Strengthening Peace Research and Peace Education in African Universities

Kenneth Omeje

John and Elnora Ferguson Centre for African Studies
Department of Peace Studies
University of Bradfprd
Email: k.c. omeje@bradford.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper explores the problems and challenges of promoting and embedding conflict–sensitive peace education in African higher education, especially in the universities. The paper also proffers some constructive policy recommendations and intervention strategies. Universities have traditionally been concerned with imparting specialized knowledge and skills in various fields of study capable of helping beneficiaries to make useful contributions to societal development and also earn meaningful livelihood from a legitimate occupation. There is increasing interest in the role of higher education in promoting peace and security at all levels of society, particularly in volatile conflict–prone and war–affected societies. This research has been mainly conceived to help strengthen the growing body of policy–relevant knowledge on the functional application of peace research and peace education in Africa.
Keywords: *peace education. Higher education, policy, structural violence; conflict resolution*

Resume

Ce document explore les problèmes et les défis de la promotion et de l'intégration éducation à la paix sensible au conflit dans l'enseignement supérieur de l'Afrique, en particulier dans les universités. Le papier profère aussi quelques constructive des recommandations politiques et des stratégies d'intervention.. Les universités ont traditionnellement été concernés par la transmission des connaissances et des compétences spécialisées dans divers domaines d'étude capable d'aider les bénéficiaires à faire des contributions utiles au développement de la société et aussi gagner de subsistance significative d'une occupation légitime. Il ya un intérêt croissant pour le rôle de l'enseignement supérieur dans la promotion de la paix et de la sécurité à tous les niveaux de la société, en particulier dans les sociétés sujettes aux conflits et touchées par la guerre volatils. Cette recherche a été principalement conçu pour aider à renforcer la masse croissante de connaissances pertinentes pour la politique sur l'application fonctionnelle de la recherche de la paix et de l'éducation de la
Mots clés: *éducation à la paix. L'enseignement supérieur, la politique, la violence structurelle ; résolution de conflit*

Introduction

Peace researchers and proponents of peace education have increasingly focused on understanding the potential contributions that universities can make to long-term peacebuilding and the most impactful strategies they could adopt. From the experience of diverse research and capacity-building projects completed in recent years in a number of post-conflict countries in Africa like Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, northern Uganda, Burundi, and South Sudan, it is apparent that key stakeholders such as the state, society and the private and voluntary sectors have a twofold expectation about the role of universities, namely: (a) that universities should provide employment-relevant education and training; and (b) that universities should shed part of their ivory tower pomposity and aloofness to reach out, and be functionally relevant to the everyday challenges and needs of their host communities (Omeje ed., 2009; *LUGUSI Network Newsletter*, 2010-2012; Stiasny & Gore eds., 2014).

The conventional approach in many post-conflict societies like Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Northern Uganda where the idea of universities playing a role in peacebuilding has been embraced is to confine such a role to the social sciences and humanities, faculties where new courses such as peace, conflict and security studies are offered. Consequently and too often, the idea of conflict-sensitive education and peacebuilding is further limited to students enrolled in some of the new emerging courses like peace studies, conflict resolution, security studies, governance and leadership studies, and so forth. This restrictive approach ostensibly misses the mark as it tends to exclude the vast majority of university students enrolled in mainstream social sciences (e.g. sociology, political science and economics) and the considerably non-cognate courses such as the natural and applied sciences, from the vital knowledge and skills of conflict-sensitive education and peacebuilding. Based on an exploratory analysis of the evolution of peace research and peace education in Africa, this paper aims to elucidate the challenges and limitations of embedding conflict-sensitive and functionally relevant peace education in the universities on the African continent.

The Evolution of Modern Peace Research and Peace Education

Peace research emerged as a response to the destructiveness of violent conflicts, especially in the Western world. Conflict is as old as human society and research into how to mitigate and stem the tide of violent conflict has engaged the attention of philosophers, statesmen and public intellectuals of all ages. These philosophical, scholarly and policy intervention-oriented inquiries of the past are a major part of the intellectual heritage of modern peace research and peace education. Many peace, conflict and social science theories have emerged from this robust intellectual heritage.

Until the end of World War II (precisely, late 1950s through early 1960s) the dominant preoccupation in peace research was practically limited to elimination of war and active violence. Various internationalist movements emerged in Europe and North America after World War I to help prevent future wars. The occurrence of World War II and the added threat posed by nuclear weapons created an additional impetus for peace research and the need to transcend the preoccupation with management and termination of armed conflict. With no distinct disciplinary status of its own, peace and conflict research was conducted within the many social science disciplines and the humanities. Some of the key scholars that pioneered peace and conflict research within the various social science disciplines are Quincy Wright (1890-1970, international law Professor), Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968; anti-communist historical sociologist) and Lewis Richardson (1881-1953; pacifist natural/social scientist).

In spite of the growing volume of scholarly works, for far too long, the existence of peace remained associated with the absence of violent conflict. Prior to the famous studies of the Norwegian peace researcher, Johan Galtung, beginning from the 1960s, peace was definitionally linked to absence of war or organised violence. Social policy and peace activism were mostly informed by this perspective. Pacifists and activists of different intellectual orientations (notably international law, diplomatic history, social psychology, and political philosophy) completely abhorred and condemned the instrumentality of the use of force or violence in society. Galtung described this dominant approach as "negative peace," which he consequently distinguished from "positive peace." Galtung (1996) defined negative peace as the absence of war and direct violence which inflict human suffering at individual, national, regional and international levels. Negative peace is essentially status quo-oriented, and its purposes and intents, at any rate, are often mediated by the interests of hegemonic power. In situations of conflict settlement and war-to-peace transition, negative peace in most cases corresponds to "victor's peace," which may result in the sequestration of the vanquished opponents and an unsustainable peace that could unravel sooner or later. To guarantee sustainable peace and an equitable social order, Galtung (1996) proposes the need for positive peace, which he defines as working towards the elimination of unjust structures, inequitable relationships at inter-personal, group, national, regional and international levels (see also, Galtung & Jabsen, 2000). He associates positive peace with the progressive and systematic elimination of structural violence in society – i.e. subtle violence embedded in the structures of society and state policies which cause human suffering and avoidable gradual death. In other words, peace goes beyond the absence of war, to encompass economic, social, and cultural justice, as well as freedom from discrimination based on race, class, gender, or religion (Husin ed. 2002). Galtung advocates that peace research should, as a matter of necessity, be value-driven and his predilection is for values of positive peace as opposed to negative peace.

Experts differ considerably on whether or not peace research should be value-driven and on what values and whose values should be preeminent. Some of the core values favoured by positive peace proponents include: social justice, freedom, peace by peaceful means (non-violence); environmental protection, human security and policy relevance (whose policy?). Some more critical pundits include values of supposedly "positive" or "constructive" violence – supporting violent struggles for freedom from oppression, exploitation, domination, colonization and discrimination. Consequently, some scholars have argued that peace research should be driven by such goals as intellectual and practical knowledge production, value and culture transmission, and the more policy-oriented utilitarian function of serving the peace, conflict and security industry (see Arrighi, 2002).

Rogers and Ramsbotham (1999:741) have characterized peace research as *inter-alia* distinguished by:

1. A recognition of the multifaceted nature of violent conflicts and need for an inter-disciplinary response.
2. Search for peaceful strategies for dispute settlement, including the debate on whether the use of force could be an option.
3. Espousal of multi-level of analysis of conflict (individual, group, state, inter-state, etc), de-emphasising the undue dichotomy between internal and external factors.
4. Adoption of a global multi-cultural approach with emphasis on the values of peace and non-violent social transformation across cultures.

Modern peace education is predicated on the progressive achievements of peace research and has been popularly defined as "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour 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 intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, national or international level (Fountain, 1999:1; UNESCO, 2002). Even though most proponents tend to agree that peace education has to do with the generation and/or application of a specific set of "knowledge, skills, and attitudes," experts markedly disagree on the actual content and focus of the "knowledge, skills and attitudes" that comprise peace education. Hence, the primary content and concern of peace education remain a philosophical dispute amongst scholars and practitioners, with some advocating and proposing universal objectives while others favouring a more flexible context-specific approach.

Some of the major universal objectives canvassed by a section of the proponents include an education that prepares people in different societies for: (1) overcoming feelings and conditions of powerlessness, (2) confronting deep-seated fears and conditions of violence, (3) reconciliation of divided and antagonistic communities; (4) working towards the achievement of freedom, justice, diversity, gender equality, human rights

and environmental protection; (5) development of good governance, leadership and peacebuilding skills, and (6) the pursuit of peace by peaceful means (Hicks, 1985; Harris, 1988; Deveci *et al*, 2008). Within this broad universalist framework, some proponents have drawn a close parallel between peace education and citizenship education, arguing that the formers (citizenship education) aims to empower individuals to become responsible legally and socially functional members of society through civic training while the latter (peace education) pursues a similar goal by promoting the concepts of non-violence, human rights, social justice, world-mindedness, ecological balance, meaningful participation, and personal peace (see Hicks, 2004; Cook, 2008:892).

There is also a growing moral-theological school of thought that approaches peace education from a religious angle, arguing that peaceful and aggressive behaviours are inherent [super]natural impulses and tendencies; therefore peace research and education should aim to encourage and develop the important "virtue ethics" needed for the good of the individual and ultimately society (see Page, 2004:2). For scholars with a leaning to Christian theology, these important virtue ethics needed for the wholesomeness of the individual can be derived from the biblical teachings of Jesus Christ which emphasize virtues such as love, kindness, forgiveness, tolerance, hospitality, patience, generosity, servant-oriented leadership, selflessness and forbearance. The Judaeo-Christian version of contemporary theological approach to peace education was foreshadowed by the classical philosophical studies of early Church fathers like St. Augustine (354 – 430 AD) and Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274).

In Indonesia and some parts of the Muslim world, peace education curricula have been developed at different levels of schooling emphasizing some key dimensions of Islam's view of peace such as: "(1) All-encompassing peace in the context of the human relation with Allah the Creator that emerges when humans live in conformity with their primordial created nature in recognizing God as Creator (*fitrah*); (2) Peace with oneself that emerges when one is free from internal conflict; (3) Peace with the wider community that can only be achieved if humans experience the absence of war and discrimination and the existence of justice in their daily life; and (4) Peace with the environment, utilizing natural resources not merely as resources for material development but also as a reserve for the well-being of future generations" (Husin ed. 2002; see also Erekat, 2015). The practical challenge with conceptions about the spiritual dimension and a moral-theological approach to peace education is that there is a mosaic of religions in the world and different religions and sects within a specific religion yield different interpretations, meanings and conditions for peace, which can sometimes become irreconcilable fault-lines for conflict.

The important assumption underlying modern peace education is best illustrated by UNESCO's (2002) mantra that "the peaceful resolution of conflict and prevention of violence, whether interpersonal or societal, overt or structural, is a positive value to be promoted on a global level through education." The UN system, in particular UNESCO,

has since the 1990s been strongly associated with espousing and promoting a global "culture of peace" through education, corresponding to a universalistic concept of peace education or what is alternatively reconceptualised as "education-for-peace." "Since wars begin in the minds of men," UNESCO (2002) contends, "it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." The universal or transnational peace education championed by UNESCO is seen as a type of education that promotes peace and tolerance in a globalized multicultural setting; and further seeks to understand and transform hatred, suspicion and violence. The UN General Assembly proclaimed 2001-2010: "The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World". The UN General Assembly Declaration and Programme of Action of September 1999 defines a culture of peace as: "all the values, attitudes and forms of behaviour that reflect respect for life, for human dignity and for all human rights; the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding between people."

As an offshoot of peace and conflict studies, modern peace education was conceived to be a value-driven and problem-solving oriented discipline (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2005). As such, many experts who espouse a more flexible context-specific approach to peace education are generally of the view that the conceptualization of peace education should be based on the specific nature of 'problem' (i.e. violence and conflict broadly defined) it is conceived to tackle in society (Francis ed., 2008; Alimba, 2013:340). Conceptually, a conflict-sensitive approach to peace education is synonymous with the flexible context-specific approach. A further illustration of how this approach works in practice will suffice. Practically, exponents are of the view that in deeply divided multi-ethnic societies emerging from war and ravaged by institutional and infrastructural collapse, as well as extreme poverty and mass illiteracy, peace education could for instance be oriented towards the reconciliation of bitterly divided ethnic communities; promotion of institutional reconstruction; provision of public infrastructure, education and skills training; job creation and poverty reduction (Francis ed., 2008; Alimba, 2013). In some other relatively more stable and functional societies marked by social alienation of immigrant minorities, racial tension between the host population and immigrant communities, and drugs and gun violence by young adults from highly disadvantaged immigrant communities, peace education could for instance be deliberately structured to focus on promoting multiculturalism and respect for diversity, inter-community cohesion, awareness of the dangers of illicit drugs and guns, rehabilitation of drug victims, gun control, skills training and employment for disadvantaged young people. Many scholars and activists from the Global South tend to favour this type of context-specific or conflict-sensitive approach to peace education because of its perceived sensitivity to the local conflict environment – both "active and latent conflict" (Burton, 1990). A conflict-sensitive peace education is believed to be vital for societies characterised by "deep-rooted structures of prejudice, suspicion and

hostilities in a society, as well as attitudes that tend to perceive recourse to violence as legitimate" (Brown, 2012). There are of course a large number of exponents both from the global North and South who argue that universal peace education and conflict-sensitive peace education need not be seen as competitive and contradictory. The two can be mutually inclusive and therefore a healthy practical balance could be achieved between the two in every circumstance through constructive curriculum development and training.

Peace Education in African Universities

Modern peace education originated from the West in the years following World War II with the result that by the 1960s peace education had become a well-established subject in many western universities and colleges, either offered as an independent academic programme or as a course (module) within one of the traditional disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities. For instance, the first Peace Studies Department and Undergraduate Programme (in Conflict Resolution) was established in 1948 in Manchester College, Indiana, USA and became a model for hundreds of similar programmes across America (Abrams, 2010). Generally, some of the oldest peace and conflict studies university departments, academic journals and research institutes were established in the West between the 1950s and mid-1970s. Prominent among these pioneer peace research facilities include the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* established at the University of Michigan in 1957 and the Peace Research Institute established in Oslo in 1959, where the famous *Journal of Peace Research* was later founded in 1964. Dozens of other research centres and journals followed in the 1960s and 1970s, founded mostly in Europe, North America and Japan.

Whilst modern peace education emerged in the west as a consequence of World War II and the correlated events of the Cold War, the field of study emerged in Africa in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War and what was popularly known as "the African crisis" (Arrighi, 2002:5). The African crisis was a term coined in the 1980s for describing the series of convoluted development disaster that beset many African economies in the 1980s and 1990s, aggravated by the World Bank/IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), and culminating in varied intensities of state failure and armed conflicts. Prior to the end of the Cold War, a limited number of studies of African conflicts were undertaken by different policy think tanks (mostly development studies-oriented e.g. CODESRIA), academic researchers within the various mainstream social sciences and allied disciplines, as well as area studies research centres and departments in the west. Like in most other fields of study offered in the continent, the vast majority of the subject specialists that pioneers African peace and conflict research were Africans and Africanists of expatriate origin who were mainly trained in the west. The fact that

these pioneers were mainly trained in the west meant that they were imbued with non-African (western) conceptual tools, imaginations of reality, outlooks and research methodologies, a phenomenon that has continued to vitiate the development of a regional pool of expertise and indigenous capacity for research (Brock-Utne, 1998). Significantly, this epistemological and methodological limitation is not exclusive to peace research; it is a challenge that cuts across the entire spectrum of higher education in Africa and partly linked to the neo-colonial foundation and heritage of African educational systems.

Even though peace education has come to stay in contemporary Africa tertiary education, problems persist with the epistemological and scholastic content of most curricula. Ostensibly, the most serious challenge and limitation to contemporary peace education in African universities is the authenticity crisis, a problem that is mainly associated with the dominance of western realism, philosophy and epistemology in the curricula of existing study programmes (Francis, 2009; Omeje, 2015). Consequently, many of the emerging peace education-centred training programmes in African universities since the 1990s, especially training and study programmes in volatile conflict-prone and war-affected countries that a account for a preponderant proportion of the new courses, have been designed in the west or introduced with preponderant western epistemological, cultural and material influence (Francis, 2009; Omeje, 2014). This structural twist has significantly impacted the epistemological content and predilection of research, teaching and learning in the universities and, by logical implication, the paradigm and limits of change achievable in society.

The more practical challenges to peace education in African universities include paucity of requisite expertise, weak capacity amongst available scholars, shortage of research and teaching materials (e.g. relevant books, journals and libraries), and limited employment and career development opportunities for subject-area graduates and practitioners – a problem that is clearly linked to the weak absorptive capacities of African economies and the short-term nature of many donor-driven projects that create jobs in the peace and conflict industry (see Francis ed., 2008; Alimba, 2013).

To a large extent, peace education in Africa seems to be focused on the formal education sector, especially the level of tertiary education. At other levels of formal education, traditional citizenship or civic education tends to be more prevalent, although in many post-conflict societies like Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Liberia, and Uganda, citizenship education - sometimes structured as part of Social Studies - at primary and post-primary levels have significant lessons in non-violent methods of dispute settlement and peacebuilding (see *LUGUSI Network Newsletter*, 2010-2012; WANEP, 2012).

Given the proliferation of structures of conflict in Africa (both structural and active violence), the limitations of peace education must be clearly underscored. It will be practically misleading and futile to hinge the solution to African conflicts on peace education which seems to be one of the common mistakes made by some experts

and practitioners. As important as it is, well-structured and effectively delivered comprehensive peace education cannot be a substitute for political and economic reforms, democratization and good governance. Many independent and authoritative research studies have demonstrated that effective political, constitutional and economic reforms are some of the indispensable conditions to sustainable peace, stability and development on the continent (see Moyo, 2009; Ascher & Mirovitskaya, 2013).

Peace Education in Africa: Understanding the Structural Impediments

One of the strongest impediments to peace in many African countries, especially in volatile conflict-prone states and countries emerging from armed conflicts is the legacy of violence, which actively feeds a deep-rooted perception among antagonistic communities and large sections of the populations that violence is a legitimate instrument for conducting public affairs and pursuit of goals. Social psychologists have shown that when people are exposed to a prolonged culture of violence and armed conflict, they are left with a twisted worldview that tends to perceive the use of violence; aggressive behaviour and resort to disorder as a normal way of life (see Kelman, 2010). The consequences of perpetuating a culture of violence in society are more blatant for children and people who have lived all the cognitive stages of their lives under conditions of embedded hostilities, abuse and armed violence.

An analysis of the embedded culture of violence in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) certainly makes greater sense against the backdrop of Africa's population dynamics. In terms geo-demographic base factor, Africa's population has witnessed a rapid increase since the 1970s. Africa's population has grown from about 221 million in 1950 to 408 million in 1975, 796 million in 2000 and 1.1 billion in 2013 (UNFPA, 2010; World Bank, 2013; WPR, 2015). Among the many factors that have contributed to Africa's population growth rate (e.g. decreasing infant and maternal mortality, gains made in combating infectious diseases and HIV, etc), the most significant is the fact that there is a large number of women who, under circumstances of rapid cultural, socio-demographic and economic change, have no access to and opportunities for family planning (UNFPA, 2010; Zinkina & Korotayev, 2014). Under conditions of extreme poverty and prolonged conflict as is the case in many parts of SSA, high population growth rate has been tempered with low life expectancy at birth (the average in SSA being about 55 years in 2013) and "a worrying youth bulge" – i.e. a large percentage of unemployed young people within the population (BBC, 2009; World Bank, 2013; WPR, 2015). In most countries of SSA, at least 50% of the population is below the age of 25 years, and a further 43% of the population is below the age of 15 (UNFPA, 2010; PRB, 2013).

The implication of the rapid demographic change in SSA for the embedded culture of violence profile is that in most volatile conflict-prone and war-affected countries and regions such as South Sudan, Darfur (western Sudan), northern Uganda, Eastern DRC, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Nigeria and, to a lesser extent, post-war Sierra Leone and Liberia, well over half of the population in these countries or sub-national regions have more or less lived their entire lives under a highly dysfunctional culture of violence. The rebel war waged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda lasted for 20 year (1986 – 2006). The liberation war in South Sudan lasted for nearly 40 years (1955 – 1972 and 1983 – 2005) and the country has once more relapsed to armed conflict since December 2013. The civil war in Darfur has been fought since 2003. The civil war in Liberia lasted for 14 years (1989 – 2003). The war in Eastern DRC has gone on since 1996. The political histories of Chad, Burundi and CAR have been characterized by violent military coups and repeated relapse to armed conflict since independence. Similarly, since the end of the Biafra civil war in 1970, Nigeria's history has been marred by political instability and endemic structures of communal violence and militia insurgencies in different sub-national regions leading to a prolonged state of "no war, no peace" in the country (Obi, 2009:132). When violence becomes entrenched as a means of conducting and settling political affairs, it inadvertently robs off on the dominant culture of politics, leaving behind a convoluted culture in which resort to armed conflict becomes an acceptable framework for political action and behaviour (Jackson & Jackson, 1997).

Both within and in the aftermath of the conflict life span, the observed embedded culture of violence is what largely shapes the mentality, attitudes, temperament, behavioural patterns and idiosyncrasies of large sections of the populations. It is further solidified and perpetuated by informal agencies of political socialization such as the family, religious and cultural institutions, mass media, and political parties. The practical challenge of peace education in these circumstances is how to foremost deconstruct the endemic culture of violence and in its place construct and embed a culture of peace. It is apparent that peace education planners in most of these volatile countries do not appreciate the deep-rootedness of a virulent culture of violence among their populace, hence studying the phenomenon with a view to designing appropriate remedial interventions has been scarcely reflected in existing peace education curricula (Alimba, 2013; Omeje, 2013).

There are two major factors that have either in isolation or combination contributed to an aggravation of the culture of violence in many countries of SSA. The first is the impact of prolonged dictatorship, political repression and a culture of impunity in national politics. Virtually all the volatile conflict-prone and war-affected African states have been victims of prolonged dictatorship and political repression partly due to the weak institutionalisation of the state, including its key regulatory and governance apparatuses, tempered by its instrumentalization for promoting sectional interest and

prebendal accumulation (cf. Joseph ed., 1999; Bach 2011). Institutionalization, from a neo-Weberian standpoint, is a process by which the state organs, agencies and structures acquire value and stability over time through a political culture based, not on politics of patronage, but on constructive juridical or constitutional (rational-legal) norms (Matlosa, 2003:88). Weak or low state institutionalization in itself is not a sufficient condition for political violence. Weak institutionalization culminates in political violence when it is challenged or strongly contradicted by high level of countervailing political mobilisation and participation. From African political history, mobilization by sections of the disaffected elite or groups to challenge a lawless regime that takes undue advantage of weak institutionalization is often organized along ethno-communal lines, which further polarizes and fragments the state, provoking authoritarian crackdown from the top and heightening the prospect of rebel insurgency from below. As Africa's post-colonial history has amply demonstrated, the motives behind rebel insurgencies in most states marred by weak institutionalization, prolonged dictatorship and prebendal corruption has hardly risen above the lust for power, and the perquisites of political office. In the case of natural resource-rich states, the outbreak of armed conflict and rebel insurgencies have been particularly aggravated by the allure of shadow economies, including both "lootable" and "obstructible" conflict goods, notably diamond, oil, cobalt and timber (Collier, 2008; Ross, 2012). It is pertinent to point out that it is not only rebels and militias that exploit the problem of weak institutionalization by resorting to armed violence at the slightest opportunity. Both the governing elite and rebel forces are often mutually engaged in the "political instrumentalization of disorder" for self-serving aggrandizement (Chabal and Deloz, 1999). The evidence from the history of rebel and militia insurgencies against the prolonged dictatorships in Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, and CAR more or less lends credence to this point.

The second factor that has aggravated the culture of violence in many countries of SSA is the structural feature of micro-level communal conflicts within and between states, most of which have a protracted history that dates back to (pre-)colonial times. A large number of the micro-communal conflicts in SSA are linked to ambiguities surrounding the issue of land tenure in many states (notably issues about who has the right to own, use, and expropriate lands); the age-old tradition of cattle raiding and blood feuding between the youth of various affected tribes and communities (notably in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa), as well as the fact that many feuding ethnic communities straddle between national borders leading to cross-border mobilization of ethnic combatants and retreating/reinforcing of fighting forces. Other micro-communal conflict aggravating factors include the high incidence of cattle rustling and destruction of farm crops associated with pastoralists' herding of their livestock into sedentary farming communities; and the rapid proliferation of small arms and light weapons among hostile communities (Omeje & Hepner 2013). It suffices to provide a number of examples of longstanding, recurrent and seemingly intractable micro-communal

conflicts in SSA. In South Sudan, protracted communal conflicts over grazing land and the customary tradition of cattle-raiding have been incessantly waged between various ethnic communities - the Dinka and Lou Nuer in Uror County of Jonglei State; the Lou Nuer and Murle in Jonglei state; the Shilluk and Dinka in Upper Nile State; and the Mundari and Dinka Aliap. Similar traditional blood feuding occurs elsewhere in Kenya between the Turkana and Pokot; and between the pastoral Maasai and the sedentary Kikuyu/Kalenjin in Laikipia District of Rift Valley; as well as in Uganda between the Karimojong and Iteso. It is further discernible among the Borana, Gabra and Garri ethnic communities inhabiting the (semi-)arid lands of Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia; between the Karimojong in Uganda and the Pokot and Turkana in Kenya; between the Karimojong in Uganda and Toposa in Sudan; as well as between the resettled Hutu refugees and local Tutsi in North Kivu (Masisi and Ruzizi Plain) following the Rwandan genocide (Omeje, 2013). Some of these recurrent communal conflicts such as those among the ethnic communities in South Sudan, and to a lesser extent Kenya are aggravated by the fact that their cattle-raiding tradition is linked to the customary requirement of large number of cattle from a potential bridegroom as payment for bride price in traditional marriage ceremonies. Another aggravating factor is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region over the years as a consequence of the decades of state failure and major armed conflicts (Omeje, 2013).

Elsewhere in West Africa (notably Northern Nigeria, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and northern Cameroun), similar structures of micro-communal conflicts are associated with inter-community disputes over cultivable and grazing lands (herder versus farmer), as well contestation over which of the communities domiciled in a place form an indigenous community as opposed to a settler or non-indigenous community – classifications that have implications for the right of land ownership, use and transfer (see Omeje, 2007; ICG, 2012; *West Africa Insight,* 2014). The observed structural impediments cannot be over-emphasised. The vicious role of the post-colonial state sometimes compounds the challenge of redressing communal conflicts in Africa because as Fantu Cheru (2002:193) has aptly pointed out, the framework of colonial laws and institutions inherited by some states had been designed to exploit local divisions and not to overcome them. For peace education to make the desired impact of mitigating and eradicating armed conflicts in SSA, there is a need to recognise the regressive bottleneck posed by the ubiquitously embedded culture of violence in many parts of the region and to adopt a context-specific or conflict-sensitive strategy for their deconstruction.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

One of the core arguments of this paper is that the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of peace education in African universities is still preponderantly tied to its western origin and as such remains substantially divorced from African realism and conflict dynamics. Hence, the first policy challenge is clearly at the epistemological and pedagogical level – the need to review and re-orient training curricula to make them more conflict-sensitive, defined from an African standpoint. A more constructive and dynamic stakeholder-centred curriculum development and review model that is at the same time consultative, inclusive, participatory and integrative has to be embraced at the university level. Such a framework model should be designed to bring together key stakeholders in university peace education programmes to brainstorming workshops aimed at (re-)crafting training curricula in a way that they will enjoy African authenticity and conflict-sensitivity. Inclusive stakeholder workshops of this nature are not only necessary for developing new peace education programmes but also for reviewing existing programmes and ensuring both their content validity and context relevance on a periodic basis (e.g. five-yearly). Notable among the stakeholders to be invited in such brainstorming workshops include relevant lecturers and subject specialists, students, university administrators, government quality control and accreditation bodies, and representatives of the potential employment sectors (NGOs, public sector, regional and international organisations, etc). It is important that the stakeholder workshops are facilitated by a team of African subject specialists and preceded by stimulating seminar presentations (well-research papers) by the latter on various aspects of authentic African peace education such as the driving normative values and philosophical underpinnings; issues of curriculum content and coverage; pedagogical imperatives and learning outcomes; alternative methods of course assessment and programme review; applied learning and practical ways of linking higher education and work in the peace industry; as well as harmonizing local training with the imperatives of living in an inter-connected regional and global environment. This type of research-informed seminar will be invaluable in helping to set the context of deliberation in any curriculum development and review workshops. Depending on the logistical and administrative realities of the different universities and countries, the proposed workshops could be convened by individual universities or a network of universities working in partnership with other stakeholders. Interested international agencies (e.g. foreign universities, research centres and donors) could play a supportive role such as offering financial and logistical assistance but should be no means hijack or drive the philosophical and intellectual agenda. Having western stakeholders drive the philosophical and intellectual agendas of peace education curriculum development, and, to a lesser extent, their implementation and periodic review have been the strongest bane of most existing peace education

programmes in Africa, especially in the more fragile post-conflict states.

Beyond the foregoing philosophical and epistemological imperatives of an authentic African peace education, it is important to acknowledge the contribution of many foreign donors and technical partners in promoting peace research and peace education in Africa. A large number of the new peace education-oriented university training programmes and scholarship opportunities on the continent would not have been possible without the well-intentioned support of diverse external agencies. For understandable reasons, external interest and support for peace education in Africa have had a greater focus on volatile conflict-prone and post-conflict countries where the training programmes are apparently most needed. However, it suffices to recommend that in countries emerging from war or considered prone to war, donor-interests need to go beyond funding the development and mainstreaming of new university programmes in peace and conflict studies to include robust investments in need assessment for local educational and training priorities, programme assessment, as well as staff training and capacitation of higher education regulatory bodies. Ideally, it would have been much better that all aspects of the African educational sectors be completely funded by African governments without external development aid and donor support as a way of ensuring the much needed focus on national priorities and local ownership. However, the reality is that most African governments, especially the heavily aid-dependent post-conflict states do not have the necessary resources to fund their national development and educational programmes. As such, external stakeholder support remains vital but it is incumbent on the aid recipient governments to ensure that on no account should external stakeholders hijack and drive the philosophical and intellectual agendas of their national education, especially the education-for-peace. There is the need to systematically subject foreign donor support and development assistance in the educational sector to national development priorities. This requires strong and visionary political leadership. Rwanda and Ethiopia are two contemporary African states that have been relatively successful in regulating donor assistance in national education, ensuring that external support lines up with national priorities. The governments of the two countries have for many years demonstrated robust visionary leadership in and beyond their educational sectors regardless of the persisting controversies surrounding their democratic credentials which I have no intention to minimize.

Acknowledgement

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