ethnic crises among others are of high concern. Most youths are now vulnerable instruments in the hands of politicians and political office holders especially during elections to be used for unwholesome errands ranging from ballot box snatching, thumb printing of ballot papers and so forth requires urgent attention. Irrespective of government efforts and intentions in giving Social Studies as "a subject" right position in the National Policy of Education and also reintroducing a sister-like subject like Civic Education in the country's educational system as instruments for inculcating national unity, morality and peace culture among the various ethnicities, it is disheartening, and now a thing of concern that moral education, civic responsibility, and right sense of values are gradually shifting in our society. All manner of social vices such as cultism, bullying, equipped theft, hijacking, killings, extortion, rape, civil disobedience, cybercrime, fraud exists. Patriotism, obedience to the law, loyalty to constituted authority, contributing to the development, peace, unity and progress of the state amongst others all seems to have dissipated. These cases portray a reckless negligence, weak and kindergarten attitudes towards preaching and the promotion of peace, peace culture and moral education for a sustainable nation building to the citizenry.

Keywords: Peace, Education, Moral Education, Sustainable Nation-Building.

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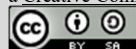
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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a nation is made up of over 250 ethnic groups and over 400 languages of people with varied cultures, Igwe, (2008). Each group claims superiority of her culture and almost would like everyone to imbibe the culture. These breeds dangerous problems ranging from lack of respect, to loss of lives and property threatening the peace, human and public security, development among others. There is no doubt, the world is in dire need of peace. The aftermath of the Second World War and the need for peaceful coexistence led to the setting up of the United Nations in 1945 after the failure of the League of Nations to bring about the much-needed world peace. This desire was as a result of the challenges posed by conflict, violence, terrorism and war along with their terrible consequences – poverty, diseases, environmental destruction and poor leadership. The world over, considerable resources are spent to offset the costly ravages of conflicts, violence, war, terrorism and to pay for high price of military defence and security measures.

Peace and conflict resolution are effective ingredients for harmonious inter-existence, cooperation and social, political, economic and socio-cultural interactions/interrelationships between people, nations, committees, communities, regions, countries, states, villages and so on. They're important concepts that every nation including Nigeria needs for her sustainable

nation-building. No one can aspire or achieve national development and progressive transformation without first instituting peace and resolving already existing conflicts, violence and chaos whether directly or indirectly. The need for peace, peace culture and moral education leading to sustainable nation-building has become more pressing in an ever increasingly globalized and interconnected world. With the prevalence of conflicts, social injustices and ethical dilemmas, equipping the citizenry with the knowledge and skills to navigate these challenges effectively have become essential, invaluable and cannot be treated with kindergarten attitude.

Conceptual Clarifications

Peace

There are several definitions of peace as there are many scholars within the field of peace education and conflict resolution management. David in Mezieobi et al (2024) sees peace as “the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful coexistence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and resolution of conflicts by non-violent means”. Peace is an undiluted, original, undisturbing and uncorrupted gift of God to humanity.

According to Houghton’s work “The American Heritage Children’s Dictionary” (1998:534), peace is “the absence of war; freedom from mental or emotional upset; public security; law and order”. It is a state of harmony characterized by the lack of violent conflict and freedom from fear of violence. It is the existence of healthy interpersonal relationship, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare and establishment of equality and policies working order that serves the true interests of all.

From the above, evidence abounds that the term “peace” has got no generally accepted definition. However, for this paper, Peace shall be defined “as the absence of the fear of violence, emotional, mental and all forms of disturbing conflicts that hinders and threatens progressive transformation and social stability.

Peace Culture

No society has ever progressed in the midst of conflicts and violence. Secession is most evidence in countries lacking peace culture which usually sets limit to her growth (Field work, 2024). Some of the problems Nigeria had in the past are capable of causing national disintegration, but we have always survived it as a result of our peace culture. Peace culture does not mean a crime free society and does not equally depict absence of conflict and violence but is a strongly bonded unity that tolerates one another. Peace culture is a cooperative lifestyle that transverses the length and breadth of Nigerian society. This egalitarianism or egalitarian spirit in the people’s way of life is what is regarded as “peace culture” (Nwokah, 2024).

Concept of Education

Education is an ancient concept that has been present since the inception of humanity. It involves the transmission of valuable knowledge from one generation to another. The primary objective of education is to cultivate well-rounded members of society, fostering the development of their intellect, emotions, and practical skills (often referred to as the three 'Hs': Head, Heart, and Hand). A truly effective education is one that equips individuals to meet their personal needs and fulfil their civic responsibilities (Brown, 2016).

Functioning as an instrument of change, education endeavours to alter the environment by influencing the thoughts and actions of individuals within that environment. It serves as a

dynamic process through which individuals enhance their knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for personal growth and societal benefit. Furthermore, education represents the mechanism through which societies strive to preserve and elevate their accumulated knowledge, skills, and cultural heritage. This perpetual effort aims to promote the well-being of humanity and ensure its survival in the face of unpredictable, sometimes hostile, and destructive elements and forces stemming from both human actions and natural occurrences (Okafor, 2017 cited in Nwokah & Emesiobi, 2024).

Moral Education

Given its significance, morality and its education deserve a down to earth practice and of fundamental national focus. Contributing to the nation-building endeavours in the Nigerian socio-cultural milieu, Egobueze (2024) highlights morality as a set of principles or values that guides individuals in determining right from wrong. It involves making judgements about what is morally acceptable or unacceptable, and it often stems from personal beliefs, cultural norms and societal standards which is pivotal in navigating the ethical dilemmas that forms our decisions in consonance with our values and the well-being of others.

Moral Education is looked at as the process through which individuals are helped to acquire, develop and understand moral principles, ethical behaviour and values. It involves the teaching and learning about what is right and wrong, fostering the development of virtues such as honesty, respect, responsibility and compassion. Moral Education aims at cultivating individuals who can make ethically sound decisions and act with integrity in their personal and social lives.

Education as Instrument of Peace for Nation-Building

Education is an important instrument for fostering systematic and sustainable human and material development within nations. Globally, education remains a most potent tool for nation building because it involves integration and serves as an instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development. It has witnessed active participation by non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals as well as government intervention. Integration of education in the society helps to foster peace and unity of a country. Education in many countries has been a major instrument for promoting peace and diversity. Each nation has to integrate policies in the educational system that would make for peaceful re-habitation. In this regard, the American case stands out; all her millions of immigrants who migrated from all around Europe, Latin American, and the Caribbean embraced education as instrument of unity in diversity. In corroborating this, Okoli in Okoli et al (2013) noted that in Nigeria since 1970s, education has been perceived as the primary instrument for nation building, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. It is an organ for the socialization of the younger generation into the new civic culture and instilling in them allegiance to the nation. The civil war came because of suspicion among citizens, lack of appreciation of national goals and fear of domination by others.

Education stands as a priority sector in any conscientious society, encapsulating the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests, abilities, competencies, and the cultural norms of a community. This transmission of knowledge to successive generations is pivotal for perpetuating societal development, in realizing these educational benefits, curricula are meticulously developed for various school subjects across different educational levels. To this end, the need to use education as a means of forging national unity becomes clearer when it is realized that Nigeria has over 400 ethnic languages. This is part of the dilemma in the

education system. Nigeria should adopt a measure aimed at improving the understanding of the life and culture of other Nigerians. Though, Nigeria is multi-cultural, multi-lingual and in fact multi-national, education has long been aiming at cultural integration, stability and solidarity.

Achieving and Promoting Peace and Moral Education for Sustainable Nation-Building: The Path to Thread

The journey towards achieving and promoting peace, peace culture and moral education for sustainable nation building requires concerted efforts by the citizenry and the general public. It is unarguably a sensitive issue yet begging for recognition as often times, attention and action towards this direction seems blurred or invisible.

- i. Practical and proactive efforts in promoting understanding and tolerance: This will take the shape of cultural awareness; helping citizens appreciate diversity and develop respect for different perspectives as well as the importance of dialogue and negotiation in resolving disputes.
- ii. Fostering critical thinking and ethical reasoning: Both historical and contemporary analysis of ethical dilemmas encourages critical thinking, encouraging debates (discussions) on social/ethical issues, developing their moral reasoning, values and a good understanding of moral implications of their choices.
- iii. Building citizenship and social responsibility including democratic responsibility, community service and fostering empathy.
- iv. Encouraging the spirit of empathy and compassion: Studying the lives and struggles of people from different times and places can help citizens develop empathy and compassion, and become more empathetic and understanding.
- v. Development of global perspective: Discussing global issues such as poverty, inequality and environmental sustainability can help individuals understand the interconnectedness of the world and the impact of their actions on global scale. Interestingly, there is interdisciplinary approach to this dimension which integrates knowledge from various disciplines thereby providing comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena.

Affirming the stance of the principles of the paper under review, and as it relates specifically to peace; Iwegbu and Aghulor (2010), and Mezieobi (2013) in Anyanwu (2016) aptly avers that there are some fundamental conditions to be met for peace to thrive in any human society. To them, these identified elements must be one or a combination of the followings;

- The desire for peace,
- A culture of peace,
- The presence of justice in all areas,
- Respect for human dignity and human rights,
- The pursuit of collective and individual goals through a non-violent means,
- The equitable distribution of social amenities and democratic gains,
- The development of common security that does not rely on threat or use of violence and above all,
- The amicable resolution and management of conflicts.

Conclusion

The real nation-building effort and sustainable national development cannot be a dream come true nor achievable without the existence of peace and action-driven conflict resolution and management strategies. The incessant threats emanating from cultural differences have undermined coexistence in Nigeria and so requires immediate redress through constructive means of dialogue to ensure that diversity notwithstanding; Nigerians could live and work together, trust and respect one another and act in concert of national issues anywhere in the country. As a matter of fact, Nigeria's diversity should be developed as a source of strength rather than weakness, using peace-culture provided its functional potentials are effectively harnessed without being prevented by cultural differences. Through national integration programmes, Nigerians should be adequately educated and mobilized to think and see themselves first, as true Nigerians; and subordinating ethnic groups' interests to the collective national interest while retaining their ethnic identity and culture. Achieving this will reasonably take a long process of lengthy period of time which involves systematic, sustained socialization and re-socialization processes, captured with well-equipped and funded formal educational system via the strategy of peace culture and moral education. Interestingly, the government, religious leaders, parents, teachers, everyone have roles to play in achieving this great feat.

Recommendations

1. First and foremost is the regular and adequate funding and equipment of our education institutions in operation.
2. Cultural reforms with emphasis on co-curricular activities essential for national integration and unity in school programmes and Ministry of Culture of Tourism in Nigeria.
3. Organization of periodic seminars, workshops and conferences with the theme "Peace culture and nation building in Nigeria."
4. Integrating the principles of conflict resolution, human rights, ethical reasoning and character development into the curriculum as well as fostering a generation of empathetic, responsible and socially conscious individuals.
5. Moral Education should be made a powerful unifying and energizing force in the school curriculum at all levels of education.
6. The school and school system should ensure their moral education efforts extends beyond the cognitive domain, but should include the affective and psychomotor. It must go beyond simply what is good or bad; prizing what is good and doing what is good must be inclusive.
7. Constant socialization and re-socialization of the people on the tenets of democracy, rights of ethnic, religious and regional groups, recognition and protection of others' cultural identities and so on.

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