

Nigerians Discuss Educating for Peace and Development

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Jos, Nigeria—“Rethinking Education as a Tool for Peace and Development” was the theme of a national summit that drew educators from across Nigeria.

The summit was organized by UPF-Nigeria in partnership with the New Era Educational and Charitable Support Foundation on September 26, 2015, at the Hill Station Hotel in the central Nigerian city of Jos.

UPF-Nigeria Secretary General Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko was the keynote speaker, with other speakers representing the Federal College of Education in the city of Gombe; the College of Education in the city of Zing in Taraba State; as well as the assistant director of education from the Ministry of Defense in the national capital, Abuja.

Participants from across the country examined critical issues affecting education in Nigeria and appealed to the government to work toward developing a new national policy on education.

The summit ended with a call for a new vision of education for Nigeria and for rethinking education to meet the challenges of the new millennium.

The participants also were encouraged to study the philosophy of education of UPF Founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon in order to appreciate the need for education and to understand how education can contribute to peace and development.

Keynote Address

Rethinking Education as a Tool for Peace and Development

By Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko, secretary general, Universal Peace Federation-Nigeria

Your Excellencies, distinguished participants, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you so much for the opportunity to address you at the opening of the National Summit on Education for Peace and Development with a focus on “rethinking education as a tool for peace and development.” As you are all aware, this summit is being held at a very special and providential moment in Nigeria and even around the world. A few months ago we witnessed the emergence of a new government in Nigeria with a promise of change as the agenda. As we gather here today, world leaders are meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to deliberate on issues of world peace and sustainable development as the United Nations moves toward its 70th anniversary in a few weeks. This call on us to rethink education as a tool for peace and development is therefore very important and most timely.

I am aware that a number of presentations will be made here today and we are going to benefit from them. However, I would like to share some insights on what I perceive should be our core rethinking focus. The quest for peace and development is an ages-long and universal desire. Every generation throughout human history has yearned for peace and development, but no generation has ever witnessed the desired

peace and development. Rather, our world has always faced violence and wars as well as destruction and misuse of resources in the environment. Our calling at this time is to reflect on best practices that can bring about peace and development, and, in the context of this summit, we need to look at how education can be a tool for such a realization, so that we can move forward from the era of good promises to the age of best practices.



Peace and development are universally desired by everyone without exception, but there is no one who has completely lived a peaceful life on earth as a fully developed person and we are yet to see a peaceful and fully developed family, community, state, nation and world. Peace and development share similar principles and are connected to each other. Peace is not just the absence of wars and violence but also the presence of harmony, love, cooperation, equity and justice, among others. Development is also a process of mutual cooperation and interdependence between a subject and an object partner. Peace and development take place on the foundation of cooperation, mutual understanding and interdependence and not by confrontation, division and destruction.

Education, on the other hand, is the process of dispelling human ignorance of the world and developing the inherent potential to utilize self, others and all things in the environment to achieve happiness in life. Education involves teaching, learning and practicing to become perfect, and ideally an educated person is supposed to be a peaceful and developed person who attains happiness in life.

Our gathering today is on rethinking education as a tool for peace and development. Throughout human history and in the history of our nation, we have always looked at education for different purposes. There was the era of education for dependence on colonial masters, which was followed by the era of education for self-reliance, and toward the end of the 20th century there was a popular slogan of “education for all.” Despite the focus on education for one thing or the other, we have not fulfilled the desire for peace and development. Therefore, the gathering today to focus on “education for peace and development” is very important. The era of education for dependence on colonial masters raised citizens who were dependent on the masters. The era of education for self-reliance has raised citizens who are reliant on self and ignorant of relationships with others. The present age is the era of interdependence, mutual cooperation and collective reliance. This is the era of global peace and sustainable development. Therefore, we need education for peace and development.

If we are to witness the emergence of the substantial realization of education for peace and development, we must grow in our thinking beyond the era of education for dependence, education for self-reliance and even education for all. We must rise to the realization of the essential ingredients for peace and development. There are certain fundamental principles for peace and development that we must consider in our new thinking on education.

Our new focus on education should be such that our educational institutions can produce citizens who are worthy in character, live as global citizens and develop and utilize their creative careers for the benefit of all. The new thinking in education should lead to the mobilization of a global alliance of individuals, families, institutions and organizations dedicated to building a world of lasting peace in which everyone

can live in freedom, harmony, cooperation and co-prosperity. Our education policy and system should raise consciousness in every citizen to:

Become a peaceful and global citizen living beyond the limitations of religions, races and nationality

Work toward establishing a peaceful family as well as promote peacebuilding activities and

Contribute one's personal and public resources to initiatives for peace.

If we must have a sustainable rethinking in education for peace and development, such new thoughts must be guided by some universal principles that transcend all the borders that have divided us against one another and created division for underdevelopment. I would like to introduce the core principles for peace and development which the Universal Peace Federation promotes as Principles for Peace.

Universal Principles for Peace and Development that education should serve as a tool for realization:



I. There Is One God Who Is the Creator of All and the Parent of Humankind

The way to rise above the pursuit of self-interest and achieve peace and development is to recognize our common humanity, given to us by our Creator. Just as a parent can intercede in the disputes of the children, it is the parental heart, originating from the Creator God, which can help us resolve the differences that exist between the world's nations, cultures and religions.

II. Human Beings Are Essentially Spiritual in Nature

Human beings long for truth, beauty and goodness. Life's deepest meaning and purpose can be found through the pursuit of these essential yet intangible attributes. Each person has an eternal spirit that transcends this physical life. Spiritual principles are to be practiced in this life so that we are prepared for the eternal world. Peace and development can be realized when we balance our spiritual consciousness with our material aspirations and acquisition.

III. The Family Is the "School of Love" and Cornerstone for World Peace and Sustainable Development

The family is the cornerstone of peace and the root of our character and culture. It is in the family that we experience love and interdependence. In the family the most basic personal and public virtues are learned. Understanding the family as the "school of love, peace and development" helps us to recognize that "family" is the most essential human institution. The foundation for a healthy family is a faithful, committed marriage. Education centered on the family is the key tool for peace and development.

IV. The Highest Standard for Human Relationships Is to "Live for the Sake of Others"

By practicing living for the sake of others, we become “other-centered” rather than “self-centered.” The essence of good character is true love expressed through unselfish actions. “Living for others” is a common principle of the world’s religions and the basis for peace and development. Education needs to promote the ideal of living for the sake of others instead of living for self. Therefore, education needs to empower human beings to attain self-realization, ethical consciousness and creative ability.



V. Interreligious and International Cooperation Is Essential to World Peace

Lasting peace and sustainable development cannot be achieved through political compromise alone, but require addressing the root causes of conflict. Transcending racial, religious and ethnic barriers is an imperative of our time. It is faith that can give people the power to forgive and the love to overcome even generations of hatred, resentment and violence. Therefore, interreligious and international education is essential for world peace and sustainable development.

Therefore, as we are gathered to rethink education as a tool for peace and development, I would like to make some suggestions for your consideration and deliberations.

There is the need for a new millennium national policy on education that should take into consideration the present era of global interdependence, which has come after the era of dependence and independence. We cannot bring about new results if we hold on to old ways, policies and programs. Our age calls on us to facilitate a new policy on education, which should help us achieve peace and development.

The new philosophy of education in our age that can bring about peace and development should be education for collective reliance and not the present education for self-reliance. We need to grow beyond reliance on self to reliance on others. Peace and development require us to live with others and for the sake of others. We therefore need a guiding philosophy that promotes collective reliance.

There is the need for a family-centered education system that makes education beyond schooling and which makes provision for education before birth and education throughout life and even beyond death. Until this moment, education has been centered on schools, but we do not have enough schools for all people to be educated in schools. We, however, have enough families for each person to be educated. If we therefore build a family-centered education system, we will be able to facilitate education for peace and development, since the family is the school of peace and development.

Education needs to integrate self-realization, ethical consciousness and creative ability inculcating character, citizenship and creativity and should lead to attitude, knowledge and skills through the heart, head and hand. In addition, education should harmonize religion and science and bring both into a common undertaking and with a focus on the utilization of technology for delivery of educational services to families, schools and community centers. The media need to be formalized as institutions of education and as tools for delivery of education. In view of the fact that many young people are using social media, we need to consider the possibilities of delivering education through the social media. I am hopeful that the other presentations will look into how to create classrooms on Facebook, etc.

Educational policies should include the family, school and community as well as parents, teachers and leaders. Also, there is the need for the harmonization of educational practices in the formal, non-formal and informal sectors. Educational programs should be offered in formal and non-formal settings.

In view of the increasing cases of religiously motivated violence around the world, it is important that we begin discussions on the issues of introducing interreligious education in school curricula as well as training interreligious educators to work with integrated science educators for peace and development.

One of the core conflict areas in the education sector is the issue of certification in education. There have been several conflicts between diplomas and degrees, confusion in duration of master's and PhD degree programs and the category of people who should be admitted in these programs. I believe that our new thinking in education should integrate the certification process and the outcomes. I would like to make the following proposals for your consideration and deliberation in this new thinking on education.

Birth certificates should be issued as a confirmation of completion of womb life education.

Childhood certificates (sons and daughters) should be offered to elementary learners.

Adolescent certificates (brothers/sisters, bachelor/spinster degree) should be issued to students in secondary schools, while the first degree should be a bachelor degree for male and a spinster degree for the females. Until now, both male and female graduates are awarded bachelor degrees as if unmarried women are not important. In this new thinking, our certification should recognize both men and women.

Couple degrees should be considered as replacements for the present master's degree, as it is logical to follow that bachelors/spinsters should graduate into the couples' realm.

Parent degrees should be considered as replacements for the present PhD, which should be for those who have completed the couple degree.

Grandparent degrees or king/queen degrees should become the replacement for the present title of professors.

The other issue I would like to recommend for your discussion is the issue of educational funding. We have been living in the era of promises of free education, which have become tools for corruption by public leaders. The cost of free education is so high that we need to have a rethink. I would like to again recommend the need for freedom of education as an alternative to the concept of free education. People need to pay for their education, and if they are unable to pay, they should have access to credit facilities which they can take and pay when they graduate. In this way, there can be sustainable accountability in education. Education is an investment, and any business in which investments are not taking the returns into consideration cannot stand the test of time. We rather need freedom of education, in which students can also decide on the teachers who teach them and leave those who are not good enough. We have arrived at a moment at which the situation of learners needs to be considered in deciding the facilitators in education. On the issue of freedom of education, I think that the time has come for us to renew tertiary education and create access for everyone who needs tertiary education. A serious strategy that we need to think about is the issue of freedom of tertiary education. It is time to harmonize tertiary educational programs. I would like to suggest the need for a Tertiary Education Graduation Examination Board (TEGEB) which should conduct graduation examinations for all tertiary educational institutions. In this way, educational institutions will become preparatory centers and will open the way for other investors to seek to invest in tertiary education and make it accessible and affordable.

I have serious concerns about disciplinary measures in our educational institutions. We have been so focused on punishment as a tool for change in behavior. The time has come for a serious consideration on how to focus on change of mind instead of punishment of the body. We need character education as a tool for effective career development.

I have no doubt that this summit provides us with a new opportunity to rethink education for the purpose of peace and development. We are living in such a special age, and it is time to change, time to grow and time for peace and development. I am hopeful that we shall use this moment to come up with contemporary thoughts in our education for peace and development. I am honored to have the opportunity to address you at the opening of this summit and to share some of the ideas I have learnt in my life from the teachings of Dr. Sun Myung Moon. I recommend to each of you to consider studying the Sun Myung Moon philosophy of education. You will surely understand the need for new thinking in education for peace and development. God bless you for your commitment to education. Thank you.