Achieving Peace Education through Open and Distance Learning System in Nigeria

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Abstract: The interaction between direct peace education and structural peace education offers new prospects for suitable peace education whose aim is to promote conflict transformation. Improving the structural conditions for a long term conflict transformation culture can do much to enhance the development of learning spaces for peace. Opportunities to trial and implementation of this approach exist in development cooperation, civil conflict management and related project settings. Experience has shown that several steps are typically involved in project implementation. The first step is to offer learning spaces for educationists who are interested in and have a commitment to peace education, so that stable groups can develop. Mutual inspiration, shared learning and project work create the basis for cooperation among individuals with different backgrounds (political, cultural, religious ideological) and levels of experience (university, school, non-school education) so that training opportunities for third parties can be developed. Following on from this, pilot projects can be carried out, the aim being to develop learning media and curricula through a shared process and to trial materials and curricula in an appropriate setting. At the end of the pilot phase, the next step is to integrate them into the education system. Issues on peace, spaces for open and distance learning were covered in this paper by the authors and conclusion and recommendations were made.
Keywords: Peace Education, Distance Education and Learning Spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars and other citizens globally have recently developed very great interest in peace education. The renowned Journal of Peace Education describes peace education not only as a flourishing academic discipline but, indeed, as an active global social movement "that can collectively unify, fuel, inspire dialogue among scholars, researchers, activists, educators, government leaders, and the myriad of public peacemakers committed to creating cultures of peace throughout the world" [1].

It has been observed that in view of what appear to be constantly self-reproducing cultures of violence in many societies, there are increasingly urgent calls for a reliable peace education tool box. Organizations engaged in non-violent conflict management and development cooperation now generally regard education programmes as extremely important, and peace education is being mostly integrated into many of them. In most cases, the question which increasingly arises is what contribution it can make, focusing, on the one hand, on the theoretical foundations of peace education and, on the other, on developing context-appropriate practical approaches and documenting and analyzing the impacts. As a result, the United States Institute of

Peace, in a review of its grant making in the area of peace education, pays tribute to the success achieved and the progress made on conceptualization and implementation, but also call emphatically for greater differentiation and focusing of approaches, and proposes more intensive dialogue between academics and practitioners in this context [2]. A network of individuals, groups and organizations has been formed, whose activities reflect the full diversity of peace education approaches practiced worldwide. A good insight into the "Scene" is provided by the Newsletter of the Global Campaign for Peace Education. Launched in 1999, the campaign's goal is to provide peace education with an internal forum and an external voice [3].

In Nigeria today, peace education is paramount going by its cultural diversity and the current Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast of the country. Achieving peace education through open and distance learning system provides an easy but an alternative means of disseminating information on conflict management to all parts of the country in a faster and outreach coverage. Peace education requires structured planning, well-designed courses, special instructional techniques and methods of communication which could

be best delivered to the Nigerian masses through open and distance learning systems.

In this paper, we shall look at the meaning of peace education, the meaning of open and distance learning, the target group for peace education, and the aim of peace education, how peace education could be achieved through open and distance learning system, conclusion and recommendation.

What is Peace Education?

Researchers and as well as practitioners have agreed that single recognized definition does not and probably cannot, exist [1]. It has also been observed that the approaches are too diverse, as are the contexts in which peace education programmes are usually discussed, conceptualized, trialed and evaluated (Lum, 2013). The diversity ranges from programmes to prevent violence among pre-school children and mediation programmes in school to encounter workshops with members of different conflict parties in crisis regions and ideas on how to redesign education systems in a conflict manner and develop curricula and learning of materials in post-conflict societies. Numerous recent monographs, collections of articles and manuals bear witness to this state of affairs. [4]

In the past, various attempts have been made at structuring the field of peace education. A good example is the much discussed approach advocated by Gavriel Salomon-Emeritus Professor at the University of Haifa, who has worked tirelessly for many years for more clarity and conceptual thinking about peace education [4]. In his view, the contextualization, of peace education is crucial. Salomon distinguishes between:
- Contexts of relative tranquility with no tension
- Contexts of latent ethnopolitical tension
- Contexts of collective, intractable and belligerent conflicts.

In the later, peace education, according to Salomon, faces its real text, for here, it is about making peace with a real enemy: "With somebody you really hate, who really threaten you" (Salomon & Cairns, 2010) [4]. From his perspective, a prototype can be developed from this albeit without devaluing peace education in the other contexts. The proposed contextualization sharpens awareness of the need for peace education programmes to be precisely, aligned to the specific setting. At the same time, some of the individual measures can be developed in different contexts.

In to contextualization, the process, personality and relationship forming aspects of peace education are important. Peace education is primarily an educational process operating within context of war, threat, violence, conflict that addresses attitudes, beliefs, attributes, skills and behavior [4].

The ideas presented in this paper are based on these principles. The key question addressed in the paper concerns the concept of peace education and how peace education could be achieved in Nigeria through open and distance learning system.

A Brief History of Peace Education Development

Since the World War, the development of peace education, especially in Germany has been significantly influence by the global political situation and events or by challenges arising within the society of Germany itself. For example, the nuclear arms race led to intense debate that focused on how to develop an appropriate pedagogical response to children's fears of war. On the other hand, issues such as right-wing extremism, xenophobia and images of violence in the media have always determined the peace education agenda to a high degree as well. the resulting diversity of topics and approaches can be viewed as a strength, but is also creates major challenges in the quest for a clear academic profile in peace education.

Although school as a place of learning is at the heart of peace education, the non-school education sector has always been addressed as well. Besides some committed teachers, it was mainly youth groups and peace organizations which began at an early stage to build on the momentum generated by peace education for greater international understanding and management of individuals' and societies' potential for violence. In the 1970s and 1980s youth groups for peace education was prominent, but it is mainly non-governmental organizations that promote peace education in our society.

In Germany, discussions about current challenges facing peace education take place at events organized by relevant networks, such as the conferences of the Peace Education Working Group of the German Association for Peace and Conflict Studies and Conferences organized by the North German Peace Education Network. In addition, specialist journals publish articles analyzing current development. In 2014, for example, the question was what might constitute an appropriate peace education response to the growing presence of the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces) in schools and in teacher training [5]. Another challenge relating to schooling arises from the interaction between children and young people with different experiences of war: children of soldiers deployed in military operations involving the Bundeswehr, refugee children from conflict and crisis region, and children who (only) find out about war via the media [5]. Against the backdrop of new wars and military interventions, critics are now asking to what

extent the unconditional moral rejection of war can continue to be upheld in peace education [6].

What is Distance Education?

Distance education or distance learning has always been about offering learning opportunities to communities that have historically been excluded from formal learning systems – women, religious and cultural minorities, residents of post conflict areas, or inhabitants of remote geographic regions. It has always been about leveraging combinations of available technologies – the printing press, the post, trucks, ships, radio, telephone, computers or fiber-optic cables – to overcome the challenge of geography, demographics, resources, and terrain to provide knowledge and opportunities to those who most need them [7]. It has always been about bringing to bear innovation – either technical or methodological – to offer new methods and modes of learning, so that non-traditional students can learn in ways that may be more useful than those offered in a traditional "brick and mortal" or "clay and wattle" school setting. It has always been about expanding limited learning opportunities and offering the convenience of learning to those who cannot because of their age or occupation-take advantage of traditional schooling. And at its very essence, distance education has always being about helping individuals fulfils their professional dreams and aspirations-whether to be an office workers or a Para-teacher or a certified teacher.

Distance education is a planned learning experience or method of instruction characterized by quasi permanent separation of the instructor and learner(s). Within a distance education system, information and communication are of-changed through predictor electronic communications media, [8]. Distance education is an educational process and system in which all or a significant proportion of the teaching is carried out by someone or something removed in space and time from the learned [9]. Distance education requires structured planning, well-designed courses, special instructional, techniques and methods of communication by electronic and other technologies [7].

Distance education is also a broad approach characterized by a high degree of variation. Such variation includes the types of media or technology used (print, radio, computer); the nature of the learning (workshop, seminar, degree programme, supplement to traditional classroom, levels of support); institutional setting; topics addressed; and levels of interactivity support (face-to-face, online, blended, none) [10].

Target Groups for Peace Education

In conflict prevention, policy-maker and educationists often take the view that children are the main target group for peace education-regardless of which conflict setting is being discussed. The premise is that "peace begins in the minds of children. But how do we make sure children receive the quality education that will help them build peace" [11]. The usual question is "how much responsibility should be transferred to children in relation to the issue of peace? But how much peace can they create, and above all, what role are the adults playing? Ultimately, the main burden of responsibility lies with them.

Around 50 percent of the populations in developing countries are under 16 years of age. The fact is that children and young people (a distraction between these terms is almost impossible to make in the global country) are not only victims but also perpetrators of violent of war (as child soldiers, for example). But they can also be agents for peace: "in zones of conflict all over the world, youth are coming together seeking to protect their own rights and to promote peace [12].

However, if peace education aims to adopt a broad-based approach that holds out the promise of success, then it is not only a matter of involving the children: the family, the community and, ultimately, decision-makers in politics and society must also play a role. Evaluations of peace education programmes with children in refuges camps clearly show that the success of these programmes depends on the extent to which the communities are involved [13]. Two lessons can be learned from this:

1. Peace education programmes for children must involve the local community.
2. Specific programmes for adults are also required after all, it is adults who engage in warfare and are responsible for making peace.

Multipliers from the education sector have provided to be important target groups for peace education. They include teachers in schools and in higher education, and education professionals working in non-school settings, such as refugee camps and youth centers. Education decision-makers at the local, municipal and national levels are also important. A further target group is the staff from non-governmental organization and peace activities, who are not only interested in peace education programmes but also peer education. Learning arrangements in this case are based on the recognition that children and young people learn best from their peers, creating touch points with peer education programmes [14].

The exploration of target groups in peace education is guided by the fundamental recognition that individuals can make a difference, especially in less individualistic societies with entrenched inter

community conflicts [15]. Peace education programmes therefore aim to empower people and strengthen their capacities to act as "change makers."

Types of Peace Education

There are two main types of peace education. They are direct peace education and structural peace education.

Direct Peace Education

Direct peace education focuses on the conflict transformation power of human encounter. Indeed, it could be said that without encounter, peace education cannot take place at all. However, these are not random encounters but "staged" forms of different conflict partial are invited to workshops, seminar and even major (sports) events for which a specific dialogue form at or learning arrangement has been developed. The encounters also bring together members of conflict parties who are hostile to one another. In ethno political conflict societies, it is important to facilitate contact between people with different ethnic or religious affiliations. In every case, peace education deliberately creates learning spaces in order to increase, the likelihood that these encounters will have positive, conflict transformative effects. It is about imitating learning processes that facilitate the development of the encounter process in direct peace advent on. Direct peace education has another goal as well: to provide the right inspiration for the right people at the right time at the right place. This can have a lasting effect, as an example form peace counts on Towr in India shows. After a workshop in New Delhi in March 2009, several participants took the peace counts concept back to their own regions (primarily the crisis in North East India) and, since they have run a steadily growing number of workshops either independently or with support from the peace counts team in Germany.

The life history approach adopted in the peace counts reports is very much in keeping with this form of peace education. Biographical learning, or learning from best practice models, has an important role to play indirect peace education, especially when working with young target groups. A critical exploration of role models who are "direct" may prove fruitful: "their conflict-rich life situations and the options for action that were available to them create productivity learning of opportunities for peace education [16]. The pre-requisite is value-oriented model-based learning. For Mendi, model-based learning is successful if the attitudes, positions and behavior patterns of a person who has been the subject of reflective and value-oriented learning can be expressed/integrated in the daily life of the (young) target groups. What is more, as Mendi sees it, an approach which uses others' life stories as a basis for reflection on one's own thinking

and action necessarily creates scope for more differentiated consideration of negative role models.

Directs peace education teaches people that peace counts-on a micro and macro level. In an impressive study conducted at Malmo School of Education, various dimensions of the linkage between the micro and macro levels were examined from a violence prevention, conflict management and peace education perspective [17]. The two key findings are:

(1)   If, based on their personal expenses, people favour violence as a way of solving conflict resolution at the international level as well.

(2)   If people gain positive experience of non-violent conflict resolution at the feelings of power lessens and lack of influence on conflicts in the international context diminish, and there is an increased willingness to for non-violent engagement for peace.

Structural Peace Education

In recent years, there has been growing interest in peace education among international organizations and policy-makers, reflecting the fact that the issue of promoting peace processes through education has gained in significance overall. At the international level, the relevant UN organizations are increasingly highlighting the possible positive peace-promoting effects of education: "Education is not a marginal player in peace building but care component of building sustainable peace" [18]. And according to UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report: "Intra-State armed conflict is often associated with grievance and perceived injustices linked to identity, faith, ethnicity and religion. Education can take a difference in all these are as, tripping the balance in favour of peace-or conflict" [9]. The fact is that education can be deliberately misused to build enemy stereotypes, hate, excessive nationalism and militarized thinking like the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria. This problem is especially evident in the formal education sector: although schools all over the world are regarded as outstanding places for delivery of peace education, they are also hotbeds of personal, structural and cultural violence and not only worse but also help to entrench and internalize (ethnic, religious and social) tension lines of conflict and discrimination over the long-term [20].

The challenge facing peace education, therefore, is to make education programmes and indeed, education systems as a whole, "conflict sensitive." After many years of discussions, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) has systematized the experience gathered to date and published various documents, including guidelines for

the development and delivery of conflict-sensitive education programmes and policies. In this context, "conflict sensitive education" is defined as a process with three core elements (INEE, 2013): [21].

- Understanding the context in which education takes places.
- Analyzing the two-way interaction between the context and education programmes and polices (development, planning and delivery).
- Acting to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impact of education policies and programming on conflict, within an organization's given priorities.

The transitions from direct to structural peace education are fluid and are located at the interface between encounter, capacity-building and joint action/implementation. The exchange of experience and training for key stakeholders in the conflict transformation process can culminate in a peace education pilot project that focuses on the joint development of learning modules and media on selected topics from the fields of conflict, violence, war and peace, as a basis for initial steps towards their delivery in schools or higher education institutions. One of the key lessons from peace educations is the sustainable charges in the formal education sector originate in transparent pilot projects which are devised, travelled and evaluated by key stakeholders, i.e responsible persons from all sectors of education, including teaching staff, and enable these stakeholders to gain positive experience. Many of these issues addressed in detain in the context of direct peace education (Controversial topics; Stereotypes; enemy mages; taboo topic; collective historical narratives; participation methods; development of concepts of peace and community) can lead to structural peace education, if the right conditions are in place and opportunities are utilized.

Peace Education: Spaces for Open and Distance Learning System

It is not surprising that the underling question frequently asked us: "What is peace education? [1]. Researchers and practitioners agree that a single recognized definition does not and probably cannot exist. The approach are too diverse, as are the contexts in which peace education programmes are discussed, conceptualized, trialed and evaluated. The diversity ranges from programmes to prevent violence among preschool children and mediation programmes in schools to encounter workshops with member of different conflict parties in crisis regions and ideas on how to redesign education systems in a conflict-sensitive manner and develop curricula and learning materials in post-conflict societies.

Distance education is a planned learning experience or method of instruction characterized by quasi permanent separation of the instructor and learner(s). Within a distance education system, information and communication are exchanged through print or electronic communication medial [22].

Distance education is also a broad approach characterized by a high degree of variation. Such variation includes the types of media or technology used (print, radio, computer); the nature of the learning such as peace education (workshops, seminar, degree program, non-formal education programmes).

In the context of peace education, distance education can be used to address variations topics of peace education usually derived from conflict and violent regions and societies. It has been used as a method of educating different groups of people and other stakeholders involved in peace education.

Types of distance education usually used in peace education include: correspondence (print), audio-based models (Broadcast: IRI, Narrow cast: IAI (via audio tape or CDs; two-way radio audio conferencing and telephone, broad cast; television molds-broadcast television (educational and instructional); video conferencing, video, computer-based multimedia models –interactive video (disc and tape) CD-ROMS, digital video discs (DVDS/VCDS), interactive multimedia, web-based models-computer mediated communication, internet-based access to World Wide Web resources, online courses (e-learning) online conferences (Webcasts and Webinars), virtual classes schools (cyber schools) and universities mobile models Hand-held devices, portable media players (pool casting), cell phones and smart phones, tablets and e-readers. All these communication technologies are used in providing peace education to various target groups concerned with peace education programmes. Studies and researchers on peace education such as in Germany and Jordan have shown that all the above communication media are usually used in open and distance education.

CONCLUSION

Against this background, it may be appropriate to consider the establishment of peace education open distance learning platform for the target sharing of experience, as a means of meeting the need for more intensive researcher practitioner dialogue which must draw on experience gained with peace education contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made in the context of this proper.

1. Peace education materials and curricular must be based on experiences gained from violent, conflict and war contexts.
2. Fundamental peace education programmes for exchange of experiences across borders should be encouraged.
3. Greater reflection on the role of peace education through open and distance learning programmes in initiating, supporting and evaluating collective learning processes in various content should be encouraged.

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