

ASSESSING PEACE EDUCATION COMPONENT OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA THROUGH SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

DR LILIAN-RITA AKUDOLU
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA
NIGERIA
lilianrita2003@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the findings of survey aimed at assessing peace education component of the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria through Social Studies curriculum. The background information reveals the urgent need for peace education in Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The contributions of this paper are in its attempt to present the extent Nigeria has gone in implementing peace education and give suggestions on what should be done to achieve the successful establishment of a culture of peace among Nigerians.

Key words: Tribalism, Unity avenues, Universal Basic Education, Findings, Suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

After the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, Nigeria became a country constituted of diverse and heterogeneous culture. Consequently there have been cases of struggle for dominance among the people. This struggle became more pronounced after independence in 1960. Madiebo (1980:4) notes that immediately after independence, “the battle to consolidate the legacy of political and military dominance of a section of Nigeria over the rest of the Federation began with increased intensity”. He went on to stress that this struggle eventually degenerated into a bloody civil war. One would have expected that after experiencing this civil war from May 1967 to January 1970, Nigerians would be very careful to maintain peace in the country. This is far from being the case as the country has continued to experience various forms of inter tribal, political and religious disturbances that have often led to loss of lives and property. In fact Forsyth (1997) correctly notes that though political upheaval was the immediate cause of the war, the fundamental cause was tribal hostility embedded in a country characterised with hidden basic disunity. There is therefore the need to refocus this country along the line of peace so as to establish the long eluded national unity.

Over the years, the Federal Government has through different avenues sought to establish closer cultural, social, religious and linguistic ties among the people so as to create the long eluded unity in the country. Among these government initiatives are the establishment of Unity Secondary schools in different States of the Federation and the setting up of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme which compels every Nigerian on graduation to serve the country for one year in any State of the Federation that is not the person’s State of origin. Also in political appointments at the Federal level, effort is made as much as possible to cover the different ethnic groups. Despite all these and other concerted efforts by the Federal Government, the idea of interpreting another

person's actions on the basis of ethnic or religious affiliations still prevails among the citizens. In the face of civil strife, the Government has often resorted to the idea of declaring a state of emergency or closing down institutions. These post-violence actions by the Government do not establish peace rather they make people live with embedded anger which explodes at the least provocation. Sustainable peace does not proceed from the barrels of guns or government declarations. It can only be achieved by engraving in the hearts and minds of people the need and strategies for peace.

It is consoling that in response to the global need for peace, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) has since 1995 been continuously adopting resolutions on the culture of peace. This has culminated to the declaration of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the years 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. The UN General Assembly has also invited all the Member States to observe 21 September each year as the International Day of Peace (United Nations, 2005). It is interesting to note that the UN has also gone beyond political and diplomatic peace dialogues to take a bold step in promoting a culture of peace through education. In fact peace education is the driving force for all UN action oriented strategies in promoting a culture of peace and non-violence. Adams (2000:2) quotes UNESCO as emphasizing that "peace must be founded upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind." This reiterates the 1945 UNESCO constitution which states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constituted" (UNESCO, 2005). Consequently, the UN is currently implementing a good number of global peace sensitive education programmes. The UN global movement for the establishment of a culture of peace through education is provoking in people the recognition of the role of peace education in establishing a culture of peace. This is an interesting development because peace education is both a philosophy and a process that is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge about different precepts and manifestations of peace and violence as well as peacemaking skills. The aim is to equip the learner with alternative non-violent ways of dealing with conflicts. Harris and Morrison (2003:10) maintain that "peace education tries to inoculate students against the evil effects of violence by teaching them skills to manage their conflicts non-violently and by motivating them to choose peace when faced with conflict." Peace education empowers learners with knowledge, attitude and skills to choose peace and non-violent approach to conflict management.

In recognition of the UN mandate on peace education, Nigeria is making effort to establish a culture of peace through education. Though peace education is not offered as a separate subject in the Nigerian education system, salient topics from this area have been added to the Social Studies curriculum which is offered to every learner in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. This programme was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo on 30 September 1999 and it covers early childhood education, adult education, special programmes for nomadic populations, non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youth as well as the formal school system which spans from the beginning of primary school to the end of junior secondary school. The formal education aspect of the UBE programme (from the beginning of primary school to the end of junior secondary school) is the scope of the present study.

The study was necessitated by the high rate of violence and intolerance manifested by secondary school students which in some cases have resulted in loss of life. Do learners in the UBE programme acquire adequate peace education and yet resort to violent actions at the least provocation? To what extent does this aspect of the Social Studies (SS) curriculum reflect the eight areas in the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace? How adequate is the SS curriculum for the establishment of a culture of peace in the learners and subsequently in the society? These questions present the problems that necessitated this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does the peace education content of Social Studies curriculum cover specific aspects of the United Nations eight areas of peace programme?
2. How frequently are learners involved in instructional activities that elicit the demonstration of the values and principles in peace education?
3. How frequently do teachers engage learners in activities aimed at the acquisition of peace-making skills?

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was adopted for the study. All the 1,450 Universal Basic Education (UBE) teachers who attended the sandwich programme at Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU) Awka in August 2005 constituted the population. NAU is a Federal institution and consequently, these teachers came from different States in Nigeria. Through the use of stratified random sampling technique, 50 respondents were sampled from each of the five years (classes) of study. This gave a sample size of 250. State of employment, teaching class and year of study constituted the strata. Instruments used for the study were the UN APL (Area of Peace List), Nigerian primary school curriculum modules in Social Studies (PSCMSS), National curriculum for Junior Secondary School in Social Studies (NCJSSSS) and a questionnaire containing 26 items. The PSCMSS and NCJSSSS were analysed to identify the extent of coverage of the APL. The questionnaire items were structured on a four point scale of very frequently, frequently, rarely and never. The questionnaire instrument was content validated by two lecturers at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability was ascertained by administering the instrument once to 10 UBE teachers in Enugu State who did not participate in the Sandwich programme. The scores were analysed using odd and even numbered items technique and later correlated using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient and this yielded a coefficient of internal consistency of 0.82. The obtained data were analysed using percentages.

RESULTS

Table 1

The Extent of Curriculum Content Coverage of the UN Areas of Peace List (APL)

Total number of topics in Social Studies curriculum (SSC) =115

S/N	Area of Peace List (APL)	Number of APL topics in SSC	
		Freq	%
1	Culture of peace through education	3	3
2	Sustainable economic and social development	7	6
3	Respect for all human rights	3	3
4	Equality between women and men	1	1
5	Democratic participation	3	3
6	Understanding, tolerance and solidarity	8	7
7	Participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge	3	3
8	International peace and security	3	3
	Total	31	29

Table 1 shows that only 31(approximately 29%) of the 115 topics in the entire UBE Social Studies curriculum (from primary to junior secondary school) is related to the UN eight areas of peace.

Table 2

Frequency of Learners' Involvement in Activities that Demonstrate Values and Principles in Peace Education

Sample =250

S/N	Items	Very Frequently	Frequently	Rarely	Never
1	Compassion	6(2%)	12(5%)	89(36%)	143(57%)
2	Solidarity	11(4%)	29(12%)	163(65%)	47(19%)
3	Non-violence	25(10%)	64(26%)	100(40%)	61(24%)
4	Patience	15(6%)	48(19%)	98(39%)	89(36%)
5	Hope	3(1%)	27(11%)	112(45%)	108(43%)
6	Justice	16(6%)	60(24%)	95(38%)	79(32%)
7	Forgiveness	54(22%)	51(20%)	73(29%)	72(29%)
8	Respect	68(27%)	92(37%)	42(17%)	48(19%)
9	Sharing	52(21%)	98(39%)	55(22%)	45(18%)
10	Love	42(17%)	68(27%)	82(33%)	58(23%)
11	Democracy	81(32%)	74(30%)	40(16%)	55(22%)

None of the items scored up to 50%. When scores for “very frequently” and “frequently” are put together, only items 8, 9 and 11 had up to a total score of 50%. This indicates that learners are not frequently involved in instructional activities that demonstrate values and principles in peace education..

Table 3
 Frequency of Teacher-s- Mediated Learners’ Engagement In Peace-Making Skills
 Acquisition Activities
 Sample=250

S/N	Items	Very Frequently	Frequently	Rarely	Never
1	Engage learners in dialogue to discuss academic problems	100(40%)	88(35%)	22(9%)	40(16%)
2	Set up whole class discussion on current social issues	15(6%)	35(14%)	108(43%)	92(37%)
3	Encourage learners to enter into dialogue with others to resolve conflicts	5(2%)	65(26%)	94(38%)	86(34%)
4	Make learners appreciate the value of dialogue in conflict resolution	12(5%)	83(33%)	132(53%)	23(9%)
5	Make learners realise the need to mediate in conflict situations	3(1%)	17(7%)	84(34%)	146(58%)
6	Engage learners in mediation in cases of real or hypothesized conflict situation	27(11%)	42(17%)	91(36%)	90(36%)
7	Engage learners in team work that requires cooperation	16(6%)	62(25%)	100(40%)	72(29%)
8	Demonstrate tolerance in class management	45(18%)	100(40%)	62(25%)	43(17%)
9	Use classroom situations to teach the value of tolerance	3(1%)	7(3%)	112(45%)	128(51%)
10	Make learners respect the rights of one another	30(12%)	60(24%)	108(43%)	52(21%)
11	Establish democratic principles in learners classroom management activities	41(16%)	64(26%)	70(28%)	85(34%)

12	Make learners follow their individual turns in classroom activities	55(22%)	40(16%)	70(28%)	85(34%)
13	Discourage violence among learners	26(64%)	72(29%)	33(13%)	81(32%)
14	Set up learning activities that encourage non-violent social change	5(2%)	14(6%)	116(46%)	115(46%)
15	Make learners show concern for other people's problems	2(0.8%)	8(3%)	125(50%)	115(46%)

All the items except numbers 1, 9, 11 and 13 scored below 50%. This indicates that the learners do not have enough opportunity to engage in peace-making skills acquisition activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the Social Studies curriculum for the UBE programme in Nigeria contain some peace education topics that are based on the eight action areas of peace education recommended by the United Nations. It should be noted that the present study was limited to Social Studies curriculum for the fact that it appears to be the first subject to overtly address peace education in the Nigerian school system. However, effective implementation of peace education curriculum requires the integration of peace concept and strategies into all aspects of instruction to cut across subject boundaries and educational practices including administration, guidance counselling and others. This is because peace education is not just about adding topics or themes to the curriculum. It is about mind transformation through the acquisition of appropriate skills, values and attitude which will empower the learner to seek and maintain peace. The implication is that peace education goes beyond subject matter issues to include all aspects of learning that touch on the behaviour of the learner. The essential thing is to teach every subject with peace education orientation. In this regard, Swee-Hin (2000:25) states that

Teachers and educators in all levels of schooling undoubtedly constitute a vital link in the web of building a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world. For example, non-violence and a holistic peace education framework needs to be integrated into curriculum areas in terms of content (knowledge and texts) and pedagogies (participatory and cooperative). Classroom management skills can endorse non-violence principles and practices of conflict resolution.

The findings that learners are neither involved in activities that demonstrate values and principles in peace education nor do they frequently engage in peace-making skill-acquisition activities indicate a lacuna in the implementation of peace education in

Nigeria. During the post-questionnaire discussion, most of the respondents told the researcher that they do not have enough time to engage the students in peace oriented activities. They teach these topics like every other topic in the Social Studies curriculum. Peace education is not exactly like the other school subjects. It is more concerned with the affective than the cognitive domain of educational objectives. Consequently experiential learning is the recommended mode of instruction (Staub, 2002 and Bar-Tal, 2002). The learners acquire knowledge by doing or by engaging in appropriate actions. In fact Bar-Tal (2002, 33) insists that “students need to live under the conditions described in peace education in order to internalize its objectives”. The essential thing is to provide learners with peace infused skill and activity-based lessons “that together build the attitudes, values and behaviour of constructive living within the community” (UN, 2004.4) The implication is that teachers should create appropriate scenarios for students to learn the need for peace as well as the strategies for peace. These peace strategies are “peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building” (Harris and Morrison, 2003:15). It is only through the practice of these strategies of peace that learners can internalize the objectives, values and principles in peace education. The findings of this study also imply that teachers should be conversant not only with the concept of peace education but also with its instructional strategies. This will enable these teachers use every opportunity in the instructional process to develop in the learners a culture of peace and non-violence. Apart from the fact that this will lead to the establishment of a society where human beings work together to resolve conflicts, as well as respect human dignity, it will also lead to development. UNDP (2006:2) confirms that “there is an indispensable link between peace and development”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of this study have shown that peace education is yet to be effectively implemented in the Nigerian education system. The major problem is that a good number of the teachers do not understand the peace education concept or its objectives, principles and strategies. This buttresses the need for adequate teacher preparation in this area of study. This is to ensure that these teachers can effectively help learners develop the ability to tolerate others and to resolve conflict without violence. In this regard the following recommendations are made:

- Seminars and workshops should be organized for UBE teachers to enable them acquire the pedagogical expertise for implementing peace education curriculum.
- Principles and strategies of peace education should be integrated into basic methodology courses taught in teacher training institutions.
- Peace education topics should be added to all subjects in the UBE programme.
- Text books for the UBE programme should be reviewed to give them peace education orientation.
- Film producers should endeavour to be projecting peace heroes more often than war heroes.
- Religious leaders should continue to use every opportunity to denounce violence and project peace.

- The Federal Government should institute peace merit award to be given to deserving individuals.

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