Bridging Nigeria's Ethno-Religious Divide through 'Peace Education' In Secondary Schools in Lagos State

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Abstract

This paper examines the prospects of bridging Nigeria's widening ethno-religious divide through the instrumentality of pence education. Relying on the functionalist theoretical approach, the paper argues that peace education in schools offers Nigeria the rare opportunity of 'catching them young' and of bridging the widening ethno-religious gulf among her mosaic of ethnic nationalities and cultures. It regrets however, that the full potentials offered by this discipline are not being fully realised because of the selective teaching of its elements through substitute subjects as Social studies, Civic studies, Religious studies and similar subjects in our schools. The study utilised quantitative data that were generated from 292 students in selected tertiary schools in Lagos state. The result indicated that the teaching of peace education in schools was positively associated with an appreciation of ethnic diversity among recipients at P-value of 0.042. However, it was found that no association exists between the teaching of peace education in secondary schools and religious tolerance, and the appreciation of conflict resolution skills with P-value standing at 0.976 and 0.492 respectively. It was therefore recommended that full scale peace education curriculum should be introduced at all levels of schooling in the country, while the teaching and learning environments should be provided to facilitate the internalisation of peace culture by all.

Introduction

Nigeria has continued to experience huge difficulty in unifying her peoples and cultures into a stable and prosperous nation after over a century of her existence as a country. Mutual distrust and hostility have continued to define inter-group relations among her diverse nationalities and groups, accounting for her chequered history of social conflicts, endless agitations for secession, insurgency and terrorism. Loyalty and commitment to the country have also continued to decline, thus creating palpable apprehensions about her possible disintegration. These tendencies which began to manifest soon after the country was arbitrarily mid-wifed through a colonial fiat, became heightened after the country's flag independence in 1960 and were to culminate into a thirty months fratricidal civil war that was caused by the attempted secession of the South-Eastern provinces of the country as the self-proclaimed republic of Biafra (Adejoh, 2016). Decades after that war, strident cries of marginalisation and threats of secession have continued to resonate with not just the Igbo, but several other members of the country's rainbow federation till date. That these have created uncertainties about the country's future as one indissoluble unit is not in doubt. Today, the spread of

identity-based violence ethnic, religious, indigene/settler claims- as well as politically motivated crises have continued to weaken the faith of most people in a united Nigeria. Indeed, to many people, Nigeria is a mere geographical expression that means absolutely nothing to them. In the exact words of Awolowo (1947):

> *"Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. The word Nigerian is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not".*

Despite the weak foundation of the country however, successive governments have continued to insist on the non-negotiability of its unity. In the words of the country's war time Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, "to keep Nigeria together as one is a task that must be done" (nd), and it was for this reason that he had to fight a civil war to stop the secession of Eastern Nigeria. Other regimes after him- military and civilian- alike have also insisted on the existence of one united Nigeria. So it was that all the various constitutional conferences that were convened by various regimes to avail Nigerians with the opportunity to appraise the state of their "union" and consequently work out *I* templates for more harmonious and mutually fulfilling co-existence were unequivocal in their insistence that the country's indivisibility and indissolubility is not a subject for debate. Addressing the delegates to the national constitutional conference of 2014, then President Jonathan had said inter alia:

> *....Even though you come to the conference as nominees and representatives of different interest groups, 1 urge you all to make a more united , stronger,*

> *indivisible and prosperous Nigeria as your preoccupation and reference at this national gathering....(Vanguard, March 17, 2014)*

This seemingly official position of the government appears to enjoy popular acclaim among Nigerians who see greater prospects in a united Nigeria than in dismembering the country into smaller units (Adekoya, 2012; Igbokwe, 2015). However, there is a unanimity of opinion that concerted efforts must be brought to bear to weld the country's diverse entities into a nation-state enjoying the loyalty and trust of all and where every citizen would see one another as one. It is in this regard that Gambari (2008), makes a case for conscious nation building efforts by Nigeria and Nigerians. In his words:

> *... nations just don't happen by historical accident; rather they are built by men and women with vision and resolve. Nation-building is therefore the product of conscious statecraft, not happenstance. Nation-building is always a work-in-progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Nation-building never stops and true nation-builder never rest because all nations are constantly facing up to new challenges.*

It is this profound reality that nation-building is a consciously engineered process that perhaps informed many of the constitutional, administrative and social engineering efforts taken by the government. Among these efforts are the creation of more states, the constitutional provision for the federal character principle, the introduction of the National Youth Service Corps, the introduction of federal unity schools and many more. The state creation exercise was undertaken to correct the imbalance in

the administrative structure of the country, minimize future political friction and ensure a stable Federation (Elaigwu, 1982) while the other provisions and schemes were to promote the unity and greater understanding among Nigerians of diverse backgrounds. However, beyond these constitutional and administrative efforts lie the undeniable place of education, and in particular, peace education in welding divided societies like Nigeria. According to Akubue and Ezegbe (2013), it is education that can and must educate man to live in peace and dignity. Cremin (1993), adds that peace education is probably the only hope for survival of life on earth and for solving the social menace man finds himself. Peace education is that form of education which aims at teaching individuals the information, attitudes, values, and behavioural competencies needed to resolve conflicts without violence and to build and maintain mutually beneficial, harmonious relationships. Mishra (2015) defines peace education as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that will enable children, youths and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive for peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. Oshita (2006) adds that the aim of peace education is not just educating for peace but educating for a "peace capacity". In other words, peace education is an empowerment strategy which mainly equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to prevent and manage conflict at intra/inter-pcrsonal or intra/inter-group levels. Averink (2013) observed that Peace education played a

critical role in healing and rebuilding inter-ethnic trust among Rwandans after the genocide of 1994. Adesina (2005) also iound that the learning of elements of peace education in Social studies curriculum had a positive influence on the affective dispositions of students of Colleges of Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria and that students who took part in the study exhibited moderate to high appreciation of cultural diversities Learning peace education helps young people achieve a culture of peace. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2010) defined a culture of peace as "a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations". Some of the factors that would help youth achieve culture of peace include an appreciation of ethnic diversity, religious tolerance and acquisition of conflict resolution skills (Akudolu, 2010). Although peace education has not succeeded in getting a place as a distinct subject in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, curriculum planners and educators have nonetheless, tried to incorporate principles/tenets of peace education and to inculcate the values of peaceful co-existence and social integration into the learners through a number of subjects such as Social studies, Religious studies, Government, and lately, Civic education. Others are History, Literature, Geography and similar subjects in the humanities (Odejobi and Adesina, 2009). Through these subjects, the country's educational system has sought to bring about good and socially competent citizens that would live cordially with the paper is divided into six sections including this introduction

as section one. The second section engages the problemmatique of the study while the third section situates the study within appropriate theoretical premise. Section four discusses the method of the study while section five discusses the results of the study. The final section concludes the work and draws out policy recommendations.

1. Statement of Problem

Nigeria is a miscellany of erstwhile disparate peoples and nation-states that were arbitrarily lumped together in 1914 by imperialist British colonial government for purely selfish administrative convenience. Extant literature suggest that well over 450 ethnic groups speaking over 240 different languages and differing historically in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and in their customs were involved in this bizarre marriage in which they practically had no say (Otite, 1990). More than a hundred years after, the wobbly ligaments bearing the heavy weight of this contrived multi-ethnic edifice have not only remained infirm, but have continued to be buffeted and compromised by bitter ethnic/sectional rivalries for political, economic and cultural hegemony among the constituents [Ajayi, 2006). Frustrations arising from these struggles explain partly, Nigeria's seemingly intractable circle of violent political, ethno-religious and resource-based conflicts. No one knows the exactitude of the number of lives lost to ethno-religious conflicts since the country's flag independence in October 1960, but there is an agreement that these are in tens of thousands (Chukwuma, 2009). Alubo [2006), reckons a higher figure of over 300,000 deaths, a figure which he says makes the spate of civil disturbances in the country comparable to a civil war. It is to be

noted that this is aside the over one million lives that were lost to the SOmonths Nigeria-Biafra war of July 6, 1967 through to January 15, 1970, following an aborted secessionist attempt by the by the Igbo and their eastern minority folks. That there are uncertainties about the country's future as one indissoluble unit, more than half a century after independence, is not in doubt. The country has continued to take steps to weld her diverse groups together. One such steps include the attempts to teach bits and pieces of peace education through substitute subjects such as Social studies, Religious studies, Government, Civic Education and the like. However, despite years of toeing this path, Nigeria has remained a deeply divided country. This raises concern about the adequacy of the current peace education curriculum is our secondary schools and forms the basis for this study. The aims of the study were to assess the effectiveness of peace education as is presently being taught in schools in bridging Nigeria's widening ethno-religious divide, to ascertain the extent to which teaching peace education through proxy subjects as is the case in our secondary schools, has promoted the spirit of tolerance and facilitated the appreciation of peaceful approach to conflict resolution among secondary school students in Lagos state, and to determine the extent to which the teaching of peace education through proxy subjects as we have in our schools presently, has helped to equip recipients with requisite skills for resolving conflicts peacefully.

2. Theoretical Framework

The functionalist theoretical perspective is considered appropriate in explicating the import of peace education in Nigeria's quest for bridging the country's ethnic divide. The

functionalist world view interprets social realities from the point of view of their utilitarian contributions to the enhancement of the stability and equilibrium of the social system (Haralambos & Holborn, 2007). Associated with such forebears of sociology as Kmile Durkhcim, Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merlon and many others, this school posits that society is made up of different parts each of which functions interdependently to maintain the stability of the whole society.

Functionalists use the terms functional and dysfunctional to describe the effects of social elements on society. Elements of society are functional if they contribute to social stability and dysfunctional if they fail to perform their function of social stability. Education as an element of society is functional if it provides solidarity, unity and togetherness and allows society to have a bond of consensus (Glogowski, 2011); and if it promotes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, and enthrone a lasting culture of peace. Education is dysfunctional if it fails to achieve these. Seen from this prism, it can be said that Nigeria's avalanche of conflicts and violence speak directly to the dysfunctionality of her education in particular, and of her other structures in general. It also follows that for culture of peace to prevail in the minds of students and bridge the wide ethnic gulf among her peoples, Nigeria's education must accord a place to peace education in her schools' curriculum. Similarly, peace education must be taken beyond the present pretentious arrangement of teaching it through surrogate subjects as Social studies, Religious studies, Civic education and the like. This is because

peace education has its unique instructional methods and strategies, which seek to promote interactive learning processes through the use of cooperative group work, peer teaching, problem-solving, discussion, role plays, mediation, consensus building, negotiations, simulation and other learner-centred instructional strategies (Akudolu, 2010). When students participate in these types of learning strategies, they listen to one another and this develops in them respect for differences (Adam, 2005). Baldo and Fumiss (1998), add that peace education is most effective when the skills of peace and conflict resolution are learned actively and are modeled by the school environment in which pupils are taught. Mishra (2015), notes that in order to achieve the objectives of peace education, a school system has to be prepared for drastic changes including setting new educational objectives, preparing new curricula, (re)writing school textbooks, developing instructional materials, and training teachers to create a school climate that is conducive for peace education. This is not the situation in our schools today, hence the failure of our education in mobilizing members of the society is favour of the type of values, attitude, traditions and behaviours that encourage non-violence, democracy, intercultural understanding, tolerance, respect for human rights as well as respect for nature and environment (Akudolu, 2010). It is also for this reason that the gulf among Nigeria's diverse peoples has continued to widen.

Method
The study adopted the survey research design to collect quantitative data from a total of 320 students of the University of Lagos and Yaba College of Technology, Lagos. Equal number of

respondents (160) was drawn from each of the schools through the multi-stage sampling technique. Respondents were made up of young people who were exposed to peace education or subjects with related curricula as well as those who were not so exposed, in their secondary schools. Data were collected with the aid of questionnaire which had two sections. Section A contained questions on the personal information and characteristics of respondents, while section B asked questions that bothered on central objectives of this study. Data for the study were analyzed based on 292 returned copies of questionnaire using frequencies, simple percentages and chi-square statistics with the alpha set at 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings
Table 1: Background Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Per cent
Female	206	70.5
Male	86	29.5
Total	292	100.0
Age	Frequency	Per cent
16-21 Years	200	68.5
22 -2 7 Years	64	21.9
28-34 Years	7	2.4
3 5-40 Years	2	0.7
No Response	19	6.5
Total	292	100.0
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Per cent
SSCE	106	62.4
OND	15	5.1
B.SC./B.A.	153	26.3
M.Sc. /MA.	18	6.2
Total	292	100.0
Marital Status	Frequency	Per cent
Married	22	7.5
Single	268	91.8
Divorced/Separated	2	0.7

Total	292	100.0
Religious Affiliation	Frequency	Per cent
Islam	76	26.0
Christianity	215	73.6
Others	1	0.3
Total	292	100.0
Ethnic Group	Frequency	Per cent
Yoruba	210	71.9
Hausa	9	3.1
Ibo	46	15.8
Others	27	9.2
Total	292	100.0

Table 1 presents the background characteristics of the respondents who took part in this study. As is seen, 70.5% were female while 29.5% were male. In terms of age, majority (69%) were aged 16-21, about 22% were 22-27years old while about 2% and one percent were aged 28-34 years and 35-40 years respectively. The table also shows that majority (62.4%) had completed secondary education while about 5% had completed the Ordinary National Diploma (OND). About 26% had completed the Bachelor's degree (B.Sc. /B.A) while about 6.2% had completed the Master degree (M.Sc. /M.A). Regarding respondents marital status, the table shows that majority (91.8%) were single while 7.5% were single. Only about one percent of the respondents were divorced or separated. There were more Christians (73.6%) than Muslims (26%) and one person (0.3%) who profess other religions in the study. Similarly, there were more Yoruba (71.9%) than the Igbo (15.8%), the Hausa (3.1%) and people of other ethnic groups (9.2%) in the study. The preponderance of the Yoruba in the study is explained by the study location which is Yoruba land in the South-West region of the country.

Table 2: Teaching of Elements of Peace Education in Secondary Schools

Whether Respondents were taught elements of Peace education in secondary schools.	Frequency	Percent
Yes	185	63.4
No	100.	34.2
No Response	7	2.4
Total	**292**	**100.0**
Subjects used to teach peace education	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Civic Education	35	12.0
Social Studies	90	30.8
Government	10	3.4
Religions Studies	12	4.1
No Response	45	15.4
Not Applicable	100	34.2
Total	**292**	**100.0**
Whether the positive aspects of other ethnic groups were taught in the school subjects.	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Yes	263	90.1
No	28	9.6
No Response	1	0.3
Total	**292**	**100.0**
Whether tolerance of other people's views and behaviours were taught in secondary school subjects.	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Yes	182	62.3
No	95	32.5
No Response	15	5.1
Total	**292**	**100.0**
Whether Respondents were taught conflict resolution skills in secondary school	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Yes	180	61.6
No	99	33.9
No Response	13	4.5
Total	**292**	**100.0**

Table 2 above shows the mediums of teaching peace education in secondary schools in Lagos state presently and the content of what is taught. As seen, about 63% of the respondents in this study reported that elements of peace education were taught during their time in secondary school. However, about 34% of the respondents did not receive any form of Peace Education while in secondary school. The table reveals further that peace education is taught through such substitute subjects as Social Studies, Civic Studies, Social studies, Government and Religious studies. Of these, Social Studies and Civic Studies were reported by about 31% and 12% of respondents respectively as the major subjects through which Peace Education is being taught in secondary schools in Lagos state. Only about 4% and 3% respectively reported that Peace Education was taught through Religious Studies and Government in secondary schools. About 62% of the respondents reported that tolerance for other people and their views were taught in their Social Studies, Civic Studies and related subjects through

which Peace Education is purportedly taught. About 33% however reported that tolerance for people with alternative views and behaviours did not form part of the curriculum in their subjects. Furthermore, about 61% of the respondents reported that conflict resolution skills were part of the topics taught in their Social Studies and Civic Studies classes in the secondary schools. However, about 40% of the respondents indicated that conflict resolution skills did not form part of what they were taught in their Social studies, Civic Studies, Government or Religious Studies classes in the secondary school.

Test of Hypotheses - Three hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study. The first sought to establish the nature of relationship between the teaching of Peace Education as is presently being done in secondary schools and the appreciation of ethnic diversity among young people, the second sought to determine the effectiveness of peace education in its present form in schools, in equipping beneficiaries with skills for resolving conflict peacefully while the third one looked at the relationship between peace education taught in secondary schools and acquisition of peaceful conflict resolution skills among youth. Below are the results of the tests.

H1: There is a significant relationship between peace education taught in secondary schools and appreciation of ethnic diversity among youth.

Table 3: Relationship between Peace Education Taught In Secondary School and Appreciation of Ethnic Diversity Among Youth.

Taught peace education in one's secondary school days.	Every ethnic group has Positive contribution in the development of the Nigerian society.		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	162(88.0%)	22 (12.0%)	184(100.0%)
No	79 (79.0%)	21 (21.0%)	100 (100.0%)
Total	241 (84.9%)	43 (15.1%)	284 (100.0%)
X^2= 4.124; df=l; P-value 0.042			

With a calculated value (X2) of 4.124 and a 'p' value of 0.042, much below 0.05 level of significance, table 3 above reveals a clear association between the teaching of Peace education in secondary schools and the appreciation of ethnic diversity among youth.

H2: There is a significant relationship between peace education taught in secondary schools and religious tolerance among youth.

Table 4. There is a significant relationship between peace education taught in secondary school and religious tolerance among youths

Taught peace education in one's secondary school days.	Willingness to live in same place with someone whose religion and culture are not same/agreeable with one's own.		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	116(63.7%)	66(36.3%)	182 (100.0%)
No	62 (63.9)	35 (36.1%)	97 (100.0%)
Total	178 (63.8%)	101 (36.2%)	279 (100.0%)
X^2= 0.001; df= 1; P-value= 0.976			

Table 4 reveals that the calculated value (X^2) is 0.001 while the 'p' value is 0.976, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05, indicating that no relationship exists between Peace education as is being taught in secondary schools today and religious tolerance among youth.

H3: There is a significant relationship between peace education taught in secondary schools and peaceful conflict resolution skills among youth.

Table 5: Relationship between peace educations taught in secondary schools and acquisition of conflict resolution skills among youth.

Being taught peace education in one's secondary school days.	Ability to successfully resolved dispute between any two or more people.		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	168 (91.3%)	16 (8.7%)	184 (100.0%)
No	87(88.8%)	11(11.2%)	98 (100.0%)
Total	255(90.4%)	27(9.6%)	282 (100.0%)
X^2= 0.472; df= 1; P-value= 0.492			

Table 4 here reveals that the calculated value (X^2) is 0.472 while the 'p' value is 0.492, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05. This indicates that there is no relationship between peace education taught in secondary schools and acquisition of conflict resolution skills among youth. In other words, the elements of peace education as is presently taught in subjects as Social studies, Civic studies, Religious studies and similar subjects in our secondary schools, are lacking in the capacity to adequately train beneficiaries on the skills for peaceful handling of conflicts.

Discussions

The first hypothesis of this study tested the relationship between peace education taught in secondary school and appreciation of ethnic diversity among youth. With a calculated value (X2) of 4.124 and a 'p' value of 0.042, much below 0.05 level of significance, the result revealed a clear association between these two variables, suggesting that the teaching of peace education in secondary schools actually enhanced young peoples' appreciation of ethnic

diversity. This finding agrees with that by Averink (2013) who documented the role played by peace education in healing and rebuilding inter-ethnic trust among Rwandans after the genocide of 1994. Adesina (2005] also found that the learning of elements of peace education in Social studies curriculum had a positive influence on the affective dispositions of students of Colleges of Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria and that students who took part in the study exhibited moderate to high appreciation of cultural diversities The second hypothesis of the study tested effect of peace education taught in secondary schools on religious tolerance among youth. The result showed that the calculated value (X^2) is 0.001 while the 'p' value is 0.976, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05, indicating that no relationship exists between peace education as is being taught in secondary schools today and religious tolerance among youth. The This finding is not in consonance with the literature as explanations emphasized that students must be taught peace education in order to realize the need to tolerate other people. According to UNESCO (1995], peace education is the most effective means of preventing intolerance. Article 1.2 of the "Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice" stipulates that "all individuals and groups have the right to be different". In addition, educating for tolerance is a practical alternative. Intolerance has given rise to violence, terrorism and discrimination within societies. D'Angelo and Dixey [2001) in their studies stated that, by teaching tolerance, we allow individuality and diversity while promoting peace and a civil society. Our success in the struggle of intolerance depends on the effort we make to educate ourselves and our children. "Intolerance can be unlearnt.

Tolerance and mutual respect have to be learnt" (United Nations Information Service, 2004). Again, that peace education in our schools today does not translate in beneficiaries' ability to tolerate others and their views raises question about the content and process of transmitting the elements of peace education to the students.

The last of the hypotheses tested the relationship between peace education taught in secondary school and peaceful conflict resolution skills among young people. The result indicated that the calculated value (X^2) is 0.472 while the 'p' value is 0.492, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05. This indicates that there is no relationship between peace education taught in secondary schools and acquisition of conflict resolution skills among youth. Oyebamiji (2001), argues that the ingredients for peace education in the school curriculum have failed to yield peace amongst the people because of the poor teaching methods employed by teachers and the inability of some teachers to drive home their points towards solving the problems or facing the reality of the world. Peace education is teacher-dependent and without a teacher who understands and can model peace education, the enterprise will not succeed (Mishra, 2015). More importantly, peace education requires experiential, active learning that increases internalization and reflection rather than traditional didactic •approaches can achieve. This is perhaps why Baldo and Fumiss (1998) contend that peace education is most effective when the skills of peace and conflict resolution are learned actively and are modeled by the school environment in which pupils are taught. This is presently not the case in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that elements of Peace education that are being taught is our secondary schools today have shown prospects of promoting awareness and appreciation of ethnic diversity among young people. For a heterogeneous country like Nigeria and her history of inter-ethnic conflicts, this is gladdening. However, the delivery of Peace education through substitute subjects as Social Studies, Civic Studies, Religious Studies as is the case in most secondary schools today, has not been able to translate into tolerance for people with contrary views and ways of life, neither has it been able to successfully transfer peaceful conflict resolution skills to beneficiaries. The reasons for this are obvious: Peace education is a practical field that requires experiential, active learning that increases internalization and reflection rather than the traditional didactic approaches that obtains in our schools today. This makes it important that Peace education is taught, not through substitute subjects, but as a distinct curriculum, text books, instructional materials and requisite teacher training programmes, so as to create a school climate that will be conducive to peace education.

Against the foregoing background, the following recommendations are therefore made:

- There is the need for the relevant authorities in Nigerian education to not only introduce Peace education at all levels of our educational system, but to make it compulsory to all pupils and students.

- Since Peace education is teacher dependent, there is the need to provide requisite training for peace educators in our schools. Peace educators must imbibe universal values, such as freedom, justice, human rights, gender equality, tolerance, and respect for the right to live, and make peace values part of their own personality

- The government should also take it upon herself to develop school textbooks and instructional materials whose content are historically and culturally relevant to our present realities, but which would provide opportunities for collaborative and interactive learning among participants and training teachers.

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