

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION ON PLIABLE PEACE BUILDING FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

¹Dr. Mary Mugwe, ²Snr Lecturer SOE MKU Thika

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Abstract: The history of education is long and traces back past events that are real bearing witness of what people compare with. Peace building initiatives have been used to settle differences between people, communities and nations around the world. The study purposed to understand the role education can and has played to counter violent extremism in Kenya. The study explores education as a facilitator, initiative builder and peace maker. Cultural , religious and ethnic factors have been studied and critique done for change. Security and education reforms have been found wanting to reinforce what education can do. The study concludes that education though essential require other parameters to succeed in peace building and therefore recommend that; national policies require reaffirmation; the global community to hasten campaign and advocacy on peace and individual nations including Kenya to address peace building initiatives among her communities.

Keywords: Extremism, Peace, Initiatives, Violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Horn of Africa, marked by diverse cultures, historical intricacies, and complex socio-political dynamics, grapples with the formidable challenge of violent extremism, threatening societies and destabilizing the region. Kenya, centrally located in the Horn of Africa, stands as an exemplar of the struggle against radical ideologies, evidenced by acts of terrorism and societal unrest. Having downplayed terrorism as a threat Militia from Somalia October 2011(Hellsten, 2016) claim to fight those who voted for the government that sent troops into their country.

The Kenyan context vividly illustrates the intricate relationship between education, peace-building, and the prevention of violent extremism. Mere, 2016 point that there is need for Kenya and Ukraine direct United States Institute of Peace (USIP) to come up with interventions against electoral and extremist violence. These two countries are endowed with education and still violent activities are experienced every five years largely instigated by the elite. These leaders run to the extreme end of their country using poor youth with a promise similar to militia of Somali. Kenyans agitate for good governance and the Somalis for good life after causing death of members of different religious faith. In such an event Kenya closes her Dadaab Camp in 2015 (USIP, 2016) in retaliation against death of 148 University students. War does not know peace, education or resilience and these countries have not learnt the effects these extremism.

The escalating frequency of terrorist attacks within Kenya underscores the urgency to examine and address the root causes of violent extremism, with education emerging as a potential linchpin in this endeavor.

Kenya's educational landscape, fundamental to national development, contends with challenges arising from historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, and ethnic tensions. The coexistence of diverse ethnic groups and regional imbalances in resource distribution create conditions conducive to radicalization. Understanding Kenya's unique socio-cultural fabric is imperative for crafting educational strategies that resonate with diverse communities, contributing meaningfully to peace and resilience.

Education as a Facilitator of Peace-Building:

Kenya's geographical proximity to Somalia, a hotspot for extremist activities, adds a layer of complexity to the study. The country's border with Somalia heightens security concerns, emphasizing the need for robust preventative measures. Regional collaboration and shared strategies become imperative in addressing the transnational nature of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa.

UNESCO(2024) reaffirm education as tool of shaping a peaceful future once the countrymen decree the power of coming together and reason. This a commitment adopted by all 194 UNESCO States at the 42nd Session of the general conference. Recognizing this pivotal role of education, the Kenyan government has implemented various initiatives to counter violent extremism and promote societal cohesion. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these initiatives remains a subject of inquiry, necessitating a comprehensive examination of their impact and identification of areas for improvement. As Kenya navigates the complexities of fostering peace and resilience through education, this study aspire to inform policymakers, educators, and practitioners on the need to make education a long term agenda for peace. By scrutinizing the Kenyan context within the broader Horn of Africa, this research endeavors to provide actionable insights that contribute to the development of targeted and culturally sensitive educational strategies, ultimately fostering a more secure and harmonious society

Hellesten (2016) reiterate that European Union, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and particularly the UK and the US in their 2016 Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), the United States Department of State and USAID affirmed they would “work with partner organizations and multilateral institutions to provide educational programs in key countries to address drivers of violent extremism. Education provided has not been fully sustainable owing to the seasonality of terrorism. The affected children fail to emulate any role model with education better than terrorism and declaring their extremes’ of life as war against education. Young Kenyan national have been implicated in terrorist attacks implying that recruitments and radicalization have been taking place in most of the communities in Kenya

Scholars have consistently emphasized the transformative potential of education in promoting peace and cohesion within diverse communities. Studies by UNESCO (2017) stipulate that education is not enough to transform the extremist but additional policy measures including long term plans addressing equity and fairness on education for all communities. Education that enriches cultures and religious affiliations can be acquired from schools but DE schooled persons require similar lessons that can be imparted to the youth while in or out of school environment.

In the Horn of Africa, characterized by historical complexities and ethnic diversity, education emerges as a potential bridge to overcome historical grievances and forge a shared national identity (UNESCO, 2017).

UNESCO in a journey towards the achievement of 2030 Agenda is tasked to coordinate education ideals towards inclusive and equitable quality education through sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017). Education though soft has power to change a country and this reveals that an education on extremism pauses a strong impact once these graduates engage the army in war. UNESCO and other agencies have used education to find lasting peace in many countries. Educating the youth during Post Election Violence in Kenya in 2007 and beyond has given positive results. The two political extremes fight each other with ideas and violence has gone down to few incidences despite brutality. Relevant education can be given to any discontent community after addressing the root cause and inclusively coming up with curriculum that addresses extremism, civil wars and rebellions.

Countering Violent Extremism through Educational Initiatives: Kenyan Context

The success of Competency based education (CBE) will be to make the youth satisfied with the education acquired in school and the quality of work they will perform. Investing in pliable peace building education initiatives inculcating social cultural diversities can be used as a tool to fight extremist beliefs and ideologies.

Educational programs designed to enhance critical thinking, media literacy, and dialogue has been identified as effective tools against the propagation of extremist ideologies. UN Report (2015) observes use of tertiary institutions as a prime mover towards change through Mobile technology right from primary school. These can be implemented through CBC curriculum but on the other hand there is need for local educators to occupy the radicalized age group with productive monitored programs.

Countering extremism through education has been relied on but acts of terror and recruitment have continually gained more impact. Thee training cycle for a radical is usually shorter and effective as compared to CBE. Gains are high too but respect for humanity is far away from the minds of the bandits. It is the high time that beneficiaries of extremism require in depth study to unearth their curriculum and ideologies.

Education in 'Madrasa' and Sunday schools has a great impact on the young adult as compared to classroom based learning. These two environments are good avenues of passing the desired education plausible to cultivate peace among communities. USIP, (2017) observe that Communities facing violent extremist threats need to develop resilience capacities and strategies to address terror. Provision of social and civic education has been used to change the older generation who bequeath the extremist ideals to their siblings. Gender approach (Ndung'u and Shadung, (2018) indicate that gender equality and women's empowerment may be key to the success of Community Terrorism (CT) responses and Post-Election Violence (PVE) programming. Education programs in Kenya, Ukraine, Singapore Southern America and many other countries of the world cannot succeed if vices passed generation to generation are not addressed and these calls for more research. Ndun'gu and Shadung, (2018) report that Practitioners should place greater emphasis on parenting in Post-Election Violence which captures need for parental education finds itself a solution to pillars of peace and an end to extremist behaviors.

Critique of Countering Violent Extremism through Educational Initiatives in Kenya

A comparative exploration of global perspectives reveals diverse approaches to leveraging education for preventing violent extremism. After cooling down terror governments embark on healing process and slowly pull away from the root causes of terror. Thus gives the victims time to wait and plan for the next cause of action. Topics learnt from skirmishes and the unfulfilled promises by leaders call for extended teaching in churches schools community meeting. However lessons learnt ends slowly until another event is repeated.

Teaching in institutions of learning offers an opportunity to convene good and bad people under one roof so it is important that teachers of all cadre be in serviced on issues that elicit terror and extremism. Education has not failed but its' impact has not been fully felt in the Horn of Africa and other regions in Kenya as well as Somalia.

Croketi(2012) citing Anaan 2001 point that *"More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, is why we have the United Nations."* Under whatever circumstance communities always requires each other. Members coexist and share same education, governance and their problems Peace is therefore a journey with learning experiences. International organizations need to foster peace and stability well imparted through education. These insights contribute to a nuanced understanding of best practices applicable to the Horn of Africa, including Kenya.

In summary, the Horn of Africa presents a distinct context for understanding and combating violent extremism. Rooted in historical grievances, political instability, and ethnic tensions, the region requires tailored educational approaches that address these specific challenges. By exploring the interplay between education, peace-building, and the prevention of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa, this literature review sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, which will delve into theoretical frameworks and methodologies to further investigate the role of education in fostering resilience and countering radicalization in this complex regional context.

Cultural Relevance and Appropriateness:

Education that is culturally sensitive and relevant is more likely to resonate with communities, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing its effectiveness in countering violent extremism. Recognizing the importance of context-specific interventions, the theoretical framework includes a dimension focusing on Cultural Relevance and Appropriateness. This aspect emphasizes the need to consider the unique socio-cultural dynamics of the Horn of Africa, acknowledging the diversity within Kenya.

Inclusive Approaches to Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue

Given the religious and ethnic diversity in the Horn of Africa, incorporating Inclusive Approaches to Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue is vital (Menkhaus, 2019). Education programs should facilitate constructive conversations that promote understanding, tolerance, and cooperation among different religious and ethnic groups (Abu-Nimer, 2002). In doing so, these approaches contribute to the dismantling of stereotypes and prejudices that may fuel violent extremism.

Transnational Security Framework:

The Transnational Security Framework is incorporated to account for the regional dynamics of violent extremism, particularly in the Horn of Africa (Buzan, Waeber, & de Wilde, 1998). This framework considers the interconnected nature of security threats across borders. Given the proximity of Kenya to regions with heightened extremist activities, it guides the exploration of educational strategies that address the transnational dimensions of violent extremism.

2. CONCLUSION

The perceptions of existing educational initiatives aimed at countering violent extremism. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions will be analyzed to identify recurring themes, challenges, and successes associated with these initiatives. The findings aim to uncover insights into the effectiveness of current programs.

Participants' perspectives on how educational strategies contribute to fostering peace, resilience, and mitigating root causes of violent extremism have been considered in the study in many flora and still gaps emerge on countering extremism. Education is vital for ages in the affected areas and those that are prone.

Global Perspectives and Best Practices:

Building on the theoretical framework, this section explores participants' awareness of and perspectives on global best practices in leveraging education to prevent violent extremism. Qualitative data will be used to assess the transferability of international approaches to the Horn of Africa, providing insights into potential adaptations for the Kenyan context. Balance between security imperatives and human rights considerations have left many vulnerable communities unanswered as to source of lasting peace due to recurring extremism in Kenya.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Contributions to Existing Knowledge:

Reflecting on the contributions made by the study to the existing body of knowledge, this section the role of education in countering violent extremism is more than necessary. It underscores the significance of contextual insights derived from the Horn of Africa, particularly Kenya.

Practical Implications:

Development and refinement of educational initiatives should aim at countering violent extremism within the country and in the Horn of Africa, with specific applicability to the Kenyan context.

Policy Recommendations:

The goal is to provide policymakers with actionable insights for the formulation and adaptation of effective policies in education that inculcate peace building.

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