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## Education and Conflict Resolutions

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### Abstract

This paper looks at the fundamental role of education in conflict resolution. The human person is a social animal, who interact/relate with one another, to be fully human. In interacting, there is conflict and education creates a conducive environment to meeting the emotional, social, and intellectual needs of diverse groups of individuals. The emphasis on education and conflict resolution is based on the fact that peace and education are inseparable aspects of civilization. In other words, no civilization is truly progressive without education and no education system is truly civilizing unless it is based on the universal principles of peace. Education enhances the acquisition of the worthwhile values, knowledge and development of attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself and with others. This paper provides a critical examination of educational systems, exploring its impact on global development. It therefore concludes that with education, the human mind is trained and shaped, thereby bringing about peace and harmony in the society.

**Key Words:** Education, conflict, conflict resolution, human, society

### Introduction

From time immemorial, education is seen as the foundation of any successful society and also a vital part of the human experience. The importance of education to any nation cannot be over emphasized. It is in recognition of this importance that many sects and

international community and NGOs across the globe have made commitments for citizens to have access to education.

Thus, education is now seen as a human right that should be ensured for all human beings, not just for the sake of it, but for the continuous functioning and evolution of

mankind. In other words, education as a human right was enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human rights in 1948, a document that can be rightfully be described as one of the highest pronouncements of our time. Education is therefore the right of all citizens of Nigeria to enjoy. In today's knowledge-driven society, Education is perceived as a vaccine that solves all problems. Education, therefore, serves as a catalyst for economic well-being, democracy and good governance, social justice, environmental preservation, peace building and others in this age of globalization.

Nigeria is a heterogenous society and with this, there are many societal /tribal issues, hence, peace is severely threatened. According to Salawu, Ethnic religious and cultural tensions and conflict are identified as one of the major factors hampering the stability and development of Nigeria since independence.

Education for peace should be a participatory process which aims at changing society's way of thinking and which promotes learning of peace. Education should be put on issues that may lead to conflict well such as gender studies, speaking the language of non-violence and creation of proper international relations.

On the strengths of this, education is largely becoming a global affair as the world continuously gravitates into a globe with little or no boundaries. Thereby making the educational sector a global community, and a formation ground for global human capital. The pool of professionals is no longer confined by geographical location, but have become a class that defies geographical boundary. The continuous growth in environmental and social problems,

insatiable thirst for science and technological inventions, and the need for mitigation against resultant challenges, have brought about a skyrocketing demand for professionals around the world. The sourcing of competent and capable hands today, are sourced from far and wide regardless of geographical limitations. And if any nation must have a pride of place amongst the comity of nations, she must be able to hone human capital that is utilizable by global demands or one that can contribute meaningfully to the solutions of global problems. The conventional indices to measure educational institutions around the world have been based on factors such as institutional frameworks, financing, studentteacher ratios etc.

For a race like Africa that has been accused of contributing little or nothing to human development/evolution (Hegel), there is a need to reevaluate such beliefs (especially in the light of contemporary world). Nigeria, being the most populous black nation, and one with marked potentials for honing some of the worlds most treasured mineral resources (Akin 2017), stands a chance to be representative sample for Africa in the discourse of educational development, and contribution to global development. This paper, from the bird eye of Nigeria's educational landscape shall attempt to investigate the nature, strengths, weaknesses and contribution of Africa's education to the global community.

### **Understanding Conflict**

Conflict is as old as human existence. In other words, conflict dates from the beginning of human history and will probably never end. Conflict can be defined as a disagreement or struggle between opposing parties, ideas, or

interests. It arises when individuals or groups perceive that their goals, needs, or values are incompatible, leading to tension or confrontation. Conflict can occur in various settings, including personal relationships, organizations, communities, and even between nations. According to Ho-won Jeong (2008:5), conflict represents the persistent and pervasive nature of inter-group and international competition among disparate interests and values that underlies power dynamics. The most destructive types of conflict such as interstate and civil wars consist of a coercive, violent mode of confrontation among adversaries. Whereas conflict embraces personal loss and societal destruction, its many features are not limited to physical violence.

Conflict, which is most popularly described as ‘a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources’ (Boulding, 1962: 5). The efforts to attain desired objects become more intense in the absence of agreed rules prescribing their equitable allocation. John Dewey (1970:77) explains:

Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheeplike passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving . . . Conflict is a “sine qua non” of reflection and ingenuity.

People’s expectations alter in response to a shift in their social and economic environment. If governing norms are too rigid to be adjusted to new demands and expectations, such inflexibility breeds resentment utilized for the mobilization of

groups that are discontent with the status quo (Mack and Snyder, 1971).

In conflict situations, the dynamics of actions and counteractions inevitably engage attempts to control the other’s behavior, often with the intent to injure or destroy. In addition, violence may follow an unconstrained attempt to dominate in a fight over power, prestige, and material interests. The essential nature of a conflict situation is easily understood in terms of the difficulties involved in meeting everyone’s aspirations simultaneously (Pruitt and Kim, 2004). Goals and activities become incompatible when one’s own interests are threatened by the actions of another.

Non-violent forms of struggle are also prevalent in pursuit of different values and scarce resources. In bringing about important social change, resorting to force is neither necessary nor inevitable. Hence, our survival on this planet hinges on how we manage the various features of conflict that is fueled not only by seemingly incompatible interests and values but also by hostilities.

Conflict can be of different types, such as:

**Interpersonal Conflict:** This type of conflict occurs between individuals, often due to differences in personality, communication styles, or personal goals.

**Intrapersonal Conflict:** this type is struggle within an individual, often involving internal dilemmas or competing desires.

**Group Conflict:** this arises within or between groups due to competition for resources, differing objectives, or social dynamics.

**Organizational Conflict:** this type stems from structural issues, workplace hierarchies, or divergent priorities within an organization.

**International Conflict:** this involves disputes between nations or large-scale groups, often over political, economic, or territorial issues.

### **Causes of Conflict**

There are many causes of conflict. Some common causes of conflict are; miscommunication or misunderstandings, Differing values, beliefs, or priorities, Competition for resources or opportunities, Power dynamics or inequalities, Emotional triggers such as anger, jealousy, or frustration. Others include the following:

**Economic Causes.** These include;

**Resource Competition:** Conflicts over land, water, oil, minerals, or other scarce resources.

**Economic Inequality:** Unequal distribution of wealth and resources among groups or regions.

**Unemployment and Poverty:** Economic hardship can fuel frustrations and make groups susceptible to conflict.

**Political Causes.** These include;

**Power Struggles:** Competition for political control or leadership positions.

**Exclusion or Marginalization:** Groups excluded from political participation may resort to conflict.

**Corruption:** Lack of trust in government due to perceived or real corruption.

**Poor Leadership/Authoritarianism:** Suppression of dissent by undemocratic regimes.

**Social and Cultural Causes.** These include;

**Ethnic, Religious, or Cultural Differences:** Clashes between groups with differing identities, beliefs, or practices.

**Discrimination:** Perceived or real discrimination against a particular group.

**Historical Grievances:** Long-standing enmities or unresolved issues between communities.

**Environmental Causes.** These include;

**Climate Change:** Changes in the environment leading to resource scarcity (e.g., droughts, floods).

**Land Degradation:** Overuse or destruction of arable land, forcing groups to migrate or fight for territory.

**Psychological Causes.** These include;

**Fear and Insecurity:** Fear of attack or annihilation can lead groups to act preemptively.

**Revenge:** Personal or collective grievances can escalate into broader conflicts.

**Ideological Causes.** These include;

**Radical Beliefs:** Extremist ideologies that promote violence as a means of achieving goals.

**Nationalism or Separatism:** Efforts by groups to create their own nation-state or achieve autonomy.

**External Influences.** These include;

**Foreign Intervention:** Influence or interference by external states or organizations.

**Arms Proliferation:** Easy access to weapons increases the likelihood of violence.

Globalization: Unequal effects of globalization creating winners and losers.

Structural Causes. These include;

Weak Institutions: Inability of governments or institutions to address grievances effectively.

Legal and Judicial Failures: Injustice or impunity for crimes.

### **The Role of Education in Resolving Conflict**

The term, “Education” is derived from the Latin word *Educare* (*Educere*), which means “to train, nurture or mold”. Again, it means to bring up or to lead out or to draw out, propulsion from inward to outward. It is on this premise that this paper draws its argument that education is meant to train the individual to live a good life in the community. To acquire skills for meaningful living or to solve problems is vital in a hostile community which education aims to achieve in the individual. Socrates said that “one who had true knowledge could not be other than virtuous. (Borruso, 2007:218)

The concept of conflict resolution typically focuses on the social-behavioral symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and mediation. Learning to manage anger, “fight fair” and improve communication through skills such as listening, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of these mechanisms. These mechanisms should aim to “alter beliefs, attitudes, and behavior that is from negative to positive attitudes toward conflict as a basis for preventing violence. Quality

education is a cornerstone in any nation peacebuilding process

Education and Worthwhile Living Education involves more than the accumulation of assorted facts, opinions and skills. For this reason, one may be well-read yet very poorly educated. Thomas Aquinas defined education as “the promotion of offspring the perfection of man, that is the state of virtue” (2007:214). This definition links all elements of education to a definitive reality that virtue denotes the symptom of the educated. It is only in Africa that education is perceived as job provider even as jobs become scarcer by the day.

However, R. S Peters (1973:34) maintains that;

education is not about getting a good job but also getting the prerequisites for leading a meaningful and education and skills training can help reduce the risk of people turning to or returning to conflict and can support economic regeneration. Access to education can reduce attitudes towards and participation in violence, although it can also raise awareness of injustice and discrimination.

An educated person says John Young (2008:321) is one who is in close contact with reality, who penetrates the meaning of things, whose judgments are fixed by reality itself. With such attitude conflict has no room in the life of the individual. From a global point of view, education has largely become the training of man for his environment. In this sense, one might as well say it is like conditioning a parrot to it

cage, a dog to its kennels, or a cow to its stable. True education says Allan Bloom “is the taming or domestication of the soul’s raw passions not suppressing or excising them, which would deprive the soul of its energy but forming and informing them as art”.

Hence, education is an instrument for developing an individual in social, mental, physical, emotional, moral and psychological aspects. Education can be considered as a process which enables people to understand the difference between good and bad attitude, right and wrong behaviour. Therefore, the role of education is inevitable in producing new generation that are able to solve the real problems in our society. Among other objectives, the main purpose of education is to educate individuals within society, to prepare and qualify them for work in economy as well as to integrate people into society and teach them values and morals of society. Quality education is a means of socializing individuals and to keep society smoothing and remain stable.

Education in society prepares youngsters for adulthood so that they may form the next generation of leaders. Formal or informal education has the power to contribute to efforts for advancing peace and justice in the world. Education can enable students to understand the causes of injustice and violence in past history and in present situations through a careful study of history and its related courses

Consequently, African educational authorities should revise and reform the content of education in the areas of curricula, textbooks and methods, so as to take account of the African environment,

child development, cultural heritage and the demands of technological progress and economic development. More importantly education policies should be entrepreneurship focused for effective productivity.

Education especially the right kind of education leads to peace. Those who are educated may also develop a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement, resulting in the desire or determination to contribute to a particular cause. Those who are already interested in joining terrorist organizations may pursue an education if they believe that it will improve their chances of implementing terrorist activities. Education may be perceived politically as a powerful tool for ideological development. This can take many forms, ranging from the use of education in the development of liberal ideas, to nation building and, in extreme cases, political indoctrination.

However, education may be perceived as an instrument for providing the knowledge and skills necessary for economic development and societal mobility. However, this may or may not include equity concerns, thus further excluding certain groups from economic and social benefits that education can provide.

[Education is a means by which social and cultural values are transmitted from generation to generation and, depending on the values concerned, these may convey negative stereotypes or encourage attitudes that explicitly or implicitly condone violence or generate conflict.

Fundamental Aim of Education John Dewey is of the view that education is not preparation for life, but that education is life itself. This means that education is the

foundation of any successful society and a vital part of the human experience.

**Education as an Instrument for Social Change** The role of education as an instrument of social change is widely recognized today. Basha Chand (2017: 242) explains;

Education can initiate change by bringing about a change in the outlook and attitudes of a person. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationship and thereby, it may cause social changes. Social change refers to the modifications in the organization and behavior of the group expressed in its laws, institutions, customs, modes and beliefs.

One of the purposes of education is to change person and his life and living style. To change a man is to change society only. No civil law or religious norms can change or mold an individual expect education. Education whether secular or religious is the most powerful instrument of social change. It is through education that the society can bring desirable changes and modernize itself.

Education can transform society by providing opportunities and experiences through which the individual can cultivate himself for adjustment with the emerging needs. Education helps to change the attitudes of people in favor of modern ways of life and develops attitudes which can fight prejudices, superstitions and traditional beliefs if they contribute to harmful ways of life. As a catalyst for conflict resolution, the crown of education is the vision of the idea

of good, which brings about happiness. It is for this reason that Hamman opines that the institution of education was a creation of man to enable him or her fulfil certain basic functions in the society. Among which are to preserve, transmit the culture, norms and values of society as well as develop positive attitudes and adjustment to change.

In this 21st century, the only major means available by which the yoke of ignorance, poverty, hunger, underdevelopment, diseases, war could be destroyed among African populace is through the provision of relevant functional and integrative education for the people. Universally, it has been accepted that education holds the key to individual and national peace building and this important process of education begins in the family at the infant stage of the child and continues in the school environment. Where this opportunity is missing the individual can easily become wild to the environment. Education and the Culture of Peace Learning is not an end in itself but rather a means of eliminating violations of human rights and building a culture of peace based on democracy, development, tolerance and mutual respect.

Consequently, the values of peace and tolerance are an essential part of quality and basic education. Basic education not only provides the skills of literacy and numeracy, but also provides the values and attitudes needed for self-development, improving the quality of life, and for active participation in society building. Most importantly, basic education provides the ability for continuous learning, giving people the power to think, to form opinions and to work towards the promotion of peace, tolerance and universal respect for human rights. Although basic access to education is essential for attaining

a culture of peace, it is not enough as mentioned earlier.

A culture of peace is achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice nonviolently, live by international standards or best practices of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace. According to Paul Cheptuto (2014:354);

Building a systematic culture of peace requires committed efforts by educators, researchers and other members of society. Through education, people are taught tolerance and others' right to existence, and how to incorporate these teachings into their everyday lives. This requires a change in attitude, a difficult process that will not happen overnight. But this is where the role of knowledge will come into place. Education provides people with worthwhile information, but most essential is the appropriate application of this information. This information must be transformed into knowledge. Only then will people begin to adapt a change in mindset, attitude and behavior characterized by long-term goals. Only then will they be able to

engage properly and be able to contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace.

A culture of peace must first take place in the classroom at an early age. It must be reflected in the curricula at secondary and tertiary levels. Education for peace must be a dynamic, long term process and a life time experience. The aims of education for peace are to develop caring and non-aggressive individuals who relate peacefully with others in their own lives, who promote the welfare of others and who act to prevent violence in their society and in the world. Obeka and Agwu (2016:23) rightly observe that; education plays a key role in teaching about conflicts, solidarity and global citizenship". This is because when people are educated on the importance of resolving conflicts in a peaceful way without resorting to war with its devastating effects on the social, economic, educational and technological and political aspects of the society, then there will be rapid development in the nation.

As today's youth become increasingly desensitized to violence, the roles of schools and the curriculum they represent assume great importance. Schools have the power to shape the attitudes and skills of young people toward peaceful human relations. Through teaching young children values of respect, tolerance, and empathy, and by equipping them with the necessary skills to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner, they are provided with the tools they need, now and in the future, to foster peaceful relations at home, at school and around the world. In this sense, education builds the foundations for good citizenship, respect for



self and others, democratic values and tolerance of opinions.

Wars and conflicts threaten peace and security to all. Their urgent nature calls for the need to reduce violence through education. Times have changed, and this requires a more proactive outlook.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions from the studies on the Nigerian educational system, the following recommendations can be made to improve the quality of education and address the identified challenges:

1. Increase funding for education: The Nigerian government should prioritize allocating a larger portion of the national budget to education. Adequate funding is essential for improving infrastructure, providing necessary resources, and enhancing the overall learning environment.
2. Enhance teacher quality: Implement comprehensive measures to improve the quality of teaching staff. This can be achieved through ongoing professional development programs, recruitment of highly qualified teachers, and the establishment of rigorous standards for teacher certification and evaluation.
3. Strengthen entrepreneurship education: Incorporate entrepreneurship education at all levels of the Nigerian educational system. This should include curriculum development, teacher training, and partnerships with the private sector to provide practical skills and knowledge needed for entrepreneurship and self-employment.
4. Promote technical and vocational education: Give greater emphasis to technical and vocational education to equip students

with practical skills that match the needs of the job market. This will help address youth unemployment and contribute to the country's economic growth.

5. Improve governance and policy stability: Establish a stable and coherent educational policy framework that promotes consistency and continuity in policies and frameworks. This will provide clarity to stakeholders and ensure the effective implementation of educational initiatives.

6. Bridging the gender gap in education: Develop targeted interventions to address the barriers that hinder girls' access to education, such as cultural practices, poverty, early marriage, and security concerns. Implement initiatives that promote girls' enrollment, retention, and completion of education, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

7. Strengthen international collaboration: Foster partnerships and collaborations with international institutions, organizations, and experts to share best practices, resources, and expertise. This can help bring in innovative approaches and support the implementation of effective educational strategies.

8. Continuous monitoring and evaluation: Establish a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions, policies, and programs. Regular assessments will help identify areas of improvement, measure progress, and inform evidence-based decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

Effective education plays a vital role in conflict management and resolution. Education covers economic, political, social, cultural, moral and ethical issues, and is vital in transforming people's attitudes towards dealing with conflicts and

psychological needs of individuals and groups.

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