The Role of Education in Fostering Peace, Solidarity and Prosperity in Kenya

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Abstract

Over the years, there has been an emphasis on the importance of education in improving the standard of living in the country. The effect of this is that Kenyans are more aware of the importance attached to education and how it has created an enabling environment for them to get engaged in activities that are geared towards nation building.

Education should create a conducive environment to meeting the emotional, social, and intellectual needs of diverse groups of individuals interested in empowering themselves. The emphasis on education and peace is based on the fact that peace and education are inseparable aspects of civilization. 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 should enhance the acquisition of the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself and with others. There is thus no shortage of enough information on the importance of education in enhancing peace. The fundamental principles entailing education is that there should be desire for peace, nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality.

The relationship between education and peace has represented a spectrum of focal themes, including international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance

of diversity, coexistence and gender equality. The role of the church has been to address spiritual dimensions of inner harmony, or synthesized a number of the foregoing issues into programs that touch on the moral requirements that touches on the learning process.

Key Words: Education, Conflict resolution and peace

Introduction
Education for peace, solidarity and prosperity entails the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. To have peace means the absence of conflict or violence and conversely as the presence of states of mind and of society such as harmony, accord, security and understanding. It is concerned with helping learners to develop an awareness of the process and skills that are necessary for achieving understanding, tolerance and goodwill in the world today.

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.

Humanity faces challenges of unprecedented proportions such as the continued development of weapons of mass destruction, conflicts between states and ethnic groups, the spread of racism, community violence, the huge widening gap between the rich and the poor throughout the globalised economy, massive violation of human rights and the degradation of the environment. These issues are a stumbling block to the attainment of world order. In order to tackle these complex and interwoven problems, there is need to make the preventive measures and solutions to these problems deeply routed in the minds of the populations. This justifies the need for educating people for peace, which should focus on human security and how to live in a world infested with diversity. (Altman, C 2002)

Education for peace should entail examining and discussing our values and attitudes towards diversity, cultural differences, tolerance and human dignity and directing our efforts towards achieving fundamental changes within societies. It is important to develop language and social interaction skills to promote peaceful relations among people, among nations and between human beings and the natural environment. The Learning process should ensure that the trainees are able to solve problems and to think critically regarding issues of conflict and violence.

We need peace education for ourselves, our relationship with other human beings to promote respect for oneself and respect for others on individual level as a prerequisite for the prevention of violence and conflict at society level and to raise people's consciousness about their rights whilst promoting international understanding between the people of different worlds.

Peace education should thus seek to transmit such relevant information and other methods of peaceful conflict resolutions, training and non violent means of setting differences in the family, at school or the work place and in other common place settings, thus creating a commitment to similar behavior on a larger national and international level and this underpins NPI's peace education philosophy.

Many are left without basic access to natural resources such as sanitation and a clean water supply. The lack of proper health care, water care and sanitation infrastructures leads to high mortality and disease rates and poses threat to the promotion of peace and stability. Indigenous and minority groups are frequently denied access to own property, denying them independence and provoking feelings of resentment. Feelings of insecurity and instability as a result of unemployment, poverty, lack of education, good government, health care infrastructure and the increase of drug abuse provide further grounds for resorting to the use of violence. Threats to peace come from many dimensions: economic, political, social, cultural and environmental. Peace can only be attained if each nation has an interest in maintaining peace and security. Nations must cooperate in order to attain global equity. This cooperation must come in terms of economic, social and political change and the promotion of peace at national, regional and global levels (Altmas, 2002).

Contextual Analysis
Education and Economic Development
Economic issues are closely linked to the maintenance of peace and security – particularly as a result of globalization, as countries become more closely connected and interdependent. Economic stability is an essential requirement in order to build peace within a society. The uneven distribution of benefits: economic growth, modernization and employment, has resulted in an increased gap between members of society.

Inequality in economic opportunities and unemployment has left the majority of the members of society with insufficient opportunities to obtain a decent living without assistance from outside sources, preventing them from getting out the cycle of poverty. Unequal access to education prevents them from obtaining skills that would contribute to their development and self sufficiency. Without improvement to the current situation of developing countries, which constitute the majority of the world's people, global security will become increasingly threatened by acts of terrorism and political instability.

The basic importance of education is to enable individuals with knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge. Education is therefore commonly regarded as the most direct avenue to rescue a substantial number of people out of poverty since there is likely to be more employment opportunities and higher wages for skilled workers. Furthermore, education can enable children's attitudes and assists them to grow up with social values that are more beneficial to the nation and themselves.
The theoretical basis of education on economic growth is rooted in the endogenous growth theory. Endogenous growth economists believe that improvements in productivity can be linked to a faster pace of innovation and extra investment in human capital. Endogenous growth theorists argue the need for government and private sector institutions and markets which nurture innovation, and provide incentives for individuals to be inventive. There is also a central role for knowledge as a determinant of economic growth. Endogenous growth theory predicts positive externalities and spillover effects from development of a high valued-added knowledge economy which is able to develop and maintain a competitive advantage in growth industries in the global economy.

Education at all levels contributes to economic growth through imparting general attitudes and discipline and specific skills necessary for a variety of workplaces. It contributes to

economic growth by improving health, reducing fertility and possibly by contributing to political stability. The major importance of the educational system to any labour market would depend majorly in its ability to produce a literate, disciplined, flexible labour force via high quality education. Consequently, with economic development new technology is applied to production, which results in an increase in the demand for workers and better education.

Political Development

Political stability is closely linked to the prevention of conflict and the promotion of peace. Many political systems restrict democratic practices, violating human rights and increasing their own power at the expense of the public. This stimulates corruption, injustice and abuse within the society. Such totalitarian regimes force their own values and beliefs upon members of the
society through the use of state-controlled media. This abuse of human rights is correlated with low life expectancies and high mortality rates, deterioration of the environment and the drain of labor and capital resources5.

Peace cannot be maintained if there is injustice and disparity in the society. States should promote the values of democracy that provide empowerment to the people, the ability to influence policy, protect human rights and most importantly, hold the government accountable. Promotion of democracy prevents conflict, strengthens governance, improves the rule of law and creates stability.

Socio-Cultural Development and Human rights advocacy

Social issues that also have an impact on the maintenance of peace are changes in people's lives such as the breakdown of family structures, migration to areas that lack appropriate sufficient infrastructures, the loss of traditional values also as a result of isolation that follows from the breakdown of their personal history, the exposure to violence in the media as well as in daily life and the exposure to different cultures.

Advances in technology have enabled millions of people to enhance their mobility anywhere in the world, resulting in exposure to diverse cultures and making societies increasingly multicultural. But this process has brought drawbacks with its many benefits. It can provoke fear and rejection of the unknown, misunderstanding and intolerance of other cultures. Unfortunately, many people turn to violence in their intolerance and rejection of cultural differences. Education is vital to teach people to incorporate the skills of dialogue, peace, tolerance, understanding and respect for human rights. Another factor threatening the development of peace is the narcotics trade. Drug organizations use violence in order to protect their supremacy. These conflicts tend to escalate towards the international level.

Exclusion of individuals and certain groups from participation in the fields of social, economic and political issues is another major cause of conflict. Marginalization in the decision-making process occurs because of discrimination in terms of cultural differences, ethnicity, religion, race, language and age: groups susceptible to discrimination are women, youth, elderly people, and minorities. The impact of marginalization these groups experience causes feelings of humiliation, alienation and denial of human rights and resources.

This creates grounds for them to engage in violent actions, endangering both themselves and others. The effect of cultural marginalization poses as a major threat to social stability. To truly attain the goal of a culture of peace, we must eliminate discrimination, encourage the promotion and respect of human rights, and teach the value of tolerance for those of differing backgrounds. This requires active involvement by all members of society. Education for peace programs should be centered on raising awareness of human rights typically focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity.

The role of the media is ever more important as our world develops its infrastructures and becomes ever more global. The media must place emphasis on moral values, actively cooperate with organizations, utilize all available resources to disseminate the message of peace, tolerance, non-violence, respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy. Scientists must work towards the creation of technologies that will benefit everyone and equalize standards of living. The transition to a technology and information-oriented society must not be isolated to the select few. Corporations must initiate, and contribute, to these causes. These enterprises have the monies, and therefore the ability, to provide a powerful contribution towards programs and projects aimed to eliminate the unequal distribution of wealth and resources throughout the world.

Cultural activities create social bonds between different segments of society, giving them common interests and background. Sporting events are a universal example of people setting aside their interests to accomplish a unified goal. Art activities stimulate members of the society to express themselves in a similar way. Cultural activities such as sporting events and artistic expression can work towards bonding people together. Organizations can work so that the message of peace can be incorporated into these activities. We must build open societies, developing infrastructures and promoting democracy. In order to do this, we must educate governments as well as civil societies. The United Nations can play a unique role in this regard, raising the standards of the international community towards a global approach, stimulating cooperation with nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations to build a better world.

The Church and the peace process
The Church has become a formidable actor for social peaceful change and critical instruments of the emerging democratic culture in Kenya . The church should play a significant role in the promotion of respect for human rights, the rule of law and promotion of democratic principles and values through civic education programs. The Church has increased its awareness and capacity about the role she could decisively play in peace building. The church is therefore building the capacity of its members and the society at large to get prepared to prevent violent conflicts and sustain peaceful interactions among member states and communities.
To understand the role the Kenyan Church played in the lead up to the 2007 General Election and what role it can play in the healing and reconstruction of the country after the widespread violence that followed the announcement of the presidential election results, it is necessary to briefly go back in time and examine the way the church has faced the challenges of each

new political era. This will in turn help us in determining the way forward for the Church in post-election Kenya.

Education and Conflict Resolution

The concept of conflict resolution typically focus on the social-behavioural symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) 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 mechanism should aim to "alter beliefs, attitudes, and behavior i.e from negative to positive attitudes toward conflict as a basis for preventing violence. (Balanandan, E 1998)

Education is a cornerstone in the peacebuilding process. 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.

Education builds the foundations for good citizenship, respect for self and others, democratic values and tolerance of opinions. Educational research indicates that when young people are trained in civics, mediation, ethnic tolerance and conflict resolution, the likelihood that they will resort to violence later in life is diminished. History tells us that education is no guarantee against hatred and war, but it enlarges people's horizons and breaks down stereotypes and prejudices. (Balanandan, E 1998)

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. Education covers economic, political, social, cultural, moral and ethical issues, and is vital in transforming people's attitudes towards dealing with conflicts.

The impact of violence affects all countries. It is a global concern, requiring a global approach to a solution. The usual method countries use to deal with conflict and wars is through oppressive military measures. But control is not enough; it merely delays future violence. A preventive approach is becoming increasingly recognized – through provision of basic education promoting a culture of peace and non-violence. Governments must shift their central priorities from accumulating political and military power towards building a stronger educational infrastructure for peace. Security and stability are all dependent upon a sound education.

Given that the violence and war is a product of culture, through a modification of basic cultural mindsets mankind can work towards creating a culture of peace. We must strive to build a culture which consists of values, attitudes and behaviors that reject violence, one that attempts to prevent conflict by addressing its root causes with a new view to solving problems: through dialogue and negotiation between individuals, groups and nations. Every individual is capable of making a contribution towards a more peaceful future. The recent developments in today's world, including the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the current international concern on Iraq's necessity to comply with the demands of the international community, have forced many people to believe that peace is an impossible

dream. There is the lack of feeling directly involved in what is going on in the world, through people's lack of interest or simply because of ignorance of how they can become involved.

People need to be made aware that they, too, can work towards the creation of a more peaceful world. People need to be reminded that an individual who acts with pure intentions can make a profound difference, can influence events that are important to the continued existence of mankind. The threat to peace stems from a multitude of causes including poverty, environmental deterioration and social injustice. There are a variety of factors including economic, political, social, cultural and environmental grounds from which these causes are founded. Absence of certainty and security in terms of these factors makes it difficult to promote peace. When discussing the need for a shift of mindset, we need to more closely examine the underlying causes that force people to resort to violence, both in order to understand its societal impact and to come up with the proper solutions to reduce its spread. (Ebrahimian, 2003).

Education, Democracy and Equality
Education for peace programs be centered on democracy and should typically focus on the political processes associated with conflict, and postulate that with an increase in democratic participation. A democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflict as well as the necessity for tolerance" (U.S. Department of State, The Culture of Democracy, emphasis added. Thus programs of this kind attempt to foster a conflict-positive orientation in the community by training students to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth.
Approaches of this type train participants in the skills of critical thinking, debate and coalition-building, and promote the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objection. Their aim is to produce "responsible citizens" who will hold their governments accountable to the standards of peace, primarily through adversarial processes. Activities are structured to have students "assume the role of the citizen that chooses, makes decisions, takes positions, argues positions and respects the opinions of others"–: skills that a multi-party democracy are based upon. Based on the assumption that democracy decreases the likelihood of violence and war, it is assumed that these are the same skills necessary for creating a culture of peace. (Ebrahimian, D.2003)
According to Clarke-Habibi (2005), "A general or integrated theory of peace is needed: one that can holistically account for the intrapersonal, inter-personal, inter-group and international dynamics of peace, as well as its main principles and pre-requisites. An essential component of this integrated theory must also be the recognition that a culture of peace can only result from an authentic process of transformation, both individual and collective." One major aspect under debate is the issue of conflict itself in peace education theory. Most peace education programs postulate that conflict is an inseparable, indeed beneficial, aspect of human nature and human social relations. Increasingly, this assumption is being questioned. The protection of public well-being involves guidance provided by governments as well as the members of the society. Promoting peace alone is not enough; there are still many other issues directly linked with maintaining peace. Other factors preventing the objective need to be dealt with; in most cases it is the government that can provide this. The first and fundamental commitment of the government is to provide all members of society with a peaceful environment, one that is conducive to freedom and opportunity. However, not all governments fulfill this obligation. Many governments fail to recognize even the most basic

of human rights, increasing their own power at the expense of the populace. Unlike an oppressive regime, a democratic government offers equal opportunities for all through economic, political, social and cultural aspects of people's lives. A truly democratic government aims for the benefits of all,
towards sustainable development, ensuring the elimination of poverty by creating employment opportunities. An equal and democratic society is essential for the creation of sustainable peace. (UNESCO 2002)

A democratic regime offers equal opportunities for education; this is another requirement in getting out of poverty: education for all groups at all levels, both formal and non-formal. Education is essential for fulfillment, essential for providing literacy and numeracy skills, essential for continued development and quality of life. A society that promotes education to all members of the society will make progress towards peace, as education will empower people to have the ability to form opinions and act on issues concerning societal development. This ability is essential for spreading the universal values of human rights, peace and tolerance,
understanding and democracy.
Besides offering equal opportunities in terms of economic aspects, a democratic regime stimulates participation of all members, particularly minority groups such as women, children, indigenous and elderly people. By empowering its own people, it will strengthen its own competency and at the same time maintain the values of peace and compassion. In our increasingly interconnected and multicultural world, it is extremely important for democratic societies to develop a sound infrastructure. Examples are the provision of health and water care and equal access to natural resources to produce a healthy population. A democratic regime further fights the trade in narcotics and other drug abuses, which pose a threat to security and peace in the society and undermine the infrastructure that has been built up. In addition, a democratic outlook promotes education of tolerance, mutual understanding and the celebration of diversity (UNESCO, 2002).

Mainstreaming the Culture of Peace
The values of peace and tolerance are an essential part of quality 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. 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. Educational and training programs must be available to people at all levels, both formally and non-formally. In such programs, the dimensions of peace education must include tolerance, respect for human rights and democracy, international and intercultural understanding, cultural and linguistic diversity. (Government of Kenya 2000),
A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards 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. 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. It requires a change in attitude, a difficult process that will not happen overnight.(Government of Kenya 2000),

But this is where the role of knowledge will come into place. Education can provide people with 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 in the eight action areas and be able to contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace.

A complete change of mindset, pure intentions and sustained effort are important to achieving a culture of peace. Society must take preventive action rather than reacting only after an event. Only through prevention can future generations succeed.

CONCLUSION

Finding stability and peace is certainly the greatest collective challenge that mankind has ever faced. Conflict is unavoidable, but violence is not. In many cases, the energy stemming from conflict can be directed towards achieving positive change. People need to be taught of alternatives in resolving conflict, that violence is not a necessary means to achieve their goals. Peace education is a means of achieving this end. Peace education raises awareness of the roots and causes of conflict, and it provides people with the necessary skills and knowledge how to respond to conflict.

Through channeling this energy into programs that rebuild the community and strengthen bonds between communities, peace education can inspire people to look to the future for a better tomorrow. It can stimulate and revitalize morale and work towards developing the infrastructure of developing economies. The United Nations and its partners can encourage this directed effort for peace by raising standards and initiating programs that catalyze the growth of a truly

universal culture of peace. The creation of peace is a long, ongoing process that will take years to accomplish, but at least the generations to come will have the chance to experience its benefits. It must become our united goal as human beings to live with one another in peace and harmony. Through the generations to come that will benefit from the fruits of our efforts towards creating a world of peace, it can still be a rewarding effort to our being.

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