Peace Education for Inter-ethnic and Inter-cultural Solidarity in Uganda: A Curriculum Agenda

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Introduction

Uganda has a history chequered with inter-ethnic and inter-cultural tensions and conflicts, and these must have had a bearing on the violent conflicts that have been a common feature in the country. Ijuka (1989) establishes that such inter-ethnic and inter-cultural conflicts manifest as prejudices, stereotypes and other subtle or covert forms of marginalization and hatred.[27] Ijuka's research focused mainly on the public service but appears to mirror some other deep seated inter-ethnic "othering," stereotypes and prejudices that obtain in the wider political, social and economic realms. Aspects of these are well covered in Barongo's (1989) as well as in Pinycwa's (1989) articles.

The inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts in Uganda as will be exemplified are not in line with the need to educate for dialogue among civilizations whose importance was recognized way back in 1998, followed by the UN's proclamation of the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Some of the highlights in the proclamation include the need for following:

> *Actively promote a culture of peace – respect for one another – regardless of belief, culture, language, and not fearing or repressing differences within or between societies but cherishing them as a precious asset of humanity; Encourage openness to the positive side of globalization… Globalization is not only an economic, financial and technological process; it constitutes a human challenge that invites us to embrace the interdependence of humankind and its rich cultural diversity* (Toh, 2008, 2).

In the proclamation, it was also recognized that education systems need reforms and the role of religions was recognized thus:

> *Educational systems need to guide children and youth to understand and respect cultural and faith diversity, and to promote peace in their societies and world; Religion is an increasingly important dimension of many societies, a significant source of values for individuals, and can play a critical role in promoting an appreciation of other cultures, religions, and ways of life* (Toh, 2008, 2).

This article is therefore anchored on proposing some aspects of educational reforms that can lead to the promotion of dialogue among civilizations with the hope that such reforms once realized will be holistic as to lead to inter-cultural solidarity within and beyond Uganda.

Uganda has over 50 tribes or ethnic groups. The tribes of Uganda are distinct groups of people bound together by customs, beliefs, language, tradition and practices. This article attempts to exemplify the existence of inter-ethnic or inter-cultural conflicts in Uganda and also looks at whether or not an educational intervention or interfaith intervention would help in transforming these conflicts and if the former intervention is required what kind of curriculum would be appropriate at what levels.

Inter-ethnic Conflicts in Uganda

This section will attempt to highlight some research based views concerning inter-ethnic conflicts in Uganda. In Ijuka (1989, pp. 167) inter-tribal views were sought in regard to inter-ethnic conflicts within the public service. The findings reveal mainly negative views concerning six different tribes as highlighted below[28]:

Tribe A
"Very hypocritical. Very proud. Very submissive."
"Give A's (sic) money and they will be okay."

"Very elusive. Very nice on the surface but inwardly very malicious." "Very good diplomats because diplomats are liars. Will stay with you and then stab you on the back."

Tribe B
"Arrogant as A's (sic). They look at others as inferior creatures."
"Very arrogant. They don't believe that other ethnic groups are also people."

Tribe C
"Outright rude and violent."
"Rude; have little respect for law, order, discipline."
"Very aggressive, uncultured, undisciplined, ambitious."

Tribe D
"Conmen and gamblers",
"More opportunistic than arrogant";
"Very opportunistic. Like chameleons; they will take on the colour of the political party in power at the time; will sing to the tune of any ruler, however cacophonous."

Tribe E
"What the master says – so do I say."
"Submissive. Always following the existing (political) order as though blown by the wind."
"Non-alligned in political matters."

Tribe F
"Crude, rough, highly united, industrious, no nonsense."
"Generally hot tempered, aggressive but at the same time very good people to associate with due to their openmindedness."
"…strong, hard-working but like fighting and drinking."

These views exemplify that the tribes in Uganda generally look at one another negatively and the sentiments have the potential to translate and often do translate into inter-ethnic tensions, suspicion, and disharmony or open conflicts.

The colonialists also created other divisive labels; the North-South Divide in Uganda with peoples of the former being

classified further as Nilotics, Nilo-Hamites or Sudanic and the latter as Bantu. The latter were recognized as more politically organized and civilized (Pinycwa, 1989). These classifications became a ground for political, social as well as economic marginalization of the North and favouritism of the South. The North, then comprising Acholi, Karamoja, Lango and West Nile basically became cheap labour reservoir for the "more agriculturally productive" south and also for recruitment of soldiers; a job taken as inferior by the Southerners.

Ironically, the top political leadership of the 1960s, 1970s and to some extent 1980s were taken by the "Northerners" with presidents Apollo Milton Obote and his former army commander, Idi Amin sharing 21 years between them from independence in 1962 to 1985. These were not peaceful periods for these leaders, since sentiments like "we are tired of Northerners" began cropping up by the Southerners who felt their formerly organized kingdoms of Buganda, Busoga, Toro and Bunyoro were desecrated (Pinycwa, 1989; Barongo, 1989).

Obote lost power to Amin in 1971. Amin's rule exposed the fallacy of assuming that "Northerners" is a coherent group. On ascending to power, Amin, a Kakwa from West Nile, killed scores of Obote's tribe and a related Acholi tribe, thinking they were a threat to his rule and recruited mainly his fellow West Nilers into the army. A combined force of Ugandan exiles and Tanzanian forces ousted Amin in 1979 leading to revenge killing against the West Nile tribes. A disputed general election in 1980 was to see Obote regain his presidential seat.

A Southerner, Yoweri Museveni decided to challenge the "rigged" election by waging a successful guerilla war that elevated him to the presidential seat in 1986. Museveni played on the regional sentiments, "We are tired of Northerners" (Barongo, 1989). This marked a period of perceived Southerners or Bantu dominance, which continues to the present. Meanwhile prior to Museveni's ascendancy to power, a rift had also developed between the erstwhile close Acholi and Langi tribe. The army Commander, General Tito Okello and his ally, Bazilio Olara Okello, both Acholi, deposed Obote a Langi in 1985 culminating in killing and looting in Lango by a predominantly Acholi army.

The election patterns today indicate that the "Bantu government" is not popular to the majority of "Northerners." Not surprisingly, the armed insurrections against the Museveni regime since 1986 are predominantly by Northerners.

The War in Northern Uganda and Inter-ethnic Conflicts
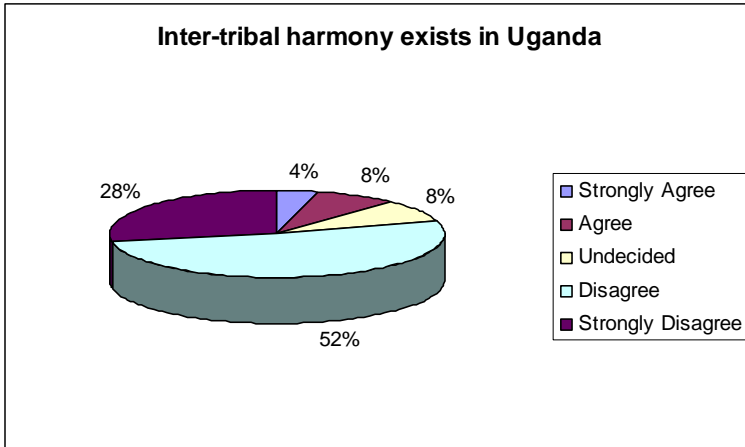
The war in Northern Uganda has also contributed to fuelling inter-ethnic conflicts. The longest of this war has been that of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that is composed predominantly of the Acholi tribe. The LRA has, however, wreaked havoc in most of Northern Uganda causing tension and sometimes open hostility against the Acholi tribe with whom they are associated.

In Langole research (2007. pp. 33)[29] respondents' opinions were sought on issues of relationship amongst different tribes of Uganda both within and outside Gulu University; their freedom of expression and identities. Opinions were also sought on whether the University education system enhances cultural respect, identities, solidarity.
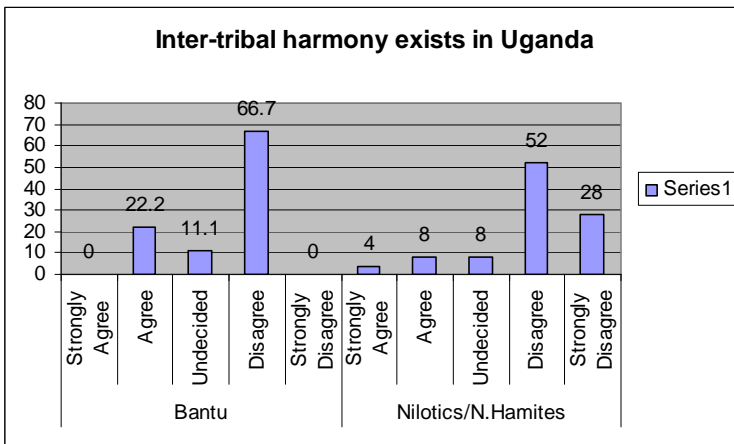
Up to 80 percent of the respondents thought there is disharmony amongst the different tribes of Uganda and 44 percent thought inter/multi-cultural education is not integrated in learning at the University. Meanwhile 52 percent thought students' politics at the University is not free of tribal sentiments.

Relationships between neighbouring tribes were found to be quite sour too, with 76 percent of respondents thinking there is no harmony between the Acholi and Langi tribes; 64 percent thought such harmony did not exist between the Acholi and Bantu tribes while 40 percent had the same opinion about relationship between the Acholi and Lugbara tribes. Up to 40 percent of the respondents also thought inter-clan conflicts are significant in the Internally Displaced People's Camps (IDPs) hence the units of fragmentation are intra-ethnic or intra-tribe as well.

Chart I:
Statement: There is harmony between different tribes of Uganda

Inter-tribal harmony exists in Uganda

■	Strongly Agree
■	Agree
□	Undecided
□	Disagree
■	Strongly Disagree

4%   8%   8%   28%   52%

Graph I:

Inter-tribal harmony exists in Uganda

Bantu: Strongly Agree 0, Agree 22.2, Undecided 11.1, Disagree 66.7, Strongly Disagree 0

Nilotics/N.Hamites: Strongly Agree 4, Agree 8, Undecided 8, Disagree 52, Strongly Disagree 28

■ Series1

Proportionately more Nilotics and Nilo Hamites than the Bantu tribes do not think inter-tribal harmony prevails in Uganda. (Source: Langole S. (2007). Project Development Report. UPEACE, Costa Rica).

*Formal and Informal Education
and Inter-ethnic/Intercultural Conflicts*

The History of Uganda is part of the curriculum in the formal education in the country. Hence a person who attends history class up to Senior 4 would not miss the Buganda Crisis of 1966, sometimes also called the Storming of Lubiri (The Buganda Seat) by Milton Obote's forces headed by Idi Amin, then Obote's army commander. This could later be interpreted as an affront by Northerners against Southerners that forced a whole Kabaka (King) into exile.

At the informal sector, songs can send a powerful message. Of the 1966 Buganda Crisis, the Acholi, generally good music composers, coined a very sarcastic song that can be loosely translated thus:

> *The banana plantation got abruptly burnt*
> *Kabaka you abandoned the plantation to fire*
> *Though you may abuse Obote in the English language*
> *You abandoned your banana*
> *Though you abuse Obote*
> *You abandoned your plantation*
> *The plantation got burnt abruptly*
> *Kabaka you abandoned the plantation*

Banana is a staple food of the Baganda and here the Acholi coined a mockery song about the desecration of a Kingdom, the unseating of a King and the burning of a staple food. It is difficult to gauge the effect of this song but definitely it sends a bad message to the Baganda. All these besides sentiments like *"ka Luloka odonyo i ker wa bitingo matafali ki wi wa me aa ki Gulu wa Kampala"* meaning should people from the other side of the river Nile (*Luloka*) come to power, they will force us to carry bricks on our head from Gulu to Kampala.

No wonder in the first few years after Museveni came to power, there were derogatory songs about *Anyanya*. *Anyanya* was a nomenclature used for Southern Sudanese rebels in the 1970s and therefore the label as applied to Northern Ugandans had the connotation about their being foreigners.

In Geography, Northern Uganda was referred to as the "Dry North" or semi arid, yet ironically some parts of Northern Uganda register very high rainfall, have lush vegetation growth and possess great agricultural potential with flat terrain allowing mechanization.

The population in the North is also sparse as compared to the South, a fact that the formal education system does not overlook and so with 21 years of Northerners rule, questions began to be posed, "How can the minority (Northerners) rule the majority (Bantu Southerners), and for that long?"

The Thematic Curriculum introduced in 2007 for Primary 1 and 2 is, however, a good one emphasizing unity with the aim stated thus: "To develop and cherish the cultural, moral and spiritual values of life and appreciate the richness that lies in our varied and diverse cultures and values." In the curriculum preamble, the aim of education is stated as: "To promote understanding and appreciation of the value of national unity, patriotism and cultural heritage, with due consideration to international relations and beneficial interdependence" (NCDC, 2007: pp 6). Hence if these can be translated into practice then they would facilitate dialogue among civilizations.

Mechanisms to Realize Inter-ethnic Solidarity

In Ijuka (1989) different ways of dealing with ethnic conflicts are recommended by public servants with various frequencies. Out of 55 suggestions, "educational reforms and efforts" top the list with 16 of the 55 suggestions followed by "reduction of political conflict outside the public service" (10 frequencies). Other suggestions include "good, honest, sensible and selfless political leadership" (4) and inter-marriages (2).

Ijuka also recommends among others, such measures as politicization, posting people to work in areas other than where they originate, seminars and training, equitable distribution of resources and jobs, and strengthening the statutory appointing bodies.

Uganda has been having some civic education and religious education that should promote inter-ethnic and inter-cultural

solidarity. While civic education is now largely non-formal especially in preparation of voters prior to elections, Religious Education (RE) still spans from primary education level to Secondary levels as electives. One of the RE pamphlets for Ordinary Level contains themes such as "Order and Freedom in Society" with subthemes on "Justice in Society," "Service in Society," and "Loyalty in Society." There is also an emphasis on Christians as bridge builders.

> *Christians should work tirelessly for unity. All forms of divisions based on religion, tribe or race are abnormal in Christianity. Christians have a duty of stopping such divisions… Christians should not develop a hostile attitude towards other religions. Efforts towards reconciliation with other members of religions should always go on hence acting as bridge builders (Nsamba, 1996 pp. 245-246).*

The Thematic Curriculum includes interesting themes of RE that can promote inter-ethnic and inter-cultural solidarity. The Christian Religious Education (CRE) section carries the theme: "Christians Living Together in God's Family" where pupils are expected to understand and appreciate the importance of living together in the home and the community, the nature and value of being a member of God's family, appreciate God's creation and the position of human beings in creation. Competencies such as respect and care for neighbours, environmental conservation practices, community service, identification of people's needs and the need to extend a helping hand to others and so forth are expected of the pupils. The pupils are also expected to embrace values such as love, forgiveness, loyalty, joy, humility, appreciation, happiness, peacefulness, togetherness, sharing, cooperation, belonging, hope, trust, patience, kindness, endurance etc. Pupils are further expected to, amongst others, acquire life skills such as empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, communication, and interpersonal relationship. Similar values, life skills and competencies that pupils are expected to embrace are contained in the Islamic Religious Education section (NCDC, 2007 pp. 52-69).

The non-formal Civic Education programme would be useful in educating for dialogue amongst civilizations since it has themes ranging from nationhood, poverty eradication, democracy, governance and human rights, non-violent culture, unity and tolerance (Kimbowa, 2006).

However, the strands of peace education above seem to lack holism, are generally optional, not made attractive enough and not diffused at all levels as to engender a philosophy of peaceful living. For RE at the higher levels of education, the learning strategy is examination-based using teacher to student pedagogy with limited options of methodologies and not enough efforts is made to take education to the villages or the non-formal sector. For civic education, it is periodic, normally conducted prior to major elections, it is largely donor driven and suffers funding problems. Hence new innovations are needed towards educating for dialogue amongst civilizations.

Towards a Philosophy and Curriculum for
Inter-ethnic and Inter-cultural Solidarity

Uganda seems to lack a philosophy, curriculum and learning strategies that could engender inter-ethnic and inter-cultural solidarity. A fresh breath to the whole issue, however, seems to lie in the young Thematic Curriculum as will be exemplified later. To get a realistic philosophy of life and curriculum that addresses inter-cultural and inter-ethnic solidarity requires an exploration of some holistic forms of peace education and Toh and Cawagas (2004) six themes are definitely useful. These six themes are:

- Dismantling the culture of war and violence
- Living with justice and compassion
- Building cultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity
- Promotion of human rights and responsibilities
- Living in harmony with the Earth
- Cultivating inner peace

There are already some efforts towards embracing these holistic tenets in Uganda. In my proposed curriculum for a

Bachelor of Community and Peace Education at Gulu University (Langole, 2007, pp. 63), the programme goals are stated as: "…to try to change the community values, attitudes and beliefs towards:

- Culture of peace and non-violence
- Living with justice and compassion
- Inter-cultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity
- Promotion of human rights and responsibilities
- Sustainable living
- Inculcation of inner/personal peace"

Courses were therefore proposed in line with the above themes in mind besides what the community expressed during the process of needs assessment. To build inter-cultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity also calls for a change in values, attitudes and beliefs against resorting to violence. It calls for peaceful negotiation, mediation and an understanding of diversities and differences that can then help to resolve conflicts. In other words, it calls for averting the culture of war and violence. Inter-cultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity also calls for compassion and justice. It recognizes the fact that we are all humans with needs that may not all be fulfilled and that we may have solutions to fulfilling these needs and if so, our human solidarity would be enhanced if we extend that helping hand. These needs may also be rights issues. They may be rights to economic wellbeing, rights to participation in decision making, rights to freedoms and dignity, and others. Inter-cultural or inter-ethnic solidarity also requires that we should feel responsible in upholding the rights, dignity and freedoms of others including the marginalized.

As humans, we share with all other species the responsibility of caring for the Earth that provides us with livelihoods in one way or the other. This therefore calls for a feeling of global citizenship, wise and possibly equitable use of the Earth's resources and a culture of their protection and conservation with a mind for future use and the needs of future generations. It calls for sharing and avoidance of greed or consumerism mentality at

the expense of others. All these are issues about peace but peace, they say, begins in the minds of individuals. It is difficult to extend peace if we are not at peace with ourselves. Hence, there is need to embrace personal peace that can radiate to others. We can get this inner equilibrium and tranquility through meditation, contemplation and connecting to our spirituality and to fellow humans. Hence all the six themes are interconnected.

A philosophy of life and curriculum that embraces all these themes would therefore call for courses around these themes, as well as peaceful strategies to implement such a curriculum.

Hence the proposed 3-year Bachelor of Community and Peace Education is endowed with courses such as: Democracy and Governance, Human Rights Education, Gender Dimensions in Armed Conflict, Religions and Faiths: Implications to Peace and Conflict, Cultures and Identity Issues in Peace and Conflict, Migration, Refugees and Internal Displacement. Other courses include: Community Mobilization and Advocacy, Globalization, Conflict and Peace, The Environment, Natural Resources, Peace and Security, and Sustainable Development Education. These courses, among others, try to capture all the six themes.

Curricula that instill a philosophy of unity in diversity amongst the citizenry are required but these also require a lot of political goodwill and platform, possibly involving the top leader of the country himself/herself. With that, it would be simpler to put up structures at the lower levels that can transmit and popularize such a philosophy. Peace education at all levels; from the higher institutions of learning, teacher training institutions to secondary, primary and even at pre-primary levels should be the way to go.

The young Thematic Curriculum is definitely a step in the right direction if only it could be well implemented. The curriculum is to be implemented in cycles. Cycle 1 covers Primary 1-3 and is to be implemented in the learners' vernacular except in areas where there is no predominant or local area language. The curriculum is based on selected themes. For P2, the themes include: Our School and Neighbourhood, Our Home and Community, Our Environment, Peace and Security and Child Protection. Others are Recreation, Festivals and Holidays and Christians Living Together in God's Family for Christians.

Themes for Islamic Religious Education include Reading from the Quran, Tawhiid (Faith), Moral and Spiritual Teaching, History of Islam and Fiqh (Practices) amongst others.

The curriculum is meant to be "relevant to children reflecting their everyday interests and activities…" and the expected outcomes amongst others are appreciation of culture and role played in the community (NCDC, 2007. pp. 7).

Cycle 2 for P4 and Cycle 3 for P5-P7, however, tend to depart from the peace pedagogy and revert to the traditional teacher to student centred examination based methodology.

The Pedagogy/Learning Strategies

The Ugandan P1 and P2 Thematic Curriculum is rich in proposed pedagogy with a child centred approach to learning and a progressive learner assessment as opposed to the examination based one. The content, concept and skills of subjects are rearranged within themes that are familiar to young children's experiences and the teaching methodology emphasizes child's activities rather than the teacher's. This is meant to encourage participation and performance of all children. The suggested activities are intended to be enjoyable and include songs, games, acting, drawing, story telling, group or pair work etc. (NCDC, 2007 pp. 9).

Learner assessment is done by cumulatively observing and listening to children, looking at their exercise books, marking their handwriting and looking at the class work they produce with the aid of simple checklists. No separate assessment tests or examinations are set (NCDC, 2007. pp. 12).

The idea of progressive assessment is good. There had been a lot of reliance on snapshot examinations and tests based on the learners' ability to cram and regurgitate what the teacher has "imparted" mainly through lecture or chalk and talk method. Teachers in Uganda are generally taken as fountains of knowledge and the learners are mere recipients.

To replace this "banking" approach, the learning strategies are in line with what is recommended by peace education scholars. For example, Turay recommends a mix of lectures,

drama, panel discussions, debates, socio-drama, role plays, study grouping, story telling, use of proverbs, codes and recreation methods like music, singing, dancing and games as peace education pedagogy (Turay, Ed., 2004). Others are snowball fights, the great wind blows, cat and mouse, dueling images that are all meant to be fun (Hawkins, 2006). Similar pedagogy is recommended by Toh (2004).

This author also strongly recommends the use of field visits, students exchange and various cultural activities such as simulation of rituals and the use of skilled, talented and resourceful "uneducated" people who could be invited as guest speakers. A local poet who sings his poetry on his/her harp could be invited to share the insights of his/her poems with a class. There are people in the community albeit unschooled who are teachers in their own ways and should be given the opportunity to share their skills, values and knowledge even in the formal educational settings. Uganda is also rich with the cultural heritage of storytelling. These can be very useful learning methodology.

Other Peace Education Initiatives in Uganda

Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) has a peace education component in their programme besides carrying out inter-tribal mediation. However, as the name suggests, there is emphasis on Acholi region and the multi-faith organization comprises the Orthodox, Catholics, Anglican and Muslim faiths only (ARLPI, 2004). This leaves out the Adventists and the mushrooming Pentecostal and Baptist churches as well as the traditionalists who are as well very influential. These limitations are, however, understandable given the fact that this body was quite a reactive one to the Northern Uganda conflict whose main field was the Acholi region and also that the Pentecostal, Adventists, Baptists are break away from the mainstream churches and appear guarded against associating with them. Meanwhile some of the traditionalists' belief systems are world's apart from the mainstream religious values. Nevertheless, the

work and ideas from ARLPI would be important in the process
of developing a peace education curriculum for Uganda.

Bishop Nelson Onono Onweng of Northern Uganda Diocese
also initiated a peace education programme through an NGO,
Jamii ya Kupatakanisa (Fellowship of Reconciliation) but the
programme mainly benefits a small group of students at Gulu
Vocational Community Centre for Orphaned Children
(UNESCO, 2002).

A project named Revitalization of Education Participation
and Learning in Conflict Areas (REPLICA) also has some
strands of peace education benefiting some few schools in
Northern Uganda but this too is donor driven and might have
phased out by the time of writing this article (BEPS, 2006).
Suffice to say that a comprehensive peace education programme
with government backing is needed to engender dialogue among
civilizations.

Generational Issues

Mahatma Ghandi once said if you want to spread the culture of
peace, start with the children. Accordingly, it is easier to
socialise children in peace values than to socialize adults. This is
not to say that adults should not be included in the peace
education project. However, children should be specially
involved as they are yet the "uncorrupted" future generations
whose belief systems and values can more easily be turned
around towards the culture of peace and non-violence. The youth
too should be specially included as they embody a lot of energy
and potential that can be channeled into the right paths. Suffice to
say that despite these emphases, the entire society or community
needs peace and they should be reached through peace education
approaches including inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue,
respect, understanding and solidarity.

Summary and Conclusions

This article highlights some literature supporting the view that
inter-ethnic or inter-cultural conflicts are a feature in Ugandan
society and that this antagonizes the spirit of initiating dialogue

among civilizations. It notes that formal and informal education in Uganda have not been very useful in promoting the spirit of dialogue among civilizations notwithstanding that the 2-year old Thematic Curricula are steps in the right direction.

It also notes the need for developing a holistic curriculum of peace education embracing the six tenets of peace given, their interrelatedness and ability to cross-fertilize. It recommends better teaching-learning strategies and learner assessment techniques. It also notes the limitations of the current peace education initiatives and recommends a special focus on children and youth, given their potentials for learning and acting for peace. It does not, however water down the need to involve a broad section of the community given the fact that values of inter-ethnic and intercultural solidarity need to be widely diffused in Ugandan society, given its present social and cultural complexity.

It can be concluded that there is need for peace education in Uganda in its holistic form and at all levels, covering the six themes of Toh (2004) as identified above. This, however, requires the goodwill and blessing of the political leadership and other educational stakeholders. There is therefore a need for lobbying. Appropriately developed curricula that demonstrate the interconnectedness of the micro-meso-macro dynamics as a panacea for local, national, regional and global peace are very important tools to start with.

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[27] Extract of the research report is contained in an article, "Ethnic Conflict within the Public Service" in Rupesinge K. (1989). *Conflict Resolution in Uganda*. Oslo. International Peace Research Institute.

[28] The research report targeted ethnic conflict in Uganda Public Service. Eleven senior officers were interviewed and of 141 questionnaires administered across the spectrum of public servants ranging from senior personnel to junior and support staff, 56 were returned. Different ethnic groups were targeted.

[29] This research covered 25 respondents comprising staff and students of Gulu University. They were drawn from different ranks/levels and ethnic groups.

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