

**THE ROLE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE PROMOTION OF  
PEACE-CULTURE IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

The paper investigated the role of secondary education in the promotion of peace - culture in Nigeria. Peaceful atmosphere is the desire of all rational being. However, peace- full co-existence has not been fully experienced in most societies, though different avenues have been employed for peace to be realized. Education has always been regarded as a major tool for the realization of society's goals and aspirations. Therefore, for peace to reign in our society, the paper looked into what our secondary schools have to offer in this regard. The paper is divided into some segments, starting with the definition of the major concepts or terms used in the body of the presentation, it also looked into the brief history of secondary education in Nigeria, and the aims and objectives of secondary education. The paper also examined the role that our secondary schools can play in enhancing the development of peace-culture in Nigeria through the pursuance of sound school curriculum, quality service from teachers, the school management and the maintenance of good home-school relationship. It finally looked into the role that the government can play especially as regards the provision of everything needed for the production of effective citizens and the promotion of peace-culture in Nigeria

**Introduction**

The importance of peaceful co- existence in the development of any nation cannot be over emphasized. Peaceful environment is needed for the social, political and economic development of a society. It is equally a necessity and a major

determinant of the production of sound, well-disciplined and effective citizens as well as the attainment of high technological advancement.

Clamoring for peace is as old as human himself. Man clamoured for because it has always been recognized as the major propeller of individual and national development. Several avenues have been employed in an attempt to attain the much needed peace in all societies. Educational philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Comenius, Erasmus and a host of others have called for the use of education as a tool for the promotion of unity and peace in all societies. To them, wars are negative means of ensuring peace and unity.

Undoubtedly, Nigerians have witnessed several wars (Civil wars, inter tribal wars etc) since the 1960s. Peace-full co- existence has been eroded, genuine love, co-operation, tolerance etc are no longer displayed. That is why all agencies of education that is, the home, the school, the religious centers and the mass media are expected to come all out to revamp the situation so that peace will again have a firm base in our society. The role that the school (especially secondary school) can play in the promotion of peace- culture in Nigeria is the focus of this paper.

Our secondary schools can do much in combating and stamping out the chaotic, violent, and conflict-oriented tendencies found and displayed by students which eventually lead to the destabilization of peaceful co-existence in our schools and the society at large. Presently, some students of our tertiary institutions have turned themselves into armed robbers, cultists, hooligans and social menace thereby becoming a threat to the peaceful atmosphere highly needed for success in the educational sector of our society. Secondary Schools are good avenues through which such social negative behaviours can be prevented or completely destroyed.

We are supposed to learn from the Ancient Spartans. Sparta, a Greek city-state once used education to solve her long-standing problem. Having realized the implications of their minority status among the other Greek states, and the need for them to maintain the dominant position, the Spartans went ahead to pursue purely military education. With much commitment, they succeeded in attaining their national goal through the employment of education (Molagun et. al, 2004). Hence, the need for Nigeria as a nation to use education as a sure tool for the realization of the much needed peaceful co-existence. Our secondary schools can do much in this regard.

Before we go into the discussion proper, it will be necessary to pay particular attention to the key concepts used in the body of this paper.

### **Definition of Relevant Terms**

Peace is supposed to be the absence of commotion, violence, war destructions, destabilizations etc. Peace is a state of being calm, quiet, or being free from disturbance. It refers to anti-strife, unity, harmony or friend relationship or to experience a crisis-free atmosphere. True (2002) define peace as a dynamic process, which involves all individual and common relationship. To him, peace cannot be equated with the absence of war, rather it includes the presence of tranquility in the relationship that is existing between individuals, families, states and citizens. Peace refers to a state where justice truth and fairness prevail. Martin Luther once said that peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of justice. Where there is no fairness and justice peace is eroded.

Tyler (1971) a renowned anthropologist saw culture as the complex whole, which involves knowledge, belief, law, custom, moral, and other habits and capabilities acquired by man in a given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of a group of people living together in an environment. As a social heritage, culture is learnt and passed on to others from one generation another. The culture of a society is usually acquired through different avenue such as the process or socialization, imitation, indoctrination or through deliberate or intentional teaching.

Culture according to Longman dictionary of contemporary English (1995) refers to the ideas, beliefs and customs that are shared and accepted people in a society e.g our culture teaches us to be law abiding and care one another.

Peace-culture as explained by Albert (2003) refers to a number attributes and behavioural patterns, which make it possible for behaviours become entrenched in a society. It refers to the establishment of the value system that promotes peace building based on the principles of equality stewardship, and equitable sharing of resources, security of mankind individual, family, group or national levels without resorting to violence.

Education is one of the most important tools that can help to foster unity, peaceful co-existence, mutual friendship and relationship in the society. Education is the process employed for the effective transmission of the society's cultural values. That is why the sociologists defined education as the process of cultural transmission and renewal ".

Lester (1957) linked education with culture. He defined it as culture, which each generation purposely gives to those who are to be successors, in order to qualify them for at least keeping and if possible raising the level of improvement, which has been attained.

To Fafunwa (1974) education refers to the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude and forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society where he Education is the process through which the skills, abilities, competencies attitude and behaviours needed for the enhancement, development and the stability of the individual and society are acquired. The above and several other ions given by scholars' show that culture and education are inseparable he culture and the aspiration of the society that education is pre occupied with.

Secondary Education; The definition of secondary education will help fully grasp the functions that secondary schools are to perform in our society especially in the area of the promotion of peace - culture. Secondary education is the conventional link between primary and tertiary education. It y means post primary education. Taiwo (1985) defined secondary education as an institution where people are admitted after the satisfactory completion of their primary school course and providing a course of full- time instruction based on a syllabus approved by the government. Secondary education is received by children between eleven plus to between fifteen or twenty two years of age. This is the stage when a child makes a foundation of he will become in life. It is the period when a child reaches puberty, an age when as a social being he gradually develops in to adulthood, it is a period the young ones experience emotional, psychological and physiological changes. All these experiences make this period a very important one in process of education. That is why much attention should be paid to it not only in successful growth of the child but for the stability and progress of the society where the child belongs and where he is expected to live as a functional member.

### **Brief history of secondary education in Nigeria**

It will be recalled that the first educators in Nigeria were the Christian missionaries who come into the country around 1842. The missionaries came primarily to fulfill their evangelical obligations. Initially, it was not their intention to

provide formal education but they were later compelled to do so because need the interpreters who would help them to overcome their communication barrier and to facilitate the reading and understanding of the bible by their adherents. This led eventually to the establishment of few primary schools. Since the establishment of secondary education was very remote to the plans of the missionaries, none was founded until 1859 when the CMS Grammar school was opened and few other ones that followed later. The colonial government that came later did not open any secondary school until 1909 when Kings college Lagos, was founded and Queen's college which was later established in 1923. The few secondary schools that later came up were as a result of the incessant demands of prominent Nigerian elites who having received their higher education outside the country knew the advantage of being fully educated. It was their agitation that eventually aided the progress of secondary education in Nigeria, (Taiwo, 1982).

The aims and objectives of the first set of secondary schools were the production of subordinates, people who would never be able to rob their shoulders with the colonial masters. The aim then was to produce artisans, clerks, interpreters and helpers for the British officials, people who would only be good enough to take up menial jobs. Hence, the curriculum was not so designed for the emancipation of Nigerian society from a servitude position (Fafunwa, 1974).

Nigerians, according to Fafunwa (1974), Taiwo (1982), and Osokoya (1987) were exposed to the subjects, which were not too relevant to the culture and aspirations of the people. The curriculum contents designed for Britain were the ready "food" for Nigerians. Our people had to master virtually all the popular foreign languages but were alienated from their own national language. They mastered the history and Geography of Britain but knew close to nothing on Nigerian history. The contents of education were also almost completely literary, while the promotion of our cultural values and heritage through education was relegated to the background.

It was only after the curriculum conference of 1969 that things began to take a better shape. The national policy on education which was an off -shoot of the conference clearly spelt out the purpose of education in Nigeria. The philosophy and aims of education became Nigerianised. The school curriculum was purposely designed to meet the needs and aspirations of Nigerians.

## **Purpose of Secondary Education in Nigeria**

Education is never an aimless venture since the society and education are interdependent. Education is employed with set goals, which will eventually lead to the realization of the national goals. The purpose of secondary education among other things is to provide the knowledge of the environment and to infuse the spirit of tolerance, love and amiable relationship with others into the students.

The purpose of secondary education as itemized by Taiwo (1985) includes the following:-

- (a) To give a large number of pupils the opportunity of education of high quality irrespective of their social background.
- (b) To diversify the curriculum so as to cater for differences in talents and to allow for better opportunities for learners after completing the course.
- (c) To inculcate the spirit of self-reliance, industry and versatility in the students.
- (d) To impress on the students their privileges and responsibilities as citizens of Nigeria
- (e) To develop and project our culture, arts, and languages;
- (f) To develop a sense of spiritual and moral values, integrity and uprightness
- (g) To raise the generation of people who can think for themselves, have respect for the views and feelings of other people and respect the dignity of labour;
- (h) To foster the unity of Nigeria and emphasize the ties and the common elements which unite us, etc .

In line with the above, Mejabi (1985) summarized the Purpose of secondary education as:

- (1) To equip youths better for responsible citizenship,
- (2) To increase in students understanding of and respect for the nation through the teaching of history and culture,
- (3) To help recipients who are unable to receive higher education to live an enriched life;
- (4) To equip students to meet the challenges of technological age .etc

The above purpose of secondary education can indeed transform Nigerian society to an enviable one, the goals are truly laudable, progressive and peace-promoting if carefully pursued. One of the aims is to produce responsible citizenship. Trouble shouters, disrupters of peace, rogues, cultists, armed-robbers, rioters cannot be regarded as

responsible citizens. That is why all efforts should be made towards the realization of the goals of secondary education in our secondary schools. Appreciable efforts should be made to inject into students at all levels all peace-orientated and peace -promoting values in order to enhance peaceful co- existence in the society. Both the needs of the students and the society which ranges from justice, peace, equality, tolerance, security, freedom, kindness, sympathy, hard work, happiness and a host of other needs must be the focus of secondary education.

### **What the secondary school should do for the Promotion of peace-culture in Nigeria**

The fact that our secondary schools have much to do for peace to prevail in Nigerian society cannot be underestimated. The roles that the teacher can play, the place of the curriculum, the role of the school management and the government will be discussed below;

**School Curriculum;** The curriculum substance of education refers to the subject content of our system of education which is the means to the realization of our national as well as educational goals. The term curriculum came from the Latin word "currere" meaning to run a course. A school curriculum is the sum total of human and material resources that are planned for the attainment of the aims and goals of course being exposed to in a school system (Ibrahim et.al; 2003). Apart from examination requirements school curriculum should encourage the cultivation of attitudes and values required for the sustenance of our society. It should also emphasize true citizenship, which implies love of one's neighbor, country, selfless service, and the placing of the national well being before personal gains.

If we remember the definitions of peace earlier given in this paper which are, a state of calmness, quietness, existence of trouble-free atmosphere, harmony, friendship, and an atmosphere where justice, equity tolerance, and fairness are experienced, then our secondary school curriculum should be given better attention than what we have always witnessed. Improvements should be made in some areas for the culture of peace to be given greater importance in our society. While the teaching of core subjects; both the junior and senior secondary schools are intensified, subjects that are designed for meeting our cultural demands should also be given adequate attention;

**History-**; Students should be exposed to the wars fought in the past e.g Nigeria civil wars and the devastating effects and the need for the prevention of occurrences of such wars in the future. Students through the study of history should be exposed to the various components of our cultural heritage in order for them to grow up with the attitude of respect and appreciation for our traditions and the customs of the different groups that make up Nigerian society.

**Religious and Moral Education:** Religion is a major aspect of Nigerian life, which can never be brushed aside .It, teaches peace, love, harmony, tolerance etc. It teaches the fear of God and the need to tolerate and respect others. Religious education has been encouraged from the ancient times. For instance, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle the three famous great Greek philosophers saw religious and moral education as sure means through which virtue can be injected into the society. Comenius, a renowned philosopher once said that through education, each child should be made God -like. God is never violent. He loves peace. Hence the need to intensify the teaching of religious and moral education in our schools.

The situation where by efforts are concentrated on helping the students to perform excellently in their external examinations at the detriment of the spiritual undertone of the topics covered in religious education should be checked. There is also the need to make religious study compulsory up to the senior secondary school level in Nigerian schools.

**Social studies;** This seems to be the most important subject in the teaching of citizenship and in the inculcation of our social values. The various topics under social studies should inject in to the students the desire for peaceful coexistence, love, and respect for people of different tribes and also the maintenance of the cultural values of the society.

**Literature;** Literature books written in English, Yoruba or in any other language, should promote non- violent, and conflict free, society. Virtues such as love, trust, respect for the views of others, tolerance etc should be injected into students through indigenous literature books.

**Nigerian language:** The three Nigerian dominant languages (Yoruba, Hausa, and Ibo) should be offered compulsorily in the first three years of our secondary



education. This will help each child to accept other people from other parts of the country as brothers rather than seeing them as aliens, and unwanted elements. Love, harmony and appreciation of the culture of others from deferent tribes can be built through the effective teaching of these three languages. Apart from this, every student should be made to offer a Nigerian language, made compulsorily, other than his/her own at the senior secondary school level.

**English language:** There should be the intensification of the teaching English language in our secondary schools. This has been adopted as nation's lingual Franca. It should be noted that the inability of many Nigerian students to express themselves freely and fluently in English sometimes m; them to react negatively to issues and activities going on around them in school. Whenever they are short of words, they resort into violence aggression especially when they are interacting with their mates. Violent tendencies will be minimized if students are encouraged to speak more frequently in English and pay better attention to the mastery of that subject.

**Vocational/Science subjects:** All practical oriented subjects such introductory technology, Agriculture, the sciences, Home economics, and c vocational subjects that aid functionality should be given better attention in secondary schools.

In Russia, apart from the fact that education is free for all up to university level, at the secondary school level every student is expected take part every week in what is known as 'production'. All the students should compulsorily involve themselves in eight hours of practical work a week in factories located within the school environment. This experience makes possible for those who are not so gifted academically to later get themselves fixed up in any of the factories after their secondary education. They planned well so as not to produce dropouts, street - peddlers, non -achievers who eventually erode the peaceful atmosphere being enjoyed in the society (Molagun et. al 2004).

In Nigeria, many who completed their secondary education but unable to secure admission to tertiary level of education since nothing highly practical was mastered when in the school have turned themselves hoodlums, disturbing the peace of Nigeria society. Though Nigerian secondary schools are supposed to be highly comprehensive with emphasis on the vocational subjects at the junior secondary level

(NPE, 2004), changes and efforts made are still highly negligible as a result of several factors such as lack of qualified professionals, equipment, workshops, fund etc.

### **Role of Teachers**

Teachers are like Shepherds caring for their sheep. No reforms can ever be witnessed using the school as a tool without the teachers to make it work. Their work goes beyond their classroom activities. They are to serve as guardians to students, to advise them on every aspect of their lives and live as models for learners to emulate. Their positive attitude to work and the establishment of good rapport with the students will go a long way in the building of mutual understanding good relationship in the school environment, conflict-free environment and the development of peaceful co-existence. For effective promotion of peace-culture in schools and the society, secondary school teachers will have to pay attention to the following

- (1) The teacher should be a role model. Teachers should be men and women of integrity, honest, not criminals, drunkards, violent individuals. Their lives and behaviours should mold the souls of the students put under their custody. They should be morality personified.
- (2) They should be devoted to their primary assignment. Their attention should not be drawn to the private lessons organized to come up after the school, which are sometimes illegal.
- (3) Teachers should always use methods that will allow students to express themselves, explore the environment, relate amicably with others such as group method, exploratory outings etc. Methods used should also cater for their individual differences
- (4) Teachers should keep students busy as much as possible but allow them to relax when necessary. Idle hands they say, is the devils workshop.
- (5) School hours should be judiciously used, while homework given should be marked regularly to prevent laziness on the part of the students. No room should be given for evil tendencies to thrive
- (6) Teacher's languages should not be derogatory in nature. The naturalists stressed the need for teachers not to see the students as devil incarnate but to treat them as individuals with bright future. Using derogatory language can create hatred in the heart of students towards the teacher

and the school activities. They can also become hardened criminals as a result of this.

- (7) Good and positive efforts made by students should be reinforced as much as possible. The teacher should appreciate their efforts and identify with their daily experiences.
- (8) Teachers are to enhance the peaceful co-existence in the school through discipline. Punishment should be awarded for any involvement in violent or destabilizing activities. The teacher should however be in mind that corporal punishment should be used as the last resort when all other gentle methods had failed. The teacher should also s punishments, as corrective measures not means of displaying one's negative emotions or as retaliatory measures. Punishment discipline given promptly will serve as an example to other students the classroom. These measures will help students to live in peace and continue to strive towards the maintenance of peace in the school and the society.
- (9) Teacher should work in cooperation with the home to aid the effect development of the child. They are to intimate parents with behaviour and attitudes and performances of their children and wards on regular basis. This will help in building cordial relationship between the teacher, students and the parents. All together, good citizens be produced which will in turn aid the building of a smooth and pea culture in Nigerian society.

### **The role of Government**

The government of any nation is the major dictator of what happens in schools. Hence for peace-culture to thrive through secondary education, government should pay particular attention to the following;

- (1) More of the inter-state schools (unity schools) which bring student from different states together in a school should be established by government. This will continue to help the students to appreciate o people's culture and ideas.
- (2) Government should encourage the existence of religious associate in Nigerian secondary schools such as Fellowship of Chris students and Muslim students. These types of Associations h always helped to produce good and law-abiding

citizens in the p Freedom should be given to schools for such activities, which surely help to forestall violence, and turn devil oriented hearts back God.

- (3) Educational facilities should be adequately catered for by government. Lack of classrooms accommodation has led to crowding in our schools. This, undoubtedly breeds ten: uneasiness, restlessness, and the like. Outlets to such experience are usually fighting, noise making, failure etc. Good Teacher-student ratio should therefore be maintained through the provision of qualified teachers and well ventilated classrooms.
- (4) Libraries with quality and current books especially those that will promote peace-culture should be put in place in our secondary schools.
- (5) Admission policy into our secondary schools should be based on merit. The idea of catchment areas, which enhance the proliferation of students from one section of the state or country, can lead to ethnic associations, hatred, mistrust, conflicts etc. Also factors such as religious background, ethnicity, political affiliations etc, should not be employed when admitting students into our secondary schools. Admission should be based purely on merit and nothing else.
- (6) Our government should encourage the teaching of the practical subjects at the secondary level by supplying teachers and every other thing that will make things work out better. This will help to cater for students who are unable to secure admission to tertiary institutions to be fully engaged in different trades learned while in school. Unemployment related problems are too numerous to mention in our society today. Idleness and peace-eroding activities will be permanently checked if students are fully prepared for all eventualities through a more viable secondary education.

### **Conclusion**

All the discussions above show that a lot can be done at the secondary school level towards the promotion of the much-desired peace-culture in Nigerian society. Several avenues have been employed by world bodies to secure world peace and harmony. UNESCO (1995), for instance emphasized the role of love, tolerance and equality as means towards the realization of world desired peaceful co-existence. But from the discussions in this paper, it is true to say that the solution is not far fetched.

Focusing more on our secondary education, pursuing it with vigour, laying emphasis on all peace-oriented subjects and educational practices will definitely help to promote peace in our schools and the entire Nigerian society.

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