

Peace Management and Enhanced Academic Performance of Tertiary Institutions in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was embarked upon with a view to examining the need for peace in the management of tertiary institutions towards enhancing academic performance in south-south Nigeria. Three hypotheses and one research question guided the study. One thousand, two hundred and nineteen (1219) academic and non-academic staff were selected for the study. A 31 item researcher developed questionnaire was used to collect data from the sampled staff in their respective institutions. Population t-test and mean scores were used to analyze data collected. Findings show that peace was advocated but there were serious inadequacies in the implementation and enforcement process of peace. Proposed peace was scarcely enforced to the detriment of academic performance. The manner and approach to existing peace management does not actually address the issue of peace building. Based on the findings, recommendations were made which included among others, that conflict resolution and peace education courses should be introduced in the school curriculum.

Keywords: Peace management, Tertiary institutions, Academic performance

1. Introduction

Peace, as a concept is primarily concerned with the creation and maintenance of a just order in society. Miall (2000) conceived of peace as the absence of war, respect and tolerance between people in the society. In other words, there should be harmony, tranquility or wholeness in the organization of a system. In the sphere of institutional management, Galtung (1990/1996) classified peace into negative and positive aspects. According to the study, when peace is said to be negative, it means that the peace in existence include the absence of crisis, strikes, war, fear and direct violence in individual and at institutional levels. On the other hand when peace is positive, it means that there is peace in existence, and it indicates absence of unjust structure, unequal relationship, justice and inner peace at the individual and societal levels. This is the real or complete peace that will be addressed in this paper, since it includes both the absence of war (direct violence) and absence of unjust structures (indirect violence).

Peace, in whatever form, level or environment it operates, is significant, in that, peace is the greatest factor facilitating institutional management towards sustenance of performance. This is because crisis time always witnesses little or no investment in education sector since academic performance of students in particular does not appear to be as good as it is expected to be. This has given rise to uncomplimentary remarks from parents and other stakeholders on the academic performance of tertiary institution students.

Nwagwu (2004) observed from the performances of our educational institutions that lack of peace causes instability and breeds general dissatisfaction, unimpressive attitude towards academic work, viewed in terms of educational cost as a result of unconducive learning environment. One can equate crisis or lack of peace period in education to what could be regarded as educational holocaust (almost complete annihilation of the school system). Crisis of any type in tertiary institutions need to be properly addressed from the level of family, through the school system up to

tertiary educational system, if academic performance must be enhanced. Perpetrators of violence according to Denga (2008) should be taught and persuaded to seek peace and dialogue towards promoting progress and academic development.

Issues of students/staff unrest, unionism, land disputes, politics and other forms of conflict can be counter-productive in the education management process. This situation has often resulted in frustration of the students, parents and the system, in addition to making the education system inefficient. Although enhanced academic performance is a function of many variables, namely; the quality of teachers, instructional method and materials used, students' socio-economic background, student intelligence quotient (IQ) as well as the school climate, all do influence, singly and collectively academic performance. Existence of peace plays a major role in the enhancement of academic performance in education system. Peace therefore is indispensable to the normal progress and development of an organization. According to Iheanacho (2001) the learning environment in which academic programme is offered influences the management of the school and students health, comfort, staff working effectiveness and in turn affects academic performance.

For peace to be used as a foundational instrument in managing educational institution, deliberate effort must be made to introduce basic programme in peace education into the school curriculum which emphasizes the accomplishment of peace objectives through offering of peace research courses (Seltzer, 2008, p.275). This peace education should emphasize human and social dimension of peace in its subject matter content, introduce the concept of human dignity and human rights with specific reference to such values as economic, equity, political participation, ecological balance, ethics, gender issues and various aspects of cultural violence. Through the harmonizing process of teaching and learning, peace education would enlighten students and adults concerning the ills that may destabilize the school system and affect academic performance.

To achieve peace in academic institutions, which is one of the goals of sustainability, the authors are of the opinion that there is need to revitalize the educational system through the introduction of peace education and conflict resolution courses in the school curriculum so as to educate younger minds on the virtues of peace. Peace is the core activity that is essential to the issue of achieving enhancement of academic programme goals and objectives in educational institutions. It is an essential tool to address sustainable development in academic institutions. There is therefore a very strong relationship between peace and enhancement of academic institutional programmes for sustainable development of educational objectives. In support of this contention, Alimba (2008) posited that peace education is a holistic education that takes into consideration the transformation of academic institutions and people in totality for personal development and the good of a society.

The United Nations through its UNESCO (2004) report noted that for education management to be of benefit to the citizens, the content of literacy education for peace should be organized in ways that utilize the idealism inherent in seeking to satisfy human needs towards self-realization. This will ensure high learning outcome and sound discipline that will in turn enhance academic performance. Based on this, the study evaluates the benefit of the existence of peace in the management of tertiary education institutions in south-south zone of Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

Management of education is crucial for efficient implementation of educational programmes toward enhancement of academic performance. Much has been said and written over the years about the performances of tertiary education in south-south of Nigeria. In crisis situation, numerous individuals and groups have advocated various proposals for ensuring adequate management of tertiary education through adequate funding and provision of necessary facilities for teaching and learning, although none has succeeded so far. Education management is still facing major internal and external crisis and hostility feuding within and between institutions. There are cases of role conflicts, unionism, staff unrest, corruption, land disputes, absenteeism and non-attainment of goals in the school system.

It is obvious that in the face of these problems, the goals and standard of education have continued to be largely unachievable. It appears that there is something fundamentally wrong with the management and implementation of education programmes. The major problem is lack of peace. Peace is the operational factor that is required for enhancement of academic studies. The search and inculcation of peace in the various educational institutions of learning have therefore become an invaluable decision that needs to be urgently addressed.

3. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

- i. The level of peace in the management of tertiary education institutions is not significantly positive.
- ii. The extent to which peace is ensured towards enhancement of academic performance is not significantly positive.

iii. The extent to which students' academic performance is enhanced in peace time in tertiary institutions is not significantly high.

4. Research Question

i. Why is peace building necessary in the management of tertiary institutions?

5. Methods

The study adopted a survey design. The population for this study comprised all the academic and non-academic staff of government owned universities in the south-south region of Nigeria. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample for the study. The tertiary institutions were stratified on the basis of their locations and operations. Three (3) universities in three states were selected out of the six (6) states in the south-south region of Nigeria. The three universities are: University of Port-Harcourt, University of Uyo and University of Calabar. From each selected university, 20 percent of the academic and non-academic staff were randomly picked. This gave a total sample size of 1,219 staff. The researchers made use of 20% of the population as sample because it was most convenient figure to work with.

A self-developed questionnaire was used in this study. The instrument was titled "Peace Management and Enhanced Academic Performance Questionnaire" (PMEAPQ). The questionnaire was made up of two parts. Part one was the biographic data of the respondents such as educational institution, location and job experience. Part two contained 31 items that were separated into 4 clusters. Cluster 1 consisted of six items that were concerned with the level of peace. Cluster 2 contained eight items on peace regulation for academic performance. Cluster 3 contained eight items on universities/students academic performance under peace, while cluster 4 had nine items that were concerned with variables for building peace or creating a conducive learning environment. The items in the questionnaire were structured on a 4-point Likert scale that ranges from very often to never. With very often having 4 points, often 3 points, not often 2 points and never 1 point. The researchers presented the initial draft of the instrument with the hypotheses and research question to three educational management experts in the Education Faculty of the University of Calabar. After examining the instrument, they made some corrections which the researchers effected in the final draft of the instrument.

The split-half method for testing reliability was applied to estimate the reliability of the instrument. The researcher administered copies of the questionnaire on 20 university staff that were not included in the study sample. Their responses to the instrument were separated based on even and odd numbers, scored and analyzed using the mean ratings. The instrument yielded a coefficient value of 0.80 which the researchers considered satisfactory for the study.

The copies of the questionnaire were administered on the selected respondents in their institutions through the help of research assistants. This ensured a 100% retrieval. Population t-test was used to test the hypotheses, while means and standard deviation scores were used in answering the research question. The decision rule was that since items were based on a 4-point scale, items which had mean ratings of 2.50 and above would be regarded as necessary factors for peace to be used as instrument for conducive environment towards management and performance of educational system, while those that obtained mean ratings below 2.50 would be regarded as factors that are not often useful for education management.

6. Results

Hypothesis 1

The level of peace in the management of tertiary institution toward enhancement of academic performance is not significantly positive.

The population t-test for single mean was used to test this hypothesis. In carrying out this test, the researchers first determined the population mean (μ) using 4 point scale. The scale spanned from very often (4 points) to never (1 point). Thereafter, all the points on the scale were then aggregated for the items measuring the variable to give a mean of 2.50. With this, the sample mean (\bar{x}) was compared with the population mean (μ) to obtain the t-value. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Results of the analysis in Table 1 show that the calculated t-values for peace in management of educational finances (3.675) and management of teaching (2.628) were each higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 1217 degrees of freedom. This means that the level of peace in the management of tertiary institutions in terms of finances and teaching was significantly positive. The results also show that the calculated t-values for peace in management of infrastructure (0.521), management of academic calendar (1.605), management of examination (-0.895), management of students' results (1.636) and overall peace management (1.557) were each

less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 1217 degree of freedom. This means that, peace management in tertiary institutions for this sub-variables and for overall was not significantly high. Since results for overall peace management, was not significant, the answer to the research hypothesis was that the level of peace management in tertiary education institutions is significantly low.

This finding reveals that the level of peace existing in our tertiary education is not adequate for academic performance to thrive. Peace is recognized as a relevant factor in education management. When a cordial, peaceful atmosphere prevail in our school system, growth and development would be noticed. On this note, Galtung (1992) posits that education institutions can only at best accomplish goals and objectives at the instance of the existence of peace. Thus, peace is a panacea to the fulfillment of education desires among nations. This is affirmed by the UNESCO (1990) report on world peace proposal which observed that, the problem in achieving peace has been fundamentally one of education management which would eliminate illiteracy, free the minds of men so as to provide an environment of understanding and cooperation in the solution to crisis. In support of this notion, many researchers such as Washbrun (1996), Fernando (2000), and West (1996) have submitted that the way of dealing with crisis problem in education is through establishment of peace.

Hypothesis 2

The extent to which peace is ensured towards enhancement of academic performance is not significantly positive. The test statistics used in analyzing data relevant to this hypothesis was population t-test for one sample mean. The result is presented in Table 2.

Results of the analysis in Table 2 show that the calculated t-values of ensuring peace through introduction of peace education (14.005), promotion of effective communication (10.369), content of literacy education (17.267), organization of conferences (2.137) and peace clubs and societies (24.675) were each higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 of 0.05 level of significance with 1217 degree of freedom. This means that the extent to which peace is ensured in tertiary institutions toward enhancing academic achievement through introduction of peace education was significantly positive. This result also show that the calculated t-values for channels of instruments of socialization (-1.502), government education policies that emphasize peace (-2.006) ensuring peace through encouragement of peace building efforts in human attitudes and behaviour (-3.570) were each less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 1217 degree of freedom. This means that ensuring peace in tertiary institutions for this sub-variables was not significantly high to enhance academic performance.

This finding indicated that peace can be promoted through the introduction of peace education and offering of peace related programmes in the school curriculum. This finding is in line with Jeong (2000) who stressed that school subjects such as Religion, Geography, History, Science should be incorporated into the school curriculum for teaching peace. Today, peace education is a major subject of UN policy, research and training by UNESCO, the council of Europe and ministries of education as well as various universities world-wide. Paramount in teaching is the pedagogy, which is unique to some disciplines. This is primarily directed toward developing the managers of tertiary institutions and students' capacity for critical thinking, inquiry, and reflective skills that enable them not only to understand obstacles to peace, but more importantly the skills and abilities to confront these issues, envision realistic alternatives, devise and implement strategies for the realization of peace option. In spite of this observation, the study further revealed that there are still some negative forces impeding the realization of peace towards enhancement of academic performance. For example, in many places in Nigeria, religious intolerance, ethnic quarrels and intolerance, sectionalism, tribalism and other forms of violence that are observable and severe have taken a serious toll in our educational institutions. On this note, studies by Denga (2005) and Odu (2006) have shown that good education management in a conducive atmosphere has power to tame or domesticate violent tendencies.

Hypothesis 3

The extent to which students' academic performance is enhanced in peace time in tertiary institutions is not significantly high. The population t-test for single mean was used to test this hypothesis.

Results of the analysis in Table 3 show that the calculated t-values for orientation of staff on recruitment for improved performance (30.038) is higher than the critical t-values of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 1217 degree of freedom. This implies that enhancement of academic performance was significantly high and positive. The result also show that the calculated t-values for enhancement of academic performance through organizing seminars, conferences and workshops (-57.867), provision of qualified, disciplined and committed staff (-39.464), provision of adequate fund (-53.470), motivational administrative leadership (-43.637), provision of relevant in-service training (54.171), effective monitoring/staff supervision (-41.610), provision of adequate facilities (-24.140) and overall enhancement of academic performance (-41.587) were each less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of

significance with 1217 degrees of freedom. This means that enhancing academic performance through peace management in tertiary institutions for this sub-variables was not significantly high. Since the results for overall attainment of academic performance was not significant, the answer to the level of enhancing academic performance in educational institution is significantly low.

This finding may be attributed to the fact that administrators of educational institutions possess different attributes and interests toward organization of the school system. They hardly explore the possibility of improving institutions under their control. This finding is in agreement with Cole (2000) who observed that administrators of educational institutions hardly respond to education reform implementation exercise by making adequate plan towards sustenance of performance.

Research Question

Why is peace building necessary in the management of tertiary institutions? To answer this research question mean and standard deviation were used. Result is as shown in Table 4.

In Table 4, items 4 and 9 had low mean ratings of 1.90 and 1.42 and standard deviations of 0.27 and 0.16 respectively, the rest of the items had mean scores ranging from 3.02 to 3.92. From the analysis the researchers found that the factors necessary for peace to exist in the management of education shows positive response while factors that may not necessarily contribute to education management indicates negative response. Although these factors contribute as peace building variables in the management of tertiary education institutions, the positive factors are inevitable as peace building variables in education management.

With regard to peace building process, the researchers appreciate this finding because existence of peace is very fundamental to effective management of education through implementation of education reforms for the attainment of education objectives. Where considerable efforts are made to institutionalize peace, for instance, by ensuring that factors affecting peace management which propel mankind into conflict and crisis are handled with care.

7. Conclusion

From the findings, the study submits that, the need for peace to exist in the various higher institutions of learning is an invaluable requirement. The presence of peace in organization is a pre-requisite to growth and development progress and happiness at all levels of existence. For peace to be promoted as a permanent feature in the management of tertiary institutions, the study recommends that peace education and peace related programmes be offered and included in our institutions academic curriculum.

The study notes further that peace has increasingly become rare and expensive because in recent times tertiary institutions have experienced internal crisis in the form of strikes and conflicts, students unrest, unionism, land disputes, which have been counter-productive, resulting in poor academic performance. To broker peace among these institutions there is therefore need for dialogue and sacrifice to move education forward.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Regular seminars and workshop on peace education should be organized for tertiary institutions aimed at explaining and developing strategies for effective peace maintenance.
- ii. Peace format which will be acceptable to the greatest number of affected people in education should be established.
- iii. The content of literacy education for peace should be organized at the family level, church, organizations, clubs and societies so as to utilize the idealism inherent in seeking to satisfy human needs.
- iv. Government should financially encourage school administrators to enable them effectively organize academic programmes that are devoid of crisis.
- v. Peace curriculum should be developed to involve disciplines that emphasize accomplishment of peace objectives.

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Table 1. Summary of population t-test on the level of the peace in the management of tertiary institutions for the enhancement of academic performance (n=1219)

S/NO	ITEMS ON LEVEL OF PEACE IN:	μ	\bar{X}	SD	T
1.	Management of Educational Finances	2.50	2.58	0.76	3.675*
2.	Management of infrastructure	2.50	2.51	0.67	0.521
3.	Management of academic calendar	2.50	2.54	0.87	1.605
4.	Management of Teaching	2.50	2.57	0.93	2.628*
5.	Management of Examinations	2.50	2.57	0.93	-0.895
6.	Managements of students results	2.50	2.53	0.64	1.636
7.	Overall peace management	15.00	15.21	4.71	1.557

Significant at .05, df = 1217, critical t = 1.96

Table 2. Summary of population t-test on the extent to which of peace is ensured towards enhancing academic performance.

S/NO	ENSURING PEACE THROUGH:	μ	\bar{X}	SD	T
1.	Introduction of peace education	2.50	3.19	1.72	14.005*
2.	Promotion of effective communication	2.50	2.80	1.01	10.369*
3.	Channels of instruments of socialization	2.50	2.46	0.93	-1.502
4.	Content of literacy education	2.50	3.42	1.86	17.267*
5.	Government education policies that emphasize peace	2.50	2.45	0.87	-2.006
6.	Organization of conferences	2.50	2.56	0.98	2.137*
7.	Peace clubs and societies for student	2.50	3.85	1.91	24.675*
8.	Encouragement of peace building effort in human attitude and behaviour	2.50	2.41	2.41	-3.570
9.	Overall peace assurance	20.0	23.14	6.23	17.595

Significant at .05, df = 1217, critical t = 1.96

Table 3. Summary of the extent to which students' academic performance is enhanced in peace time.

S/NO	ITEMS ON ENHANCING OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	μ	\bar{X}	SD	T
1.	Organizing seminars, conferences and workshops towards improvement of academic work	2.50	1.29	0.73	-57.867*
2.	Provision of qualified, disciplined and committed staff to duty	2.50	1.46	0.92	-39.464*
3.	Funds should be provided by government for research and development purposes.	2.50	1.29	0.79	-53.470*
4.	Motivational administrative leadership should be put in place	2.50	1.30	0.96	-43.637*
5.	Provision of relevant in-service training on academic performance	2.50	1.15	0.87	-54.171*
6.	Orientation of staff on recruitment for improved performance	2.50	3.24	0.86	30.038*
7.	Effective monitoring and supervision of staff to develop competencies in teaching	2.50	1.32	0.99	-41.610*
8.	Provision of adequate facility for teaching and learning	2.50	1.85	0.94	-24.140
9.	Overall enhancement of academic performance	20.0	12.90	5.96	-41.587*

Significant at .05, df = 1217, critical t = 1.96

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of questionnaire items on variables for peace building.

S/N	Items on necessity for peace building	\bar{X}	SD	Decisions
1	Existence of peace help staff to conduct research in their academic work.	3.12	0.54	Positive
2	Peace enhances academic performance	3.06	0.48	Positive
3	The existence of peace building reduces tension, violence and conflict in education management	3.28	0.46	Positive
4	It ensures implementation of education policies and programmes	1.90	0.27	Negative
5	There is a possibility of effective communication in school administration.	3.12	0.41	Positive
6	It encourages cordial relationship among staff.	3.30	0.57	Positive
7	There would be discipline among students	3.02	0.52	Positive
8	It encourages unity among staff and students	3.92	0.71	Positive
9	For peace, education and goals to be achieved.	1.42	0.16	Negative