

Education for Peace Building in conflict hit regions in Africa: The Case of Cameroon and Sudan

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ABSTRACT

In a continent replete with conflicts of all types, creating hazardous consequences, the quest for lasting peace becomes a highly sort option. Cameroon (Anglophone Regions) and Sudan are two among many African countries that have been wrecked by conflict and left as wreckage untold suffering leading to both internal and external displacements. Many children have dropped out of schools in both cases and in worse cases recruited as fighters. Those in different educational establishment live with trauma the urge to avenge their love ones in due time. Understanding that in such situations, the parties concerned seek to transcend ephemeral to long lasting solutions, this perspective study examines to what level peace education has been considered in the primary and secondary school programmes in Cameroon and Sudan. This study examined the subjects taught in the primary and secondary schools in the two cases, highlighting those related to peace education. The results indicated that in both countries, peace education is not intentional with no direct subject on peace education on the study programmes. The study recommends that the good example of African countries, like Uganda, Ethiopia amongst others, where peace education is taught should be learned not only by Cameroon and Sudan, but by all African countries. Peace education, especially to children at a tender age will guarantee better communities.

Keywords: Africa, Cameroon, Conflict, Education, Peace building, Sudan

INTRODUCTION

Education is essential for promoting peace, managing, and transforming conflict and conflict-inducing structures¹. In particular, it is suggested that education can have a powerful and positive contribution to building and sustaining peace as it supports security and political, economic, and social transition and transformation². Evidence that the more people complete schooling, the lower the chance of conflict is important to an extent, but it is not fully persuasive. Paulson³ shows that since the late 1990s, the levels of education have increased substantially but there has been no reduction in armed conflicts. Peace education should therefore emphasize on living harmoniously with diverse backgrounds, balancing unity and diversity through multi-perspectivity and identity recognition⁴. Peace education must cultivate critical thinking and empathy to counteract extremist ideologies, thereby fostering unity and resilience against violence⁵. Peace education according to Niyitunga⁶ is “the process of acquiring values and knowledge, and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviour needed to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the natural environment”. It is on the basis of this that this paper seeks to examine the role education can play in peace building in Cameroon and Sudan. This perspective paper therefore examines the current state of education in the primary and secondary schools in Cameroon and Sudan and suggest the inclusion of subject directly related to peace education.

BACKGROUND

Just prior to and following the independence of Sudan in 1956, the country has experienced a series of internal wars and conflicts which have caused massive suffering, loss of lives and resources, and worst of all, these wars have ripped the social fabric of the nation. “Sudan considered to be as one of the countries of multi-cultural, multi ethnicity and multi tribal, there is about 570 tribes, 57 ethnical groups”⁷. Different tribes and groups used to coexist peacefully for thousands of years. Some of these conflicts include the conflict between Northern and Southern Sudan, aggravated by the closed district policy developed by the British administration in Sudan (1898-1956). In the western part of the Sudan, the conflict in Darfur that erupted in 2003 and has claimed 300,000 people and displaced more than two million is still ongoing despite peace efforts by many external actors⁸. In 2011, 2012 and 2013 armed conflicts erupted in Blue Nile state [southern east] and Kordofan state [southern west] in which cost the country thousands of lives and significantly affected the economy”⁹. Most recently, during Ramadan on 15 April 2023, a civil war began between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its allies (collectively the Janjaweed coalition). All these conflicts have affected education seriously.

As for Cameroon, a country with two major cultures, francophone and anglophones, the sociopolitical crisis that started in 2016 and deteriorated over time leading to violent clashes between armed forces and the Ambazonian fighters, resulting to killings and displacements¹⁰ can be traced back to the controversies surrounding the reunification process that saw the collapse of the federal system. The failure to harmonise or sustain the two parallel systems, alongside economic and administrative marginalisation only worsened the problem. In late 2016, anglophone common law layers and teachers’ Trade Unions organised a peaceful strike across the two anglophone to denounce among others, the systematic assimilation process of the Anglo-Saxon legal and educational systems into the francophone system. Non-

State Armed Groups fighting the government adopted a school boycott/disruption strategy since 2017 to apply pressure on government¹¹. This has continued to this day and has completely disrupted education in many areas in the two anglophone regions, causing some of the youths to drop out of school and join separatist fighters to carry arms.

Implementing peace education in school is directly impacting the lives of youths, who according to Georgi, a former senior official in UNFPA Burundi, “represent the biggest danger to peace consolidation, and who possess the energy and naturally optimism and innovative mind set”¹². Peacebuilding and education projects have been implemented in several countries in Africa, focusing on integrating life skills, peace education, and conflict-sensitive approaches into their education systems. The following African countries carry out peace education in their schools- Uganda (training for teachers and the development of peace clubs in schools), Ethiopia (focusing on conflict resolution, tolerance, and social cohesion), Somalia (integrating peace education and life skills into the curriculum to promote social cohesion and resilience), Kenya (focuses on promoting tolerance, conflict resolution, and social cohesion among students) and South Sudan (focuses on equity, social cohesion, and resilience among conflict-affected communities).

From the cases mentioned here, it is clear that peace education is attainable and should be priority for conflict hit regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the concepts of peace education and how it is practiced in different parts of the world. It will also examine the cases of Cameroon and Sudan.

Peace Education

While peacekeeping and peace-making have played an important role in UN activities since its foundation, it was not until 1992 that the language of peacebuilding entered the institution’s lexicon, when the UN Secretary-General published *An Agenda for Peace*¹³. Given that the search for peace is a constant quest by many bodies, national and international, due to raging conflicts in many countries in the world today, peace education has become a common vocabulary in educational settings. Considering the opinion of Yaro and Longi¹⁴ that focusing on comprehensive development, promoting cultural understanding and respect, upholding justice, and embracing truth, African nations can work towards lasting peace and stability, one can only say that this is achievable through peace education. Peace education is an elusive concept defined differently in different works with the common idea being harmonious living. [Gursel](#)-Bilgin¹⁵ defines peace as tranquillity and a state in which there is no war. This definition simply means that the presence of peace signals the absence of war. The term ‘peace building’ has emerged over 30 years back “through the work of Johan Galtung, who called for the creation of peace building structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the ‘root causes’ of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution”¹³. Peace building is therefore a form of education because building here constitutes concepts, structures, mentalities amongst others. From a more authoritative point of view, peacebuilding is defined as “an action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict,”¹³.

Education is a major vector in achieving a culture of peace. Yaro and Longi¹⁵ posit that “by bringing people together and encouraging discussions on topics that impact their well-being, it lays the foundation for development, strengthens governance, and eradicates ignorance and dictatorship”. Peace education refers to the process of empowering people with the skills, dispositions, and knowledge to create a more peaceful social order¹⁶. The subfields of this group of approaches to peace education include nonviolent conflict resolution training, human rights education, and peace studies¹⁷. If these subfields and more that directly relate to peace education are consciously included in the Primary and secondary school programmes in Cameroon and Sudan and other African countries, sustainable peace will be achieved. This is because peace education draws out from people their instincts to live peacefully with others and emphasizes peaceful values upon which society should be based¹⁸.

METHODOLOGY

This study makes use of qualitative data collection method, specifically documentation study. The following sources- document review and data from world bank and UNESCO provided available data for this study. For document Review, official policy documents, curriculum frameworks, textbooks, and reports from government and non-governmental organizations related to education in Cameroon and Sudan were reviewed while data from world bank and UNESCO data bases were equally got from published documents from the organisations concerned. The research questions for this paper aimed at bringing out the different measures educational policies and practices in Cameroon and Sudan contribute to peacebuilding efforts at the primary and secondary school levels. By so doing, our focus was to bring out the subjects taught in primary and secondary schools in Cameroon and Sudan and to examine if there are subjects that deal with peace education. This perspective study ends by suggesting that there is a need to copy best practices from countries

already carrying out peace education for more accommodating future communities not only for Cameroon and Sudan, but for African countries in General.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, we are presenting data on subjects taught in primary and secondary schools in Cameroon and Sudan, at what level peace education related subjects are taught, if they are even taught in these war-hit countries and lastly, the importance of peace education at the basic education level in a country.

Primary and Secondary education in Cameroon and Sudan

Here, as we have indicated, our focus is on the subjects taught at the different level. We will begin with the primary and then the secondary.

Subjects in primary schools

According to the world bank ¹⁹, the Sudanese curriculum has remained unreformed and unquestioned over at least the last three decades. This statement implies that even subjects designed for this educational system have remained unchanged for the past three decades. In examining the role of education in the transformation of post conflict societies, UNICEF ¹⁴ posits that the transformative process “must recognize that the primary agency for managing the transformative process rests with the conflict-affected society itself”. With the understanding that education plays a huge rule in peace building, the need to examine the subjects taught and whether or not they teaching peace related contents is crucial for countries in prolonged conflicts. See table one.

Table 1

The subjects are not arranged in this paper according to the different levels because the intention is just to see which subjects are related to peace education. Arora ²⁰ holds that the basic education curriculum in Sudan is designed to realize the following objectives:

- Strengthening of religions spirit among children
- Acquisition of language skills by children
- Complete development of the child
- Development of sense of belongingness to the mother country
- Protection and conservation of environment

It can only be judged from the fourth objective that issues related to peace are probably elements to be taught in relation to developing the sense of belongingness. The objectives do not outrightly project issues of peace building. The Sudanese primary education subjects present almost the same scenario as that of Cameroon where nothing about peace building is outrightly expressed. Sudanese primary schools as well as the Cameroon Anglophone primary schools have 12 subjects.

From the core skills and competences expected to be acquired by each learner, the only subject in the primary school in Cameroon that comes near peace education is Citizenship because it has the following objectives: “Practise social and citizenship values (morality, good governance and budgetary transparency)” ²¹. As for primary school subjects in Sudan, one can hardly bring out a subject that deals with peace education. We can, nevertheless, suggest that Quran Islamic Religious Education or Christian Religious Education deals with peace, though not directly. It is therefore not an overstatement to claim that peace education is not outrightly taught in Cameroonian and Sudanese Primary schools.

Subjects in Secondary Schools

Secondary education is the second stage of formal education after primary school, usually about age 11 to 13 ²². Since the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) states that political violence starts in the minds of people ²³, sustainable peace depends on changing people’s mindsets, consciousness and worldviews. This can be properly done when the mind is still young and ready to accept change. Peace education through peace subjects will drill the minds of the younger ones towards peace. Table 2 capture the subjects taught in secondary schools across Cameroon and Sudan.

It should be noted that Cameroon operates two different systems of education, the Anglo-Saxon system and the French system and the subjects taught in the different systems are different. Table 2 above in each case focuses on the anglophone Cameroon where the Anglo-Saxon system of education is practiced and where the anglophone crisis has raged on from 2017. The 22 subjects are not done by every student at once. Each student chooses at most 11 courses from the list. However, in the first two years of secondary school, most of the essential Arts and science subjects are done

by every child and they are permitted to choose only at the third year. From the list of courses for Cameroon secondary schools, like in the primary school where no subject directly handles the issue of peace education, two subjects- Citizenship Education and Moral Education may handle a few issues about peace, but not peace education because the scopes are not the same.

From the list of subjects taught in Sudanese secondary school, it is equally seen that like in Cameroon, there is really no subject that directly handles peace education. Of the 23 subjects taught in secondary school subjects are generally geared towards achieving specific skills, but none targets peace education. Like in Cameroon where citizenship education and moral education can be considered to treat issues related to peace and respects for one another, Citizenship is found in South Sudan’s curriculum. We can say Islamic education remotely handles aspects of peace, but not intentionally.

In a nutshell, peace education as a subject is not officially taught in the secondary schools in Cameroon and Sudan and this has negative implications because the two countries are ignorant of the roles that youths play in peace education. This observation agrees with the United Nations Development Programme Regional Service Center for Africa’s (2023, p. 6) ²⁴ claim that “although there is a growing recognition of the crucial role that youth play as peacebuilders in Africa, their inclusion has been relatively minimal, ineffective and largely not directly linked to national and formal peacebuilding infrastructures”. formal peacebuilding infrastructures should begin with primary and secondary school curricula where young minds are made to understand the concepts of peace.

Suggested courses for peace education in Cameroon and Sudan

We have already established that peace education should be embraced by the education ministries in Cameroon and Sudan and by extension to other African nations, not only those in conflict situations, but even those with relative peace.

Subjects needed for peace education

A transformative cosmopolitan peace education empowers educators and students in the face of challenges to become proactive agents of change who advocate for and labour to achieve equity, social justice and peaceful coexistence in their pluralistic (multicultural) local communities and global society ²⁵. There is a need for peace education to provide the needed empowerment. In South Sudan, maybe due to the bitter experiences of war, their curriculum, both for primary and secondary schools begin by stating the following values:

- - - Human rights and gender equity
 - Respect and integrity
 - Peace and tolerance
 - Compassion and social justice

These values, nonetheless, are not directly taught as a full discipline as the same curriculum indicates that “There are certain matters that young people should learn about, but which do not fall entirely within one subject. These cross-cutting issues apply from P1 to S4, and are: Environmental Awareness and Sustainability, Peace Education and Life Skills ²⁶.

The following can be consciously taught as subjects at different levels of both primary and secondary schools in Cameroon and Sudan in particular and other African countries where peace education is not taught:

1. Conflict resolution
2. Forgiveness
3. Violence prevention
4. Ecological sustainability

Once implemented, the authorities should also make sure that “teachers have the skills to teach this new curriculum” ²⁷. With this in our schools, the level of violence in the event of conflict, which are largely unavoidable, will drastically be reduced.

CONCLUSION

To live and own a peaceful continent, which for now stands very fragile with many conflicts, the authorities must consciously invest in peace education because other forms of development greatly rely on peace. When countries invest in infrastructural development without developing the minds of the people, the uncultivated minds will pull down the structures without any remorse. This paper does not claim that peace education will completely eliminates conflicts in

Cameroon and Sudan or in African as a whole; it however argues that the rate of conflict will reduce and should there be conflict, the rate of carnage will be reduced because the educated minds will instruct the architects the need for peace. When children are not consciously given peace education, they are indirectly given the education of violence and the consequences can only be a war-torn Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our deep appreciation to ASFI leadership and all our instructors during the Art of Scientific Writing and Publishing course. We are the more grateful to Prof. Nwaru Bright for organising and equipping us with the skills. We are also thankful to other group members who listened to our group project and made useful suggestions. Finally, we are indebted to the ASFIRJ Committee for accepting to publish this research free of charge.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that this work is free from any conflict of interest

FUNDING

No fund was received

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the realisation of this work and approved the final manuscript.

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Table 1: Juxtaposition of subjects taught in primary schools in Cameroon and Sudan

Cameroon	Sudan
1. English Language	1. Quran Islamic Religious Education Or Christian Religious Education
2. Mathematics	2. Arabic
3. Science and Technology (Health Education, Environmental Science and Technology.)	3. Mathematics
4. Français	4. Applied and Expressive Arts
5. Social Studies (Citizenship)	5. School Environment
6. (History and Geography)	6. Physical Education
7. Vocational Studies (Agro pastoral farming, Arts and Crafts)	7. English
8. (Home Economics)	8. History and Geography
9. Arts (Visual arts, literary arts and performing arts)	9. Science
10. Physical Education and Sports	10. Health and Nutrition
11. National Languages and Cultures	11. Music
12. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	12. Arts and Crafts
Alemnge ²¹	Arora ²⁰
12 subjects	12 subjects

Table 2: Juxtaposition of subjects taught in Secondary Schools in Cameroon and Sudan

Cameroon	Sudan
English	Biology
French	Rhetoric and Expression
Literature	Geography and Environmental Studies
Mathematics	Chemistry
History	Mathematics
Geography	Arabic Grammar
Citizenship Education	Reading and Literature
Moral Education/ Religion	Islamic Education
Home Economics	Arts and Design
Sports and Physical Education	Military Sciences
Health Education	Citizenship
ICT	Physics

Chemistry	Engineering Sciences
Physics	Computer Science
Geology	Family Sciences
Additional Maths	English Language
Biology	History
Human biology	French Language
Commerce	Literary and Linguistic Studies
Food and Nutrition	Basic Mathematics
Accounting	Specialized Mathematics
Economics	Agricultural and Animal Production
	Commercial Sciences
22 Subjects	23 Subjects