Review

Peace education: A prognosis for social reconstruction in Nigeria

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The increasing complexities of violence in Nigeria demands new strategies for combating the social malaise. Things have so degenerated to the extent that the 'big men' who should be belly-aching over how to solve the problems of Nigeria are getting themselves enmeshed in a game of bloody levity while riff-raffs, ruffians and ragamuffins are driving sane people to Golgotha with bombs. We cannot but agree that Nigeria is in dire need of the ideology of social reconstruction. The authors are of the opinion that the virility of violence in the country must be intentionally challenged. This paper submits that if national stability and strength depend on effective integration of plural traditions, schools can play significant mediatory role. In order to combat the current culture of intolerance and violence there is the need to reinvigorate social reconstruction via Peace Education Programme.

Keywords: Social reconstruction, peace education, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The indices of Nigeria approaching a failed state are largely provable. The country's perpetual inability to meet the desired expectations of her citizens has remained largely a source of worry for many Nigerians and their friends. The classical definition of a failed state is a country overwhelmed by circumstances. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to human adversity, natural disasters, collapsed or collapsing institutions, a dissolute and disoriented political elite and a disillusioned and disenfranchised populace tottering at the edge of despair and despondency. Pervading the Nigerian terrain is the rise and rise of incivility; a nasty edginess is the order of the day. Tempers flare without notice and almost in every public place, arguments quickly degenerate to insults and bitter recriminations. Expletives and foul coinages are hurled about like equal opportunity grenade as religious, political, commercial and even academic transactions are marked by rancor and incredible rudeness. The discourtesy and incivility are of such nature that the civilized must squirm in coy denial. Things have so degenerated to the extent that the

'big men' who should be belly-aching over how to solve the problems of Nigeria are getting themselves enmeshed in a game of bloody levity while riff-raffs, ruffians and ragamuffins are driving sane people to Golgotha with bombs. We cannot but agree that Nigeria is in dire need of the ideology of social reconstruction.

Social Reconstruction: A Concise Elucidation

Woolman (2001) posited that social reconstruction ideology is a social perspective which assumes that the unhealthiness of our society is caused by too great a disparity between the ideal and the factual, between the unrealized potential and the realized situation which causes conflicts and a subsequent social crisis. It holds that the survival of the society is threatened because the traditional mechanisms developed by society to contend with social problems are incapable of doing their job. Ikumola (2011) while writing on the report of the panel set up on *Boko Haram* captured this systemic failure in Nigeria when he tersely commented, "the committee noted that there was no effective and co-ordinate intelligence gathering and deployment to forestall crime". Besides, it listed operational lapses,

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service rivalry, underfunding and lack of collaboration are part of the problems of the security agencies. No doubt, the statement bespeaks a volume of crisis of confidence in the country.

In addition, social reconstruction ideology assumes that something should be done to keep society from destroying itself (Engel and Martin, 2005). This assumption necessitates the development of a vision of a society better than the existing one, a society whose problems and conflicts have been resolved. It also requires action directed toward reconstruction of society based on that vision. To save society from self-destruction, Giroux (2005) recommended that a vision of a society better than the existing one must be developed. According to Giroux (2006), Social Reconstructionists begin with the assumption that the survival of any society could be threatened by many problems. These problems include among others, racism, war, sexism, poverty, pollution, worker exploitation, global warming, crime, political corruption, population explosion, energy shortage, illiteracy, inadequate health care and unemployment. At this juncture, it might be important to draw the correlation between Social Reconstruction and Education.

Social Reconstruction and Education: An Explication of Corollaries

Generally, there are four major philosophies that dominate educational thinking today. Apple (1996) enunciated that the Perennialists hold that "the supreme end of education is the possession of everlasting, timeless and space- less principles of reality, truth and value". He went further to expatiate that the essentialists emphasize the cultural heritage and traditional subject matter and that the

Progressivists treat the schools as laboratories of experience in which students learn chiefly by pragmatic problem solving. From all these, the Reconstructionist has borrowed, but finds each, in its own way, inadequate. Perennialism leads to dogma and false orthodoxies; essentialism stagnates in the statuesquo; the progressivists while strong on method are not sure what they should be educating for.

The Reconstructionists' answer to education is that education must try to create a new social order that is as close to utopia as possible (Apple, 1996). The reconstructionist rejects all absolutes, thinks that there is no metaphysical design to the universe and that history has no ingrained purpose, nor pre-ordained goal. All that matters is building a future in which "man may be happier, more rational, and more human than he has ever been" (Groenke, 2009). Since there are no absolutes, Howlet (1982) reasoned that truth is only what the majority says it is. The task of both school and society

is to determine what goals men should strive for by appealing to social consensus. Though the individual must be encouraged, the aim is always to build a 'group mind' that expresses the social consensus of the majority. The all embracing value for the individual is social self realization and that comes only when each man comes to grips with the realities of our group-central culture. To maintain political relevance, these theories should retain the themes of plurality, difference, and heterogeneity in the context of a reconstructed conception of collective emancipation.

In every society, at any time, the function of education is to realize the ideals of manhood and of relationship between men that it cherishes (Mazrui, 1978). It is imperative then that education must develop individuals who are cooperative in their means and constantly engaged in achieving agreement about the details and relations of the ends they desire; ends that emanate from their means and provides purposive actions on behalf of future goals. Fafunwa and Aisiku (1982), Ekechi (1998); Anyanwu and Obanewa (1999) were of the opinion that if education is to serve distinctive functions, it is needful then to determine what particular values and what particular ends of culture this generation should be asked to adopt and struggle to realize. No doubt, Nigeria's national stability and strength depend on effective integration of plural traditions. Yoloye (1995) and Oyelade (2001) pointed out that cultural reconstructionism advocates an education that manifests continuous reconstruction of social change. They noted that cultural reconstructionism is a blend of the old and new into a viable cultural synthesis which could be hinged on Dewey's pragmatism and Hegel's view of absolute idea. Hegel's view of absolute idea derives from the process of continuous conflict between partial truth (thesis) and its contradiction (antithesis) which results in newer and higher idea (a synthesis). From the discussions so far, the following assumptions could be made:

(a) there is an ideal society that we ought to be working towards;

(b) education is a social action that has consequences, depending on how we educate;

(c) there is need to direct education to develop ideal society.

Social Reconstruction involves a normative view of education, one consistent with peace education. The connection with issues of peace and social justice is not too difficult to locate.

(a) The ideal society that we ought to be working towards is one of peace and justice.

(b) Education is a social action that has consequences in orienting students towards the possibilities for peace, depending upon how we educate and;

(c) Energy should be directed towards education to

embrace and encourage peace.

The relationship between social reconstruction and peace education can possibly be seen most clearly in the writings of John Dewey. This is where Dewey's (1957) work becomes handy. Dewey had written earlier that there is an intimate connection between education and social action in a democracy. He was of the opinion that school should teach students how to be problem-solvers by helping students learn how to think rather than simply learning rote lessons about large amounts of information. In Dewey's view, schools should focus on judgement rather than knowledge so that school children become adults who can "pass judgement pertinently and discriminatingly on the problems of human living" (Campbell, 1995). According to Ryan (1995), Dewey also believed that schools should help students learn to live and to work cooperatively with others. In a tone of finality, he asserted that in a complex society, ability to understand and sympathize with the operations and lot of others is a condition of common purpose which only education can procure.

Developing a Culture of Peace through Education

As peace education is a broad field, its definition can be a bit tenuous. Very simply, peace education aims to provide learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to end violence and injustice and promote a culture of peace. Fountain (1997) defined Peace Education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. Hicks (1985) regarded peace education as activities that develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to explore concepts of peace, enquire into the obstacles to peace (both in individuals and societies), to resolve conflicts in a just and non-violent way, and to study ways of constructing just and sustainable alternative futures. Galtung (1995) explained 'peace studies' as evolving from a focus on research and building knowledge to an emphasis on skill-building. Insight into the roots of violence must be balanced with work on devising ways to overcome, reduce and prevent violence.

For Galtung, the reforming of cultures and social structures that are antithetical to peace is the essential challenge. Peace Education brings together multiple traditions of pedagogy, theories of Education and international initiatives for the advancement of human development through learning. It is fundamentally dynamic and interdisciplinary. It grows out of the work of

educators such as John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire, John Galtung, Elise and Kenneth Boulding and many others. Freire (1970, 1988) centered education on revealing systems of expression, particularly through the exploration of language and identity and by challenging the banking-model of teaching and learning. Reardon (1995) revealed in her writing that "the ultimate goal of peace education is the formation of responsible, committed and caring citizens who have integrated the values into everyday life and acquired the skills to advocate for them". She went further to express that "the conceptual core of peace education is violence; its control, reduction and elimination. The conceptual core of human rights education is human dignity, its recognition, fulfillment and universalization". Deducible from Reardon's writing is the fact that virility of violence must be intentionally challenged.

The growing literature of peace education reflects a dynamic field. Harris (2004) divided peace education into five categories: international education, development education, environmental education, human rights education and conflict resolution education. In order to combat the current culture of intolerance and violence in the society, Reardon (2001:111-114) explained thus:

Learners must be guided towards a clear comprehension of the major obstacles to a culture of, the normative and behavioural obstacles that lie at the heart of our discussion of capacities and skills; and the institutional and existential obstacles, the global problems that are the worldwide manifestations of the culture of war. Together these problems comprise the problematic of creating a culture of peace.

It is important that education should facilitate people's understanding that war and other forms of physical, economic, political, ecological and gender violence are not on the same order as natural disasters. Whereas the latter ones are inevitable eventualities to be prepared for, the former ones are consequences of human will and intent.

Peace education is most effective when the skills of peace and conflict resolution are learned actively and are modelled by the school environment in which they are taught (Baldo and Furniss, 1998). In a number of countries, emphasis is placed on improving the school environment so that it becomes a microcosm of the more peaceful and just society that is the objective of peace education. This creates a consistency between the messages of the curriculum and the school setting, between the overt and the 'hidden' curriculum.

The following contents are suggested for introduction into our curricula from primary to tertiary institution.
1. Alternatives to Violence- A course in solving conflict peacefully.
2. Becoming Peace Makers- Peace education curriculum for pre-school.
3. Dealing with violence in the classroom.

4. Conflict Resolution in the   Schools.
5. Cooperative Sports and Games- Challenge without competition.
6. Education for Social Responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Peace education is an essential component of quality basic education that aims to build the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable young people to preventviolence, resolve conflict peacefully, and promote social conditions conducive to peace and justice. Peace Education is about empowering people with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge:
*to build, maintain, and restore relationships at all levels of human   interaction.
*to develop positive approaches towards dealing with conflicts -from the personal to the international.
*to create safe environments, both physically and emotionally,   that   nurture   each   individual.
*to create a safe world based on justice and human rights.
*to build a sustainable environment and protect it from exploitation.

Peace education is based on a philosophy that teaches nonviolence, love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation and reverence for the human family and all life on our planet. Skills include communication, listening, understanding different perspectives, cooperation, problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, conflict resolution, and social responsibility.

In the past, peace education centered on the causes of war, an issue that grew as nations developed the capacity of destroying the whole human race many times over. But today the scope of peace education includes not only the causes, the nature, and the terrible consequences of war but also the study of violence in all forms. Such forms of violence include conflict, threat to life, ethnic hatred, discrimination, prejudice, racism, injustice, genocide, poverty, violence in the home and family, destruction of the environment, and so forth. A basic aim of peace education is to save humankind from destroying a large portion or all of itself. Once we become aware of our suicidal behaviour, peace education points out to us the alternatives that can gradually slow down and   stop   this   mad   rush. But peace education does not provide a complete answer, as it appears to offer a long term solution to threats here and now. However, peace education must be reinvigorated and allowed to grow sporadically within schools so that it can quickly reach out to parents, families, various ethnic and religious groups, and the communities in Nigeria.

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