



Research Paper

Infusing Military Folklore into NCE Literature Curriculum for Peace Education

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Abstract

Peace education has become an urgent pedagogical concern in pluralistic and post-conflict societies such as Nigeria. While literature education has long been recognized as a vehicle for moral and civic development, the potential of military folklore—including soldiers' songs, chants, narratives, and oral testimonies—remains largely unexplored within teacher education curricula. This theoretical paper argues for the infusion of Nigerian and global military folklore into the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) Literature curriculum as a culturally responsive strategy for peace education. Drawing on peace education theory, folklore studies, and literary pedagogy, the paper demonstrates how military folklore can be used to cultivate key peace competencies such as empathy, tolerance, civic responsibility, and conflict resolution skills among pre-service teachers. The paper proposes curriculum integration strategies across literature genres and situates military folklore as a powerful narrative resource for humanizing conflict and fostering reflective dialogue. The study concludes that incorporating military folklore into literature teaching can strengthen peace-oriented citizenship education and enhance the transformative role of teacher education in Nigeria.

Keywords: military folklore, peace education, literature curriculum, NCE, teacher education

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I. Introduction

Peace education seeks to develop values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable individuals and societies to prevent violence and resolve conflict through nonviolent means (Harris & Morrison, 2013). In Nigeria, where ethno-religious tensions, insurgency, and communal conflicts persist, education has been identified as a critical instrument for promoting peaceful coexistence and democratic culture (Odok, 2023). Teacher education, in particular, plays a strategic role because teachers function as mediators of values and social norms within schools and communities. The Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) curriculum in Literature emphasizes literary appreciation, linguistic competence, and cultural awareness through the study of prose, poetry, drama, and oral traditions (National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE], 2012). However, the curriculum gives limited attention to structured peace education content or conflict-sensitive narratives. This gap presents an opportunity to reimagine literature education as a platform for peacebuilding. Military folklore—defined as the informal cultural expressions of soldiers such as songs, chants, jokes, proverbs, and personal narratives—constitutes a rich but underutilized body of literature. These forms often express soldiers' lived experiences of war, suffering, camaraderie, fear, and hope, making them powerful tools for exploring the human consequences of violence (Dundes, 2007). This paper argues that integrating military folklore into the NCE Literature curriculum can enhance peace education by fostering empathy, critical reflection, and civic responsibility among pre-service teachers.

II. Literature Review

Peace Education and Curriculum

Peace education extends beyond the absence of war to include social justice, tolerance, dialogue, and democratic participation (Galtung, 1996). Scholars argue that peace education should address both structural and cultural violence while equipping learners with conflict resolution skills (Harris & Morrison, 2013). UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that peace education must be embedded within formal curricula to promote sustainable peace

and global citizenship. In Nigeria, peace education initiatives have been largely policy-driven, with limited integration into teacher education programs (Odok, 2023). Studies indicate that curricula that incorporate culturally relevant narratives are more effective in shaping attitudes toward peace and coexistence (Salomon, 2011).

Folklore as Pedagogical Resource

Folklore has long served as a medium for transmitting communal values, moral lessons, and social norms across generations (Bascom, 1965). In educational contexts, folklore enhances cultural identity, critical thinking, and ethical reasoning (Dorson, 1972). Recent studies demonstrate that folklore-based pedagogy promotes empathy and social cohesion, particularly when aligned with learners' cultural realities (Andriani & Andra, 2025). The NCE Literature curriculum already incorporates indigenous oral traditions such as folktales, myths, proverbs, and praise poetry (NCCE, 2012). However, war-related folklore and narratives of conflict remain marginal, despite their relevance to peace education.

Military Folklore and Humanizing Conflict

Military folklore emerges from the lived experiences of soldiers and often reflects the psychological and emotional dimensions of war (Dundes, 2007). Soldier songs and chants, for example, frequently parody authority, express longing for home, and critique the brutality of conflict (Fish, 2006). Globally, songs such as *Lili Marleen* became shared cultural artifacts across opposing armies during World War II, underscoring common humanity amidst war (Browne, 2009). By presenting war from the perspective of ordinary soldiers, military folklore challenges glorified narratives of violence and invites reflection on the costs of conflict. This humanizing potential makes military folklore particularly suitable for peace education.

III. Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored in constructivist learning theory and narrative peace pedagogy. Constructivism posits that learners actively construct meaning through engagement with cultural texts and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Military folklore, as a narrative form, allows learners to interpret conflict through personal and collective experiences rather than abstract political discourse.

Narrative peace pedagogy emphasizes storytelling as a means of fostering empathy, dialogue, and moral imagination (Salomon, 2011). Through engagement with military folklore, learners confront ethical dilemmas, recognize shared suffering, and explore nonviolent alternatives to conflict. This approach aligns with culturally responsive pedagogy, which advocates the use of learners' sociocultural contexts to enhance meaningful learning (Gay, 2018).

IV. Curriculum Integration for Peace Education

Infusion into Literature Courses

Military folklore can be integrated across existing NCE Literature courses without displacing core content:

- **Poetry:** Soldier songs, war chants, and marching cadences can be analyzed as poetic forms, focusing on imagery, tone, and thematic concerns such as loss, solidarity, and hope.
- **Prose:** Short autobiographical narratives or oral testimonies of soldiers can be studied as narrative prose, highlighting characterization and point of view.
- **Drama:** Dramatic reenactments of folk narratives or improvisational performances based on military experiences can foster experiential learning.
- **Oral Literature:** Nigerian war songs, proverbs, and oral histories can be incorporated into indigenous literature courses, linking local history with peace discourse.

Peace Education Competencies

The integration of military folklore supports the development of key peace competencies:

- **Empathy:** Understanding soldiers' emotional experiences promotes compassion.
- **Tolerance:** Comparative study of global military folklore reveals shared human values across cultures.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Reflective discussions encourage nonviolent approaches to conflict.
- **Civic Responsibility:** Critical engagement with war narratives fosters ethical citizenship.

V. Conclusion

This paper has argued that military folklore represents a valuable but underutilized resource for peace education within the NCE Literature curriculum. By humanizing conflict and foregrounding lived experiences, military folklore enables pre-service teachers to critically engage with issues of violence, empathy, and social responsibility. Integrating such materials into literature education can strengthen peace-oriented pedagogy and

enhance the transformative potential of teacher education in Nigeria. Future research may empirically assess the impact of folklore-based peace education on teachers' attitudes and classroom practices.

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