

Peace Education And Conflict Resolution In Post Primary Schools: The Role Of The Teacher

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Abstract

This study assessed the role of the teacher in promoting peace education and conflict resolution in post primary school. A descriptive survey design was used. Data were collected using a questionnaire constructed by the researchers. The sample for the study comprised 107 final year sandwich social studies teachers, who teach in post primary school. It was a quantitative research which made use of social studies teachers from 10 different states in Nigeria. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The result of the study revealed among others that teachers in the sample educate the students on issues that promote peace and conflict resolution. The teachers teach them tolerance, positive values, foster respect among the students and to a very high extent teach about human rights. Recommendations include that students could learn songs, and drama that depict peace and conflict and their consequences. There should be peace and justice club in schools, to enable them develop the culture of peace and conflict resolution.

Background of the Study

Education plays a key role in social transformation of the child and the entire society. It is education that can and must educate man to live in peace and dignity. The importance of education at all levels in the development of peace culture among people cannot be over emphasized.

If education is the only defense against human catastrophe, peace education is the soul that can create the shield for human survival on the planet earth. It is only through peace education that peace can be installed in human mind as an antidote to 'war is in the minds of men (UNESCO 2005: 1-2).

The world today is fragmented with competing nuclear weapons, suicide bombers, human rights abuses, terrorism, kidnapping and other vices that plague the society, Nigeria is not an exception. Peace education is probably the only hope for survival of life on earth and for solving the social menace man finds himself. The concept of peace education is quite new, it is a very important innovative initiative. It appeared in the

educational literature in early 1970's when the Peace Education Committee was founded by the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), (Hinde and Parry 1989).

Peace education is an articulation of relevant knowledge, issues, attitudes and values for worthwhile human relations in the Nigeria socio-political setting (Mezieobi and Mezieobi 2009). According to Ikwuemelu (1994) peace education is the basis for national unity, socio-political awakening, national consciousness, sensitization, social order and national economic efficiency sustenance. It is obvious that no meaningful teaching and learning can be achieved in schools without peaceful environment.

The goal of peace education is to instill the theoretical construct and applied aspects of the concept of peace in the minds of students and teachers in order to build a safe and habitable world (UNESCO 2005). The Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE) Network (2004) describes peace education as a holistic participatory process that includes teaching for and about human rights, non-violent responses to conflict, social and economic justice, gender equity, disarmament and human security. The Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE 2004), intend to foster the culture of peace in communities around the world, and build public awareness and political support for the introduction of peace education into all facets of education throughout the world. Another one is to promote the education of all teachers to teach for peace. The assumption is that a culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global as well as national and community problems, acquire the skills to resolve conflict amicably; know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality and appreciate cultural and religious diversity.

The urgency and necessity for peace education was acknowledged by the member states of UNESCO in 1974 and reaffirmed in the integrated Frame Work of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy in 1995. Yet a few educational institutions have undertaken to educate for peace, (GCPE 2004). The focus is to develop a young generation with peace consciousness who will also know the importance of conflict resolution. Lack of peace destroys the identity of a country; mental and creative energies are diverted from useful activities to destructive activities. The situation in Nigeria with reference to security of life and property is a typical example. Education should be infused with aims and purposes set in the charter of the United Nation, the constitution of UNESCO and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles 26 which states that:

Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for maintenance of peace (Nair 2005: 39).

Concept of Conflict Resolution

It is a well known fact that conflict is an inevitable process of social life. Conflict is the expression of disagreement over something important to two individuals, groups, or nations when they have different views, different values and fight over limited

resources to address them (Phil-Eze 2009). Conflict has to be put under control by interacting with the parties to develop common generalization and practices that will return cordial relationship against violence (Aja 2009). Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict (wikipedia.org/wiki/conflict resolution). Conflict resolution is borne out of the belief that conflict cannot be left to linger, it has to be resolved.

The purpose of conflict resolution in school is, to provide an environment in which each learner is free from threats and has opportunity to learn, and work with others and achieve their objective. Some of the essential processes of conflict resolution are negotiation, mediation, dialogue and compromise. Conflict resolution as an academic discipline is relatively new.

Peace Education Foundation (PEF) provides a grade-level specific curriculum for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 that has a unified sequence of content and skills (Cromwell 1999). It was pointed out that to enrich conflict resolution in schools, PEF programmes are purposefully tied to school improvement; the content of PEF curriculum has five components:

- a) Community building
- b) Understanding conflict
- c) Perception (understanding different viewpoint)
- d) Anger management
- e) Rules for fighting fair (Cromwell 1999)

PEF's curriculum includes mediation in grades 4 – 12. It provides instructions for training mediators and overseeing a school-based mediation programme.

A fourth-grade mediator from Illinois (USA) said, "We help kids who are fighting talk about their problems. Some people think kids can't help other kids solve their problems. Its neat because we don't work out things for kids who are fighting. "They solve their own problems and we help" (Cromwell 1999:3).

The idea behind the mediation programme approach is for the teacher (mediator) to teach children and adults to mediate or help disputants find their own solution to a disagreement. The Peer Mediation Schools Programme, developed by the New Mexico Centre for Dispute Resolution (NMCDR) trains the staff and the entire students body in mediation process. Teachers participate in mediation training and serve as staff mediator.

The curriculum is mandatory in elementary school and optional in middle and high school. The curriculum teaches and reinforces communication, develops vocabulary and concepts related to conflict and develops problem-solving skills at the elementary level. At the secondary level the curriculum teaches and reinforces communication skills, problem solving and anger management (Cromwell 1999).

The good news in this literature review is that there is conflict resolution programme which could have positive effect on the students if properly applied by the teachers.

In Nigeria, one of the challenges facing teachers in schools and parents at home is how to help children learn and grow as strong and peaceful individuals in this world of violence.

The basic issues teachers should address are, how to create positive attitude towards peace in our children, peaceful school environment, facilitate meaningful relationship on the playground and the communities and how to teach the students to be responsible citizens. In Nigerian schools, value re-orientation is necessary for teachers and/students. They should be exposed to ideas which will enable them think about what makes a good friend and how one can be a better friend to his/her classmates.

Attitudes towards education for peace are still reserved. In a study of Teachers Attitude towards the Teaching of Peace, carried out in Finland, only 10% proved to be active in working for peace and 23% believed in the individual's potential for influencing the peace situation (Isohookana – Agunmaa, 1986). Majority of the teachers were not interested in the education for peace. Some felt that there were no materials for it and some were not familiar with the existing materials. The study further found out that teachers have strong fears that education for peace is political propaganda, (Isohookana – Asunmaa, 1986).

In another study carried out in Owerri Imo state Nigeria by Emenalo(2007) on The Application of the Principle of In-Locho Parents in Secondary Schools, found out that with reference to Teacher – Student Relationship in Secondary School, 78% of the respondents agreed that teachers are interested in the academic success of students and 90% are eager to correct their bad behaviours because they bother about the moral upbringing of students. The study also revealed that 63% of teachers have enough time to handle students' problems, 76.7% are aware that such parental duties have to be carried out by them in school but noted that students do not confide in teachers (83.3%). The above scenario depicts the fact that, the challenge of education for peace and conflict resolution at all levels of education lies on the teacher. The teacher faces the audios task of conveying those influences to students which develop in them awareness of the goals of peace and method of achieving it, empathy for other people and the nation. The students will have the will to assume an ethical high level of responsibility for ones own actions as well as the skills for peaceful resolution of conflicts. To achieve these, teachers should work in synergy under a crisis free environment where mutual trust and collegiality reign (Ofojebe and Unachukwu 2007).

The teaching of peace education and conflict resolution poses a different challenge than the conventional subjects. In primary and secondary school curriculum in Nigeria peace education is not proposed to be a separate subject where conventional pedagogy could hold the fort to some extent. Since it has to be integrated with other subjects, it demands a fresh thinking and consideration. Peace education is not a theoretical subject, its success is in practicing peace behaviour and peace mind-set, indeed peace values, (UNESCO 2005).

To develop values, attitudes and peaceful and peace loving mind-set, it will be necessary to adopt alternative pedagogy through experiential learning; construction of learning in a Multi-Channel Learning Environment (MCLE) is advocated, (UNESCO 2005). The design and adoption of Multi-Channel Learning Environment (MCLE) would require a shift in the currently used conventional model of instruction to the new cognitive learning paradigm. In the constructivist school of thought, teacher is just one

source of learning. The teacher's primary role is to design and organize activities that provide a meaningful opportunity to the learners for constructing learning instead of providing ready – made solutions to the problems. Teachers' role would be to raise a series of questions in the students' minds so that they may individually or collectively search the solution (UNESCO 2005).

The concept of peace goes hand in hand with conflict resolution. The emphasis should be on how to train students in anger management, effective listening and communication and also brainstorming solutions to conflicts. The central pursuit of man is peace. The fundamental idea of international security is contained in the United Nations (UN) charter, Article 1 which commits all members "to maintain international peace and security" and at the end, to take effective collective measures to preserve or restore peace (Onuoha 2008). International organizations such as United Nations (UN) send soldiers on peace mission to war torn countries such as Somalia, and Sudan to maintain and enforce peace. UN also introduced world peace day, and gave Nobel peace prize to individuals who promote peace, all in an effort to emphasize the importance of peace. There is need therefore to find out the efforts teachers are making to enable students acquire the culture of peace and conflict resolution.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the role of the teacher in promoting peace education and conflict resolution in post primary schools. It also intends to find out the extent to which teachers teach topics that promote peace in schools, the extent to which teachers provide good moral incentives to the students and the extent to which teachers use recommended strategies to resolve conflict.

Research Questions:

The study sought to find answers to the following questions.

- (1) To what extent do teachers teach topics that promote peace in schools?
- (2) To what extent do teachers provide good moral incentives to the pupils?
- (3) To what extent do teachers use the recommended strategies to resolve conflict in schools?

Method

The study is a descriptive survey research design. It is a quantitative research which made use of social studies teachers from 10 states in Nigeria who are on sandwich programme. The population of the study comprised all the 2012 social studies sandwich students in the Department of Social Science Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka numbering 362 who teach in post primary schools. Out of 362 students 107 are in final year. Only the final year students were used for the study. There was no sampling because of the small number of the intended respondents. Therefore all the 107 final year students formed the sample size. The sandwich students came from 10 different states in Nigeria, namely, Enugu, Abia, Benue, Kogi, Ebonyi, Bayelsa, Cross River, Anambra, Abuja and Delta. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire captioned Peace Education and Conflict Resolution Post Primary School, designed by the researchers. The

questionnaire has three (3) major clusters made up of 20 items. The instrument was structured in line with the Likert four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) 3.50-4.00, High Extent (HE) 2.50-3.49, Low Extent (LE) 1.50-1.49 and Very Low Extent (VLE) 0.00-1.49. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and suggestions made were incorporated in modifying the instrument. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach alpha method which gave reliability co-efficient of 0.84. One hundred and seven (107) questionnaires were personally distributed to the sandwich students in class during lectures. The entire questionnaire was returned but few were not properly filled, so 104 well completed questionnaires were used for data analysis. Weighted mean score and standard deviation were used to analyze the data obtained.

Results:

The results of the study are presented in tables in line with the research questions.

Research Question I

To what extent do social studies teachers teach topics that promote peace in post primary school?

Table 1. Mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which social studies teachers teach topics that promote peace.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Human rights	3.519	0.710	VHE
2	Constitution and the right of citizens in democracy	3.259	0.696	HE
3	Training in non-violent exercise	2.261	0.647	LE
4	Tolerance	3.451	0.735	HE
5	Integration of values and fostering respect	3.423	0.746	HE
6	Social justice	3.163	0.777	HE
7	Learning experience for realizing personal peace.	2.127	0.704	LE
8	Effect of drugs and other addictions harmful to health	3.432	0.734	HE
9	Causes of conflict	3.394	0.799	HE
10	Types of conflict	3.298	0.79	HE
11	Conflict resolution co-operation and interdependence	3.317	0.779	HE

The data presented in table 1 show that the respondents to high extent teach most of the topics listed, with the exception of training in non-violent exercise and learning experience for realizing personal peace which had low score. Other topics like human rights; constitution and the rights of citizens in democracy; tolerance; integration of values and fostering respect; social justice; effect of drugs and other addictions harmful to health; causes of conflict; types of conflict, conflict resolution, co-operation

and interdependence are taught by the teachers. It is worthy of note that to a very high extent they teach human rights.

Research Question 2

To what extent do teachers provide moral good incentive to the students?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which teachers provide good moral incentive to the pupils

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
12	Provide moral incentive to good conduct in school	3.35	0.69	HE
13	Encourage and sponsor activities that enhance peaceful and socially oriented values.	3.31	0.68	HE
14	Encourage the students to participate in prayer rallies for peace.	3.1	0.800	HE
15	Teach the evils of war and nuclear weapons	2.12	0.75	LE
16	Teach the evils of conflict.	3.12	1.03	HE
17	Make pupils aware of their rights and responsibilities in school.	3.48	0.72	HE

The data presented in table 2 above show that teachers provide high moral incentives to their students and encourage and sponsor activities that enhance peaceful and socially oriented values; encourage the students to participate in prayer rallies for peace and make students aware of their rights and responsibilities in the school. But the teaching of the evils of war and nuclear weapon scored low point.

Research Question 3

To what extent do teachers use the recommended strategies to resolve conflict in schools?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which teachers use the recommended strategies to resolve conflict in schools.

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
18	Peer mediation	3.26	0.68	HE
19	Dialogue	3.35	0.65	HE
20	Compromise	3.11	0.79	HE

There is evidence from table 3 that to high extent teachers apply all the strategies recommended for conflict resolution, they are: peer mediation; dialogue and compromise.

Discussion

The study investigated peace education and conflict resolution in post primary school in some states in Nigeria and focused on the role of the teacher. The study yielded

important results which show that teachers in the sample educate the students on issues that promote peace and conflict resolution in their schools. They make them aware of human rights, the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria and the rights of citizens in democracy. The teachers teach them tolerance, positive values and foster respect among the students. The result also revealed that the respondents highlight issues such as the effect of drugs and other addictions harmful to health, causes of conflict, co-operation and interdependence. Unfortunately, training the students in non – violent exercise and exposing them to learning experience for realizing personal peace scored low point. The reason may be that the teachers in the sample did not know how to go about teaching it due to lack of materials.

The findings of this study differ with the result of a survey carried out in Finland on *The Attitude of Teachers towards the Teaching of Peace*, it was found out that only 10% of the teachers are active in working for peace and that majority of the teachers were not interested in the education for peace; some felt that education for peace is political propaganda (Isohookan – Asuman 1986), the difference is that the teachers used for this study have positive attitude towards educating for peace, they believe in individuals potential for creating a culture of peace and conflict resolution in the school and make effort to achieve that objective.

Other very interesting findings are that teachers provide good moral incentive to the students, encourage and sponsor activities that enhance peaceful and socially oriented values, encourage the students to participate in prayer rallies for peace and teach them the evils of conflict and to a very high extent teach about human rights. The teachers in the sample scored low on the teaching of the evils of war and nuclear weapons. This is a vital topic that the students should be very well exposed to. The teacher in order to portray the evils of nuclear weapon should make the students aware of the fact that the entire world, United Nations (UN) condemns countries that produce nuclear weapons because of the devastating effect it has on mankind.

All the recommended strategies for resolving conflict which include peer mediation, dialogue and compromise are used by the teachers. They explain the disadvantages of conflict to the students so as to make it clear to them that it's better to be in peace than in conflict. The teachers work hard to cultivate in the children the culture of peace with a will for peace. The result agrees with Emenalo (2007) who found out that 90% of teachers are eager to correct students' bad behaviours because they bother about the moral upbringing of the students.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, the teachers in the sample are well disposed to peace education and conflict resolution. Their positive response to most of the issues raised in the questionnaire show that they are interested and committed to inculcate peace culture in the students. There are certain areas the teachers have to pay more attention to, this include, how to help children realize personal peace, train them in non-violent exercise and lay more emphasis on the evils of war and nuclear weapons.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. Education for peace and conflict resolution must start in the home and must permeate many aspects of classroom teaching at all levels of education.
2. The Peace and Justice Club should be formed in the schools. The school could do a lot of things to promote peace in the club such as, learn songs on peace, and write prayers on peace, take pledge to be peace makers, make badges with the peace emblem of a dove to wear. The school can also give peace badge to well behaved students.
3. The students could learn drama that depict peace and conflict and their consequences
4. The school could organize a peace fast and peace march occasionally.
5. Teachers should encourage students to work in groups, and make sure that they learn to co-operate with one another and produce result.
6. There should be further research in this area using a wider population.

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