

Exploring the Relevance of Peace Education in the Light of Saint James

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Abstract

We pass from a time of insurgency in Nigeria's history, which calls on humanity's sincerity, inspiration, and consideration to solve our conflicts and problems. Peacebuilding, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, whichever term one uses, sits uneasily within one particular field, discipline, or government department, for that matter. Our current dilemmas are related to the culture of violence, conflicts, and war, becoming a global human phenomenon permeating all aspects of life. Modern nations in the world, who once faced these problems, used several techniques and approaches to solve these conflicts and problems. Nigeria and Africa, by extension, is a developing nation and continent, which is facing different challenges ranging from political tensions to religious and tribal violent conflicts. Conflicts can either be violent or non-violent. In violent conflict, parties involved directly feel the effects because it inflicts physical harm on them. Lack of peace is a global phenomenon. This phenomenon presents itself in various colours and patterns. There are therefore many theories propounded in describing the natural causes of it. In his characteristic manner of proffering solutions to all forms of crisis, Saint James contended in the third chapter of the epistle that demonic or worldly wisdom is the primary reason for conflicts among people, not counting their social or religious affiliations. On the other hand, peace education is seen as the way to educate future generations. Therefore, this paper examines and presents the concepts of peace education secularly and Saint James' concept of conflict resolution.

Keywords: Peace Education, Saint James, Crises, Resolution, Nigeria

Introduction

Indeed, since the youths form the vital pillars upon which any given human society stands, they are the ones who will bring about significant development, whether constructive or destructive. Thus, the teaching of peace education will allow them to resolve conflict without resorting to violence, which is very important. Therefore, it is crucial to engage the youths in society at every stage of their development positively. Starting from their childhood, the concept of peace should

be explained to them, accompanied by a presentation of ways to resolve conflict amicably without resorting to violence and how such positive behaviour can benefit them. Peace education refers to the people's development of positive attitudes, whereas peacebuilding integrates economic and social justice aspects. However, the two concepts are related as they attempt to improve human rights (Baxter and Ikobwa 2012).

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According to Harris and Morrison (2003: 7-10), peace education forms a crucial part of education. They argue that educators have contributed to the development of a global village and that it is now time for the schools and communities to contribute to the achievement of Dr Martin Luther King's vision of "beloved communities." Political tensions to religious and tribal violent conflicts have negatively influenced Africa's development and Nigeria in particular. As they are left unattended due to resolving these issues, these conflict situations keep happening and gradually become part of the national culture. The recent one is the religious crisis in Kwara State.

James, in his characteristic manner of 'emphasizing the place of work as evidence of salvation' tried to proffer solutions to conflicts and the attendant consequences significantly exemplified by the type mentioned above in his five-chapter epistle to his Hebrew Christian brothers in Diaspora (James 1:1) towards the dawn of the Christian era. This he brought to the climax in the last six verses of the third chapter, using the imagery of false and true wisdom to advocate that adherence or keeping to the latter's tenets will surely solve the problems (cf. James 3:17-18).

In Reverse Order

In 1914, upon Lord Frederick Lugard, the then British Governor-General, Nigeria was created through the union of the Northern and Southern Protectorates. At that time, Africa was in the hands of the British, French, Portuguese, and other colonial powers, who occupied the area in order to profit from the trade of slaves and other resources. When the slave trade finally came to an end, the British colonialists, afraid that they may lose Nigeria to the French who colonized the neighbouring countries, decided to unite the Northern and Southern protectorates. In 1960, the British finally gave independence to Nigeria and by extension Africa.

The Nigerian population comprises three main ethnic tribes: the Hausa in the North, the Igbo in the East, and the Yoruba in the West. There are, however, many other tribes scattered throughout the country. According to the estimation of the World Factbook's CIA records, there are over 250 ethnic groups and about 200 tribes in Nigeria (The World Factbook 2012). Thus, this diversity of ethnic groups and tribes generates a complex language pattern in the nation. "The number of individual languages listed for Nigeria is 527. Of these, 514 are living languages, two are second languages without mother-tongue speakers, and 11 have no known speakers" (Ethnologue 2012). In addition to their high number, every tribe has its own linguistic and cultural specificities, contributing to making mutual understanding a critical issue. Therefore, the Nigerian nation has experienced religious, political, and ethnic tension for quite a long time. One of the worst aspects of these tensions comes in the form of ethnic stereotyping. For example, members of certain tribes are all believed to be taking part in the terrorist activities of Boko Haram, while some others are identified with robbery. Also, certain tribes feel culturally superior to others, which only worsens the already tricky mutual understanding. Thus, a peace education program is highly needed to end these false beliefs and stereotypes, change the negative behaviours that people from different tribes have towards others, and engage Nigerian citizens to influence society's development positively.

This paper will be specifically focused on the youths, which, according to the African Union (AU, 2006) – comprise people from 15 to 35 years of age. In Nigeria, as in the rest of Africa, this category makes up around 70 to 75 per cent of the population. To be more specific, the following curriculum has been designed to target people between the ages of 10 to 16 years.

Peace-Education Initiative

"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather both are processes that take place over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself from its youths severe its lifeline." – Kofi Annan (former UN Secretary-General).

In a lecture delivered as part of Moodle MO2ISS, peace education has been identified *to create more peaceful societies, transforming cultures of violence into a peace culture. It is lifelong learning, i.e., from childhood socialization to adult education* (Rank 2012). The peace education program is a tool to encourage and support students to discover their resources. Through the curriculum, students will develop their resources regarding choice, hope, and inner strength, which will lead them to the prospect of a separate peace. Although the concept of peace education is new in many parts of the world, there is a need to spread this innovative educational programme with a curriculum designed for children, youths, and adults. National culture, as it influences people's apprehension of peace, will be part of the curriculum. Through the programme, the students will develop their listening skills and adopt a tolerant attitude. (Hunter 2006). As peace education aims to help individuals become good citizens and respect diversity, it is non-sectarian and non-religious. Peace education constitutes one of the essential means to reach peace. However, the absence of war does not mean peace in itself. Indeed, peace is a virtue, a state of mind, and a disposition for benevolence, nonviolence, justice, and confidence (Harris and Morrison 2003). The peace education curriculum will be specified to empower students of all levels with knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviours to live in line with themselves, others, and their environment. Moreover, the programme will enhance the necessary skills to resolve injustice and conflict situations and disseminate a peaceful culture. When many other areas need attention, peace education stands out. Peace education is of very high importance. It will enable people to adopt a positive attitude regarding the different issues they can face throughout their lives and develop the necessary skills to resolve conflict peacefully. This, in turn, will positively impact society. Therefore, it is crucial to design an explicitly cut peace education-related curriculum.

Viewing the Situation

As they are left unattended due to resolving these issues, these conflict situations keep happening and gradually they become part of the national culture. Consequently, the causes of conflict and tension continue, and the new generations are not aware of those issues and the need to resolve them. Bearing in mind that Nigeria is a multicultural and multi-ethnic nation where people are raised differently according to the beliefs and customs of their ethnic group. Consequently, by observing one's behaviours, it is possible to discover one's origins. The most critical challenges facing Nigeria constitute the terrorist activities of the so-called group Boko Haram in the North and the militancy in the Southern part of the South. However, the rest of the country is also affected by these conflicts. Thus, it is crucial to include peace education in the national curriculum to empower the future generation with the necessary skills to resolve these issues.

Many people arrested in connection with Boko Haram or the militancy are children or youths who often underplay the grievous implications of such activities on their development and that of their people. Their understanding of the notion of peace is very poor; to them, violence is the only way to achieve their goals, and they do not consider or even know, any alternative ways to approach the issues they encounter. As they grew up in environments that encouraged violence, bombing or kidnapping people are just normal things to them. The curriculum in which they have been educated can be qualified as dysfunctional since education should teach students to avoid violence. Therefore, we can see a need to restructure the country's educational system by integrating peace education to prevent youths from engaging in violent behaviours. As the first experiences are the ones who have more impact on us, it is vital to start teaching the knowledge of violence and to develop the skills of critical thinking and attitudes of respect and tolerance during childhood.

Since the 19th Century, as explained by Harris and Morison (2003: 3), social reforms have considered that the basic foundations for social change were given by schools, churches, and community groups. Through education, it was hoped that the students' willingness to contribute to society's development positively would increase, and, in turn, their dislike for violence and war would increase. By widely raising awareness of the disastrous consequences of war, it was hoped that the students' ability to resolve conflicts peacefully would increase.

Consequently, peace education programmes are highly needed in Nigerian primary and secondary schools. They will empower the children with the necessary knowledge of peace and address the issues without violence. The teaching of such programmes will enable the young to grow up to become good citizens that act positively for the nation.

James' Concept of Peace and Conflict

Certain concepts are fundamental to this study, primarily as used by James. They include wisdom, peace, and conflict. Vine gives two Greek words for wisdom as applicable to James' choice of words. The words are *σοφία*, (*sophia*), and *σοφος*, (*sophos*). While *Sophia* has a broad spectrum of meanings ranging from wisdom believed to have stemmed from God (Rom. 11:33; 1cor. 1:21, 24; 2:7, Eph. 3:10), the personification of wisdom (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35; 11:49), human wisdom in spiritual things (Luke 21:15; Acts 6:3, 10; 1cor. 2:6), human wisdom in the natural sphere (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31; Acts 7:22) to its most debased form: earthly, sensual devilish or demonical (James 3:15); *Sophos*, is used about God and spiritual men and very few instances in New Testament, to ordinary learning. About God, without being mentioned except in a place, *Sophos* is seen in His glory and splendour (Rom. 16:27; 1Tim. 1:17 and Jude 25), spiritual teachers in Israel (Matt. 23:35), believers endowed with spiritual and practical wisdom (Rom. 16:19; 1cor. 3:10, 6:5; Eph. 5:15; James), and the naturally learned men (Rom. 1:14, 22; 1cor. 1:19, 20, 26, 27; 3: 18-20) (Vine, 1996). In context, James was apt in his use of the two terms, *Sophia* and *Sophos*. As seen in the text, indeed, right from the very outset of the epistle, James did not want to bother his readers with intellectual definitions of wisdom that would naturally characterise the writing of such calibre in his time as the author of Hebrews 11:1 when he dealt with faith. Like most of his fellow Bible writers, he was more interested in the human person's practical life that can radiate God's true character here on earth (cf. 1:17-25) as expressed in Jesus' teachings (scripture).

Such a decision would have been occasioned by religious leaders' realistic view, especially among the Jews, that the "wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1cor. 3:19). Thus, what he gave was more of a description than a definition of wisdom. He has been describing it all along, with

his talk of believing God, relying on God's goodness, doing what God's word says, and living the righteous life that God desires (cf. 2:1-26). Here, he would label this as wisdom and describe it as humble submissiveness to God, resulting in a life of goodness, purity, and peace towards other people. To him, such a life disposition can dispel conflicts and ensure the lifestyle of heaven on earth. The same will help reduce if not eradicate disputes in Nigeria, where it had significantly disrupted economic growth.

Peace

Peace means the absence of war or freedom from any form of disturbances, conflicts of any kind, intrapersonal or interpersonal or inter-tribal, and even at the international level. According to David J. Francis, it is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and resolving conflict by nonviolence means. (Francis 2006). To Dzurgba, it is freedom from the quarrel, strife, discord, rioting, disorder, hostility, violence, or war. Further to that, he says "it is freedom from fear, anxiety, uncertainty, disturbance, and tension" and that it is an atmosphere of calmness, security, and safety" (Dzurgba, 2010). Speaking from the point of view of some Old Testament passages, Ecclesiastes 3:8 and Isaiah 45:22, for instance, Ebenezer Adeogun sees peace as having so much to do with health, prosperity, well-being, security, as well as quiet from war (Adeogun, 2013). Implicit in these views or definitions are such realities as healthy or newly healed, interpersonal or international relations, prosperity in social or economic matters, and establishing a working political system that can benefit all.

Conflict

Like any of the concepts examined earlier, conflict does not lend itself to a particular definition though it has an ordinary meaning notwithstanding the context or angle from which it is perceived or discussed. Having common sense simply means the presence of any form of a turbulent situation within oneself, between two or more persons, tribes, nations, etc over issues of common interests. Perceiving conflict as having an ontological basis in human needs, David J. Francis defines it as pursuing conflicting interests and goals by different groups (Francis, 2006). Similarly, Isaac O. Albert quoting L.A. Coser describes conflict from a social perspective. To them, it is a "struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting groups are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals (Albert, 2006). Conflict, as indicated from the onset of this paper, is a common phenomenon among human beings. It can be personal, social, political or religious. Coser and Albert's definition more appropriately captures the concept the way James would probably have put it if he had lived in our time. Tying James 3:14 and 4:1 together, one would see the perception of James vividly. He was disappointed by the envy and jealousy that characterized the attitudes of people in the Church. In 4:1-2, they yelled: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasures that war in your members...? You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war..." The terms *πολεμος* (Polemos) translated as fight and *μαχη* (machê), which means James aptly used quarrels. Commenting on this passage, Olatunde Oderinde opines that the primary source of disputes and conflicts in the church centres on a desire for recognition, honour, power, pleasure, money, and superiority (Oderinde, 2010). To such, conflicting fellows, the satisfaction of selfish desires becomes more critical than righteousness and the will of God (cf. Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14; Gal. 5:16-20). When such occurs, Donald C. Stamps et al. believe self-centred conflicts are often created in the fellowship (Stamps, 2000). Such can be likened to the rifts in the world today. Similarly, this paper is mainly about many politico/social crises in Nigeria,

all-encompassing because it cuts over all phases of the peoples' national lives. It is fundamentally political.

Textual Analysis

James 3: 13-18

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? He should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom by his good conduct. 14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. 16 For where there are envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretence. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace.

While the central theme of the book of James could be *faith that works*, the theme of this section of the book could equally be *the wisdom that aids faith*. Before now, James has been writing regarding how the tongue can be used and the destruction that can occur when one's double-mindedness towards God and others are allowed expression in his words. He turned to the more profound matters of wisdom which he spoke of in 1:5-8 about Solomon's wisdom passage (Prov. 2:1-7). He urged his readers to pray to God for wisdom upon which he said God is generous in giving. And God gives good gifts to those who ask such of him. George Guthrie calls this the focal passage of James' wisdom discourse (Guthrie 2006). This wisdom, as presented by James, is capable of making available all grace that can allow one to conveniently face any life's trial without being jeopardized as well as warding away all kinds of strife in the Church and by extension, the larger society, and thereby certainly ensuring development if adhered to (cf. 3:17-18).

The Implication of Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

As earlier noted, our text essentially urged those in the cadre of teachers in the Church who claimed to possess wisdom at the level that others did not have, to show evidence of their wisdom by their lifestyles other than the way they spoke. Interestingly, James had to focus on them because it was their responsibility to provide leadership for the people's good governance. They needed to use the wisdom from above (3:17), and the same is the reason for the text's choice.

James would ask all Christians to prove their salvation claims (James 2:14-26). It uses the idea that nations are ruled, and when the thoughts are evil due to the value systems of those in power, the consequences are always disaster and anarchy. Besides, when those in power are evil, their values become the values of the people also. This suggests why Dickson E. Rogers says that "nations are built on good characters of individual citizens, and that good characters will often make the best of bad situations while bad characters will make the worst of the good situation" (Rogers 2000). The advice of Oderinde that "it is the responsibility of every citizen to develop good characters to develop a great nation because those in power emerge from among the masses" (Oderinde 2010) quickly comes to mind. But good characters will hardly be developed where godly ideals are not given the right place in society.

Conclusion

A Norwegian peace educator, Magnus Haavelsrud, once said *There are no simple answers to how education can contribute towards disarmament and development. But increasing awareness*

through education seems to be a way towards the kind of mobilisation that is necessary. One way to overcome Nigeria's challenges is to address the issue during the early stages of development by developing and implementing a peace education curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. Through such early learning of the notions related to peace and the different ways one can resolve a conflict without resorting to violence, the youths will grow up in a positive environment.

They will be encouraged to act for the good of society.

Moreover, the learning process is not limited to classrooms and schools but takes place in a larger social context. An effective peace education programme will rely on communities, families, and social networks to promote the constructive approaches developed through the peace education curriculum.

It is determined that the ultimate solutions to these problems are in the consciousness of citizens of the society and to convert their culture of conflicts, violence and war to a peaceful and prosperous society by solving our problems with discussion and negotiations peacefully. To solve our conflicts and concerns, we must transform the culture of violence, conflicts, and war into a nonviolence culture, peace, and respect for others which is the fundamental goal of peace education.

It is the application of demonic or worldly wisdom characterised by jealousy and every kind of vice that causes conflicts in societies. This is Biblical as it is social and rational. The concept of wisdom by James is a universal truth though documented in the Holy Bible. It applies to anyone that can reason, just like Apostle Paul subscribed to some Greek views like "Bad company ruins good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33) credited to Menander, for instance, without being a pupil to any of the Greek philosophers (Motyer). Qur'an, of course, has a similar position across its chapters.

According to Shahid Athar, Muslims are asked to follow the good examples of earlier prophets." In the matters of faith, He has ordained for you (O Muhammad) insight through revelation as well as that which had joined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Steadfastly uphold the faith and do not break up your unity" (Sura 42:12). (Shahid Athar 2008). Thus, this paper's position is not about the superiority of any religion but a working ideal from a sacred book considered helpful to Nigeria and Nigerians and the entire humanity.

Recommendations

Educating the students in both primary and secondary schools on peace, nonviolence, and tolerance enables them to develop active listening and critical thinking skills. For the preparation of their lesson notes, teachers will use the curriculum to teach students the issues related to peace and conflicts. Through the school curriculum, the teachers will help the students change their parents' attitudes towards violence to resolve a dispute. Mediating and anger-management skills will be developed to assist the students in resolving issues. The teacher will present the consequences of violence on individuals and society, and the curriculum will detail the non-violent approaches to fix the problems. Through the programme, students will improve skills that build their confidence and constructive attitude towards peace. Constructive elements will be presented to students, and they will have the occasion to put their positive behaviours into practice through different exercises. Students will be encouraged to see themselves as citizens of one single nation rather than divide themselves along ethnic lines.

Suppose many Nigerians, especially those in power, can adhere to James's instructions and this paper's position, not necessarily because they want to be Christians, but because they see such as reasonable, Nigeria will undoubtedly become a dream nation. Rather than formulating selfish policies and creating programmes that will only worsen the masses' economic condition, things will change for the better if there will be such policies that will engender peaceful co-existence, and a functional curriculum for school children's economic development. There should be job and wealth creation, which will justify the national anthem's portion that Nigeria is a 'place where peace and justice reign.'

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