Value Conflict Resolution through Peace Education: A Panacea for Sustaiable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The intent of this paper is to explore the concepts of value conflict and peace education; and also to discuss how peace education can be used to resolve value conflicts and engender sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper which is based on the review of extant literature identified that value conflicts arise between parties as a result of differing world views and ethno-religious dispositions. The paper posits that peace education is a veritable instrument for inculcating in individuals and groups, the worth of peace and harmony and the cost of conflict and violence; peace education is proffered as a mechanism for reducing the spate of value conflicts and also a way of equipping individuals and groups with the necessary competence to forestall value conflicts and/or to manage them when they occur. The paper concluded that peace education is the way out of the unending problem of value conflict in Nigeria, as it is capable of promoting peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic groups in the country and recommends that activities focused on fostering cooperation and peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic and religious groups should be increased, it is the considered view of the paper that peace education is the tool with which individuals and groups can acquire the skills and dispositions required to engender peace, and also prevent, management and resolve conflict.

Keywords: Value conflict, Conflict resolution, Peace education, Sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

There is no way to peace; peace is the way (Mahatma Ghandi, 1869-1948). The rising profile and complexity of conflict and social disorder in the present Nigerian society call for urgent attention both from the public and private sectors. Conflict is inevitable in human society, however, when conflict become prevalent and pervasive; steps have to be taken toward resolution and restoration of normalcy. Value conflicts are not peculiar to modern day societies, but are common occurrences even in ancient times. However, value conflict in recent times have become more extensive, complicated, profound and continuous (Chang and Jun, 2014). The Nigerian society as it is presently, is one that is characterized by continual conflicts ranging from the political to economic, and socio-cultural to religious. These conflicts have become major source of concern in Nigeria, as they have cost so many resources (human and material), and have made indelible imprints in our national consciousness.

Value conflicts come about when two or more people or groups have dissenting views on the

basic understanding of what is naturally right or wrong. Value conflicts subjective because they are based totally on what someone "feels" about a person or situation. Value conflicts create interpersonal and intergroup tension at different levels of society. Thus, sociologist and social psychologist have been concerned with how value conflicts develop, when they escalate, and how they can be resolved. Understanding the dynamics behind a conflict can make for easier resolution. This insight can also help in mediating between parties in the conflict. One group's most fundamental and cherished assumptions about the best way to live may differ radically from the values held by another group (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997); as parties may have different standards of rightness and goodness and give fundamentally different answers to serious moral questions (Bartos and Wehr, 2002). When groups have different ideas about the good life, they often stress the importance of different things, and may develop radically different or incompatible goals. This paper takes critical look at value conflict, the use of peace education in resolving such conflicts, and examines how value conflict resolution through peace education can affect sustainable development in Nigeria.

Value Conflict

Values are beliefs or philosophies that are meaningful to a given people. They are principles or standards followed and revered by a people from generation to generation. Values are standards or qualities considered worthwhile and desirable. Values can range from the commonplace, such as the belief in hard work and punctuality, to the more psychological, such as self-reliance, concern for others, and harmony of purpose. We all have values that determine our decisions and guide our lives. We express values in our relations with other people when we are loyal, reliable, honest, generous, trusting, trustworthy, feel a sense of responsibility for family, friends, co-workers, our organization, community or country. On a more physical level, we may place great value on cleanliness, punctuality, orderliness, accuracy, quality, and physical perfection in whatever we do (Fountain, 1999). Tolerance, openness, respect for the individual, and teamwork are several great human values, while Oneness, love, beauty, and truth are some of the higher spiritual values that they derive from. At certain points, the human and spiritual values come together and blend into one another, expressing through spiritualized human values such as selflessness, humility, and gratitude.

Conflicts refer to disputes, disagreements, quarrels, struggles, fights and wars between individuals, groups and countries. Conflicts are generally defined as relational disputes between two or more parties, in which those involved perceive a threat to their interests coming from those on the other side of the disagreement. While this can describe a variety of conflict, it does not explain the full range of possibilities within this term. There are several types of conflict, each of which carries a different level of subjectivity. Value conflict can thus be defined as disagreement between individuals, groups, institutions or states, which are caused by difference of opinions caused by differences in long-held beliefs and world views, and have cultural, religious, social or political undertone.

Because values tend to be quite stable, people are often unwilling to negotiate or compromise on them. Indeed, if the basic substantive issues of a conflict are deeply embedded in the participants' moral orders, such issues are likely to be quite intractable (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997). A group's moral order is related to its practices, its patterns of thinking, and its patterns of language. As they are socialized, group members learn to centre their judgments on values and procedures fundamental to their own common culture (Kimmel, 2000). Their

moral order provides the set of meanings through which they understand their experience and make judgments about what is valuable and important (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997). People from the same culture have more or less equivalent realities and mind-sets. Their values, assumptions, and procedures become part of "common sense" for them. However, when two parties that do not share norms of communication (customary patterns and rules of communication) and expectations about behaviour must interact, they often clash (Kimmel, 2000); since each party may believe that its ways of doing things and thinking about things is the best way and come to regard other ways of thinking and acting as inferior, strange, or morally wrong.

For example, sometimes people distinguish between moral orders built on rights and those built on virtues. Each one is associated with particular forms of society and ways of being human. While a rights-based approach is associated with enlightenment and modernity, a virtues-based approach emerges from traditional society (Kimmel, 2000). In many cases, culture has a powerful influence on the moral order. Because systems of meaning and ways of thinking differ from one culture to another, people from different cultures typically develop different ideas about morality and the best way to live. They often have different conceptions of moral authority, truth, and the nature of community (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997).

Value Conflict in Nigeria

The varied political orientation, the ethno-religious and social-cultural diversity and the unequalled economic condition of the different ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria constitute a major source of value conflicts in the country; these conflict are however magnified by primordial values and institutions that promote our differences and underplay our commonalities. These have resulted in conflicts of various facets and dimensions, causing superiority-inferiority between groups, dominance-subordination relationships and political inequality, domination and exclusion among and between groups. Ethnocentrisms have also contributed in no mean measures to these conflicts in Nigeria. Value conflicts have become vicious and cancerous viruses destroying our national moral character and virtues. In fact, value conflicts in Nigeria have eaten up the bonds of our unity and have denied the emergence of true cooperation and peace building and peaceful coexistence and genuine integration in the country.

Peace Education

Peace education as a concept and a field of research has defied accurate and comprehensive definition, as various experts have offered various definitions that are often coloured by cultural, professional, and political bias. Peace education encompasses many different sub-topics, such that a unifying definition has proved elusive. Consequently, as peace education has developed, evolving definitions have continued to emerge, there are therefore too many different definitions of the concept. According to Wikipedia (2014), peace education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. Harris and Synott (2002) view peace education as a series of teaching encounters that draws from people: their desire for peace; nonviolent alternatives for managing conflicts and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and

inequality. In the view of UNESCO (2002), peace education refers to 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. While Abebe, et. al., (2006) perceive peace education as an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal, and exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures.

In this treatise however, peace education is defined as the process of acquiring the knowledge, skills and fundamental dispositions that empowers the individual to resolve conflicts peacefully, achieve personal and interpersonal harmony and to adapt seamlessly to the environment. Peace education programmes around the world have been concerned with issues like: anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality among others (Page, 2008), though academic discourse on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for broader and more holistic approach.

Resolving Value Conflicts through Peace Education

Conflict resolution is the process of ending a disagreement in a constructive manner for all the parties involved. It can be regarded as any process that resolves or ends a conflict through methods which can include violence or warfare (Laue, 1998). Alternatively, it can be viewed as a non-violent process that manages conflict through compromise, or through the assistance of a third party who either facilitates or imposes a settlement or resolution. There is no best approach to resolving value conflicts, as time, context and environment affects various conflict resolution strategies differently. Conflict resolution processes are many and varied and can be seen on a continuum ranging from collaborative, participatory, informal, non-binding processes (such as mediation, conciliation, third party negotiation) to adversarial, fact-oriented, legally binding and imposed decisions that arise from institutions such as the courts and tribunals (Boulle, 1996). Laue (1998) suggested that a conflict can only be considered resolved if: the solution jointly satisfies the interests and needs of the parties via joint agreement; the solution does not compromise the values of either party; the parties do not repudiate the solution even if they have the power to do so following the settlement; and the solution is fair and just and becomes self-supporting and self-enforcing.

In order for peace education to be able to help in resolving value conflicts, peace education should be thought of as encouraging commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of individuals as agents of peace; as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; as informing the student on the values of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such structures; as encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; and as caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others (Page, 2008). A review of field based projects by Groff and Smoker (1996) revealed four variations of peace education as most common: conflict resolution training, democracy education, human rights education and worldview transformation. These approaches to peace education if adequately imbued will not only reduce value conflicts in the society, but will also arm members of the society with relevant

skills to manage them when they occur.

Peace Education as Conflict Resolution Training

Peace education centred on conflict resolution typically focus on the social and behavioural symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and mediation (Deutsch, 1993). In this context, learning to manage anger, fight fair and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions constitute the main elements (Deutsch, 1993). Participants in conflict resolution training are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and brainstorm together on compromises (Deutsch, 1993). Over all, this approach to peace education aims to alter beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours from negative to positive attitudes toward conflict as a basis for preventing violence (Van Slyck et al, 1999).

Peace Education as Democracy Education

Peace education programs centered on democracy education typically focus on the political processes associated with conflict, and postulate that with an increase in democratic participation, the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases. At the same time, a democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflict as well as the necessity for tolerance (U.S. Department of State, 1999). Thus programs of this kind attempt to foster a conflict-positive orientation in the community by training students to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth. This approach to peace education train participants in the skills of critical thinking, debate and coalition-building; and promote the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objection. The aim is to produce responsible citizens who hold their governments accountable to the standards of peace. This approach is based on the assumption that democracy decreases the likelihood of violence and war; and builds in individuals the skills necessary for creating a culture of peace (Brabeck, 2001).

Peace Education as Human Rights Education

Peace education programs centered on raising awareness of human rights usually focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity (Brabeck, 2001). Approaches of this type familiarize participants with the international covenants and declarations of the United Nations system; train students to recognize violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and promote tolerance, solidarity, autonomy and self-affirmation at the individual and collective levels (Nelson, 2000).

Human rights education faces continual elaboration as it grapples with a significant theory-practice gap and frequently challenged by debates of its validity. According to Pitts (2002), human rights education does not work in communities fraught with conflict unless it is part of a comprehensive approach. The author states that such education can be counterproductive and lead to greater conflict if people become aware of rights which are not realized. In this respect, human rights education can increase the potential for conflicts. According to Kester (2008) to prevent these outcomes, many such programs are now being combined with aspects of conflict resolution and democracy education schools of thought, along with training in

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non-violent action.

Peace Education as Worldview Transformation

This is a new approach to peace education hinged on insights from psychology which recognize the developmental nature of human psychosocial dispositions. Essentially, while conflict-promoting attitudes and behaviours are characteristic of earlier phases of human development, unity-promoting attitudes and behaviours emerge in later phases of healthy development. Danesh (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b), proposed an integrative theory of peace in which peace is understood as a psychosocial, political, moral and spiritual reality. Peace education according to this author must focus on the healthy development and maturation of human consciousness through assisting people to examine and transform their worldviews.

Surveying a mass of material, Danesh (2004) argued that the majority of people and societies in the world hold conflict-based worldviews, which express themselves in conflicted intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and international relationships. He subdivides conflict-based worldviews into two main categories which he correlates to phases of human development: the Survival-Based Worldview and the Identity-Based Worldview. It is through the acquisition of a more integrative, Unity-Based Worldview that human capacity to mitigate conflict, create unity in the context of diversity, and establishes sustainable cultures of peace, is increased (be it in the home, at school, at work, or in the international community).

Being guided by the proposition of Page (2008), we posit that peace education is a sure way to bring about conflict resolution that can meet the conditions of Laue (1998). This is so because with adequate and well-rounded peace education programme, individuals and groups can be equipped with the values, knowledge and attitudes, skills and dispositions that promote effective conflict resolution and ensure peaceful coexistence between and among groups. Peace education when imparted in the right fashion using well-structured and pragmatic methods must be able to arm the beneficiaries with the tools to manage and resolve conflicts efficiently; if not forestall them entirely.

Value Conflict Resolution and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Sustainable development refers to a mode of human development in which resource use aims to meet human needs while preserving the Environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. According to the Brundtland report, sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The definition of sustainable development in the Federal Sustainable Development Act echoes the Brundtland definition. In adopting the Sustainable Development Act, "the Government of Nigeria accepts the basic principle that sustainable development is based on an ecologically efficient use of natural, social, and economic resources and acknowledges the need to integrate environmental, economic and social factors in the making of all decisions by government.

Values have to do with belief systems of people; and value conflicts occur when groups or individuals are intolerant of other people's belief or try to impose their own beliefs on others. This kind of conflict revolves around the issue of religion and ethnicity. Harmful traditional practices that are repugnant to natural justice are also a major source of value conflict. These

conflicts have hindered the socio-economic development of Nigeria as developmental initiatives are viewed with suspicion and are always clad in religious, sectional and cultural biases. The Nigerian state have witnessed incessant inter and intra communal, religious and cultural disturbances which have destroyed lives and properties, resulting in backwardness in our socio-political and economic lives. Owing to value conflicts in our value systems and the prevalence of suspicion in our social character, Nigerians have always viewed and perceived government action whether emanating from the executive or legislature with religious and ethnic bias and colouration. This has more than often, negated or hindered the drive for sustainable development in the country. (The instance where respected personalities including University Dons openly campaigned against polio vaccines in the north easily comes to mind). Value conflicts in the same vain have smeared government projects aimed at improving the lives and security of the citizenry. (The case of the rejection by the Ogonis in Rivers State of the siting of a military barrack in Bori is an example).

The existence of these problems do not only affect infrastructural and security considerations but also hinders policies of government, legislative processes (the delay in the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill is a classic example), and anti-graft efforts. The debilitating effect of this malaise is its impact on the ability of government to meet the challenges of today without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet its challenges. Nonetheless, this paper is of the view that a pragmatic and unbiased peace education programme have the potential to minimize the spate of these value conflicts if not eradicate them completely; and also that where these conflicts inevitably occurs, they can be resolved efficiently, and consequently pave the way for the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In concluding this paper, it is expedient to posit that value conflicts as experienced in Nigeria is counter-productive not only for the present, but also for the future. It must be addressed holistically as a matter of urgent national concern so as to forestall a total break-down of the Nigerian social fabric. The bonds that bind us as are fast breaking off due to the escalating nature of value-based conflict. As a people, there is every need for us to reflect deeply and see how we can to hold our values without undermining those of others; learn about other people and their values and see how we can learn from one another. Such cooperative and harmonious co-existence and mutual respect for one another is the panacea for the ills of the society that are occasioned by value conflicts. In such an atmosphere, Nigeria will be headed on the path of development that will cater for the needs of today without endangering the ability of the future generation to meet its needs.

It is on this note that we proffer peace education as a worthy instrument of value conflict resolution in the country. The way out of the plague of value conflict and its attendant destructiveness is to increase activities focused on fostering cooperation and peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic and religious groups through peace education which we are optimistic can engender peace building, conflict prevention, and conflict management and resolution. With a view to collapsing the value boundaries between the different ethnic groups in the country, this paper proposes that individuals and groups within the country must learn to respect the values of one another so as to allow for peaceful and harmonious coexistence. The paper also suggests that government and other relevant stakeholders in the

country should periodically organise avenues like seminars and symposia for the citizens to come together and interact. Furthermore, the paper recommends the re-strengthening of agencies and bodies that are established for engendering national cohesion. Finally, the paper strongly recommends that interethnic affiliations should be encouraged among the various groups in Nigeria through marriages. Also, inter-religious seminars and conferences, and other social and cultural fiestas should be encouraged in the country.

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