

An Educology of Peace Education:
Formulating a Strategy for the Promotion of
Non-Violent Conflict Resolution in a
Democracy

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Abstract

The world today is fraught with violence and conflicts. This state of affairs is made all the more dangerous by the development of nuclear technology and the possibility of dissemination of military applications of this technology to unstable countries and militant terrorists.

At the same time, there has been a rapid diffusion of democratization since the conclusion of the cold-world war, and this a most promising development. Conflicts indeed are inevitable where interpersonal relationships exist. But conflicts do not inevitably have to lead to violence, or loss of property or of life. Conflicts can be resolved peacefully, and the democratic process is especially well suited for peaceful resolution of conflict.

What is needed within the democratic context is knowledge, skill and commitment to the process of peaceful means of resolving conflict. An important component of the process of promoting peaceful conflict resolution is an effective program of peace education. To make the process effective, there needs to be a sound educology of peace education, i.e. there needs to be sound knowledge about how to make the peace education process work and take widespread effect.

Introduction

The search for peace has been a perennial undertaking in human history. O'Connel (1991) properly and cogently argued that peace provides conditions within which persons and groups develop most fully and without which life is disrupted and resources wasted. However, human history has been steeped in blood from recurring war.

Some years prior to O'Connel, Jaspers (1968) noted that peace has become an even more central issue in our times than previously in history because the possibility of nuclear destruction is going to hang over the world for the foreseeable future. Jaspers stated:

In the past, the worst disasters could not kill mankind. Multitudes whole nations ... perished; others survived and forgot. But now our intellect tells us with inescapable logic that soon there will be no more oblivious survivors There could be confidence, in the past, because in every disaster some were spared. Now however, man can no longer afford disaster without consequences of universal doom [p. 315]

The world, since 1945, has continued to be ravaged by violence, conflicts and wars, as evident in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Uganda, Burundi, Liberia, Zaire, and the Middle East, among others. Nigeria also has witnessed its unfortunate share of grievous ethnic, civil and religious conflicts in the course of its history. Recent sharp ethnic and religious divisions have posed a serious threat to the current democratization process in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, it is a typical situation that children come to school from widely different cultural, social and religious backgrounds. Each ethnic and religious group brings with it habits of behaviour, attitudes and expectations which widely diverge from other groups. Some groups are very aggressive, others docile. Some are weak, others are very strong. Some are very dull, while others are very intelligent.

Some are poor, while others are rich. Some are stingy, others are altruistic and so on.

The differences among the children sometimes lead to episodes of destructive competition, power struggles, attention and favour seeking, self-projection and egocentrism, and pride and arrogance. The competition among groups in schools at times erupts into ugly, even violent conflicts. The conflicts manifested among social and cultural groups within schools mirror those which occur in adult society within Nigeria.

Much research has shown that wars (or even military conflicts short of war) are nonexistent, or very rare, among democracies (Gledish 1992; Ray. 1995; Russett 1993, 1995). According to Hermann and Kegley, Jr. (1996) this fact has not been lost on policy makers in search of a guideposts for their post cold war foreign policies.

For example, the Group of Seven (G-7) has made the promotion of democracy a principle around which to focus its blue prints for a twenty-first century peace. However, the theory of civic culture (Almond and Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1988, 1990) postulates that the viability of democratic institutions is affected powerfully by attitudes, positive feelings towards the political system, and belief in the trustworthiness of other citizens. Thus, since peace education is viewed as a life affirming approach to human interaction. Its proper major focus is to teach children and citizens non-violent resolution skills. There is no gainsaying its indispensability in inculcating appropriate civic culture and attitudes among children to uphold our nascent democracy.

The argument being advanced in this discourse is that there is a *prima facie* case for the proposition that the process of peace education is an appropriate strategy for

forestalling violence and for constructively managing and resolving conflict in a democracy. The acceptance of peace education as an appropriate process further implies that the development of an educology of peace education (i.e. knowledge about the process of peace is education) is necessary. It is required because there needs to be knowledge which can make the process of peace education effective and efficacious in achieving the desired outcome of constructive conflict resolution.

Historical Perspectives of Wars and Conflicts

Humankind has been classified zoologically as a primate. According to Travers (1973), most primates live in groups and spend substantial amounts of time each day in social interaction.

Travers indicated that these interactions involve playful behaviour and behaviours that are collectively called grooming behaviours. According to him, humankind belongs to a group of species which have high innate social needs, and when these needs are not satisfied, trouble results.

According to Clemente and Lindsley (1967) warfare and other antisocial tendencies did not appear until sometime after primitive technologies emerged. However, Dowse and Hughers (1972) argued that aggression and violence have been part of human history since its beginning, and probably because of this, the idea that such behaviour is inherent in human beings has considerable plausibility. While some contend that aggression is instinctive in man, others believe that it is a learned behaviour.

A third orientation towards the origins of aggression in humankind, which is the most widely explored in social sciences, is the frustration–aggression theory. The basic

postulate of the theory is that interference with goal-directed behaviour creates frustration, which, in turn, leads to aggressive responses usually directed against the reputed frustrating agent (Dollard et al 1939). This assumes that in social life, humankind comes to value many things: wealth, status, power, security, equality, freedom, and so on. When human beings cannot achieve these values, or when achieving one value means losing another, dissatisfaction, anger and often aggression occur.

**The Search for Benign and
Non-Coercive Forms of Intervention:
Soft Power and Conflict Resolution**

There has been a number of traditions of thought which go back almost to the origins of self-conscious reflection about humankind and its social relationships. The problem of conflict resolution has been polarized between two views. One perspective is of those who have contended that effective conflict resolution is correlated with a capability to exercise some form of power over conflict parties to encourage or coerce them to arrive at a settlement. A second perspective is of those who argue in favour of non-coercive resolution based on trust-including dialogue and the formulation of integrative or “win-win” outcomes.

According to Woodhouse (1996), what makes the linkage of the two approaches possible is the emergence of a more sophisticated concept of power. With this conception, the more radical assumptions of conflict resolution theory are beginning to come into alignment with long term changes in the environment of international politics which have been identified by interdependence theorists. Nye in Woodhouse (1996:45), for example, contended:

Although force remains the ultimate form of power in a self help system it has become more costly for modern powers to use than in previous centuries. Other instruments such as communications, organizational and institutional skills and manipulation of interdependence have become important instruments of power.

Nye referred to these other instruments of power as “soft power,” which negates “hard power” (the power to command, order, enforce). Bounding, in Woodhouse (1996), also underscored that integrative power (co-optive and cooperative relationships built on intangible qualities such as mutuality, respect, legitimacy, and trust), a non-material or intangible quality, is the *sine qua non* of democratic community in which there is a respect for human rights.

Democracy and Peace

Hornby (1989) has usefully defined the term *democracy* as a country with a system of government which encourages and allows right of citizenship such as freedom of speech, religion, opinion and association, the assertion of the rule of law, majority rule, accompanied by respect for the rights of minorities. This system of government allows for universal suffrage, and it precludes ethnic or class cleavages.

According to Dowse and Hughes (1972), the prime idea in democracy is that the government must have room to maneuver. It must have the power to implement its decisions. But at the same time its decisions must, at the very best, be taken in the light of the known wishes and aspirations of the citizens.

Inspired in part by rapid diffusion of democratization since the late 1980's, the major industrialized democracies have anchored their security policies on the belief that a world of democratic states would be a peaceful world

(Jagers and Gurr, 1995; Starr, 1995; Hermman & Kegley, Jr.1996).

According to Hallenberg (1994:149), the propensity of democracies to cooperate generally with one another is a critical component of democratic peace theory that challenges realism and especially, neo-realism. Herman and Kegley, Jr. (1996:437) have emphasized that democratic peace theory derives its popularity primarily from its core proposition -- that when conflicts arise, the parties will resolve them through compromised bargaining rather than resorting to force.

In addition to the foregoing peace theory, the theory of civil culture (Almond and Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1990) postulates that the viability of democratic institutions is affected powerfully by attitudes. These attitudes include factors such as belief in one's ability to influence political decisions, feelings of positive effect on the political system, and the belief that other citizens are basically trustworthy.

Therefore countries with high levels of these civil culture attitudes are expected to be more likely to adopt and sustain democracy over time than countries with low levels. Another alternative possibility is that the civil culture attitudes are an effect rather than a cause of democracy. According to this line of argument (Muller and Seligson, 1994), the successful persistence of democracy over time is likely to cause increases in levels of appropriate civil culture attitudes because high levels of subjective political competence, pride in the political system, and interpersonal trust are a rational, learned response to the experience of living in a country that has a stable democratic regime.

From our foregoing understanding of the idea of democracy, and the two prime theories of democratic peace and civic culture, we can readily deduce that peace is both

an antecedent and corollary of democracy. The idea here is that peace is an integral part of the democratization process.

The process of peace education is properly viewed as a life affirming approach to human interaction. Its principal focus is the teaching of and the learning by children and citizens non-violent resolution skills. The process of peace education indeed may be our last and best resort in our quest for sustainable democracy and a world of enduring peace.

Peace Education and Conflict Management in a Democracy

In order to have a good grasp of the concept of peace education, it is beneficial to have a proper comprehension of the concept of peace. According to O'Connell (1991), in St Augustine's great definition -- "the tranquility of order," O'Connell (1991:6) stated :

involved in ... understanding of peace is a set of attitudes among persons and groups ... that seek to uphold the values of justice, freedom and peace inherent in stabilizing order.

According to Rogers (1991), the process of peace education is concerned primarily with positive approach to peace-making. This approach entails the development of people who internalize a positive vision of peace and have a real sense of justice (personal and social). Also, they are people who sensitized themselves and who have helped to cope with the various social manifestations of violence and conflict in their own lives and the wider world. Peace education is also viewed as a life affirming approach to human interaction (Schmidt and Friedman, 1989). The general goal of peace education can therefore be summarized as equipping children with conflict resolution skills which will enable them to maintain cooperation in resolving conflicts.

Literature searches in this area reveal a global awareness and realization that appropriate solutions to eradicating societal violence and resolving conflicts peacefully lie in the process of developing within children, right from home through school, skills for resolving conflict by non-violent means.

Children are the adults and leaders of tomorrow. We have an obligation to guide and assist them to acquire non-violent conflict resolution skills. We have a responsibility to help them develop the knowledge and attitudes which enable them to cooperate and engage successfully in the process of managing and resolving conflicts peacefully and constructively. In fulfilling these obligations, we are contributing to the development and maintenance of a stable democracy and a peaceful world.

From studies conducted in the U.S.A., American parents who were surveyed reported that teaching children non-violent skills was important to them as parents. They said that they would pay more for such programs. And they did not think that pre-schoolers were too young to participate in learning non-violent living skills (Peterson, 1993).

In contrast with the American studies, a global survey revealed that peace education programs have not taken root in the majority of countries, Nigeria included. This is a great challenge. This challenge goes out to teachers, academics, early childhood educators and educologists and to Nigerian government organizations involved in early childhood education. The challenge calls for all stake holders to summon the will and assemble the resources necessary for planning and implementing effective and efficacious peace education programs in the schools.

Peace education is based on a number of principles. They include (1) an attitude of give and take cooperation,

(2) respect for others and their opinions, (3) leadership skills, (4) benevolence in civic and cultural attitudes which lay emphasis on otherness. These are some of the essentials of a functional peace education curriculum which is crucial to the sustenance of democracy.

From a survey of educological literature about peace education, it is apparent that a number of different peace programs have been developed. Examples include those of the Montessori classroom, peer-mediation, and creative conflict solving programs.

With the many existing curricula of peace education programs, it is apparent that not all of the curricula include all of the possible elements of peace education. But what is apparent is that there is a wide range of concepts, propositions, skills, attitudes and values from which one may choose in developing a curriculum of peace education.

Thus a curriculum of peace education may include features such skills in peaceful solution to conflicts, problem solving approach, learning of non-violent skills for daily living and social skills, peer-counselling, attitudes and skills of cooperation, understanding of human rights and children's rights, role-playing in constructive conflict resolution, non-violent classroom environment and a range of aspects which promote and facilitate peace in conflict resolution, such as understanding of cultural variations, linguistic differences, citizenship education and national, state, or ethnic loyalties.

There are many integrative features available to a curriculum of peace education. For example, biblical instructions such as "the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel ... and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph.3:6), and "But our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippian 3:20) are examples of instruction in peace education.

These scriptures may be used to develop the concepts and attitudes of otherness and fairness to all, and being free of all forms of racism, ethnicity, political and class divisions, and all forms of segregation that could threaten any attempt to institutionalize a stable democracy.

Children at all levels of their school life need to be exposed to peace education programs, not only for a holistic personal development, but as an instrument for a sustainable peaceful, democratic and egalitarian society. For this purpose, teachers, academics and educologists have vital roles to play in the development and implementation of an adequate curriculum of peace education.

The challenges which call for personnel development through pre-service and in-service teacher training, workshops, seminars and conferences. Indeed teachers have a great challenge in developing, maintaining and protecting democracy through peace education.

One cannot doubt that curriculum in all schools in Nigeria, for example, have bits and pieces of topics which are intended to promote cultural, ethnic and racial understanding and peaceful or benevolent civic culture and attitudes.

But what currently exists is not enough. It is too piecemeal and haphazard. What is needed is a more extensive, articulated, coherent approach to promoting peace education in a more practical and purposeful manner. This is needed for the larger purpose of promoting a sustainable democratic and peaceful society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been argued that there is an ongoing danger of the use of war to resolve national and global conflicts. Modern warfare is made even more dangerous by

the existence of nuclear war capabilities and the possible spread of nuclear warfare capabilities to other nations.

It has been argued that an important, if not essential, element for a sustainable democratic and peaceful society is a program of peace education for its citizenry. Children are the adults of tomorrow. They need to be equipped with skills for constructive conflict resolution, and they need to be given guidance in their development of appropriate attitudes towards civic culture. Peace education needs to begin with the first days of school experience and extend through the children's entire school life. For as the Holy Bible recommends, "Train a child, in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Prov. 22:6).

In an effective peace education program, both the family and the school must cooperate to embrace the concept of peace education. They need to appreciate the power and effectiveness of skills of non-violent conflict resolution in a democratic state like Nigeria. They need to work together with government, and non-governmental organizations to formulate and implement a peace education curriculum in the Nigerian school system.

To facilitate this, conferences and workshops by and for early childhood specialists, educologists and teachers are necessary to work out the modalities, relationships, structures and logistics involved in appropriate peace education programs for schools. They are the people with the expertise to develop the requisite educology of peace education. It is the educology of peace education which forms the knowledge base for making rational, well informed decisions about what to incorporate into a curriculum of peace education. In their deliberations, they of course must not operate in a cultural, economic and political vacuum. They must not lose sight of all the

personal, societal, political, cultural and economic forces which militate against the formulation and implementation of any new change in society. They must inform themselves of what has already been achieved in peace education programs. They must also remain cognizant of the fact that the children of a nation are its future and that an investment in children is an investment in the future of the nation and its democratic character.

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International Journal of Educology, 2002, Vol 16, No 1

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