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Implementing Peace Education Concepts in Early Childhood Curriculum: A Tool for Addressing Violence and Promoting Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The provision of quality early childcare is essential for all children in Nigeria, and the government has put a lot of things in place to ensure that this goal is achieved. One such effort is the production of the Preschool curriculum. Nigeria has experienced diverse kinds of violence in recent times which is not just affecting the nation but the children adversely. There is a need to find a way of curbing this menace. Inculcating skills that promote holistic child development is a great tool for achieving peace and sustainable development. But the question is does the Early Childhood Curriculum for Age 0-5 years contain peace values/concepts? Are the peace concepts in it adequate for inculcating peaceful skills in preschoolers? Is this curriculum being effectively used in teaching and organizing learning activities for preschoolers? Content analysis of the curriculum document and mixed research design was adopted. Through purposive sampling, a sample of 110 preschool teachers was used for the study. It was found that there were many peace values and concepts in the curriculum that were adequate for inculcating peace skills in preschoolers. Most preschool teachers do not know anything about the curriculum document. They did not use the curriculum document in organizing learning activities for their pupils. The study recommends that intensive awareness should be created by the government, organizations, and concerned individuals on the need for preschools in Nigeria to use the Early Childhood Curriculum for the age under discussion and government should organize regular training for their teachers to train them on the effective use of preschool curriculum among other.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The alarming rate at which violence is occurring in human society today is now a matter of great concern. Deliberate use of face-to-face coercion, endanger, against another, personal self, or group of people which results in psychological harm, injury, death, deprivation, or maldevelopment. Diverse kinds of brutal reactions are carried out by humans in opposition to humans and the world. People live within a period of overwhelming brutality of various categories such as exploitation, crimes, oppression terrorism, war, and injustice during an outside development enjoyed by little. Most human beings are poor and work seriously hard to survive.

There has been perpetration of various acts of violence in Nigeria over the years. From ethnic conflicts to religious conflicts to terrorist attacks with domestic violence not left out. The root causes of violence in Nigeria include tribalism, corruption, unemployment, ignorance, poverty, political instability, poor economy, religious sentiments, inequity and injustice, and indoctrination (Chukwu, 2019; Oluka & Igwe, 2020; Ideyi, 2008; Nnoli, 2003). In Nigeria, violence seems to be a never-ending trend. It evolves, from the use of traditional weapons to that of more sophisticated weapons of warfare. Unfortunately, children too are not left out of the violent trend. Brutality against teenagers is a core problem that people are face faced with all over the globe. Violence among children, teenagers, and youths is found in most homes and among various family members. It also occurs in workplaces, schools, communities, care, and the justice system. Most time, it has a negative impact on boys and girls of various ages. It is associated with face-to-face or psychological brutality, abuse and injury, negligence in treatment, maltreatment, and abusing people sexually. Global proof reveals that culprits are known to be human beings who take care of the children and also interact with the children. Such people are known to be intimate partners, peers, and caregivers. In a study of known occurrences of kinds of brutality against teenagers at the elementary level in Nigeria, UNICEF in 2007 highlighted the impact of brutality on presence in school and the available approaches for its control in schools. It was found that sexual, gender, physical, and psychological violence exists in schools. Generally, brutality has constituted a core threat growth to children and their communities.

Education makes up actual significant contributions to human development and revolves around every sector of the country. Nigeria loves countries that are developing and have made enough investment in the education sector since education assists the country in growth. In the current society, it is important to take education of the children seriously, especially at all levels of education, because it is a main contribution to the human and capital development of a country. Early childhood time is very important in the creation of the identity of any individual. To usher in a new approach to thinking and doing things, it must begin with the small education of children at the elementary stage (Early Childhood Education). Education is important to the future of individuals and the country (Zaripova, 2023; Dumciuviene, 2015). According to UNESCO in 2007, international bodies are in support of education oneness, inculcating value, and molding of character that is required to sustain the future.

Early childhood development (ECD) means the procedure that a youngster below eight years of age begins desirable emotional confidence, social competence, physical health, readiness to learn, and mental alertness (Anindhita *et al.*, 2023; Yasmin 2012). The study pointed out about nature and standard of ECD as an aspect of major predictors of human advancement. The space within a period is a core aspect of how thoughtful the molding of people is and is attested by quick adjustment in the building of the brain. ECD put forward

good conduct at all times, such as appreciating different races and coming together, working cooperatively, controlling disagreement in an understanding manner, caring for other people, and showing love to people around. This attribute is important to bring out a significant endeavor in fostering peace later in life. Younger days give a peerless avenue, as it is a perfect period to assist with good communication and to advance comprehensive development.

Erasing age groups of cultural anxiety and friction cannot be done nightly, but the establishment of constant, bringing up, and stimulating surroundings for youngsters is serious not only in our communities but in all cultural groups and nations as well. It pointed out different pathways to mould an equal society that is fair to all with sustainable development being paramount. ECD gives a distinctive, powerful, and favorable access link for society and people to surpass existing divisions and change their focus on their youngsters and their future.

UNICEF defines it as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

Peace is believed to be a sacred situation that has an ethical, political, and social declaration. It has to take place for individual awareness, which is believed to be done by individual reasoning and emotional volume. Comprehensive peace education involves, joining pessimistic calmness and constructive calmness. Negative peace is the non-appearance of one-on-one confrontation while positive peace is the availability of equal chances available to all human beings (Vasilopoulos *et al.*, 2019). It is around the habitat of interaction and adequate nature studying procedures that peace education could be made a reality. Peace education is strong enough to prevent conflict which could generate negligence and reaction. It makes room for learners with other persons to deliberate topics such as peace, discrimination, race, violence, and gender in a mutual direction to the lens of social justice.

There are different methods of peace education and they are distinguished widely, however, they are similar in aims and attributes. The types of peace education are focused on developing people with different views who can work towards a caring and just society. So far peace is very important in childhood education; there is little difference in reasoning and general opinion and much talk on the creation of global opinion for peace. The only comprehensive approach to early childhood education paves the way to linking peace education with the early years of infancy. Children at this stage are building their reasoning with social capacities to turn into active and useful individuals within the community and peace education is the option to provide reasonable and forever influence in their life. Therefore, early childhood teachers who work with younger wards have the privilege to incorporate abilities for peace into the younger children preparing for their journey in life.

Teaching peace in an early childhood classroom or setting is good for inculcating in the child to embrace peace and to be able to live peacefully within the society they find themselves. Early childhood instructors could help in molding the abilities of younger children through guidance for peace, it has to do with developing measures to embrace peace. Early childhood peace education curriculum should have four angles a sense of fairness and justice, an appreciation of diversity, and the awareness of interconnectedness, self-value, and self-respect. The four goals will show preschool teachers a curriculum that focuses on developing peaceful youngsters who will become peaceful adults later in life.

The disorder and confusion in society caused by violence affect the child's feelings. Teenagers embrace feelings about violence in the environment and it will degenerate into violent behavior.

In Nigeria, the aims of Early Childhood Education in the National Policy on Education are to inculcate peace values and thereby grow to be peaceful and promote peace in the society among other things.

Social skills are better given during the formative years and are better expected to educate youngsters about being friendly, caring for people, being selfless, and being a good citizen in the country. In Nigeria today, it could be pointed out that some Nigerians are known to be terrorists, militant agitators, bandits, kidnappers, ritual killers, organ harvesters, and child traffickers. It also helps to build emotional skills improves self-satisfaction, emotional intelligence, self-control, and morality, and removes greediness and self-centeredness. Neglect of emotional skills in elementary school gives way birth to greedy people, corrupt individuals, kidnappers, ritual killers, armed robbers, drug barons, and power-drunk leaders. Education is an agent of change (Binhas, 2019); therefore, underscores the interdependence of peace and development and emphasizes holistic, humanistic, inclusive, and sustainable approaches.

Among official documents in Nigeria, the preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years is a significant tool for addressing violence and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria.

The aim of the study therefore was to analyse the Early Childhood Curriculum for Age 0-5 years and ascertain if the contents are adequate for inculcating peace values in preschoolers.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following questions were asked:

- (i) What are the peace values contained in the preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years?
- (ii) How adequate are the peace concepts in preschool Curriculum for Ages 0-5 years in inculcating peaceful skills among children?
- (iii) How is a preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years being effectively used by teachers in teaching and preparing learning activities for preschoolers?

2. METHODS

In answering the research questions, the study adopted a mixed research design and content analysis of the preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years document. The study was conducted among early childhood education sandwich students (2018/2019) at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. A sample of 110 correspondents obtained from purposive sampling was used and the oral interview was adopted as an instrument for the study data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of content analysis of the NECC for 0 - 5 years and interviews conducted that answered the research questions for the study are shown in the following.

3.1. What are the peace values contained in the preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years? Analysis of Peace Values/Concepts in Preschool Curriculum for Age 0-5 years

Curriculum simply means "all the experiences children have under the guidance of the school" or "all learning opportunities provided by the school". Early childhood education has been identified as the basis of the Nigerian educational system, it is made up of babyhood (daycare or crèches) and early childhood period, (Nursery school/preschool period). To achieve this, The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), with

support from UNICEF, designed and developed the Preschool curriculum (NECC) for Ages 0 – 5 years in Nigeria in 2004.

The NECC is divided into two age brackets namely; National Early Childhood Care Curriculum for Ages 0 – 3 years and the Preschool Curriculum for Ages 3 – 5 years. The Early childhood curriculum is a systematic arrangement of subjects of study designed to advance young children's knowledge and competencies. The issues, challenges, and trends of what to teach; How to teach it, why to teach it; “where the teaching takes place” and more are therefore suggested in the curriculum.

The contents of NECC are presented in themes, which are perceived as more robust and allow the elastic infusion of contemporary developments. Eight themes were adopted for ages 0-3 and 3- 5 years as follows; physical development; affective/ psychosocial development, cognitive development, food and nutrition; health; water and environmental sanitation; safety measures; and protection issues. Each theme is made up of topics, performance objectives (for Parents/ Caregivers/ Teacher/ Child), Contents, Activities (for Parents/ Caregivers/ Teacher/Child), Caring/ Teaching/ learning materials, and an Evaluation Guide, in detail for both National Early Child Curriculum for ages 0 -3years and 3 –5years respectively.

Analysis of the curriculum shows a crucial point in the document; that children should be allowed to explore the environment freely, to participate in the activities, and to interact with people and materials within the environment.

Among the themes in the NECC for ages 0-3 years and 3- 5 years, the peace values/concepts are majorly found under the theme titled affective and psycho-social development.

For the 3-5 years, there are four topics under affective and psycho-social development which are social and moral development, emotional development, gender issues in childcare, and types of responsibilities.

Table 1 reveals that many peace concepts/values are integrated into the contents and topics found under the affective and psycho-social development section of the Preschool curriculum for Ages 3 – 5 years. These concepts/values should be taught to imbibe in the child the culture of peace, (to be at peace with himself and the skill to live peacefully with others) These are; social, moral, and cultural beliefs and values of the family and community, play with peers and others in the community, social institutions, peace education, rights and responsibilities and conflict resolution. Relationship with people and objects, individual differences and basic rights and responsibility, teamwork skills e.g. play, partnering, expression of appreciation; looking after communal and personal belongings maintaining peace e.g. dialogue, conflict resolution, and non-violent cooperation.

3.2. Research Question 2: How adequate are the peace concepts in the preschool Curriculum for Ages 0-5 years in inculcating peaceful skills among children?

The peace concepts/values in Table 1 when compared with Balasooriya (2001) concepts in peace education, are adequate for inculcating peaceful skills in preschoolers?

3.3. Research Question 3: How is the preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years being effectively used by teachers in teaching and preparing learning activities for preschoolers?

On the effective use of the Preschool curriculum for Age 0-5 years in teaching and preparing preschoolers’ learning activities, a total of 110 teachers were asked the following questions:

- (i) Do you know about the Preschool curriculum for Age 0-5 years
- (ii) Do you use the Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years in preparing lessons for your pupils

Table 2 summarizes the results of the interview. When teachers were asked about the curriculum they use in teaching and preparing learning activities for their pupils, the teachers said they use foreign curricula and any other useful material they can lay their hands on.

Table 1. Peace Values/Concepts in NECC 3-5 years.

	Topics			
	Social and moral Development	Emotional Development	Gender issues in childcare	Types of responsibilities
Contents	Social, moral, cultural beliefs and values of the family and community eg. Greeting, helping, respect, etc.	Psychosocial values eg, expression of attitude, love, appreciation, trust, Care	Teamwork skills eg play, partnering, expression of appreciation	Types of social responsibilities a. Cleaning of the home and centre b. taking care of personal and communal belongings
	Communities’ stories of reward system	Self-expression through play, songs and dance, music, writing, drawing, moulding, drama, etc	Drama	Orderliness a. At home b. At centre c. In the community
	Play with peers and others in the Community	Arts and crafts eg moulding, drawing, building with wooden blocks or lego, paper cutting, etc	Dance	Maintaining peace e.g. non-violent cooperation, dialogue and conflict resolution.
	Social institutions eg, naming ceremony, kinship, chieftaincy, religions, etc,	Relationship with people and objects	Sorting	Roleplay
	Peace Education	Individual differences and basic rights	Rhymes/songs	
	Rights and Responsibilities		Selection of shapes and colors	
	Conflict resolution		Basic rights and responsibilities	

Table 2. Preschool Teachers Use of Preschool curriculum for Age 0-5 years.

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	I do not know about preschool Curriculum for Age 0-5 years	95	86%
2	I know about the Preschool curriculum for Age 0-5 years but do not use it in preparing lessons for my pupils	14	13%
3	I use the Preschool curriculum for Age 0-5 years in preparing learning activities for my pupils	1	1%
Total		110	100

3.4. Discussion

Analysis of the Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years revealed that many peace values/concepts are contained in it, these concepts are in line with Balasooriya, concepts for peace education and adequate for inculcating skills in preschoolers. The curriculum was prepared by resource persons/experts from different works of life in Nigeria. It is culturally relevant; because these resource persons are on the ground, they know the needs of the Nigerian child and the best way to meet those needs using readily available materials.

The study shows that although the Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years is good enough and when implemented properly will promote holistic child development and that of the nation, most preschool teachers do not know about it. Most of them use foreign curricula while others use whatever material they can lay their hands on. Most Nigerian preschool teachers organize learning activities to promote children's mental and cognitive development neglecting the other aspects. Neglecting such skills produces individuals that cause problems in the society.

According to caregivers/teachers should be trained in various service delivery departments such as water, nutrition agencies, health, and environmental sanitation. It is expected that before the beginning of each term, caregivers/teachers will acquaint themselves with the curriculum, discover the materials listed, create a reliable scheme of work, and ask for help where necessary. When teachers are prepared properly, they will use the Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years effectively, this will help promote children's holistic development thereby leading to sustainable development in society.

4. CONCLUSION

Nigeria as a country is interested in the education of her children right from the early years, believing that the holistic development of children will go a long way in bringing about sustainable development of the nation as a whole. Although the rate of violent acts in the nation is increasing at an alarming rate, inculcating peace values and concepts in preschoolers is one of the significant keys to curbing this challenge. These children will grow to be peaceful adults thereby bringing the change we need.

From the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

- (i) Intensive awareness should be created by the government, organizations, and concerned individuals on the need for preschools in Nigeria to use the Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years.
- (ii) The government should organize regular in-service training for preschool teachers to train them on the effective use of the Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years.

- (iii) The Preschool curriculum for Ages 0-5 years should be made available to all the preschools in Nigeria.
- (iv) The government should effectively monitor preschools to ensure that they properly implement stipulated government practices, knowing that most of them are run by private bodies.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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