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Peace Education Curriculum and Peaceful Co-existence in the Niger Delta Region: Implications for School Administrators

Nkang, Iniobong Ekong

Abstract

The study examined the relationship between peace education and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta region with particular reference to Akwa Ibom State. The population consisted of Niger Delta youths resident Akwa Ibom State, which stood at 3648. Simple random sampling technique was used in drawing a sample of 365 respondents. Two null hypotheses formulated, tested at 0.05 alpha level, using Pearson Moment Correlate Coefficient Analysis. Data collection was done using a structured question. Peace Education and Peaceful Co-existence in the Niger Delta (PEPCN). The null hypotheses were rejected indicating a significant relationship between variables. It was concluded that Peace Education was necessary for violence reduction and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta Region. Among the recommendations made was that peace education should be incorporated into the curriculum of all educational institutions in the Niger Delta region and the nation in general.

Introduction

The Niger Delta, an area of dense mangrove rainforest in the southern tip of Nigeria, comprises nine of Nigeria's thirty-six states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. The region's oil accounts for approximately 90 percent of the value of Nigeria's exports, but the Niger Delta remains one of Nigeria's least developed regions (WAC, 2003). Conflict, present in the region for many years, began to surge appreciably in the late 1990s. In 2000, the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo created the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to help end the violence and spur socio-economic development. Still, during and after the 2003 presidential election, violence between rival militia groups and against the oil corporations increased considerably.

Facilitated by poverty, political disenfranchisement, and the easy availability of firearms, armed groups fought each other over the control of illegally acquired oil (so-called "bunkering") and engaged in violent acts against oil companies, such as kidnapping officials. Violence in the oil rich Niger Delta has attracted both national and international attention. Cases of violence, kidnaps

and youth restiveness in the region have been no prominent headlines in the national dailies in recent times. Kidnaps of all class is of people, hostage taking, violent demonstrations, and wanton destruction of lives and property in the Niger Delta region are reported almost on daily basis. For instance, the Punch Newspapers of Sunday March 2, and Wednesday, March 5, 2008 carried cover stories of Gunmen destroying police stations, shooting soldiers and kidnapping children. In response to the increasing cases of violence and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region and also because many feared violence would increase during the 2007 electoral period, the Obasanjo government came up with the Niger Delta Peace and Security Strategy - a complement to its Niger Delta Master Plan, which outlined plans for economic and social development in the region. This could not still bring peace to the region.

On November 7, 2005, the United States Institute of Peace held a public event on the peacemaking strategies being pursued in the Niger Delta with Dr. Judy Asuni, director of the Nigeria-based Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW). These strategies brought together representatives of the federal, state, and local governments; the oil and gas companies; the security agencies; foreign donors; and members of civil society to address the fundamental factors behind the violence in the region. AAPW was made one of the three groups that comprised the secretariat of the Niger Delta Peace and Security Working Group, which was to implement the peace and security strategy (Bekoe, 2005). These efforts have also failed to bring about the much desired peace in the region. Other strategies have been developed, including the recent "Truth and Reconciliation Committee", yet the region is boiling even more with cases of kidnapping spreading to virtually every state in the region.

As part of measures to bring peace to the Niger Delta region, the Federal Government of President Musa Yar'Adua on September 10, 2008, created the "Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs". The Ministry, with headquarters in Abuja, is expected to lead and coordinate environmental and youth empowerment policy initiatives as well as reinforce Federal Government's commitment to the overall development of the region. The ministry has two ministers, one overseeing infrastructural projects and the other solely responsible for youth empowerment. The Niger Delta Development Commission, which handles most of the development programmes in the region, is given a new status as a parastatal under the new Ministry (Punch, September 11, 2008).

It is now widely acknowledged that peace, security and rapid economic development of the long neglected Niger Delta region are critical to stability of the world energy prices, peaceful co-existence and overall development of Nigeria. Although it is possible to bring peace, security and peaceful co-existence to the Niger Delta region, success may only come as a result of careful implementation of well-designed peace and development oriented programmes. One of such programmes would be the introduction of peace education into

major way of attracting the attention of the o conjunies, government and to a public to come to their aid. Most of the corplant relate to unemployment, environmental degradation, destruction of means of evelihood and health. The constant clashes of security agents with the militants has been responsible for the maining, outright killing and other cases of human rights abuses in the attacted oil communities (Falokun, 1999). The region, which is believed to contribute more than 90% wealth to the nation's economy, has little or nothing to show for it in terms of development. This has given rise to the rampant cases of violence kidnaps, hostage taking, wanton destruction of lives and property, maining and killings that have characterized the Niger Delta region in recent times. Violence and conflict have roles to play in peace education. Violence as a tool for achieving change is both widely used and feared. It comes in different forms and the fear of violence can be as damaging as violence itself. Violence is embedded in our society not only as a method to solve conflict but in sport, entertainment and literature. Conflict is not the same as violence. Conflict can be approached as a challenge, offering people the chance to be inventive and creative, and to develop in ways they might not have thought of. Dealing with conflict creatively is a vital part of peace education.

The UNESCO (1999) charter helped to make the invaluable point that wars originate from the minds of men; it is in the same minds that the defences of peace must be constructed. This therefore, means that deliberate effort must be made to ensure that everyone is educated and enlightened about peace and peaceful co-existence, and young persons to be made the vanguards of peace. The sense of insecurity, suspicion and lack of trust arising from political thuggery such as what arose from the constitution review blunder, the 2007 general elections, Niger Delta crisis and several other unwarranted crises in the country have generated a lot of heat in the political system. Besides, the youths in recent times have been involved in anti-social behaviours that have threatened the corporate existence of the country as a nation. Some of these negative behaviours include cultism, examination malpractice, violence, kidnapping, antiparty activities, street fighting, ritual killings, taking and abuse of drugs and arson. These behaviours, many are afraid, may degenerate into a more serious political instability. Youths are the doorways to peace in any nation. Early peace education is vital in making it life-long for all citizens of all ages in all countries of the world. Peace education sets out to redress the culture of violence and aggression and to inculcate values of non violent change among young persons and adults alike. It opens up peoples eyes to see and understand actions taken and their consequences. The youths have to know what peace is and guard themselves against embracing or being used to create violence. Peace education is also seen as an application of positive peace contents as opposed to negative peace (Galtung, 1996) and processes concerning the achievement of peace to individuals who are still growing and learning.

higher education curriculum in the country. Such a curriculum would emphasize such themes as culture of peace, citizenship education, solidarity, democracy, sustainable development, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, humanights, gender equality, transformation and management. This will usher in a culture of peace and peaceful co-existence in the embattled Niger Delta region and the nation generally.

Peace Education Curriculum, Violence, and Peaceful Co-Existence

Peace has been defined in different perspectives in accordance with individual perceptions. Peace in its myopic and limited definition is the absence of war. Readom (1988) asserted that "peace is the absence of violence in all its forms – physical, social, psychological and structural".

According to Harris and Morison (2003) the term peace "implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standards of justice, satisfy basic needs and honour human rights". This definition of peace was supported by Russel, cited in Sandy and Perkin (2002), who stated that "peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice and the rule of law. Common synonyms for peace include "amity" "friendship" "harmony" "concord" tranquility, repose, quiescence, truce, pacification and neutrality. Kaura (1992) gives a comprehensive definition of peace which he places within a positive context:

Peace is a state of well-being that is characterized by trust, compassion and justice. In the state, we can be encouraged to explore as well as celebrate our diversity, and search for the good in each other without the concern for personal pain and sacrifice... It provides us a chance to look at ourselves and others as part of the human family, part of one world.

Hicks (1988) explicitly explained that peace education is not a separate subject but the creation of a dimension across the curriculum, a concern that may be explored in different ways with any age group and in any subject. So, peace education curriculum, according to Hicks (1988) comprises the following items: Skill: Critical thinking, co-operation, empathy, assertiveness, conflict resolution and political literacy.

Attitudes: Self-respect, respect for others, ecological concern, open-mindedness, vision and commitment to justice.

Knowledge: knowledge of personal and global conflicts and attempts to solve them, various concepts of peace and those individuals and groups involved in peace movements, key issues and ethical dilemmas to do with conventional war as well as the effects of militarism and individuals and groups. Violence, a state of unrest and incessant wanton destruction of lives and property, characterizes the state of affairs in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria today. Violence in the Niger Delta has metamorphosed into proliferation of arms and emergence of militias in recent times. The communities see protest as a

Peace Education is based on the premise that if students / youths who form a significant proportion of the population know their right and cultivate a culture of democracy and skills of living peacefully (including the ability to elect their leaders themselves), they will be a powerful voice in sustaining democratic values and a culture of peace. It should, as a matter of necessity be introduced at all levels of education in the country.

The various undemocratic political practices in Nigeria combined with the deterioration of traditional values and structures, marginalization and neglect have created a situation in which the Nigerian people do not believe that democracy is possible, neither are they able to envision credible alternatives. There is then a growing sense of disillusionment among the populace and a growing cycle of violence as experienced in the Niger Delta region. The country's integration and corporate existence are threatened and question the ability of the country to survive. Nigerians now see themselves as members of ethnic groups instead of citizens of a country. Consequently, there is a shift from community values to a materially based value system and thus the collective aspirations of the people of Nigeria are being abandoned. Peace education is needed at all levels of education in the country to redress this ugly situation. Manely (2004) sees education as a political agent because it must in its very nature, either tend to preserve the status-quo or promote a change. He further argued that education is always an extension of a political purpose and must be seen as a primary agent that is available for that purpose. Thus, for any meaningful change and development to take place in any nation, appropriate attention must be given towards the growth of educational system. In the same vein, the African Encyclopedia (2000), defines education as "the process which provides the youths with the knowledge, skills and values a society believes are necessary". From these definitions, education can be said to mean a process whereby the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and skills which a society believes are crucial to its survival and or development are imparted to the citizenry. Peace education curriculum across the levels ensures the impartation of a culture of peace and co-existence to the citizenry.

Peace Education is the deliberate attempt to educate the youths in the culture of peace, dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peacemaking skills in homes, schools, and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization. It provides education for global security and focuses on direct, organized violence particularly, the institution of war and armed conflicts, employing the framework based on recent theories of human security (Galtung, 1996). Peace education concerns itself with human and social dimensions of peace. According to Gumut (2006), it introduces the concept of human dignity and human rights with specific reference to such values as economic equity, political participation, ecological balance and particularly, the formative principles fundamental to international human rights standards. It

concerns itself with the global ethics, gender issues and various aspects of cultural violence. Global governance is also of great concern to peace education which creates the concept of global civil society. Generally, peace education is an investment in the younger generations, and attests to the fact that by educating younger minds in the virtue of peace, the skills of conflict analysis and management, identification of conflicts and sources of conflicts, etc, a more peaceable future could be secured for humanity (UNICEF, 1999). Although peace is implicitly part of general education, peace education is aimed at making more explicit and peace element necessary for the survival and peaceful co-existence of a nation. As indicated by Gumut (2006), peace education inculcates in the youths a culture of peace and reduces the tendency for violence in the society. A curriculum of peace education is necessary at all levels of education to inculcate in the citizenry a culture of peace and peaceful co-existence, a pre-condition for the reduction of violence in every society. The Niger Delta youths through proper peace education will re-direct their energies into useful ventures that can improve their wellbeing and bring about sustainable development in the region. Peace education, Fajonjomi (2000) observed, is necessary for the peaceful co-existence of a people. It promotes democratic process and pave the way for sustainable national development.

Peace education should be fundamental to the whole life of a school, in Religious and Moral Education, in learning about Citizenship and Community Service, Equal opportunities and Global Awareness. Disputes may be inevitable, but violence is not. In order to prevent continued cycles of conflict, education must seek to promote peace and tolerance, not fuel hatred and suspicion (UNICEF, 1996). The Youths can be helped to integrate their work for peace with every other aspect of life, with their families and communities, religious affiliations, and their jobs and work relationships. The task of inventing peace requires the co-operation of everyone and it takes many years to accomplish. The school should not be immuned to peace strategies. The disorder of the world surfaces in school in many ways and the very qualities that are needed to address the global crisis are the very same qualities required in school. Any school can become a community which models how the world may be. For example, each person is respected and honoured; mutuality exists in all relationship; resources are used mindfully and justly, etc The values of community, simplicity, helpfulness, creativity, celeberation and openness to the spirit bring with them the possibility of a school where people matter and where they can be fulfilled. The same values are those that can contribute to a world where justice, peace and care for the environment are made a priority (Wilkins, 2000).

For peaceful co-existence, we do not need to be locked into violence relationships at any level: personally, locally, nationally, or internationally. Moral development can be enhanced by the appropriate peace education

curriculum, teaching methods, relationships in the classroom and the school as a whole.

UNICEF (1999) recognized the following values and attitudes as underpinning peace education and needed to be addressed through peace education curriculum:

- Respect for others regardless of race, gender, age, nationality, class, sexuality, appearance, political or religious belief, physical or mental ability.
- Empathy a willingness to understand the views of others from their standpoint
- A belief that individuals and groups of people can make for positive change
- Appreciation of and respect for diversity
- Self esteem accepting the intrinsic value of oneself
- Commitment to social justice, equity and nonviolence
- Concern for the environment and understanding of our place in the ecosystem
- · Commitment to equality

Consequently, the broad aims of peace education should be:

- to understand the nature and origins of violence and its effects on both victim and perpetrator;
- to create frameworks for achieving peaceful, creative societies;
- to sharpen awareness about the existence of unpeaceful relationships between people and within and between nations;
- to investigate the causes of conflicts and violence embedded within perceptions, values and attitudes of individuals as well as within social and political structures of society;
- to encourage the search for alternative or possible nonviolent skills;
- to equip children and adults with personal conflict resolution skills (Bottery, 2000).

Peace Education should inculcate into the youths such skills as: identifying bias, problem solving, sharing and co-operation, shared decision-making, analysis and critical thinking, enhancing the self esteem of oneself and others, creative self expression, ability to imagine life beyond the present and work towards a vision, understanding the links between the personal, local and global, communicating through careful observation, honest talk and sensitive listening, positive emotional expression, recognising and expressing feelings in ways that are not aggressive or destructive, conflict resolution strategies, empathy, nonviolent action in relation to problems both personal and societal, ability to act on ideas, self reflection, and independent research (Faulks, 2000).

Peace education may involve some or all of the following processes and methods. Active learning participative methods, experiential learning, partnerships in learning with pupil participation, dialogue, self expression, story telling and response to stories, project work focused on identifying questions and researching answers, encouragement of use of source material, exchange with children from other cultures using their own medium, creative teaching and learning, whole school approach including all staff and links with the wider community.

Peace education can be both theory and practice based. Theory based peace education covers such contents as: The role of values systems in religious and secular world views, the history and present day struggles for justice and equality in race and gender, the ethics of science and technology, understanding of the causes of violence and war and other local, national and international disputes, the theory of conflict resolution, visions of the future, political and social change, the economics of war and oppression, human rights and citizenship, violence, war and peacemaking in the media, nonviolence in literature and the arts.

According to Faulks (2000), the following practical expressions of peace-making should be used in peace education. Models of peace-making, peace history-local, national and international, the role of the United Nations and Non-governmental Organisations, how community groups affect peaceful change, vocations for social change, the role of personal and community health and nutrition in a healthy society, understanding other cultures through language, custom and stories, parenting and child care, bullying and anti-bullying methods, peer mediation and conflict resolution skills for children in the classroom. Appropriate contents, methods and teaching of peace education can be an invaluable tool for violence reduction, conflict prevention and resolution, and peaceful co-existence.

The Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between peace education and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta region. Specifically, it sought to:

- 1. Determine the relationship between peace education and violence reduction in the Niger Delta Region.
- 2. Determine the relationship between peace education and peaceful coexistence in the Niger Delta region.

Two null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study. These are:

1. There is no significant relationship between peace education and violence reduction in the Niger Delta.

2. There is no significant relationship between peace education and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta.

Method

The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for this study comprised the Niger Delta youths of Akwa Ibom State. The population, which was reached through the Niger Delta Youth Movement (NDYM), stood at 3648.

The sample of the study was 365 respondents. This was drawn from the population stated above using the simple random sampling technique. The youths were mainly unemployed graduates and school certificate holders. The sample represents 10% of the population under study.

A structural questionnaire tagged "Peace Education and Peaceful Coexistence in the Niger Delta" (PEPCN), was developed, validated, pre-tested and used for the study. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument stood at 0.77. It was made up of three sections: peace education curriculum, violence reduction, and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta. Altogether the instrument had a total of 18 Items: 6 on each section.

The data collected were analysed using a correlation statistics of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis (r).

Results

Table 1: Summary of Responses to Research Variables

S/N	Variables	X	x	Standard deviation
1.	Peace Education	6575	18.01	1.64
2.	Violence Reduction	6132	16.80	1.16
3.	Peaceful Co-existence	6176	16.92	1.18

N = 365

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between peace education and violence reduction in the Niger Delta.

In order to test this hypothesis, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis(r) was performed on scores of items measuring peace education and those on violence reduction in the Niger Delta.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Peace Education and Violence Reduction in the Niger Delta

		Peace education	Violence reduction
Peace	Pearson Correlation Sig.	1.0	0.68
education	(2-tailed)		0.02
	N	365	365
Violence	Pearson Correlation Sig.	0.68	1.0
reduction	(2-tailed)	0.02	
	N	365	365

The calculated r-value of 0.68 was greater than the critical r-value of .098 at 0.05 alpha level and 363 degrees of freedom. This implies that there is a significant relationship between peace education and violence reduction in the Niger Delta. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2.

There is no significant relationship between peace education and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta.

In order to test the hypothesis, the Pearson product Moment Correlation analysis(r) was used in correlating the scores on peace education with those on peaceful co-existence in Niger Delta.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Peace Education and Peaceful Co-existence in the Niger Delta

		Peace education	Violence reduction
Peace education	Pearson Correlation Sig.	1.0	0.59
	(2-tailed)		0.02
	N	365	365
Peaceful	Pearson Correlation Sig.	0.59	1.0
co-existence	(2-tailed)	0.02	
	N	365	365

The calculated r-value of 0.59 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.098 at 0.05 alpha level and 363 degrees of freedom. This implies that a significant relationship exists between peace education and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

In testing hypothesis one, a significant relationship was established between peace education and violence reduction in the Niger Delta. The calculated r-value of 0.68 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.098. The null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. The implication is that peace education relates significantly to violence reduction in the Niger Delta region. This finding is backed up by Gumut (2006). According to Gumut, peace Education inculcates in the youths a culture of peace and reduces the tendency for violence in the society. The finding is also in line with UNICEF (1999) and Wilkins (2000). Youth moral development can be enhanced by an appropriate peace education curriculum, teaching methods, relationships in the classroom and the school as a whole. The teaching of appropriate peace education curriculum to youths inculcates in them the necessary tools for the maintenance of peace and prevention of conflict. This enables the youths to redirect their energies towards useful ventures for self-improvement and sustainable national development. The teaching of peace education at all levels of education, therefore, becomes inevitable.

Data analysis in hypothesis two indicated a significant relationship between peace education and peaceful co-existence in the Niger Delta region. The calculated r-value of 0.59 was greater than the critical value of 0.098. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. By implication, peace education relates significantly and positively too to peaceful coexistence in the Niger Delta. The finding agrees with Fajonjomi (2006). This scholar observed that peace education was necessary for the peaceful co-existence of a people. It inculcates in the youths a culture of peace and enhances their ability to support peaceful co-existence. Lack of peace education culture could result in violence, which according to Falokun (1999), has been responsible for the maiming, outright killing and other cases of human rights abuses in the affected oil communities of the Niger Delta region. Peace Education promotes peaceful co-existence and mutual respect among people. It is needed as a panacea for peaceful co-existence in the tensed Niger Delta region.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and results of the findings, it was concluded that peace education is needed for violence reduction in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, and that it is a necessary condition for peaceful co-existence in the oil-rich embattled region.

The teaching of peace education to the younger generation particularly the youths, is an invaluable decision. It will go a long way in equipping the youths with knowledge and skills that would help bring about peace through better understanding. The youths as future leaders and as vanguards of democracy should be well informed about themselves, the environment they live in, and to appreciate poverty and wealth, and the world as a whole. Peace education equips the youths, who are vulnerable to being manipulated into engaging in negative acts which would inevitably lead to conflicts, with an insights into the likelihood of the consequences that might result when these negative acts are perpetrated.

Recommendations

On the basis of the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

- Peace education should be incorporated into the curriculum of all educational institutions in the Niger Delta region and the nation in general.
- 2. The curriculum should be so planned and organized to take into consideration the uniqueness of the Niger Delta region and learning abilities at the different levels of education.
- The curriculum should cover all areas of need in peace education. The
 out-of-school youths and the non-formal education sector should be
 covered in the peace education curriculum.
- Training sessions, workshops and seminars should be regularly organized for teachers of peace education to streamline the teaching methods and materials used.
- 5. Proper evaluation should be carried out regularly to assess the performance of the peace education programme, while remedial measures should be put in place to correct lapses.

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