

**THE ROLE OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL
COEXISTENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

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Abstract

Generally, the term conflict, have impaired and affected critically the state of peace and development in the Nigerian educational system through recent killings from the Boko Haram. This makes the issue of peace seems to be on a decline state in the contemporary Nigerian society and as a result, have affected her its ability to meet up its target goal and also poses fear for the future development of the educational system. Therefore, the place of Civic Education in fostering peace and sustainability development in the state of Nigeria educational system is inevitable. This paper addressed why Nigerian education at each level be exposed to various culture, values, ethics, standard and democratic knowledge that makes a civil society. The diversities nature of Nigeria fosters the need to work together with different groups to have a functional economy and social system. It was suggested that students should be exposed early enough to Civic Education to enable them acquire knowledge and skills in order to imbibe peaceful behaviors. Also, Civic Education teachers should encourage the pupil to form civic and political clubs and Peace education should be made compulsory at all levels of the education system. Ministry of education and curriculum planers should implement peace education initiatives at a local level and national level. The social media especially the television can be channeled into broadcasting of programmes that will teach the children about their rights and the proper behaviours expected in a civil society.

Keywords: *Civic Education, Peaceful coexistence, Sustainability, Development, Educational system.*

Introduction

Nowadays, violent conflicts pose the greatest development challenges in the world. Children and education systems are often on the front line of these violent conflicts. The rise in violent extremism and radicalization represent a significant threat to all of us. Members of radical groups adopt increasingly extreme political, economic, social, cultural, and religious ideologies and use undemocratic and violent means to achieve their objectives. African countries also face the challenge of objectively addressing deeply rooted structural causes of conflicts emanating from historical injustices, marginalization and corruption (Hartely, 2007). Education is said to impart knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are important for the social, economic and political development of any country. This role is well articulated in the objectives of Sustainable Development which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

Moreover, the objective of Sustainable Development Goal is to 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 culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. While education is central to peace building, it is important to note that it has two aspects. There is evidence to the view that when equitably available, of good quality, relevant and conflict sensitive, education can help promote peace and provide safe environments.

On the other hand, when its delivery is characterized with exclusion and inequity, it can exacerbate conflict. It is for this reason that deliberate effort need to be made to put in place necessary policies and strategies to maximize the positive effects of education on peace. Education has to be sensitive to context, including conflict and disaster, and has to pay attention to disparities, including equity. (Agagu, Omotosho and Abegunde, 2010) Actually, Nigeria as a nation has witnessed incessant violence and crisis ranging from communal clashes, religious wars, Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta youth unrest, and the recent Fulani herdsmen trouble with the farmers for the past decades. This has left the Nigerian citizens in panic, fear and uncertainty. Many people have been aggrieved by the insecurity and

economic hardship and this has further made peace to be far reached among the Nigerian citizens.

For peace to reign in Nigeria, it has to be instilled in the minds of the young ones right from the primary school level to enable them grow into responsible peaceful members of their communities. This can be done through Civic Education which is enriched with themes that can be used to inculcate peaceful behaviours in Nigerian education system. Olibie and Akudolu (2013) affirmed that Nigeria has seen a high level of corruption since the beginning of democracy which has been marred by kidnappings, embezzlement of public funds, nepotism and so on, a disappointment as to the purpose of the change from the dictators in the military regimes. Furthermore, Nigeria has recently experienced extreme violence as a result of intra-tribal wars and religious conflicts leading to loss of lives and properties. Nigerians therefore need a strong foundation and a reminder as to the guidelines that make for a civil society.

The chaos in the Nigerian society today will only be addressed if it is confronted at the grass-root level of education. Hence, our education system should provide an avenue to set straight the minds of the young Nigerians by fostering and emphasizing peace through the instrument of Civic Education to ensure a future that will not only be sustainable but adequate for the multi lingual and ethnic nature of our society. Teachers and other vendors of knowledge have the responsibility of modeling and transmitting to the Nigerian educationist the right information that is necessary to achieve a peaceful and unified nation through the use of the essential and relevant curriculum of Civic Education.

Also, in recent times, Civic Education has been innovated to protect every Nigerian by stating explicitly their rights and responsibilities as members of this sovereign nation. Levine and Bishai (2010) proposed that the teachers in schools can model civic virtues in the classroom for easy assimilation in the equal treatment of every member of the class, giving equal attention and opportunities to each of them, while encouraging them to work together. One of the key interventions in promoting peace and sustainability development through education is development of conflict-sensitive education policies and plans. This entails conducting conflict analysis on education

systems, structures and delivery to identify the drivers of conflict and violence, and provide possible solution to the challenges.

Civic Education

Civic Education is a public, socially-oriented system of continuous Education and upbringing aimed at building civic competence, democratic culture, satisfying the needs for socialization in the interest of the individual, civic society and the rule of law. Civic Education otherwise known as Citizenship education seeks to transmit skills necessary for participation in a civil society. It prepares the young people to fill in their roles and take responsibilities as members of a community (Olibie and Akudolu, 2013). Civic Education serves as a channel through which our young people can be inspired to aim for the common good of all Nigerians. Levine (2013) defined Civic Education as all the processes that affect people's belief, commitment, capabilities and actions as members of a community. Civic Education more often than not may not come as a deliberate effort, as it could occur at every stage of life and taught in other venues other than the school environment. It is therefore worthy of note that members of the society, the family, governments, religions and mass media are responsible for disseminating information that may be beneficial or harmful to the child and the society. Hence, Civic Education within the school consist of deliberate courses that are geared towards developing citizens that are well informed and responsible in order to achieve a civil society. The main goal of Civic Education can be considered as the formation of civil qualities on the basis of new knowledge, skills and values that help individuals to solve emerging problems, adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions, represent and protect their rights and interests while respecting the .interest and rights of others.

Brahm (2006) listed the following as the major components of Civic Education all geared towards achieving peaceful co-existence and ensuring a sustainable development in Nigeria:

1. Developing civic knowledge, through the understanding of the principles and practice of democracy with aspects of representative democracy, the rule of law, human rights, citizenship and the civil society. Civic Education therefore ensures that the Nigerian child at the primary school level is

aware of the laws by which the society and the citizens abide by, and their rights as members of the society.

2. Developing cognitive civic skills to enable students fuse information of political and civic life with public issues. Students are exposed early to problem solving skills which could be applied within the classroom and the society to ensure sustainable development.
3. Building civic skills in the learners such as working together with others, collaborative deliberation and decision making, and how to peacefully influence deliberations. Civic Education teaches unity and mediation, skills necessary to promote peace within the school and the society.
4. Instil in the learners civic characters such as support for human rights, equal rights, the importance of active political participation and working to promote the common good. Civic Education ensures that the Nigerian child at the primary school is aware of the right attitude towards others, the respect and value for the right of others and the rule of law.

However he pointed out that a true Civics education has three interrelated components which are: virtue, knowledge and skills.

1. Civic virtues are the traits of character necessary for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizenship. Examples of civic virtues are respect for the worth and dignity of each person, civility, integrity, self-discipline, tolerance and compassion;
2. Civic knowledge includes principles of democratic theory, operations of democratic governance, and behaviors of democratic citizenship. In particular, it involves concepts and data about democracy in the learner's country and comparisons with other countries and
3. Civic skills are the cognitive operations that enable the learner to understand, explain, compare and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship.

There also are participatory skills that involve actions by citizens to monitor and influence public policies and the resolution of public issues. Together, the cognitive and participatory skills involve the citizen's use

of knowledge to think and act competently in response to the ongoing challenges of democratic governance and citizenship.

The main task of Civic Education is always the preparation of children for the future, the task of educating future citizens of our country. Many teachers have been making efforts both to introduce school subjects that will help the young once develop self-management and other life skills that will help prepare them for the future. The purpose of each state civil programmes should be the creation of an effective system of ethical and legal education that would contribute to the formation and development of humanistic personal orientations and the formation of legal and political culture among school children.

The development of their democratic way of thinking and acquisition of complex ethical, legal and political knowledge, skills and abilities and the experience that the young people need to integrate into a democratic society, for their active participation in the social life of the country and the protection of the rule of law.

The Concept of Peaceful Coexistence in Education and its Usefulness

Peace education is the process of acquiring the values, knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the natural environment. Again, Ugwulashi (2011) noted that the immediate past Director-General of UNESCO, has written on peace education as being of "fundamental importance to the mission of UNESCO and the United Nations". Peace education as a right is something which is now increasingly emphasized by peace researchers. There has also been a recent meshing of peace education and human rights education.

Bajiji and Hant (2008) described peace education as a series of teaching encounter that draw from people their desire for peace, non-violent alternatives for managing conflict, and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality. In addition, they emphasized that peace education encourages the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; as informing the student on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; as encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine

a peaceful future; and as caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others.

Decades ago, peace education programmes around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality, among others. Peace education centered on conflict resolution typically focus on the social-behavioural symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) mediation.

Learning to manage anger, "fight fair" and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of these programmes. Conflict is very natural and normal, but one cannot go through the entire life fighting, one has to learn different ways to resolve conflict. Participants are also encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to brainstorm together on compromises which would bring about peace in the society.

In the submission of Adebisi (2009), he described violence as a breakdown in social orders that emphasizes the irrational, chaotic and destructive aspect of riots. Violence as defined by is illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decision against the will of others. Train participants in the skills of critical thinking, debate and coalition-building, and promote the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objection. Their aim of peace education is to build responsible citizens who will hold their governments accountable to the standards of peace, primarily through adversarial processes. Activities are structured to have students assume the role of the citizen that chooses, makes decisions, takes positions, argues positions and respects the opinions of others.

Based on the assumption that democracy decreases the likelihood of violence and war, it is assumed that these are the same skills necessary for creating a culture of peace. Peace education programmes centered on raising awareness of human rights typically focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which

all members of the human race can exercise personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity.

The Concept of Sustainability Development

The concept of sustainable development has been diversely understood and is constantly evolving making it difficult to earn a particular definition. It has encompassing nature of socio-economic problems of this century. Economies, remittances, climate changes, politics and social institutional structures all over the world are interconnected and hence have become a concern for all. Sustainable development was developed out of concern for the future of humanity due to the shift in the interaction between man and the environment.

To achieve a sustainable development, a clear knowledge of the constraints within the society and the requirements to remove the constraints should be known (Hartely, 2007). Sustainable development therefore is basically concerned with the environment and the socio-economic problems can only be met by a better functionality and proper management of the resources found within the environment. Since sustainable development looks beyond the well-being of the present generation into the future, it requires that the citizens of today be on alert to avoid any abuse of the various resources via proper education and training (Bajaj and Hants, 2008)

When there is chaos, disorder and insecurity within the society, the idea of sustainable development becomes a mirage. In order to preserve the resources and values in the society there must be peace. Insecurity spells the abuse of individuals' rights in the society, the loss of hope in the ability of the government to protect her citizens, and often a considerable shift in migration rate.

The issue of sustainable development has become a major concern in Nigeria as daily news on destruction of gas pipelines by the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), and the bombings and kidnapping of Nigerians by the Boko Haram, hit the streets. The high level of violence in Nigeria tramples on the standards of a civil society. The electoral and political violence impedes the individual's rights to vote for the candidate of their choice and the freedom of speech, the bombings by the insurgent groups hampers on our right to life, association and religion, kidnapping obstructs the right of movement. Sust-Ikyase and Egberi (2015) opined that power has become the major source of chaos

in Nigeria, as the lack of patriotism and service dwindles in our society. People seek positions for their own interest and goals, and fail to concern themselves with the welfare of fellow Nigerians.

Bello (2015) stated that between June 2006 and May 2014 there was over 915 fatal incidents that cost the lives of Nigerians as a result of ethno-religious conflicts with the middle belt characterized as the bloodiest part of the country. At this rate, the future becomes unpredictable since the present is characterized by the destruction of lives, resources and properties in their numbers. This increases the need for the emphasis of Civic Education at the grass root level of education in Nigeria, to teach tolerance and acceptance of people despite their gender, race, religion, and political views. The right skills and attitude in Civic Education will ensure that Nigeria experiences peace and a chance at preserving the human and material assets of Nigeria.

Strategies for Promoting Peace through Civic Education for Sustainable Development

According to Levine and Bishai (2010), peaceful behaviour can be promoted at the primary school level through Civic Education. Civic Education is fully enriched with the information necessary to maintain peace and sustainable development in the Nigerian society. He stated that it promotes peace through the following strategies:

1. **Role Play:** This is a good strategy used in teaching responsible citizenship. Here, pupils are made to play out the roles of good citizens. When this happens, they become active in the class and learn to become responsible. Citizenship entails an active participation in a civil society, it is therefore the role of citizenship education to educate and enlighten the young Nigerians about their participations and contributions to ensure the sustainability of peace and unity in Nigeria. Teachers are responsible to make use of the themes in Civic Education to teach the young Nigerians to have respect for diversity in terms of gender, race, religion and age. This can further be done through discussion.

Becoming a responsible citizen of Nigeria will not only reduce the number of crime rates in the country, but also ensure a large number of citizens who will be ready to serve Nigeria and ensure that our resources are properly managed and distributed. Responsible

citizenship ensures that the students learn to decipher between what is good and bad as regards the treatment of their fellow citizens giving considerations to individual rights.

2. Cooperative Learning Strategy: This can be used in teaching pupils political awareness. This is where pupils learn from one another while the teacher act as a guide. Citizenship education also teaches the participation in politics and the electoral process in Nigeria. Levine (2009) opined that participation in government is considered a measure of good citizenship. This includes the habit of engaging in peaceful contest in order to participate constructively in politics and provide meaningful service to the community. The role of the teacher is to teach the pupils about the knowledge of the nation's political past and processes through cooperative learning strategy which will enable the child to find out the mistakes made by the past leaders, what is expected of them as citizens and the way forward to ensure a safe and secure political environment in Nigeria.

The teacher also teaches the pupils political skills such as forming alliances, strategizing, interpersonal and communication skills, which will not only benefit the child in politics, but is very vital for managing both human and material resources with results (Hartley, 2007). When teachers teach the pupils skills of leadership and make them participate in class, it will help them to acquire the political skills essential to lead.

3. Through discussion, pupils can be taught civic rights where they are made aware of their rights as Nigerian citizens. Civil rights include the rights to education, freedom of speech and association. These rights are normally taught under Civic Education. These civil rights ensure that the individual is equipped to participate actively in the community decision making process, and ensures a functional democratic leadership. Universal and fundamental rights that protect the dignity of the child are also provided for in the Civic Education class. It is important to recognize that if civic rights are emphasized at the Primary school, it will enlighten the young Nigerians and make them more aware of their rights as members of a civil society. This will in turn enable them to act responsibly.

Also of importance are the rights of the child which is provided for in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, stating the child's right to a name, survival, and development, and also the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These rights when taught properly will help to protect the child from all forms of abuse and neglect. Being fully aware of their rights, the pupils will be equipped to withstand indoctrination, but rather with the awareness of the societal processes can make the decision to act accordingly. Agagu, Omotosho and Abegunde (2010). Teaching these rights in the Civic Education classrooms will also encourage children to speak out in the face of abuse to the right authorities in order to be protected.

Conclusion

For a viable sustainable development, the Nigerian child who is the future of Nigeria needs to be educated through Civic Education in order to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for the maintenance of peace and stability in Nigeria. Civic Education is enriched to transmit awareness on the civil and fundamental rights of every Nigerian, the skills that make for responsible citizenship, their rights and responsibilities in our society, respect and value for the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria and individuals of opposite sex, ethnic groups, and religions. The members of society including the media, social groups and networks are urged to join in the fight to preserve the values that guide civil societies i.e. order to maintain peace and unity in Nigeria for sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made of which when applied can promote peace at the primary school level for sustainable development:

Students should be exposed early enough to Civic Education to enable them acquire knowledge and skills in order to imbibe peaceful behaviors. Also, Civic Education teachers should encourage the pupil to form civic and political clubs to further expose them to civic and political rights and responsibilities.

Peace education should be made compulsory at all levels of the education system. Ministry of education and curriculum planers should implement peace education initiatives at a local level and national

level. It is expected that citizen should accept the principles of uniqueness in diversity and to establish the social norms of respect, dignity, and the rights of every individual.

In addition, developmental assistance agencies should promote peace education as a component of their teacher training and materials production.

The social media especially the television is today a great influence in the lives of children who are seen playing out the roles observed on television. Instead of portraying violence, the social media can be channeled into broadcasting programmes that will teach the children about their rights and the proper behaviors expected in a civil society.

The right conducts modeled through the media can help them portray such values, which will ensure peace within the primary schools. Home networks that could benefit the child's intellect and involvement in solving problems in the society can be encouraged, thereby engaging them in solving issues that may arise within the school environment and promote.

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