

PEACE EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR MITIGATING YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION

Udofia, Michael Iniekong

Department of Educational Foundations, Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Etinan, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study investigated peace education and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The population was made up of all youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. 60 youths were randomly sampled and placed into experimental and control groups of 30 each. The design was randomized pretest - post-test control group design. A comprehensive hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The structured questionnaire which measured youth restiveness was found to have sufficient content and face validity. The internal consistency was established through pilot testing and yield Cronbach alpha of 0.72. The results showed that treatment factor produced significant mean difference between the experimental and the control groups in favor of the former. Peace education is therefore recommended as a reliable approach in curing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The study has shown that the one of surest way to curb youth violence and restiveness in the Niger Delta is through peace education.

Keywords: *Peace education, Youth restiveness, Niger Delta*

INTRODUCTION

The word youth and restiveness have gained notoriety in usage especially in the Nigerian context as related to matters of agitation by youths of the Niger Delta region. Youth restiveness is a despicable act being perpetrated by a significant proportion of the youth in various communities that can no longer be ignored. As the name implies, it is a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome socially unacceptable and unworthy activities engaged in by the youths in any community. It is a phenomenon, which in practice has led to a near breakdown of law and order, low productivity due to disruption of production activities, increasing crime rate, intra-ethnic hostilities and harassment of prospective developers and other criminal tendencies (Ofehe, 2010). The Niger Delta region is characterized with bad roads, low infrastructure development and high level of unemployment, female prostitution and low industrialization rates. It grieves and naturally energizes conflicts as the youths watch the treasury being looted by government officials. The agitation of the youth is that, what are the restitution of their depleted land and sea environment caused by oil spillage or gas flaring, global warming experienced where oil flared causing greenhouse effect, the ozone layer depletion leading to sun burn and cancer, acid rain and many more. The import of the above submission is the unending crises in the Niger Delta region, which rose to crescendo boiling point with the bombing of oil installations and the kidnap of four foreign oil workers. This is caused by lack of understanding between stakeholders in the oil rich region. The unemployment

and sufferings among the youth of the Niger Delta and even among those with university degrees should be addressed spontaneously, as the increase in armed robbery, hostility to company's staff and properties, prostitution among the female youth, ritual killing is becoming too alarming. These activities are carried out by youth who after seeing the high level of unemployment and suffering even with university and polytechnic graduates, after spending years in educational institutions, still roaming the streets and many still staying with their parents, resort in these vices for quick money making. If this problem is not urgently addressed by the government, it will simply endanger the future of the country. Against this backdrop, the study sought to investigate the relationship between peace education and youth restiveness in the Nigeria Delta of Nigeria. The Niger Delta of Nigeria is characterized by actions or conducts that constitutes unwholesome socially unacceptable and unworthy activities engaged in by the youths. There is a near breakdown of law and order, low productivity due to disruption of production activities in oil companies, increasing crime rate, intra-ethnic hostilities and harassment of prospective developers and other criminal tendencies. Despite effort of the federal government of Nigeria to harken to the yearnings of the Niger Delta people, youths are still restive in the region due to the perceived neglect and environmental degradation caused by activities of oil companies operating in the region. There is need for deliberate introduction of peace education to: inculcate civics virtues, develop a climate that models peaceful behavior among all members of the community, handle conflicts in ways that respect the rights and dignity of all involved and provide forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice. Since youth restiveness is in the increase and little or nothing has been done towards exposing the youth to peace education, the researchers sought to investigate how potent peace education can be in curbing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. Peace education according to Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2009) is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behavior to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the environment. To Fwa (2004), peace education describes societal harmony and the absence of conflict, discord, hostility or war. Falade, Adeyemi and Olowo (2010) describe peace education as living in harmony, mutual understanding and resolving inter-personal communal conflicts without degenerating into disharmony and violence. It is all educational efforts, formal or informal aimed at developing in the learners the attitudes, values and skills to live with others in harmony, mutual understanding, trust and amicable resolution of conflicts. The United Nations (2009) describe peace education as the schooling and other educational initiatives that:

- Functions as zones of peace; where children are safe from violent conflict. Uphold children's basic rights as outlined in the convention on the rights of the child (CRC).
- Develop a climate that models peaceful behavior among all members of the learning environment.
- Demonstrate the principles of equality and non-discrimination in administrative policies and practices. Draw on the knowledge of peace building that exists in the community, including means of dealing with conflict that are effective, non-violent and rooted in the local culture.

- Handle conflicts in ways that respect the rights and dignity of all parties involved. Integrate an understanding of peace, human rights, social justice and global issues throughout the curriculum whenever possible.
- Provide a forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justices.
- Enable children to put peace making into practice in the education setting as well as in the wider community.
- Generate opportunities for continuous reflection and professional development of all educators in relation to issues of peace, justice and right.

The development of the culture of peace can be traced to the indigenous system of education in Nigeria. Traditional education laid emphasis on character training. Falade, Akinola and Adejube (2009) explain that the Yoruba of Nigeria have norms meant for social cohesion and smooth running of the community. The Yoruba adopt proverbs to teach the virtue of forgiveness, harmony and peaceful coexistence. An example of such proverb is "bi a ko gbage oro ana a ko ni reni ba sire" (unless we overlook at the past misdeeds, we will not be able to relate). In the traditional community, like any other human society, conflicts or disputes arise. The family or community leaders settle such disputes through dialogue. The extended family system and the decentralized political structure in some parts of Nigeria promote conflict resolution, respect for elders, mutual understanding and harmony.

Peace education has become part of the school programmer in many nations of the world. In some countries, peace education has been referred to as education for conflict resolution, international understanding and human rights, global education, life skills education, social justice education, environmental education among others. Societal issues and problems determine the scope and nature of peace education in nations of the world. The Nigerian government introduced the 9-years Basic Education Programmed as one of the means of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015. This prompted the need for the revision of the existing school curriculum. Hence, the National Council on Education (NCE) in 2005 directed the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to review restructure and realign the existing primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) curriculum into a 9-year Basic Education Programmed.

In 2006, the NERDC produced the 9-year Basic Education curriculum which covered current and emerging issues like value reorientation, peace and dialogue including human rights education, family life and HIV/AIDS education, etc. (NERDC, 2007). In the light of this, a new basic education social studies curriculum was developed. The new social studies curriculum incorporate contemporary issues like peace and conflict issues, child/women trafficking, youth unemployment and youth restiveness, gender issues and other relate is. While a new civic education curriculum was disarticulated from the social studies curriculum, other emerging areas like peace education, gender education, and family life education were integrated into the social studies curriculum.

Peace education is not a separate subject in the New Basic Education curriculum. Rather, the concepts have been integrated into social studies curriculum. When environmental and economic conditions deteriorate

to unbearable level, oil-bearing communities in Nigeria react. Shell, Mobil, Chevron or any of the international oil corporations respond by securing the assistance of the Nigerian Police or Military to terrorize and brutalize protesters. Most of the complaints relate to unemployment, environmental degradation, destruction of means of livelihood and health. The attitude of security agents towards protesters has been responsible for the maiming, outright killing and other cases of human rights abuses in the affected oil communities.

Restiveness according to Abudah (2004) is self-generating theory of conflict process within social groups. He further states that any restive acts by groups whether inter or intra in nature in contemporary history of Nigeria is synonymous to conflict. Intra group restiveness or conflict occurs when there is a competition for an interest (Onah, 1999). The relative deprivation theory asserts that psychological variables and deprivation is the basic product for conflict and restiveness of any kind. The more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of a population, the greater is the magnitude of violence in one form or the other (Famham and Pilmot, 1998). Coleman (1996) argues that the unequal socio economic development of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria led to inter-ethnic and intra ethnic conflict. Once there is an uneven development in all or some facets of human existence within a given society, the different groups will definitely become immersed in the competition for the goods of modernity, which invariably leads to conflict situation.

Asobie (2004) says that there are approximately 300 pills per year in the Niger Delta region. And he blames the restiveness of the Niger Delta youths on the oil multinational corporations that operate in the region without being committed to the plight of their host communities. Again, he argues that the oil multinational corporations and the Federal Government of Nigeria are implicated in the collaboration of militarizing the Niger Delta region. In view of Saro-Wiwa (1985), the root causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta are inequitable distribution of revenue, uneven development among the Niger Delta region. He goes on to say that development in the center has been given much attention than the other levels of government and that there is evident inequality in the development approach in Nigeria. He argues that the grassroots and the people of Ogoni land in particular and the people of the Niger Delta in general are like goose that lays the golden egg.

He argues further that the articulation of fundamentally different development paradigms had resulted in controversies to peace in the Niger Delta conflicts. Saro-Wiwa (1985) further argues that the proximate causes of most of the conflicts in the Niger Delta can be easily identified as the dominance of leaders of specific groups to gain office and use such states and institutions to distribute economic and political benefits preferentially to their interest groups. Discrimination against subordinate groups, often portrayed, as less deserving human beings accompanies this preferential treatment. The Niger Delta citizens are in such very pitiable circumstances. It is based on the above view that Saro-Wiwa (1985) contends that "... the protection and promotion of the rights of the Niger Delta citizens as well as other disadvantaged groups are essential for a conflict free Nigeria".

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between peace education and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at:

- Determining how peace education would instill peaceful virtues in youths.
 - Seeking how youths would live harmoniously with their neighbors.
 - Seeking how youths would denounce violence and be prepared to voluntarily contribute, through various activities to the development of their communities.
- During the course of the study, the question that arose is, Can peace education have any significant relationship on the behavior of youths with respect to instilling peaceful virtues in youths, making them denouncing violence and live harmoniously with their neighbors. To achieve the aim of the study, a comprehensive hypothesis was formulated thus:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between peace education and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta with respect to instilling peaceful virtues in them, denouncing violence and making them live harmoniously with their neighbors.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is experimental which the pre-test, post-test control group design. The population of the study consisted of all youths in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. 60 youths were randomly sampled and placed into experimental and control groups. The average age of the respondents was 19 years. The instrument used was named "Peace Education Youth Restiveness Questionnaire (PEYRQ); designed by the researcher and used to raise data on peace education and youth restiveness. The structured questionnaire was pilot tested and it yielded a coefficient Cronbach Alpha of 0.72. This was a good indication of internal consistency. The researcher ensured variability of item specifications to satisfy content validity of the instrument. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The data for the study were collected in five phases as follows:

Phase 1: The instrument was administered on the control and experimental groups to ascertain the equivalence of the two groups.

Phase 2: The experimental group was subjected to an interview process to review the state of restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Phase 3: The experimental group was encouraged to participate in designing a programme that can be adopted to learn peace education concepts.

Phase 4: Subjects were given lecture and talks on some peace education concepts. There was Video show on some violent crises highlighting the negative effects of violence.

Phase 5: Finally, re-administration of the questionnaire, completion and collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between peace education and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta with respect to instilling peaceful virtues in them, denouncing violence and making them live harmoniously with their neighbors.

Table 1: t-test showing difference between control and experimental groups in their level of restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

SOV	N	Mean	SDev.	SError	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Experimental Group	30	48.2667			7.91051	4.443	1.795	1.96 <.05
Control Group	30	62.1000			7.39961	3.510		

SOV = Source of Variance; SDev. = Standard Deviation; SError = Standard Error

The table above shows that the mean scores of the treatment group level of restiveness is not significantly higher than that of the control group. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant mean difference between the two groups was retained.

Table 2: t-test showing difference between control group and experimental groups in their acquisition of peace virtues in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

SOV	N	Mean	SDev.	SError	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Experimental Group	30	23.3333			4.5662	8.337	5.170	1.96 58 <.05
Control Group	30	17.7000			3.8430	7.016		

SOV = Source of Variance; SDev. = Standard Deviation; SError = Standard Error

From the above table, it can be seen that the mean scores of the treatment group is higher than the control group. This result differs the position of the only hypothesis formulated for the study hence it was rejected.

Table 3: t-test showing differences between control and experimental groups in their harmonious living with neighbours in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

SOV	N	Mean	SDev.	SError	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Experimental Group	30	22.2667			5.5581	1.014	85.170	1.96 58 <.05
Control Group	30	16.3000			3.7706	6.884		

SOV = Source of Variance; SDev. = Standard Deviation; SError = Standard Error

From table 3 above, it can be seen that the mean scores of the treatment group is higher than that of the control group. Also the t-cal is higher than the t-crit. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4: t-test showing differences between control and experimental groups in their denouncing of violence in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

SOV	N	Mean	SDev.	SError	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Experimental Group	30	15.0667			3.1941	5.832	3.234	1.96 58 <.05
Control Group	30	12.9000			1.8071	3.299		

SOV = Source of Variance; SDev. = Standard Deviation; SError = Standard Error

From table 4 above, mean score of experimental group is higher than that of the control group. This shows that the null hypothesis is also rejected. The result obtained from data on table one was expected because the experimental group that received peace education could not score significantly higher than the control

group, since before the treatment, all respondents were at the same level of exhibiting restive behaviors. However, in other cases, the null hypothesis was rejected out rightly. The lower mean scores of the control groups are testimony to cater (2006) assertion that peace education helps in facilitating students construction from their collective experience, engage in cross cultural communication with multicultural school participants, train students through molding of dispositions and skills that develop peace, including the practice of nonviolence before and during conflicts. Cater (2006) opines that peace education creates a nurturing environment which nourishes and provides a safe place for communication about concerns related to violence, use strategies that support peaceful interaction with self and all people model action for peace development on and the school environment, thereby demonstrating a community norm of social justice, cultivate and support the students responsibility for their own peaceful - problem solving. These corroborates Falade et al (2010) who wrote that peace education concepts have some inherent values and skills which are expected to be acquired by the learners such as: to develop the culture of peace, learners are expected to acquire collaborative inter-personal attitudes like respect, trust, honesty, humility, fairness, empathy, justice and a host of others. They submitted that collaborative and participatory approaches are required for the development of the culture of peace in the learners. The implication of the results is that peace education is an effective approach in curbing youth restiveness in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has conclusively shown that one of the surest ways to curb youth restiveness in the Niger Delta is through peace education. These include teaching about how to acquire collaborative interpersonal skills like tolerance, objective rationality, respect, trust, honesty and humility. These will lead to a violent free society in the Nigetyur Delta, thereby fostering economic development in the area in particular and Nigeria as a whole. To promote a culture of peace in youths of the Niger Delta, the following were recommended that peace clubs should be inaugurated for youths of the Niger Delta communities. Regular talks and seminars on peace education concepts should be organized for youths of the Niger Delta. Also, voluntary services should be encouraged and voluntary activities promoted among the youths. Skill acquisition centers should be established to equip youths in the Ares with necessary skills for gainful employment.

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