



Fostering peace education through classroom interactions amongst students in home economics in Nigeria secondary schools

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Abstract

The development of peace education curriculum in Nigeria secondary schools has been interdisciplinary. The contents of peace education have been integrated into existing subjects including Home Economics. This paper makes a case for the use of relevant classroom interactions and also a case for the use of relevant home economics curriculum. The issue of peace and peace education is discussed. This was followed by the relevance of home economics to peace education. The concept of classroom interactions is also presented. Finally, some elements of classroom interaction in Home economics for peace Education where discussed along with some recommendation.

Keywords: classroom, Nigeria, schools, education, Economics, peace education

Introduction

Peace in today's increasing globalized world requires competencies and values that will equip people to live in extremely diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. Education has been seen as a tool for developing the competencies and values required for peace. Reardon (2003) ^[11] asserts that education for peace is education to create some of the preconditions for the achievement of peace. Schirch (2005) ^[13] noted that education for peace is primarily concerned with knowledge and skills related to requirements of and obstacle to achievement of peace. Peace education fosters the skills, knowledge and attitudes for living together in peace despite diversities. According to Lopez, (2001) ^[9]. Such diversity is not only characteristics of societies that we formerly considered to be distant, but is rather part of our very own co-existence, since otherness and difference now impregnate our homes due to the constantly bring us into contact with worlds with different cultures and languages, and also due to the increasing population shifts of individuals from regions and countries own.

This implies that peace and learning to live together in the twenty-first century should then start by recognizing these new situations and accepting our creative diversity. In the educational context, teaching and learning have always been cultural processes that take place within particular contexts, to the extent that they reflect the experience, perspectives, orientations and contributions of a wide variety of ethnic and cultural groups (UNESCO, 2002) ^[16]. These processes need to be reflected in the curriculum. However, while processes and skills needed for peace education have to form part of the curriculum, the real danger of overloading the curriculum must not be ignored (UNICEF, 2007) ^[17]. This is because the child has a right to childhood; therefore, bringing the various elements needed into a well-integrated, manageable and child-friendly curricular package is necessary. The need, therefore,

is to integrate concepts of Education for peace both at the level of design and implementation of school curriculum. This is because Education for peace explores multi-disciplinary and developmental approaches to address violence in all its varied forms. Promoting goals of justice, empowerment and social justice through the process of education for peace requires that a pedagogical framework encourages critical and reflective thinking; provide space for dialogical engagement with the culture, context and achieve the ultimate values and goals in school curriculum. Thus, the international Bureau of Education (2001) ^[5] stated that approaches to peace education are contextual and situation dependent for every subject in school curriculum. They are design towards developing peace related capacities and development of peace making skills and intentionally directed towards transformative learning across the curriculum including languages, arts, social sciences, and vocational subjects. Home Economics is one of the vocational subjects.

Home Economics as a Subject for Peace Education

Home economics, Domestic science or home science is a field of study that deals with the relationship between individuals, families, communities, and the environment in which they live. Home economics courses are offered internationally and across multiple educational levels. Home economics courses have been important throughout history because it gives women the opportunity to pursue higher education and vocational training in a world where only men were able to learn in such environments. In modern times, home economics teaches people of all genders important life skills, such as cooking, sewing, and finances. With the stigma the term "home economics" has earned over the years, the course is now often referred to by different terms, such as "family and consumer science.

Home Economics is a vocational subject that is designed to

promote a healthier home and society. Ajala (2002)^[1] defined Home economics as the study of the relationship of people and aspects of their environment such as clothing, housing and finance. Home economics is one of the subjects studied in schools. According to Uko-Aviomoh (2005) it is entrepreneurial based because it is a skill-oriented field of study that is expected to equip learners with saleable skills that make for self-reliance/self-employment and paid employment. The major objective of home economics is the production of manpower that possess the requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for human food, clothing and home resources and bringing them into cooperative relationships. The aim of Home Economics is to prepare learners how to strategically plan and use available resources in their environment to improve their homes, families and society life.

Improvement of homes, families and society life are components of peace education that form the core of Home Economics. Home economics is also relevant to peace education because it equips students with life-coping skills such as conflict management, collaborative problem solving, family resource management, decision-making, values and family life and healthy living, among others. These contents are important because students in our schools face continuous changes and challenges.

Major changes caused by divorce, remarriage, moving, drug/physical/mental abuse, foster care, and unsupervised homes can have a large impact on the youth. These major changes as well as minor changes have increased the stress that our young people must learn to deal with. Because of this, many students do not come to school ready to learn. Basic resiliency and problem skills are often missing because parents lack time, commitment, or understanding of the importance of these skills. Many parents are unable to provide for basic needs and parenting their is need, so, many children lack the knowledge and skills to deal effectively with the stressors in their lives. Consequently, they engage in activities that disrupt peace such as indiscipline, cultism, violence, vandalism, and other forms of behavioural misconducts.

Home Economics provides knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to these problems. Home Economics as a subject for peace education provides a valuable link to student's experiences at home and community as well as what the students learns at schools. Thus it helps foreground process of constructive meaning making for peaceful co-existence. This process of meaning making is not just influenced by the content of the denned curriculum but also by the learning process, school and family spaces. What is needed in Home Economics is to ensure that these contents are taught in as realistic way as possible using relevant classroom interactions so that the students will apply the skills in real life situations to foster peace.

Consequently, a very important question addressed during a workshop "Curriculum Development and Education for Living Together" held in Nairobi Kenya in 2001^[16] was what teaching methodology should be used that could arouse the learners' interest and also help them to understand the content required for peace. The working document on workshop No.5 of the ICE (International Bureau of Education, 2001)^[5] listed the following methods:

- Experimental practices and getting in touch with reality: Great emphasis has to be placed on practical work and learner involvement in that practical work;
- Making the learner act: students should play an active role if they are to learn: diversifying learning paths: every student has to follow his/her own learning path, so that they can learn with ease;
- Taking account of initial representations: the students prior knowledge or ideas form an important base for what is going to be taught, and that knowledge will help to facilitate or block the students learning;
- Knowledge about knowledge: once the learning process has been complete, the difficulties encountered must be discussed with the learner, so as to see how much has been understood;
- Project-oriented teaching methods: using projects is the best way to increase pupil involvement in numerous ways during the teaching and learning process;
- Documentary research: this involves some specific technical skills and would depend on the availability of learning materials, such as textbooks, reference books, the internet, etc.

These methods depict a movement from a transmissive /didactic model of teaching towards a constructivist/communicative view of learning by attending to students' conceptions and recognizing that students are active constructors of their own knowledge. Within these methods, teaching is used to achieve general learning outcomes involving the development of intellectual and social skills. Lederach (2005)^[8], advocates giving the students, maximum control over learning strategy and creating curricula that fostering further growth and development of the mind. In other words, it is essential to use students centered classroom interactions to foster peace education across the curriculum including Home Economics.

Concept of Classroom Interactions

Classroom interaction refers to the whole range of activities and experiences through which teachers; curriculum, materials, and learners interact. It has to do with the interactive processes through which teachers' impart learning to students using available materials.

Element of Teacher Classroom Interaction for Fostering Peace through Home Economics

It is clear that the classroom interaction such as Reardon (2003)^[11] has identified a number of qualities interactions into four broad headings:

- Supportive and inspiring environment
- Student participation
- Classroom discipline and management
- Student Satisfaction

Supportive and Inspiring Environment

Research on classroom environment such as Reardon (2003)^[11] has identified a number of qualities associated with positive learning outcomes. The following are the key areas for improving the learning environment for peace:

- Supportive relationships among teachers and students
- Friendliness and understanding in classroom norms, making decisions, and setting goals
- Clear expectations and responsibilities
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Adequate time for completing tasks and for discussions
- Opportunities to work on open-ended tasks
- Interesting and meaningful activities

In home Economics, many of the classroom factors listed above also influence students' positive attitudes. For example, students with favourable attitudes toward Home Economics may feel that they are involved in class and perceive a great deal of both academic and personal support from teacher. These students can also understand the classroom expectations and rules and report friendly and peaceful relationships with their classmates.

Student Participation

Beliefs and theories about how children learn are also changing ideas about what schools and classrooms should be like. Educators such as Lederach (2005)^[8] believe that people do not learn by having information transmitted to them, but by creating their own knowledge. While some people are able to do this listening to a lecture or reading a textbook, many others must have direct experiences and opportunities to talk about their ideas in order to understand what they learn. A constructivist approach is based on the premise that learning is most effective "when the learner is actively engaged in creating his or her own knowledge and understanding by connecting what is being learned with prior knowledge and experiences" (Lopez, 2001)^[9].

Constructing knowledge and understanding is a social, interactive process. A peaceful learning environment is a key component in guiding students toward an interactive and constructivist approach to learning. Students learn from a peaceful environment. In a peaceful learning environment, students likely to learn more from each other by sharing their ideas and points of view, asking questions, and building on their shared methods and ideas. This process of communicating about their thinking and working to create shared ways of thinking are also essential for learning (Henderson, Fisher & Fraser, 2000)^[4]. Some features which Home Economics discussions, student-generated research topics and investigations, active involvement, and evaluations that emphasized reasoning, evidence and personal interpretations, rather than only correct results.

Classroom Control and Discipline

Home Economics teachers need to develop a vision of the peaceful classroom environment with their students from the first day of class. The whole group would discuss, negotiate, and adopt this vision in order for all students to share and value it. Rules of conduct and expectations will evolve from this collective vision (Scott, 2003)^[14]. Many teachers worry that allowing students to take on new role and responsibilities means that they will not be able to control the classroom. This is not the purpose or the outcome of encouraging students to take more active roles. Rather than giving up order and discipline or giving students "free rein", the teacher empowers

students to participate in making decisions about their behavior. In fact, successful teachers in diverse peaceful and cultural settings report that they share their authority with their students. They also gain their authority from a variety of sources-such as knowledge of their students, caring, and creating a peaceful and respectful environment-rather than just their position as the teacher.

Whether or not teachers are successful in helping students to learn depends on their abilities to establish supportive relationships with students and to engage them in meaningful and worthwhile activities (Henderson, *et al* 2000)^[4]. Giving students control over their learning increases motivation, promotes understanding and engagement, reduces discipline problems, and fosters peace in classrooms.

The Home Economics teacher should possess managerial and organizational ability in the teaching-learning situation. The teacher is the organizer of classroom activity. The teacher sets detailed learning objectives, plans the effective use of time, ensures classroom safety, and arrangement involves basically the control of the teaching group, which is the class. Classroom management connotes the effective handling of materials and pupils that make up the teaching group. (Goh, & Fraser, 1998)^[4] describe classroom management involves the control of the group, manipulation of their time, organization of learning materials and teacher's personally such as voice and general behavior. It is the method employed in handling or arranging all the essential components of the classroom, which are carefully and deliberately put together in such a way that all the objectives set for the teaching-learning situations could be achieved. Good classroom management helps to increase the control of the class orderliness. It allows the teacher to get closer to the pupils and makes the pupils to behave well. It allows the teacher to teach effectively and thus enjoy the pupil more. Effectiveness of a teacher refers to the extent to which the teacher is successful in achieving the output requirement of his role as a teacher.

Student Satisfaction

Another important element in peaceful classroom interaction is student satisfaction. Alausa, (2007)^[2] studied the elements of a classroom as a science environment centered on sharing knowledge and found that students are actively involved in making decisions, planning and organizing activities, and establishing classroom norms. This makes it possible for students to become satisfied with lessons, share ideas and build on the thinking of others, even when they initially feel individual ownership of materials and ideas. Students who are accustomed to a competitive environment in the classroom will need time to adjust to a community approach.

Home Economics teachers should provide a helpful model for establishing a sense of peace and satisfaction among students. This demand initiating a caring community in the class. In a caring community, all members are important, and everyone has significant contributions to make both to learning and to the general well-being. Students report that a sense of being known and of being at peace with other students leads to a more congenial learning environment and increased motivation to learn and participate in school (Labate, 2001)^[7]. Home Economics teachers should create opportunities to establish caring in all of their interactions with students. They

should ensure that everyone is treated with respect and acceptance, which is not based on prior academic performance or special abilities. They should enable students to be personally involved in their classrooms to bring themselves to learning by emphasizing and modeling acceptance.

Getting to know the student is also important in establishing caring and peaceful relationships. The knowledge that teachers gain about their students, their interest, experiences, values, personalities-serves many purposes in addition to establishing a peaceful climate that is essential information for planning activities and discussion. Home Economics teachers should allow students to know them as well, by talking about their lives outside the classroom and by sharing their own interests and past experiences. Students themselves report the significance of personal relationships with their teachers. When students understand that they are important to their teachers, they are more satisfied, motivated to learn and have an increase sense of responsibility for such things as being prepared and on time, or applying their efforts to learning.

Many strategies for promoting student satisfaction are simple, but they are also powerful when consistently enacted. For example, teachers can be sure to greet students and make contact with them both through eye contact and moving around in the classroom. Teachers can also look for ways to give students personal attention by taking an interest in students' lives, making time for informal talk, and writing students personal notes of encouragement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Peace is imperative in striving to live together in an increasingly complex, globalize and scientific world. Peace education requires individuals and communities capable of continually developing and utilizing various kinds of knowledge frameworks, value systems and skills. In order to help students to achieve this kind of understanding. The Home Economics curriculum has been designed taking into account their daily lives and cultural background, and emphasizing a sense of wonder and respect for the world. Implementing that curriculum require relevant classroom interactions among students and teachers.

In essence, fostering relevant classroom interactions, demands that Home Economics teacher should

1. Be friendly and aware of what each learner knows and understands;
2. Present work in such a way that the learner can relate it to his/her previous knowledge;
3. Allow the learner to idiosyncratic methods which work;
4. Listen to the learner when he/she is in difficulty;
5. Encourage the learner to take responsibility for his/her progress.
6. Enrich teaching and learning with relevant peace-based examples, illustrating, explanations, reinforcement and questions.

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