



Influence of the Peace Education Programme of National Orientation Agency on Youths in Rivers State: Implication for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the influence of the Peace Education Programme of National Orientation Agency on Youths in Rivers State: Implication for Sustainable Development. The descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The population of the study consists of all the Youths in Rivers State. One research question and three hypotheses were stated to guide the findings of the study. Multistage sampling technique was used to select a total of six hundred (600) students for the study. One instrument titled "Influence of Peace Education on Students Questionnaire" was developed by the researchers and subjected to content validation. The reliability of the instrument was established using chrombach alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test and one way ANOVA. Results showed that the Peace Education Program organized by NOA in RS had a positive influence on the Youths of the state. There was no significant difference in the impact of the programme based on gender and Senatorial Districts but there was a significant difference based on age differences of the youths. Suggestions were made that Government should encourage the staff of NOA to continuously carry out Peace Education Programmes in different parts of the country. Peace Education should also be introduced in our school curriculum to instil in the youths the much needed core values and discipline for peaceful co-existence in the country.

Keywords: Peace Education, Core values, Discipline in Youths, Peaceful co-existence, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, blessed with abundant natural and human resources, is a country of well over three hundred and seventy-eight ethnic nationalities endowed with many natural resources, all of which are being controlled by the Federal Government. However, some groups contend fiercely for the control of their natural resources to the exclusion of others. This has led to immense lack of trust and suspicion among groups. As a consequence; ethnic crises leading to violence and destruction of lives and property all over the country has become a common place among the people. Like most African nations, Nigeria is characterised by abject poverty, inflation, indiscipline, unemployment, ethnic and religious crises, corruption, labour unrest, social violence, chaos, intolerance, waste of gems, security threats, breakdown

of law and order, strike action and armed robbery, etc. (Mogbo 2007). All these result from the fact that country is not quite stable politically.

The world reports that African countries are pushing more towards violence than they are towards the culture of peace. The obstacles to this culture of peace are mainly socio-economic in nature for example: oil in the Niger Delta, diamond in Liberia/Sierra Leone, land in Rwanda/Burundi. In the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, the major reason for the continuous arms struggle has been incessant oil spills from oil pipelines owned by oil companies operating in the region. Ordinioha and Brisibe (2013) posited that the oil spills in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria could lead to a 60% reduction in household food security, reducing the ascorbic acid content of vegetables by 36% and reducing the crude protein content of cassava by 40%. Some of these facts are published in UNEP reports yet nothing is done about it by the Government and the oil producing companies. Even when companies release money to ease out the suffering of the people, some elites and community leaders embezzle such monies to the exclusion and provocation of the youths. This has generated various communal clashes in Nigeria and has impacted negatively in the cultivation of right values among the youths.

The struggle over the control of the meagre payments made by oil companies to oil producing areas has led to so much continuous struggles and internal wars that lives and property are being lost on a daily basis. The propagators of these fights form themselves into different militant groups and use different strategies to attack their opponents and government officials who they see as those blocking their way from getting what they want. Ajaja (2012) and Akpan (2014) attested to the fact that in the South-south, there are various militant groups. The members use guns and other forms of arms to fight, they take people on hostages and demand for large sums of money as ransom. They often kill people and get away. Even the organized crime prevention units put in place by Government could not do much due to the highly organized structures put in place by these lawless groups. The younger generation see these things and perceive them as the right way to live, so they themselves form smaller groups or cliques to struggle for power both in their neighbourhoods and school communities. During a focus group discussion between some secondary school students and Longjohn and Amadi in 2016 it was revealed that secondary school students form cult groups and operate in the school system to oppress others who refuse to join them or are not members of their group.

In Nigeria, the consequences of youth violence are many. More students are dropping out of school; community violence is on the increase; international image is being destroyed, thus discouraging foreign investment. Economic development and most importantly the future of the nation are becoming more uncertain (Akanji, 2005). Ajaja (2012) also posited that there is a high level of restiveness that is being perpetrated by youths most of whom are school drop-outs. He posited that over 85% of the criminal activities perpetuated in Nigeria are done by youths who dropped out of school. And most of the killings and kidnapping as well as prostitution in and outside the country by these youths were done in ignorance, and would have been moderated if the youths had the right education. Teenagers in Nigeria and round the world are constantly exposed to messages that promote violence as a way to solve problem and feel empowered when imbibed and practised. Such messages often result in school violence among other things (Smith & Sandhu, 2004).

Ajaja (2012) carried out an Expost facto study, using the past school attendance registers as the major instrument. He discovered that a high percentage of students' dropout in SSI, a higher percentage of dropouts was among females in all parameters; the drop-out rate was higher in rural schools; most of which are mixed public schools. Uriah, Ololube and Egbezor (2015) investigated the role of gender on youth restiveness and found that female youths are increasingly involved in restiveness in the Niger Delta like their male counterparts and there was a significant relationship between gender and agitations of restive youths.

All over the world, education is a major means towards enlightenment, development of acceptable values in the community and peaceful living among groups. One of the major objectives as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals is to make for world peace. Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

The major focus of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (undated) as posted on its website is on poverty reduction, sustainable development and other Sustainable millennium development goals. What it takes to achieve these includes good governance and stability and none of these can flourish on its own. Safety, human rights, poverty reduction and sustainable economic development are all connected. It is impossible to simply advance in one area without consequences for the other areas; moreover, no single part of the society can solve all human problems on its own.

One of the major factors often listed as militating against Nigeria's socio-economic and political progress is poor orientation. Global News (2008) as cited by Dienne and Morrison (2011) states that the prevailing political and social unrest in Nigeria which are characteristic of anti-social behaviour of different kinds and magnitude are indicators of misappropriation of values in our society which is a result of poor orientation. According to them the unity and progress of our society is threatened because, core values that encourage law and order, respect for elders, sanctity of human lives, brotherliness, honesty and tolerance are disoriented. Poor orientation also includes among others indiscipline, poor attitude to work, greed, poor sense of time, desire for money without work, corruption, nepotism, mediocrity in high places, lack of commitment to national goals, lack of sense of duty, absence of policy coordination, amongst others.

Roa (2003) cited by Dienne and Morrison (2011) sees values orientation as the process of directing the interest and passion of individuals to the desired socio-cultural values that promote societal development and good human relations. Hence value orientation according to them is to influence people to adjust, turn to, or conform to specific values needed by the society. Proper orientation therefore implies instilling in the lives of the people those qualities that make for national development and harmonious co-existence like non-violent interventions and dialogue for tolerance and inter faith understanding as it is done in Palestine and Israel; education to embrace dialogue and mediation instead of intimidation and violence as is done in Democratic Republic of Congo; education for mutual acceptance and progressive reconciliations as is done in Burundi, amongst others (Baregu, 2011).

In Nigeria today, the Agency that carries out national orientation and peace education programmes is known as the National Orientation Agency (NOA). The critical mandate of the NOA is to orientate the Nigerian populace. It is the only Agency of government that is positioned to carry out on sustainable basis, the fundamental function of orientation, mobilisation and public enlightenment needed by the youth of Nigeria as it journey through the 21st century.

The growing literature on peace education reflects a broad and trans-disciplinary field. Harris (2004) divides peace education into 5 categories: international education, developmental education, environmental education, human rights and conflict resolution education. Curricula in peace education covers a range of topics, including the history and philosophy of peace education (Reardon, 1988, Burns and Aspeslagh, 1996, Harris and Morrison, 2003), the dialectic between "negative" and "positive" peace (Galtung 1969,1999), gender and militarism (Reardon 1993,2001), conflict resolution education (Johnson and Johnson 2006) and the formation of peaceful values in education (Boulding 1991, Swee-Hin and Cawagas 1991). On nurturing cultures of peace, Sommerfelt and Vambheim 2008 writes that peace requires citizens to contain their aggression, exhibit cooperative behaviour, and resolve conflicts without violence. Jenkins 2007 illuminates the difference between education about peace and education for peace. Education about peace includes models on war and peace and leaders of peace movements, such as Gandhi and King. Education for peace on the other hand, intends to nurture knowledge; values, behaviours and capacities to confront peace on three inter related levels; the individual, community and globe. The individual level relates to person- centred awareness of self i.e body, mind, emotions and spirit whereas the community level refers to interpersonal relations such as trust, openness and interdependence and the globe level concerns cultural and environmental consciousness.

In practice peace education is problem solving education that attempts to build in every person the universal values and behaviours on which a culture of peace is predicated. It includes the cultivation of peace building skills such as dialogue, mediation and artistic endeavours. Peace education teaches the values of respect, understanding and present skills for analysing international conflict, educate for

alternative security system and the use of pedagogy that is democratic and participatory. Thus peace education as practiced as a practice refers to matching complementary elements between education and society, where the social purpose (ie why teach), content (what to teach), and pedagogy (how to teach) of the educational process are conducive to fostering peace. Accordingly, peace education is a dialogical experience conducted through participatory learning, where the learners communally and cooperatively grapple with contemporary issues related to local and global contexts.

Harris (2000) stated that peace education is about empowering people with skills, attitude and knowledge:

- a) To build, maintain and restore relationship at all levels of human interaction.
- b) To develop positive approaches towards dealing with conflicts from the personal to the international
- c) To create safe environment both physically and emotionally that nurtures each individual
- d) To create a safe world based on justice and human rights.
- e) To build a sustainable environment and protect from exploitation and war.

He further notes that peace education is based on the philosophy that teaches nonviolence, love compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation and reverence for the human family and all life on our planet.

Statement of problem

In recent times there has been high rate of youth restiveness, drug trafficking, militancy, child labour, kidnap, person trafficking, increased rate of killing, assassinations, cult activities and political crises in the country, this situation has often generated questions on the effectiveness of the NOA peace education programmes. Thus this study seeks to assess the extent to which the NOA peace education programme has influenced the Youths of Rivers State in terms of attitudinal change and value re-orientation.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to investigate the perception of youths in Rivers State on the impact of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State. Specifically, the study aims at:

- (1) Determining the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State.
- (2) Finding out if there is any gender difference in the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State.
- (3) Finding out if there is any age difference in the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State.
- (4) Finding out if there is any difference in the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State based on Senatorial Districts..

Research question

The following research question was stated to guide the study:

Research Question 1: What is the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State?

Hypotheses: Three hypotheses were also stated to guide the findings of the study.

HO1: There is no significant difference in the perception of Youths on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on gender.

HO2: There is no significant difference in the perception of Youths on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on age.

HO3: There is no significant difference in the perception of Youths on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on Senatorial Districts.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. The population of the study consists of all the Youths in Rivers State. Multistage sampling was used to select the subjects for the study.

Firstly, the state was clustered along the existing three Senatorial Zones. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one (1) Local Government Area from each senatorial zone and two (2) Senior Secondary Schools from each Local Government Area. Simple random sampling was further used to choose one hundred (100) Senior Secondary School Students from each school making a total of six hundred (600) students. One instrument titled “Influence of Peace Education on Students Questionnaire” was developed by the researchers and subjected to content validation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Crombach alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. The instrument consists of two sections A and B. Section A comprises items that elicit the biodata of the respondents while section B is made up of 22 items that address the major issues in the Peace Education Programme.. The items are responded to on a Likert- format (4-point scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree). The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test and one way ANOVA.

RESULTS

The results of the findings are presented according to the research question and hypotheses stated.

Research Question 1: *What is the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programme carried out by National Orientation Agency on the youths of Rivers State?*

Table 1: Mean and standard deviations students’ responses on the main issues being addressed by the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State.

S/N	Major issues addressed	How Addressed.	N	Mean	SD
1	Shun violence/ socially desirable attitude	Good citizens are not expected to fight	600	3.46	0.78
		Stealing is an offence	600	3.14	1.04
		Armed robbery is an offence	600	3.38	0.87
		To own a gun is an offence	600	2.96	1.08
Mean			600	3.24	0.94
2	Self-Discipline	Avoid using abusive words	600	3.10	0.96
		Public display of arms is an offence	600	2.94	1.01
		Secret cult’s activities wastes lives hence should be avoided.	600	3.37	0.81
Mean			600	3.14	0.93
3	Peace Mediation	Use dialogue to settle disputes	600	2.81	1.06
		Peace education programmes helps us to understand how to use dialogue to demand from governments	600	3.07	0.98
		Peace education programmes helps us to use dialogue to handle misunderstanding with elders	600	3.18	0.89
Mean			600	3.02	0.98
4	Core values	Live peaceably with one another	600	3.22	0.84
		Thuggery is against peaceful co-existence	600	2.99	1.01
		Mob action disturbs peaceful co-existence	600	3.03	0.98
		Kidnapping is an offence	600	3.40	0.85
Mean			600	3.16	0.92
5	Patriotism and Nationalism	Incidence of fighting with sharp objects should be reported to the police	600	3.16	0.09
		Incidence of kidnapping should be reported to the police	600	3.42	0.82
		Bunkering causes fire out breaks that kills youths hence should be stopped	600	2.97	1.03
		Bunkering is against the law	600	3.22	0.90
		Oil spillage due to bunkering spoils the environment hence should be stopped	600	3.24	0.97
Mean			600	3.20	0.92

Table 1 shows that under the shun violence / socially desirable programme carried out by National Orientation Agency (NOA) to give orientation to youths in Rivers State on how to live as good citizens of Nigeria; good citizens are not expected to fight had a mean =3.46 (SD = 0.78), stealing is an offence had a mean = 3.14 (SD=1.04), armed robbery is an offence had a mean = 3.38 (SD = 0.87), to own a gun is an offence (mean=2.96, SD=1.08). Under self-discipline programme, avoid using abusive words had mean =3.1 (SD = 0.96), public display of arms is an offence had (mean =2.94, SD = 1.01) and secret cult activities wastes lives hence should be avoided had mean= 3.37, (SD = 0.81). Under core values programmes where the youths are given orientation by NOA on how to imbibe core values that make for peaceful living; live peaceably with one another had mean = 3.22, (SD 0.84), thuggery is against peaceful coexistence had mean = 2.99, (SD =1.01), mob action disturbs peaceful coexistence had a mean = 3.03, (SD = 0.98) and kidnapping is an offence had mean = 3.40 (SD = 0.85). Under peace mediation programme, use dialogue to settle disputes had mean=2.81,(SD=1.06), peace mediation helps us to understand how to use dialogue to make demand from government had a mean = 3.07, (SD= 0.98) and peace education programmes helps us to understand how to handle misunderstanding with elders had a mean =3.18, (SD = 0.89). From the responses of the youths under patriotism and Nationalism programme, incidences of fighting with sharp objects should be reported to the police had mean = 3.16, (SD = 0.90), incidence of kidnapping should be reported to the police had mean= 3.42, (SD=0.82), bunkering is against the law had mean = 3.22, (SD = 0.90), bunkering causes fire outbreaks that kills youths hence should be stopped had mean= 2.97, (SD = 1.03) and oil spillage due to bunkering spoils the environment hence should be stopped had mean= 3.24 (SD= 0.97).

All the responses of the youths have means above 2.5 which can be taken as the criterion mean. This implies that the Peace Education Program carried out by NOA on Youths of RS had a positive influence on them.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of Youths on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on gender

Table 2: Students' Perception on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Decision
Influence of Peace Education Program	Male	305	79.71	11.07	-0.06	598	Not Significant
	Female	295	79.77	9.6			

Table 2 shows that the female youths of Rivers State had a relatively higher perception on the effectiveness of the PEP organized by the staff of NOA with mean = 79.77, SD=9.6 compared to the males with mean=79.71. Both groups of persons had high mean values compared to the criterion mean of 55. This gave a t-value = -0.6, at df=598 and 0.05 level of significance. Hence HO₁ is retained, implying that there is no significant difference in the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Program based on gender.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of Youths on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on age.

Table 3: Students' Perception on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on Age.

	Age	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Decision
Influence of Peace Education Program	Older youths	230	77.5	17	3.10	598	Significant
	Younger youths	370	81.4	11			

Table 3 shows that the younger youths of Rivers State had a relatively higher perception on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Program organized by the staff of NOA with mean = 81.4, SD=11 compared to the older youths with mean=77.5, SD=17. Both groups of persons had high mean values compared to the criterion mean of 55. This gave a t-value = 3.10, at df=598 and 0.05 level of significance. Hence H_{02} is rejected, implying that there is significant difference in the perception of the youths in Rivers State on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Program based on age.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the influence of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA on the Youths in Rivers State based on Senatorial Districts.

Table 4: Students’ Perception on the effectiveness of the Peace Education Programmes carried out by the staff of NOA in Rivers State based on Senatorial Districts.

Source of Variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sign-2-tail	Decision
Between Group	285.318	2	142.659	1.322	0.267	Not Significant
Within Group	64103.982	594	107.919			
Total	64389.300	596				

Table 4 shows that with F-value=1.322 at df=2 and 0.05 level of significance, there is no significant difference in the way the Peace Education Program organized by NOA in RS influenced the youths based on Senatorial Districts. H_{01} is therefore accepted.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

From the responses of the students, it is clear that NOA in Rivers State actually addressed the major issues on Peace Education during their Peace Education Programme organised in the state. The youths actually perceive the Peace Education Program as worthwhile to them especially in this era of violence and cultism everywhere in Rivers State. This is in line with the responsibilities of the Peace Education Department of National Orientation Agency which include among others to:

- a) Instil positive and desirable attitudes, values and behaviour amongst the citizenry;
- b) Inculcate the values and virtues of patriotism, nationalism, honesty and positive work ethics;
- c) Promotes peaceful co-existence, conflict resolution and a violence free society;

These issues addressed by the peace education programmes are also in accordance with the definition of Peace Education as put forward by Harris and Synott (2003) that Peace Education are a series of “teaching encounters” that draw from people, their desire for peace, nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangement that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality and that peace education is about empowering people with the skills, attitude and knowledge:

- To build, maintain and restore relationship at all levels of human interaction;
- To develop positive approaches towards dealing with conflicts from the personal to the international;
- To create safe environments, both physically and emotionally that nurtures each individual;
- To create a safe world based justice and human rights;
- To build a sustainable environment and protect it from exploitation and war.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study looked at how the Peace Education Programme of the National Orientation Agency has influenced Youths in Rivers State towards sustainable development in the State. The findings revealed that majority of the objectives of the Peace Education Programs of the NOA were achieved. The program also had some positive impact on the youths both male and female, young and old in all the Senatorial Districts of Rivers State by influencing them positively on how to settle differences among themselves, how to approach Government and elders in the society to make demands or present their grievances.

Recommendations were therefore made for Government to improve upon and take the Peace Education Program more seriously in order to catch up the students early by teaching them how to become peace loving citizens of State. The researcher also made the following recommendations:

- Government should include Peace Education Program in regular school curriculum, let students start early to learn how to live peaceably in their environment, how to make demands from government and how to make for peaceful mediation between one another.
- Government should send staff of the Department of Peace Education out to other nations where peace education are properly implemented to under study them on how to use more innovative instructional strategies like conferences, seminars and workshops where the programme participants will feel free to participate and interact freely with the programme implementers in environments outside school setting or town hall meeting devoid of their parents, elders and teachers.

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