Administrative Strategies for Enhancing Peace Education for Improved Socio-Cultural Relations Between Nigeria and Maradi Region of Niger Republic

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Abstract - *Peace is a critical factor that determines the speed of national development in every nation as well as the stability of socio-cultural relations among nations. Nigeria and Niger Republic are two countries that have maintained close ties through inter-marriages, religious interaction, political diplomacy, and economic interchange among others. This lasting socio-cultural relationship dates back for into history and has continued till today.In recent history from the 1990s to date, the political and social life of the Republic of Niger has been marked by high political tension and recurrent food crisis across the country and Maradi Region inclusive. This is in spite of efforts made by government in negotiations, rehabilitation and execution of development programmes. These efforts have failed largely because of poor provision of peace education in the region. What appeared to have been overlooked is the fact that provision of peace education is a weapon of ensuring rapid socio-economic development and enhancing better international relations between Niger and Nigeria as well as with other nations.*

In the case of Nigeria, the activities of the Boko Haram coupled with economic hardships and societal crisis have negatively impacted on the welfare of the citizens which in turn has affected socio-cultural relation between Nigeria and Niger. This paper therefore proposes and submits that peace education is very critical towards maintaining fruitful relations between Nigeria and Maradi Region of Niger Republic as well as with other nations. The paper proposes an urgent review of curriculum of peace education, teacher training, improved teaching methods, provision of adequate instructional materials, proper supervision and funding of peace education in both countries. This will help to provide appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies that will ensure the provision of peace education as a pre-requisite for rapid economic, political, religious, educational, social, scientific and technological development between Nigeria and Maradi Region of Niger Republic both for the present and for the future.

Keywords: Administrative Strategies, Peace Education, Socio-Cultural, Relations, Development

INTRODUCTION

Every nation in the world has it's unique socio-cultural heritage which it propagates, defends and transmits to its citizens from one generation to the other. This is because the socio-cultural heritage of a country or region determines the language of communication, the music, the type of food, housing style, marriage customs, ethics of social conduct, dressing patterns, leadership style, level of technology among others. In fact, the socio-cultural heritage of a country is so all encompassing that it has a great impact economic practices, political structure and succession, religious beliefs, process of education, social interaction among groups as well as scientific and technological conditions of a region. To this extent every country wishes to project its socio-cultural heritage within the framework of friendly and positive relations it enjoys with other countries or regions of the world.

Various countries of the world have put in place various laws and regulations that guide international relations and socio-cultural exchange in the spirit of respect and mutual benefit. Nigeria and the Maradi region of Niger republic have enjoyed unhindered

socio-cultural interaction for thousands of years. They shared language interaction, inter marriages trade and other forms of socio-cultural relations even before the coming Islamic scholars form the Arabia Peninsula and North Africa in the 11th century as well as the Europeans from the 14th Century A.D. Despite colonial domination by different European nations particularly the British in the case of Nigeria and the French in the case of Niger Republic, socio-cultural relations have continued to exist between Maradi Region and Nigeria. An international conference such as this one that is organized every year in Niger with invitations extending to Nigeria scholars is a testimony to this long lasting socio-cultural relation particularly between Nigeria and Maradi Region of Niger Republic.

In recent times, Nigeria and Niger Republic as well as other countries of the world are experiencing a lot of economic hardships, climatic and environmental challenges, and rapid changes in socio-cultural values as well as security challenges occasional by Boko Haram. All those problem have brought about increased poverty, frustration and distortion of cherished socio-cultural values in both countries. According to Cheffou[1] from the 1990's to date, the economic, political and social life of the Republic of Niger has been marked by political tensions and recurrent food crisis across the country. This is in spite of the efforts made by the state to end the conflicts through negotiations, singing of peace accords in Ouagadougou in April 24, 1995; Algiers in November 28, 1997 and N'djamena in August 21, 1998. Efforts were also made to recover guns, rehabilitate ex-combatants and execute development programmes.

Conflicts have become so common and weapons so easy to possess that people do not hesitate to make use of guns as a means of settling disagreements. In the case of Nigeria the way and manner the Boko Haram group has acquired sophisticated guns has been so mystifying, alarming and unbelievable. This situation has destroyed the peace and security of Northern Nigeria to the extent the Boko Haram terrorists have the audacity, the temerity, and the impetus to challenge the military might of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In the southern and western parts of Nigeria the peace is ravaged by unprecedented rate of kidnappings, armed robbery and activities of Niger Delta militants whose target is the destruction of Nigerian's source of revenue from oil. This situation coupled with high rate of poverty and unemployment has led to the distortion of socio-cultural values with great value placed on material acquisition than human lives and brotherly coexistence.

According to Manga[2], the region of Maradi like other regions of Niger has an environment that has been characterized by harsh living conditions, unemployment, and a depleted ecosystem. The victims that suffer most under these deplorable and inhospitable conditions of life are the youths, children and women generally. Unfortunately, most of those youths are pushed into conflicts situations, with most of them joining armed rebellion as a source of making money without consideration of the dangers involved.This paper believes that only peace education and proper enlightenment can change the mindset by citizens in both Niger and Nigeria towards sustaining good socio-cultural relations between the two countries. The objectives of this paper therefore, is to examine some conceptual and theoretical framework of peace education, the relationship between peace education and socio-cultural relations, the challenges of providing peace education as well as administrational strategies for improving place education in Niger and Maradi Region of Niger Republic.

Conceptual Framework

Peace as a concept has been defined by scholars from different perspectives. Ibrahim [3] defined peace as a state of concord, harmony and tranquility in society as characterized by absence of dissension. This is an idealistic definition that is difficult to be attained in real life anywhere in the world. Galtung [4]. Defined peace as the absence of war and by extension war is the absence of peace. Again this definition though attractive is grossly inadequate for the understanding of the nature of peace since it is more or less tautological and circular in logic there is peace because there is no war and there is war because there is no peace. Ikejiani –Clark and Ani [5] defined peace as a state of the mind characterized by serenity, goodness, a balance or equilibrium within, between and among individuals and groups in a society. Sarkin Fada [6] defined peace as the existence of healthy interpersonal or intrapersonal relationships and prosperity in matters of political, religion and economic welfare that serves the interests of all in an orderly society. This clearly implies that peace is the maintenance of orderliness and absence of threat to security in a community, region or country.

Peace education is viewed as the deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of

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conflict and the promotion of peacemaking skills in homes, schools and communities. According to page [7].peace education is the process of acquiring values, knowledge, attitudes skills and behaviors to enable people to live in harmony with themselves, with other and the wider community. To Mbaji and Ebirim, peace education is a programme that is centered on raising awareness of individuals and groups through policies and procedures that would be embraced in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. Ogundele, Musa and Jimba [8] defined peace education as referring to conflict resolution skills that one acquires by means of formal, non-formal and informal learning in order to face the social concerns of everyday life for the development of society. Lantieri and Palti [9] viewed peace education as the process of teaching individuals to appreciate the values of non-violence, love, compassion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for human family and all life in our planet. It is a global strategy aimed at activating knowledge and attitudes to achieve and sustain global culture peaceful coexistence for a better humanity.

Theoretical framework

The quality of socio-cultural relations between and among nations depends on the level of development among the nations. Countries with low level of development tend to experience political, economic and social challenges that tend to affect the extent of their socio-economic relations with other countries. Relationships between a developed and an underdeveloped countries are likely to be in balanced in favor of more developed countries while relations between countries of fairly equal level of development are more likely to be balanced on equal footing. This paper therefore examines the development theory of peace education. Bako [10] opines that develop is not purely an economic phenomenon it is rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and re-orientation of entire economic and social systems. The theory holds that for socio-cultural relations to be sustained and transmitted the society must first of all strive for development in the following indices:

a. Raising people's living standards i.e incomes and level of consumption of food, medical services, and education through relevant growth processes.
b. Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem, through the establishment of positive social, political and economic institutions which promote human dignity and respect, and;
c. Increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice in terms of variety of goods and services.

Peace educators therefore use development studies to provide their students with insights into the various aspects of structural that help to sustain socio-cultural values of the society.

Relationship between peace education and socio-cultural relations between Nigeria and Niger Republic

1. No meaningful socio-cultural relations can occur where there is no reasonable peace. Lasting peace may not be sustained without proper peace education that will infuse the love for peace among rulers and citizens of every nation. To this extent peace education helps to establisher political structures and programmes that facilitate positive socio-cultural relations between Nigeria and Maradi region of Niger republic.

2. Peace education helps to establish a stable society that will province a favorable environment for rapid economic growth and development. Economic development in turn brings about prosperity and social well being that is necessary for socio-cultural relations. This applies to Nigeria and Maradi region because economic hardships distracts from positive socio-economic relations between nations.

3. Peace education helps to support religious teachings which emphasize the necessity for good moral conduct in socio-cultural interactions among nations. It helps to emphasize the golden rule as well as ensuring the highest spiritual and ethical standards in socio-cultural relations among individuals, groups and nations.

4. Peace education helps to ensure the development of science and technological know-how of nations. This is because scientific research and application of technological to other areas of human development is only possible in an atmosphere of peace and stability. The higher the development of science and technology, the easier the global socio-cultural relations and interaction among nations of the world, and most especially between Nigeria and Maradi Region.

5. Peace education helps to entrench social cohesion and propagation of social values of peaceful co-existence, norms, and traditions that ensures orderly conduct in society. It helps to sustain the peace and brotherhood between Nigeria and Maradi Region.

Challenges of peace education in Nigeria and Niger

The provision of peace education both in Maradi region and Nigeria is confronted with numerous problems. Some of these include the following:

1. The current content of peace education curriculum in schools at all levels is grossly in adequate in terms of teaching critical issues in peace education. Muhammed [11] pointed out that the curriculum content in schools both in Niger and Nigeria does not adequate address specific issues of human rights, conflict resolution, disarmament education, development education and international studies.

2. There is the problem of inadequate number of professionally trained teachers who specialize in peace education. Cracdley[12] pointed out that some of the teachers lack the qualification experience and competence to teach peace education effectively. In Nigeria and Maradi Region.

3. Some teachers do not use appropriate teaching methods to teach peace education. According to Aggawal[13], poor teaching methods make it difficult to transmit peace education knowledge and skill efficiency to the understanding of the learners. The problem of teaching methods affects teacher both in Nigeria and Maradi Region.

4. Instructional materials suitable for peace education are grossly inadequate. Teachers on their own part have not been making adequate efforts to improvise teaching aids to ease their teaching activities. Jordanana [14].noted that no meaningful teaching of peace education can be done without audio-visual aids and other necessary teaching aids.

5. Although regular supervision is necessary to ensure effective implementation of peace education curriculum yet it is not done regularly and comprehensively. Blasé and blasé [15].pointed out that lack of regular and comprehensive supervision makes teachers to continue using wrong teaching processes without guidance and motivation.

6. Financing peace education has become a serious certain particularly in sub-saharan Africa for the reason the budgeting of education generally suffers inadequate funding due to scarcity of resources and misplaced priorities it should be noted that Both Nigeria and Maradi are experiencing economic challenges which affect relationship and development in both countries.

7. Lack of proper evaluation of peace education programmes to identify areas of successes and failure so as to make appropriate adjustments. Yunusa (2000) noted that the neglect of formative and summative evaluation has affected the delivery of peace education programmes.

Administrative strategies for enhancing peace education

For Nigeria to have improved socio-cultural relations with Niger Republic and particularly with Maradi region peace must prevail. Peace education helps to propagate the culture of peace which is necessary for socio-cultural relations between nations. Harak [16] provided a number of recommendations to enhance peace education. Some of these are relevant to both Nigeria and Maradi Region:

1. Peace education curriculum should be revised and expanded to include critical aspects such as development education and international education improvement in national development will enhance socio-cultural relations.

2. Peace education content should be incorporated in the teacher training programmes. In service training, on-the-job training of teachers should be emphasized to propage peace education in the teacher education content. Mentoring of younger teachers by more experienced teachers should be encouraged by school administrators.

3. School administrators should ensure that teachers use appropriate methods of teaching peace education. Teachers should keep on adopting modern methods for effective teaching.

4. School administrators in Nigeria and Maradi Region should help in providing appropriate instructional materials for peace education. They should ensure that teachers use the instructional material correctly and that the materials are properly stored for future use. School levels should encourage teachers to develop interest in improvisation of instructional materials to supplement government efforts.

5. School administrators should ensure regular and comprehensive instructional supervision to ensure that teachers are actually doing their duties of teaching place education as required in their schedule of duties. Supervision helps to guide teacher and channels their efforts in the right direction.

6. School administrators in Nigeria and Maradi Region should ensure that teacher use both formative and summative evaluation techniques in the process of teaching peace education. The ethics of assessment and examinations must also be spelt out and enforced by the school administrators.

7. Government in Nigeria and Maradi Region should increase budgetary allocation to education so as to make it possible to secure suitable in structural materials and other resources required fort effective teaching of peace education in Nigeria and Maradi Region. School administrators should also consider the various strategies of internally generating revenue to fund peace education programmes within their schools.

CONCLUSION

The extent of socio-cultural relations between and among nations is largely dependent upon the degree of peace prevailing within and between countries of the world. Peace education is one of the instruments in calculating the values of peaceful co-existence particularly between Nigeria and Maradi region of Niger Republic. An atmosphere of peace is necessary for the rapid social political, economic and cultural development of a nation. This in turn provides a basic for any fruitful relations between Nigeria and Maradi Region. Since peace building must begin with formal transmission of knowledge, skill and attitudes that foster peace in school, it implies that administrative strategies must be put in place to ensure that the culture is cultivated in schools. The products of the school system are expected to come out and contribute in creating, sustaining and improving socio-cultural relations between Nigeria and Maradi Region of Niger Republic.

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