PEACE EDUCATION: AN INSTRUMENT FOR ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

By

ASSOC. PROF. S. N. IKWUMELU
Department of Arts & Social Science Education,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.

OGENE AZUBUIKE OYIBE
Department of Arts & Social Science Education,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.

And

DR. P. E. ELUU
Department of Arts & Social Science Education,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.

Abstract
Ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria have become an intractable problem because of faulty approaches adopted by government to resolve them. Attempts by government to resolve these conflicts have often opened a new frontier of crisis leading to a search for viable alternative. This paper advocates for application of peace education in enhancing national security in Nigeria and argues that if peace education formed part of the Nigerian school curriculum and the content are well taught, it will instill in learners the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of resolving problems intelligently instead of resorting to violence. Through teaching and learning peace related education concepts in schools, the factors that impede the actualization of national security will be identified and discussed. It will also present to the learners the negative effects of violence to persons and state and direct their mind to how to use a powerful argument and civilized diplomacy to achieve lasting peace that will usher in a political stability, national integration and economic development.
Nigeria is intermittently unsettled by sporadic ethnic and religious conflict leading to loss of human lives and valuable property. These armed conflicts are recorded because Nigeria is ethnically heterogeneous, and the three ethnic groups with different religion such as Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) are constantly struggling for supremacy. All these have cast a spell of mutual suspicious and fear on Nigerians leading to accusation of marginalization against one another, a situation that has bred tension and insecurity that are threatening the continuity of just inaugurated Nigeria Seventh Republic.

Despite the internecine civil war which should have served sufficient lesson for non-recourse to violence as instrument for settling disputes, violence has continued to be employed in Nigeria as a tool for seeking redress from oppression and perceived alienation from the mainstream of politics and the economy, (Udoka, 2000). Indeed, these problems have become intractable and have rendered all proffered solutions insignificant. And these call for peace education instead of the use of barrel of gun and military strategies that have been without any hope for non future occurrence.

The most perturbing phenomenon is that religion which preaches peace, and love, and therefore should be a powerful instrument for enhancing national security through conflict resolution in Nigerian states has itself become one of the major causes of conflict that result to insecurity in Nigeria. In support of the above assertion, Onwudiwe (2006) is of the view that, as at now, all the instruments devised after the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 to return peace and cooperative living among Nigerians appear to have failed, creating an inciting atmosphere that another major conflict could occur and that may lead to the disintegration of our dear country Nigeria. Recently, the emergence of hostage-taking, kidnapping and bombing activities by Islamic sectarian that is popularly known as Boko Harram revealed that all is not well with Nigeria in terms of security of lives and property.

Though, this perplexing atmosphere currently hovering over Nigeria as earlier mentioned shows that Nigeria is not at peace or not secured. It is our belief that introduction of peace education into Nigerian school curricula will help to defuse tension in the country and usher in a period of unparalleled peace and conflict-free society. This aimed at examining strength of Peace Education in enhancing National Security in Nigeria. It is only in an atmosphere of friendliness, cordiality, harmony, and peaceful co-existence that the nation (Nigeria) can achieve socio-political and economic growth and development.

The Meaning and Importance of Security

The issue of security is as old as man himself. When man felt insecure in an environment, he began to build shelter and started to live in bands. When nations felt
insecure, they began to form armies. To secure the future, man began to invest and save against the rainy day. Because of security, man began to search for the Maker of the universe (God), the supernatural being that controls the universe. Ogoh (2008) thus maintained that all forms of security, be it for human safety, national safety, economic safety, environment safety and so on, have been and will continue to be the concerns of man. But the question of national security in contemporary world assumes a kind of dimension that one may ask: whose security, State or Person? This question directs our mind to a quest for meaning and importance of security to state and her citizenry.

Security can be viewed as freedom or safety from danger or absence of threat and danger. The concept of security is of great concern to all human societies as it concerns survival of man and resources. Indeed one of the reasons why men live in groups is the need for security. Security is so essential that individuals and states cannot make meaningful progress and development without it. Gleditch (2001: 53) examined the changing interpretation of security from the traditional doctrine of realism to new thinking, noting that realism, which emphasizes the struggle for territory and resources with patterns of conflict and cooperation forming mainly on the basis of struggle for power - military, economic and political, has been dominant in security thought. Therefore a country can strengthen its position through conquest or alliance building and will do so unless checked by countervailing powers. As Kissinger (1974: 35) stated, “absolute security for a country means absolute insecurity for all others”. By implication, security for nations bent upon increasing their power and position implies being able to compel others to act in accordance with their demands. Lippman in Shearer (2003: 121) maintained that a nation is secure to the extent that it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values if it wishes to avoid war, is able, if challenged to maintain them by victory in such a war. Muhammed (2007) describes national security as a condition whereby a country is free from any form of fear or threat to its peace, stability and progress. And in the event of any threat or actual attack, the ability of the country to absorb the shock, get over it and respond effectively to restore public confidence in the state and its institutions. Thus, we find nations of the world expending so much of their national resources on amassing weapons of war. In essence, the realists conceive security in narrow military terms as a zero-sum game in which the gains of one state are a loss for another. The question is, why amass weapons of war for the security of the state? Why not shift emphasis to the security of the human person? This is the new thinking.

In 1982, the Palme Commission launched the slogan “Common Security”, which implies a positive-sum notion in which the greater security of one state was seen to be mutually reinforcing with that of another. Later in 1991, the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance raised issues on the new challenges to security besides political rivalries and armament. The emphasis here was on a wider concept,
which deals with threats that come from failures in development, environmental degradation, excessive population growth and movements and lack of progress towards democracy. In “Our Global Neighborhood” 1995 report, the Commission on Global Governance reaffirmed the position of the Stockholm initiative. The emphasis was on broadening the concept of global security from the traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the security of the plant. It is from this framework that the concept of human security as a counter point to the idea of national security emerged. It is realized that fortified borders, armed conflicts and ideological domination do not necessarily lead to total security. Natural disasters and other environmental factors, HIV/AIDS scourge, and the diseases, poverty and hunger cannot be fought with weapons of war.

Thus, security according to Ogoh (2008:30) was recast as a concept that should be applied to individuals instead of states. A notion that should cover the whole gamut of human needs and also accommodate economic vulnerability, ecological threats and natural disasters. For her; security does not mean merely safe-guarding of territory boundaries but also entails that a country should be industrialized and also maintain a high level of cohesiveness, egalitarian and technological advancement”.

In this sense, security connotes freedom from, or elimination of threat not only to physical existence of the state but also to the ability for self-protection and development and the enhancement of the general well being of all the people.

The term human security’ therefore is a shift in perspective or orientation that is, a shift in emphasis from territory security and regime survival to that of the persons within the territory. It is a concept that came into the limelight in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report in an attempt to capture the post-cold war peace dividend and redirect those resources towards development agenda. According to the report, human security is conceived as the summation of seven distinct dimensions of security namely, economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. This of course, is a broad way to look at human security which if achieved will ensure a more peaceful world? But the very breadth of this approach makes it unwieldy as a policy instrument.

Writing on human security Hubert (1999), defined the concept as implying safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats; it is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom of their safety or even their lives. It entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerabilities, minimizing risk and taking remedial actions where prevention fails. This is not to say that security of the state is not important but rather the security of the state should be geared towards the security of human persons not of the regime in place.
Security Problems for the Individual and the Society

That there are security problems in Nigeria today needs not be overemphasized. Ogoh (2008) opined that the problem of security for the individual and the society will better be appreciated when one attempts to answer some of these fundamental questions:

1. What is the prevailing health situation of the populace?
2. How is the quality of education and general level of literacy?
3. What is the state of the nation’s economy?
4. What is the level of political stability and quality of governance in the country?
5. What are the level of crime and the competence of the institutions of social control to combat the menace of crime in the country?
6. What is the extent of sustainability of the environment?
7. What is the degree of technological advancement?
8. How is the quality of life and calorie intake of the populace?
9. To what extent is the level of social integration amongst contending ethnic, religious, gender and other sectional dichotomies evident in the country?

The above questions clearly indicate that the challenge of national security is to create enabling environment for national development. The primary objectives of national security in Nigeria should imply the containment of stability control of crime, elimination, advancement of genuine development, progress and growth and the improvement of the welfare and well being and of life of every citizen. This is laudable statement, but, it is often said “easier said than done” (Oyeshola, 2005).

Today, the Niger Delta poses a security threat not only to Nigeria but also to the international community. Kidnapping, recent Boko Haram activities and hostage-taking of foreigners and other important staff of oil companies have become the order of the day. In response to this menace, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has earmarked large sum of money for security in the affected area. Combined military and paramilitary forces have also been deployed to the northern Nigeria states and Niger-Delta. Recently, a military-based training camp has been set up in Bayelsa state and the entire nineteen (19) states of Northern Nigeria all in an effort to ensure security in Nigeria.

The issue of security in Nigeria goes beyond the question of military might and strategies. If the basic needs of the people are provided by the government youth restiveness will be reduce to bearable rate, and the money hitherto expended for security can be diverted to other sectors of the economy. Escavos, for instance has no drinking water. The area is hunger-stricken and poverty-ridden. Access to quality education is almost impossible. The experience is the same in Bonney and other
communities and some states in the northern Nigeria. These places call for the attention of the government in form of human empowerment and infrastructural development.

The Role of Education in the Promotion of Security Consciousness

Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (2012) maintained that education is a veritable tool for social change, national integration and development. Oyibe and Oketa (2012:76) added that “education is a social process whereby the individual acquires skills and knowledge for successful living in a society”. Whitehead in Ogoh (2008) defined education as the acquisition of knowledge for the benefit of the individual and society. It is a powerful phenomenon that influences man from day one to the last day. It also emphasizes knowledge, understanding and overall development of an individual and the society (Kazi, 2007).

The extent to which the above feats are achieved in any country depends largely on the quality of education provided to the citizenry. Ukaonu in Aguokogbuo (2000) opined that education is a social process whereby the individual is prepared for successful participation in social relationship. In Nigeria, education is viewed as instrument ‘par excellent’ for national growth and development. It is conveyed in the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE) as instrument for change for the nation as a whole. To this end, five-point national goals are formed, namely: free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens, (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). These noble goals cannot be achieved under a condition of insecurity. There is no gainsaying that the current state of national security in Nigeria is parlous. Therefore, education has important role to play in creating security awareness among the citizenry. It is no doubt that education is an indispensable instrument not only to an individual but also for the development of a nation. For this reason, the three tiers of government-federal, state and local governments have continued to invest so much in ensuring its sustenance and continued role in the overall development of both the citizenry and the nation.

The education reforms and curriculum reviews currently going on are appropriate change in the right direction. These exercises have given rise to inclusion of such curricular offerings as: Population/family life Education; Drugs/AIDS Education; Citizenship Education; Peace Studies Education and Conflict Resolution Education; Poverty and Human Rights education and Environmental Education. These are expected to promote security awareness, particularly human security.

Enhancing National Security through Peace Education

Peace Education inculcates in learners the need for collective responsibility which must include good governance by the political leadership and effective loyalty
by the people (Ogoh, 2008). It is the type of education that will enable children and young people to translate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired through the process of education into action to cause cooperation and conflict free society. When states are excessively aggressive, internally repressive or too weak to govern effectively, they threaten the security of people. A fundamental objective of peace education in Nigeria is the desire to integrate the diverse people (ethnic, religious, tribe, tongue, etc) of Nigeria through the inculcation of a sense of national consciousness. This is by inculcating the need for integration in the learner and discouraging an attitude that may cause disintegration and disunity. Such positive attitudes and values as respect for the human person, dignity in labour, honesty, patriotism, loyalty, etc, which are necessary ingredients for national security are better inculcated in a Peace Education class.

Fountain (2012) was of the view that peace education is designed to build in the learners a sense of commitment to global solidarity, peace, acceptance of differences in opinions, social justice and environmental awareness since it aims at empowering the children to participate in bringing about constructive change both locally and internationally instead of resorting to violence as medium for displaying their unacceptance of public policies or programmes.

Teaching and learning need to comprise not only essential tools such as literacy and numeracy but also knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required to live and work in dignity and participate in development. It should be an interaction that will bring about satisfaction of those needs that implies responsibilities to promote social justice, acceptance of differences, and world peace. Peace education should be effective instrument for enhancing that above stated supposed be objectives of classroom interaction.

Peace education is an integral part of the world vision of quality basic education. It is defined as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to bring about behavior 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 interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, national or international level. Peace education according to UNICEF (2010) should be part of every country’s school curricular content. This implies that it is UNICEF recommendation that peace education should have a place in all societies- not only in the countries that are undergoing armed conflict or emergencies. Peace education is aimed at supporting United Nation Decade for a culture of peace and non violence for children of the world and to introduce peace and human rights education into educational institutions. No wonder, Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2011:267) maintained that “a culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the
world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice, non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appropriate cultural diversity and respect the Earth and each other”. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace.

According to Article 29 of the UNICEF Convention On the Right of the Child (1989), the education of the child shall be directed to “… the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples…”. Therefore education should be made to incorporate such themes as environment and ecology, peace, tolerance, conflict avoidance, personal health, cooperative skills, multiculturalism, cooperative views on human values, and human and child right. It is when such themes are incorporated in the teaching/learning curricula as a subject that the last peace will be permanent.

In the year 1990, the United Nation ‘Declaration on Education For All’ says that;

“every person child, youth and adult- shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The satisfaction of these needs empowers individual in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to further the cause for social justice, to be tolerant toward social political and religious system which differ from their own, ensuring that commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are upheld, and to work for international peace and solidarity in an interdependent world.

Again, in 1996, the UNICEF research on the impact of armed conflict on children reaffirmed the importance of education in shaping a peaceful future. The research recommended that both the content and process of education mentioned above should promote peace, social justice, respect for human rights and the acceptance of responsibility. Children need to learn skills of negotiation, problem solving, critical thinking and communication that will enable them to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. According to the result of the research, disputes may be inevitable but violence is not. To prevent continuing cycles of conflict, education must seek to promote peace and tolerance, not fuel hatred and suspicion. This implies that ensuring quality Peace education, children will acquire the essential learning tools needed to gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes critical to their own lives, the well-being of their families and their constructive participation in the society. Peace
Education, when effectively taught must address the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflict and violence, whether overt or structural, from the interpersonal level to the societal and global level. Ibrahim and Shehu (2007) were of the view that, Peace Education has the potential of ‘catching them young’ in that; it prepares the young learners’ mind for effective citizenry and cooperative living in the country. It teaches the learner the importance of good governance and duties of citizens to the growth and development of any nation. The pursuit of national security requires a collaboration of the state and its inhabitants in detecting, preventing, controlling and eliminating sources and perceived sources of danger, whether latent or manifest, internal or external, natural or man-made, which threaten the collective interest of the nation.

Conclusion
In order to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women, to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standard of life. Peace education has been developed as an integral part of the work of the United Nations to be the viable instrument for achieving above state objectives. As stated by Ogh (2008) it cannot be an overstatement to assert that national security is a holistic concept, which can be assessed by evaluating the state of critical variables already highlighted. Nations are not secured with emphasis on military might or powers alone. That human security is an attack on the chief evil affecting the development of the common man.

Peace education is that type of education directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It promotes understanding, tolerance and friendship among all persons and nations, racial religious group and further the activities of Nigeria for the maintenance of peace and national security. It is the writers’ opinion that if Nigeria government through its agencies and boards will armor effective delivery of peace education in Nigerian schools, the problem of insecurity will have been addressed squarely.

Recommendations
Based on the above discourse, the following recommendations are made.

i. That government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should invest more on education instead spending so much on security by acquiring armory.

ii. That government should direct more of the fund spend on maintaining security through military tactics and strategies to provide those things that cause insecurity, for instance: unemployment, hunger, deprivation and illiteracy.
iii. Curriculum planners should include peace education as one of the core courses in primary and secondary schools and even at Nigerian tertiary institutions, and there should be recruitment and training of staff to man the programme at various levels of education in Nigeria.

iv. Qualified consultants from educational institutions and universities should be involved in the drawing up of relevant syllabi for the various courses to make police officers and other security agencies meet the current need of the force.

v. Nigerians should endeavor to inculcate and imbibe a security consciousness/awareness culture. Greater citizenry commitment to intelligence/crime control is imperative.

vi. It is the role of education to enlighten the people through the relevant school subject for instance ‘Peace Education’ that law enforcement/security operatives are partners in progress, and not enemies or government agents assigned to harass law-abiding citizens.

References


