
Peace Education for Leadership and Members of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study is on peace education for leadership and members of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It was guided by three research questions on the barriers to, strategies and benefits of peace education for leadership and members of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This study makes inquiry into the nature of peace education as a way of dealing drastically with issues of conflicts in higher institutions and its neighborhoods. Descriptive research-design was adopted, based on which peace education as a concrete solution to the issues of conflict in higher institutions was suggested. The study further investigates how leadership innovations in tertiary institutions include the adoption of peace education, as a means to aid leaders identify contradictions and its impact in forestalling the escalation of various forms of conflicts that may arise in unprecedented manners. The study highlights the need for higher institution leadership to promote peace and security in the school and the state. Making useful suggestions, this study clarified how the leaders of universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and research centers are to work towards a socio-economic rationalization of their role as peace educators. Its focus is on employing peace education as a sustainable approach to conflict management in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study thus concludes that, tertiary institutions must become pillars of peace in society.

Leadership and higher education are the basis of development in human society, as opined by Chinweuba & Onah (2018). Tagoe (2016) observed that in recent years, serious questions have been raised about the quality and relevance of the education being delivered to national development. In the light of this observation, it appears that higher institution leadership, in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, may be more focused on consolidating political appointments and gaining political favours. With such an attitude, Kisunzu (2011) recommended that planned change would need to be anchored using the first strategy in Malcolm Baldrige award-winning academic institutions of higher education. This, according to Kisunzu, is to: “utilize sustained leadership to ensure that change aligns with organization’s mission, vision, and values and is integrated into the strategic planning process through assessment of progressive performance excellence.” If achieving such change is not the motive of aligning higher institution leadership with political power, then one opinion would be that selfishness could have taken hold of most leaders of higher institutions. It might not be a mere hypothetical ostentation to attribute selfishness to those leaders who seek their own interest at the expense of their subjects. It is indeed selfish of most higher education leaders to prioritize their affiliation with politicians over securing peace in their institutions. Such misplaced prioritization poses a certain menace to the sustainable leadership of higher institutions. There are obvious critical issues of conflicts causing members of the institutions to live in fear and insecurity, and addressing these issues should be the priority of leaders.

In an attempt at discovering the factors responsible for the increasing participation of many members of higher institutions, especially students, in conflict-causing events such as cult activities, the role of higher education leadership in reorienting those involved in these activities comes to mind. Quite clearly, orientation programs may not be enough in the tertiary institutions where cult activities are rampant. For example, Rivers State has become a quasi-warzone, with the spate of trending reports on cult killings making headlines all over the media. The perpetrators of such mayhem would need to be identified by the police. Doing so is meant to trace their connection to cultism in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, hence is not unnecessary. That means the state security service needs to gather intelligence even from tertiary institutions and the latter from the former. The police force should be engaged by the leaders of higher institutions in orientation programs designed to educate students on ills of aiding and abating conflicts. Profiling police reports; presented by police officers invited for the orientation programs, will help students appreciate the importance of adhering to school rules, especially such rules that prohibit their involvement in cultism within or off campuses.

That practical and proactive measure at collective and collaborative sensitization of students, unmistakably, really transcends being a mere orientation program and could be as it should be a honed, proactive campaign initiative of the higher institutions leadership; centered on the need for continuous collaboration of

students, school management and public with the state security agencies. Sanctions prohibiting the involvement of members of higher institutions in cultism will not only need to be made but also enforced by the leadership. Enforcement may require reporting accused members of the institution to the police for investigation. Those known cult members could then be punished accordingly. So, orientation is not enough, proactive actions are required by the leaders of the institution; to ensure that peace, and the security of the lives and properties of all, is assured in the state and in its tertiary institutions.

Just recently, there have been several gun-battles in Rivers State that have happened around the vicinities of higher institutions. However, the reports by the police command have not identified the cultists or clearly disclose their affiliation to any of the tertiary institutions. Of course, they are not required to do so, unless on demand by heads of institutions or journalists whose reports could then include such disclosures. Having this disclosure is important to be considered, as a matter of fact, thus requiring a show of concern by the leaders of institutions in the state. The follow up with police reports is crucial. Higher education leadership should have the inclination to request police reports on apprehended or suspected cultists to uncover their identities and find out if they are members of their institutions or not. Such classified information could be vital for decision makers in higher institutions to equally probe and take advantage of their sensitive nature. They could then warn members of the institutions as well as ensure those exposed cultists don't remain on admission, if found to be their students. This will help keep institutions safer and protect others from bad influences. But this study found that higher institution leaders have not been relating with the police force to obtain criminal records of apprehended suspects for use in fishing out rascals hiding in campuses as students.

It would be imperative for this issue of security in and around campuses to be prioritized by the leaders of tertiary institutions. They should collaborate with the state's security services and armed forces to run background checks of their students, and hand over to the security agencies all those members of their institutions identified as members of cult gangs. Failure to do this over the years is one of the factors responsible for the high rate of the involvement of students in cultism in and off campuses. It is a leadership concern to address this gap.

Against this backdrop, lack of attention to issues of peace in the state, isn't expected of higher institution leaders, because members of the institutions are products of the state, as members of the state are products of their institutions in turn. The state and institutions of learning are interconnected. Leadership in tertiary institutions produces and influences leadership in the state, and issues of conflicts and insecurity in the state affects tertiary institutions in the state. The recent activities of cultists in Rivers State have affected students in tertiary institutions within the state. Reports gathered from students residing in the areas affected by tension have shown that there is a very close connection and linkage between the state and its institutions of learning. That's

why leaders of higher institutions need to get actively involved in helping ensure peace in the state by starting with peace education within their institutions.

The need for peace education requires the attention of all administrators and academic staff of tertiary institutions. There is no sitting on the fence concerning peace education. It is a urgent need in Rivers State, where series of crises disrupting peace in the state have erupted. These crises have mounted tensions around the campuses of tertiary institutions in the state. It is either cult gangs are operate within and around tertiary institutions or their campuses are their hideouts and comfort zones. If this is true, leaders have a duty to deter students from getting involved in cultism whether in or off campus. This needs urgent response, however complex, as Abdulraheem (2013) noted that; “response of individuals to change is very complex.”

Higher institution leadership seems to have been oblivious of the status of students and possibly even lecturers as cultists. Campus cultists draw outside gang members closer to their own institutions for hangout. The result is that they will decide to set up camps for recruiting and arming new cult members within their campuses. Several students have attested to having knowledge of cult camps in their campuses and these students know the names, faces, departments and levels of the cultists in their midst. They’ve been confronted and intimidated on several occasions. But they are afraid to expose these cultists to the appropriate authorities for fear that nothing would be done by the leaders and the gangsters could come hunting for them. This exposes the communication gap between students and leaders of their institutions. There is equally a high level of students’ distrust for their institution’s leaders. Many students would admit that they even fear the consequences of speaking up or exposing the cultists. It is not just a problem of fear, it is a problem of inattentiveness and irresponsiveness on the part of their leaders. It is thus the responsibility of higher institution leaders to create a conducive and open atmosphere for members of their institutions to study and live above fear and intimidation. Cultism is a serious issue to begin addressing headlong. With the right sanctions and access to security agencies assured, cultism in campuses could be dealt with.

Cultism may be only one of the conflicts that have reached an alarming rate of having an explicit negative impact on tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It adds up to the number of other causes of unrest that make the tertiary institutions unsafe establishments for quality education to thrive. Indeed, without peace, education cannot be effectively used in the achievement of what Efe (2014) described as, “transformation of individuals, communities, nations and the world at large.” Accordingly, Efe opined that education “is very important in the training and development of human resources in any country through the impartation of appropriate skills, capacities, values, knowledge and attitudes.” In same vein, Rose, Miller & Kacirek (2016) held that “a significant component of an institution’s performance is influenced by the individual performance of the employees in the organizational system.” Relating these views to the scenarios of entrenched violent conflicts remaining unresolved in tertiary institutions, the individual

performance of both staff and students will drop down the scale. That's easy to expect and the institution itself will be affected in the performance of its role of influence in the society depending on it.

Etadon (2013) agreed with Aderinto (1994) that student conflicts have superseded other forms of conflicts in terms of frequency of occurrence, volatility, and severe effects on the universities and the nation as a whole. These conflicts, as Etadon observed with reference to Okoge (1992) and Ogunyemi (1994) are becoming an endemic feature of the Nigerian educational system and they manifest mainly in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. More so Etadon is not the only one who has observed that student conflicts have resulted in the loss of lives and destruction of public property, thus making student conflicts phenomenal. Student conflicts stem from conflicts in their society. This is the case for Etadon, because the tertiary institutions are subsets of the various macro societies and they are a reflection of society's increasing use of violent methodologies to resolve conflicts frustration, and conflict situations. For this reason, the causes of continuous violent conflicts such as the critical spate of cult killings in and around the campuses of tertiary institutions would have to be paid attention to, in an attempt at proffering solutions to all these conflicts. Allowing such conflicts to continue would have serious consequences on higher institutions. These consequences are many. They could make the environment non-conducive for quality education. Continued violent student conflicts could cause deference of admission. They could expose more students to the negative influences of the masterminds of the conflict. They could also encourage unwillingness of students and staff, in the playing of their roles in helping the tertiary institutions achieve their institutional aims and objectives. Not attending to these conflicts could put the lives of the members of the institution at risk of serious injury or death. All of these and many more consequences are due to the insecurity experienced around the institution at times of escalated conflicts.

These consequences are bound to ensue as a result of the lack of attentiveness of tertiary institution leadership to issues of conflicts within and around the institutions. Gaffar (2014) had observed that in institutions, conflict occurs between various individuals because of their frequent interaction with each other. For Gaffar, conflict in an institution is an expression of hostility, antagonism and misunderstanding between staff members. He believes Conflict is inevitable and often good, for example, good teams always go through a "form, storm, norm and perform" period. Thus, Gaffar thinks that getting the most out of diversity means often-contradictory values, perspective and opinions. In this line of thinking, conflict is seen as a positive thing and Gaffar goes on to identify four reasons why conflict is needed, namely: it helps to raise and address problems; it energizes work to be on the most appropriate issues; it helps people "be real", for example it motivates them to participate; and it helps people learn how to recognize and benefit from their differences.

If Gaffar is right, then there are obviously various forms and varying degrees of conflicts that need to be resolved in every institution, and tertiary institutions are not

any exceptions. Conflicts may arise as a need to overcome challenges that haven't been previously viewed as requiring attention. This makes it necessary to address conflicts as they arise since they help the institution move above certain challenges. Assie-Lumumba (2006) admitted to the universal presence of such challenges. She is of the opinion that "all societies have their forms of internal contradictions that constitute real factors that can be artificially manipulated by self-serving forces, whether external, internal, or a conniving mix of both." Toeing this line of thought, it is important that tertiary institution leaders will take the responsibility of identifying and dealing with their own fair share of contradictions. When conflicts are not well handled, they escalate and lead to more difficult challenges for the institution. The emergence of new conflicts is a natural thing, but refusal to take responsibility of handling them creates a gap or lack of peace that widens as time elapses without the issues at conflict being resolved. The proper handling of conflicts restores order, sanity and makes peace for the benefit of all the members of the institution in conflict.

Peace is the goal of conflict resolution and effective conflict management. When peace is sought, leaders take responsibility to handle conflicts appropriately and manage them proactively. Peace is a value that measures the degree of responsibility assumed by leaders of institutions, organizations and groups, because it always requires an initiative to respond to the needs of the members. The quality of leadership responsibility is tested by the length and degree of sustenance of an atmosphere of peace. When leaders listen to their members and respond to their needs they not only prevent conflict but sustain peace. Leaders need to know how to maintain peace among their members. The larger the group, organization or institution the higher the demand for peace among the members, and the leader is responsible for this state and outcome at all times. It suffices to say then that leaders have a role to play to educate their members on the necessity of peaceful coexistence as well as educate themselves on ways of making, maintaining and sustaining peace among their members. The leaders of tertiary institutions are responsible for different sizes of large groups of members of their own institution and peace ought to be sought for at all times. Absence of it is tantamount to chaos.

The constant conflicts in tertiary institutions reveal the gap in leadership responsibility and responsiveness to the needs of their members. Peace cannot be done without as conflicts cannot be non-existent absolutely. Insofar as conflicts emerge often unprecedentedly so often would peace be sought for and efforts made to maintain it as well as prevent most avoidable conflicts that take the form of violence. To achieve a situation of higher degree of sustenance of peace in tertiary institutions there is need for a proper study and understanding of peace by higher institution leadership as well as members of higher institutions, and such a study could be defined as peace education. Peace education is, therefore, the program of study designed to help the leadership and members of higher institutions to understand peace and how to achieve it, enhance it, sustain it, and promote it in various groups that make up the institution.

Furthermore, peace education is an approach to identifying and dealing with the contradiction of conflicts which distort academic programming within the higher institutions. The recent conflicts in Rivers State, their impact on the students living off campuses, and the lack of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State have necessitated this study on peace education for higher education leadership in the state. According to Etadon, Nigeria, with over one hundred and fifty tertiary institutions, had witnessed unprecedented violent behaviour occasioned by student's involvement in all categories of conflicts and violence. He equally accepted a report by Rinju (2003) which claimed that students' unrest always have adverse effects on students, staff members, administrators and institution's goals at large. The series of incidences of violent conflicts in Rivers State reached an alarming rate in 2019. As the media reported, heavily armed youths identified as cultists staged much gun confrontation against armed officers of the Nigerian police force, around the neighborhoods of one of the federal tertiary institutions in the state. This made it difficult for both students and staff in that neighborhood of the affected institution to go freely to their campuses. Such is a form of violent conflict that affects tertiary institutions and often happen in Rivers State as well as in other states. Regardless of efforts made by the police command to fight cultism in the state, there hasn't been any notable involvement or formal intervention by the leadership of tertiary institutions in Rivers State to responsively and responsible help make peace and support the state in preventing such incidences of violent conflicts. This is a gap that peace education for the leadership and members of the tertiary institutions in Rivers state would be employed to fill. Peace education would thus emanate as a philosophical approach to using an educational curriculum as well as academic program to solve internal and external problems of conflicts that threaten the sustenance of peace in the institution.

This study thus analyzes the nature of peace education for the leadership and members of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It attempts to find out the barriers to the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. It tries to determine the strategies for implementing peace education in tertiary institutions. And it endeavors to ascertain the benefits of peace education for helping tertiary institution leadership become more proactive in handling conflicts in and around tertiary institutions in Rivers state. It focuses on peace education because having peace education for the leadership and members of all the tertiary institutions could equip them to handle conflicts more responsively for sustaining peace. On the contrary, if peace education is not embraced in Rivers State, continued violent conflicts would always affect the tertiary institutions. This would be to the detriment of those pursuing different programs of learning in the institutions. It would visibly, equally limit the means of livelihood of those whose lives depend on their jobs in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

If peace education is embraced, leaders of higher institutions in Rivers State will protect the vital human resources and valuable material assets of their institutions. They could

be more open to mounting all mechanisms of peace, security and in-depth reforms of approaches to conflict resolutions. To have a peace education curriculum designed for higher institutions, this study recommended the enhancement of research and programme development on conflict resolution through the responsive engagement of leaders of these institutions with other stakeholders. As a result, the needs of the members of higher institutions could be met, for both staff and students. These needs include, but are not limited to, alleviating their fears of and exposure to the conflict situations of aggression, violent hostilities, extortions, oppressions and discriminations. Moreover, there should be a mechanism for joint collaboration with security agencies led by universities. This will go a long way to address emerging issues, including political exploitation of youths, peace and insecurity in tertiary institutions and the state.

Statement of Problems:

The problem of concern is not so much the existence of conflicts among students and staff in tertiary institutions but the improper management of conflicts by the leadership of tertiary institutions. According to Gaffar (2014), conflicts are neither constructive nor disruptive but the ways these are handled make them either positive or negative. The leadership of tertiary institutions is not expected to sit and fold their hands when there are issues of conflicts that make the neighborhood unsafe for students and staffs living around there or going to the campuses there. In so far as the neighborhood is threatened the tertiary institution within it is equally threatened, and that was witnessed in Rivers State with recent cult killings around University of Port Harcourt neighborhoods such as Alikahia, Choba, Rumuchakara, and Ozuoba. These are communities where students live off campus. Resulting from this civil unrest, with the violent conflicts in the neighborhood, students and staff were unable to go to perform their usual functions at two main campuses of this higher institution surrounded by these communities. While there was neither any record of nor exact report of the loss of lives of students and staff of this tertiary institution, the incidences constituted a serious threat to their lives during the period of their intensity. From eye witnesses and the media, the police force began a manhunt which led to the arrest and killing of many of the suspected cultists, but the leadership of the institutions did not get involved in helping the police out in any way. How they could have got involved was stated in the background of this study. Their status of inactivity and non involvement in addressing this kind of conflict and similar kinds in the past exposes the passive attitude of higher education leadership in conflict management. Passivity of higher education leadership in external conflict management is thus a problem begging for a more urgent solution than the spate of student conflicts in the campuses. To be active agents of conflict management these leaders could adopt any of the strategies for handling conflicts, which the most important four, according to Gaffar, are: mediation, negotiation, avoidance, and collaboration. Not getting actively involved in external conflict management is decried.

Conflicts within higher institutions range from student unrests and disagreement caused by some basic factors like, unresolved conflicts, increase in school fees, lack of communication, alienation of students from decision making, etc. (Chibuokwu & Nwosu, 2015). The three main types of conflicts which occur within tertiary institutions include, interpersonal conflict between two individuals, intragroup conflict among individuals within a team, and intergroup conflict among different teams within the institution. All these types of conflict may be due to discrepancies in set goals, unequal interests and competition.

The causes of conflicts in tertiary institutions are integrated with the known causes of conflicts in society such as economic hardship and corruption in the wider society which affects the tertiary institutions. These conflicts may be among students or staff. On the part of the staff, lecturers, for example, may disagree over unpaid salaries and entitlements leading to strike actions affecting the entire institutions. Government may also be held responsible for some of these conflicts by non-fulfillment of its promises to lecturers. The school's administration may also be responsible for other conflicts such as restructuring of academic programmes and programming without consultation with students. For example, fees may be increased suddenly and students in response may stage violent protests. Students, however, are young and more prone to agitations particularly if there are communication gaps between them and the leadership of their institutions, or if there is delay in meeting their demands by the leadership of their institutions. A very easy trigger to student protest conflict is fee levies on the students.

This study therefore seeks to define the place of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, in order to properly address the various forms of conflicts in the institutions. The major focus include: barriers to peace education in tertiary institutions, strategies for implementing peace education in tertiary institutions and the impact the refocusing of higher education leadership for peace education will have on tertiary institutions in Rivers state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the need for peace education in relation to helping higher institution leadership become more proactive in conflict management, for the interest of tertiary institutions in Rivers state. Specially, the objectives are to:

1. Find out the barriers to the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
2. Determine the strategies for implementing peace education in tertiary institutions
3. Ascertain the benefits of peace education for helping tertiary institution leadership become more proactive in handling conflicts in and around tertiary institutions in Rivers state.

Research Questions:

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the barriers to the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
2. What are the strategies for implementing peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
3. Ascertain the benefits of peace education for helping tertiary institution leadership become more proactive in handling conflicts in and around tertiary institutions in Rivers state.

Research Question One: What are the barriers to the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

From analysis, it was discovered that, the barriers to implementing peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State among others include: Academic staff capacity overload, Heads of departments lack of leadership, Lack of financial resources, Additional Demands, Complexity of the model, Lack of training on peace education.

Research Question Two: What are the strategies for implementing peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

From further analysis, it was discovered that, the strategies for implementing peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State include teaching peace education by focusing on critical areas that could aid in formulating its curriculum with subject matters such as: Encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; Informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; Informing the students on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; Encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; Caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others; Helping the students to understand critical global peace themes such as anti-nuclearism, international relations, environmental responsibility, communication skills, nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality etc; Training individuals to resolve interpersonal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) mediation; Helping the students learn to manage anger, “fight fair” and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions; Employing approaches which include encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their actions and to brainstorm in groups on compromises, among others.

Research Question Three: What are the benefits of implementing peace education through the refocusing of higher institution leadership for peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers state?

From another analysis, it was discovered that, the benefits of implementing peace education in refocusing higher institution leadership for peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State include: Reduction of crime, violence and other social vices in the society; Overcoming challenges ranging from political tensions to religious and tribal violent conflicts; Enabling people to adopt a positive attitude regarding the different issues they can face through their life and to develop the necessary skill to peaceful conflict resolution; Enabling people to have the right perspective and approach towards issues of terrorism and militancy particular steering clear of playing an agent or party to, or getting victimized; Empowering the future generation with the necessary skills to resolve social issues; Equipping citizens with the knowledge to understand how to avoid and manage violence, conflict, achieve better or improved human relationship, unity and internal cooperation among various tribes; Eliminating the avoidable causes of preference for war, violence, exclusion and destruction among which are groups prejudice, stereotypes and hatred, while enhancing mass support and understanding of the need for peace, non-violence, cooperation, and collaborative construction of values for social and communal development; Enabling people to appreciate themselves and collectively seek, endorse or employ means to foster their peaceful coexistence within their own groups, community and society; Fueling and inspiring, motivating and sustaining willingness of students to positively contribute to the development of the society while at the same time enabling them publicly discriminate against violence and war or other forms of conflicts.

Discussion of Findings:

The findings revealed that, the barriers to the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State include: Academic staff capacity overload, Heads of departments lack of leadership, Lack of financial resources, Additional Demands, Complexity of the model, Lack of training on peace education, among others (Chelule, 2014). The test of hypothesis equally showed that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of administrative staff and students on the impact existing curriculum not focused on peace education and the impact the design of a new curriculum focused on peace education will have on tertiary institutions to achieve conflict resolution in tertiary institutions Rivers State. This implies that, both staff and students responded to the items positively as barriers to the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. In line with the findings, Enaigbe & Gbinoghene (2016) identified inadequate knowledge of the concept of peace education, lack of acceptability of peace education by government, lack of political will, inadequate funds among others as some of the challenges of peace education.

The findings also revealed that, the strategies of implementing peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State include: teaching peace education by focusing on critical areas that could aid in formulating its curriculum with subject matters such as: Encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; Informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; Informing the students on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; Encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; Caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others; Helping the students to understand critical global peace themes such as anti-nuclearism, international relations, environmental responsibility, communication skills, nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality etc; Training individuals to resolve interpersonal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) mediation; Helping the students learn to manage anger, “fight fair” and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions; Employing approaches which include encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their actions and to brainstorm in groups on compromises, among others. The test of hypothesis two showed that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of staff and students on the impact had on conflict resolution in tertiary institutions by the existing state of higher education leadership not focused on peace education and impact of the new proposal of refocusing higher institution leadership for peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State (Olowo, 2016).

The respondents all agreed on the above listed strategies as ways of enhancing the implementation of peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. This is in line with the assertion by Esmaeil and Filiz (2014) that the aim of peace education is to remove negative feelings by creating a forum for people to come together and allow them to know, trust and cooperate with each other, and thus coexist. In line with the findings peace education is achieved by emphasizing its vital components such as conflict resolution and communication skills, as well as honing the values and importance of teams such as nonviolence and peace building which empower individuals and give them solidarity, and by exposing the students to other related areas of studies which include international relations, human rights, developmental psychology, the environment and conflict resolution, so peace education could be implemented by focusing on the value as well as risks of conflict with the aim to increase communication skills (Ezeoba, 2012).

The findings of this study finally revealed that the impact of implementing peace education through refocusing of higher institution leadership on peace education in Rivers State include: Reduction of crime, violence and other social vices in the society; Overcoming challenges ranging from political tensions to religious and tribal violent conflicts; Enabling people to adopt a positive attitude regarding the different

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issues they can face through their life and to develop the necessary skill to peaceful conflict resolution; Enabling people to have the right perspective and approach towards issues of terrorism and militancy particular steering clear of playing an agent or party to, or getting victimized; Empowering the future generation with the necessary skills to resolve social issues; Equipping citizens with the knowledge to understand how to avoid and manage violence, conflict, achieve better or improved human relationship, unity and internal cooperation among various tribes; Eliminating the avoidable causes of preference for war, violence, exclusion and destruction among which are groups prejudice, stereotypes and hatred, while enhancing mass support and understanding of the need for peace, non-violence, cooperation, and collaborative construction of values for social and communal development; Enabling people to appreciate themselves and collectively seek, endorse or employ means to foster their peaceful coexistence within their own groups, community and society; Fueling and inspiring, motivating and sustaining willingness of students to positively contribute to the development of the society while at the same time enabling them publicly discriminate against violence and war or other forms of conflicts, among other ones. The test of hypothesis three showed that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of staff and students on the impact of implementing peace education through refocusing of higher institution leadership for peace education in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. In line with the findings, Alimba (2016) categorically stated that the share of higher education in societal crisis is much greater than those manifesting at other levels of education. This is because of the make-up of the system; its link with other sectors and the society in general. In clear terms, Alimba (2008) also posited that the abnormal use of small arms in schools brings about the problems of insecurity, fear, and tension which deprive the system of the opportunity of being effectively and efficiently managed, to optimally contribute to the developmental prospect of the continent. These events are bound to limit the delivery capabilities of higher institutions of learnt in any continent. Thus peace education will enhance these capabilities by dealing with the problems that limited them.

Conclusion:

Peace education could be described from the study as a progressive academic content of practical and philosophical orientation designed to solve the practical and peculiar problems of conflicts in tertiary institutions. And in this light, this study has shown that, Lack of peace education in tertiary institutions could negatively affect both staff and students who need peace education as a continuous orientation to know how to play their roles in helping to solve the practical and peculiar problems of conflicts in their tertiary institutions

It acknowledges the fact that one of the core missions for established tertiary institutions is to unleash the creative and innovative capabilities of people for the solution of surrounding problems and enhance the quality of life. As such the escalation

of cult activities is a major conflict that implodes the fortunes of tertiary institutions. It thus presents peace education as a solution to various forms of conflicts which affect tertiary institutions as clearly observed that

- Protests by staff unions is a serious conflict that distort the smooth running of academic programs in tertiary institutions causing delay in completing academic sessions and negatively affecting the life plan of the alumni.
- The ebbing of cult activities help to improve the freedom of students and staff of tertiary institutions to carry out their regular academic activities smoothly...
- The purpose of establishing universities everywhere is because they have immense potentials to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the people through higher education which they foster; hence allowing conflicts to thrive in them will greatly inhibit this contribution.
- Tertiary institutions serve as sources of new knowledge and innovative thinking and therefore peace education deserves a place within the curriculum planning of tertiary institutions, as a way of enhancing new knowledge for ensuring peace in tertiary institutions.
- Tertiary institutions are functional providers of skilled personnel with credible credentials and that includes skilled peacemakers in society which peace education curriculum could foster.
- Tertiary institutions have the capacity to attract international talents and business investments and peace education that produces the right talent for maintaining peace in and around the institutions or locality of the institution would help attract more of the right quality of international talents and business investments in that locality.
- No tertiary institution will ever attract both local and international students en masse, where there is hardly smooth running of its academic sessions due to internal conflicts that are let to escalate without its leadership taking the initiative for peace education.
- Tertiary institutions are bound to fail to achieve the purpose of their establishment where their leadership is not doing enough to ensure peace among other challenges such as inadequate institutional care, scarcity of teaching and learning infrastructure, and a fossilized culture of violence etc.
- A curriculum for peace education is important because it would help everyone who has a role to play in tertiary institutions both government, staff and

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students to clearly understand their roles and what is before them, and firmly resolve to cause their institution to overcome its challenges and to be counted among the best higher educational institutions in the world.

- Frequent disruptions leading to poor quality of academic work and irregular and uncertain university calendars are consequences of conflicts in tertiary institutions that peace education could help to limit or tackle effectively.
- Without peace education the frequent use of strike action would continue to disrupt academic work and paralyze all academic activities in tertiary institutions, making peace education a necessity.
- Disruptive strike actions do untold harm to the tertiary institutions and no existing academic program has been able to provide a better alternative to this conflict, and so peace education would need to define the way forward and better alternative to strikes.
- For peace education to have nationwide effectiveness it should be able to enhance the smooth running of academic activities in tertiary institutions by being extended to the University Union which has always managed to paralyze the entire tertiary education system nationwide due to central command structure that they operate in enforcing strike actions.
- Peace education could help to strategically manage and control the negative impact of the culture of violence in tertiary institutions
- Where other existing academic activities would have no impact, peace education; when focused upon by tertiary education leadership, will reduce and eventually bring an end to the conflicting activities of cultism; which, as a strange, devilish, satanic and totally repugnant phenomenon is a main agent of the culture of violence in tertiary institutions.
- Peace education curriculum designed for students will teach them the values of society and how to avoid groups or unions that jeopardize those values, hence be an effective tool for safeguarding students from groups or sects that are dedicated to actions well beyond accepted norms in society.
- Peace education curriculum will detail for the learners the ways to protect themselves from exploitations by the media of culture of violence such as

cultism, hence able to resist acts of terror, violence, intimidation and outright killings of “marked” persons, as cultists have been known to operate in all their varieties that have held higher institutions hostage without any existing academic activity ever being able to curb them.

- Peace education will promote acts of peace in tertiary institutions and discriminate against the culture of violence in its entirety, particularly cultism which held sway over tertiary institutions, and whose members are maimed and killed with incredible ferocity for attempting to deflect from their ranks or give out classified information about their fraternity.
- Peace education will be able to bring to the open once taboo topics of conflicts in higher institutions and proffer lasting solutions whose ambassadors will become all who learn to become peacemakers through peace education, but who would have otherwise been prisoners of fear and cowardice, unable to speak freely amidst other academic activities.
- Peace education will be able to restore sanity in the minds of young people who will no longer live in fear of molestation by cultists, whereas other academic activities have been unable to arrest the conflicts involving students being terrorized with dangerous weapons in classrooms – guns, knives, explosives; girls being raped and property stolen.
- Peace education will teach students and staff the value of embracing peace and taking active roles in participation at peace and other relevant forums or educational activities in their institution and see the inappropriateness of joining cult fraternities such as Virkings, Back Axe and Buccaneers among the most vicious male dominant cult groups in higher institutions or the female dominant ones such as Daughters of Jezebel, Black Brassieres and countless others that have long terrorized higher institutions especially in Rivers State.

Recommendation:

Based on the findings and observations detailed above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Leaders of universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and research centers should work towards a socio-economic rationalization of their role as peace educators to protect the vital human resources and valuable material assets of their institutions, and be more open to mounting all mechanisms of peace, security and in-depth reforms of approaches to conflict resolutions to meet the needs of the members of the institutions, both staff and students and protect

them from their fears, while being innovative in leadership in order to forestall escalation of conflicts that may arise in unprecedented manners.

2. Leaders of higher institutions should set an example of leadership by adopting a democratic style of transparency and openness where all communication gaps are closed between them and those they lead, by ensuring the involve staff and students in critical decisions that could affect all within the institution and so should make their offices accessible to the members of the institution who might need to make critical consultations with them, while they also take their responsibility seriously to ensure the security of the life and property of the staff and students are guaranteed and never compromised by anyone from within or outside the institution.
3. In refocusing higher institution leadership for peace education in Rivers State, the leaders should simplify the model of peace education they intend to adopt to clearly define their objectives and modus of implementing peace education in the institutions with clear indication of the refusal of the institution to condone all unethical conducts among staff and students such as make them prone to conflict of interest in relation to factors which include unwholesome practice of discrimination, exploitation, molestation, sexual abuse, involving students and staff, and other deviant behaviours such as homosexuality and lesbianism, drug and human trafficking, cultism and gangsterism, stealing and extortions, fighting and intolerance through impolite use of words on any member of the institution.
4. A guidance and counseling unit for peace and conflict resolution should be created and adequate funding sourced to empower it to plan and implement various extra curricula peace education programs for the staff and students of the tertiary institution community.
5. A peace education curriculum should be structured into the academic program of the institution and adequate human and financial resource should be committed to implementing its effective delivery in tertiary institutions, having competent professors, senior lecturers and lecturers among the academic staff assigned to manage different courses developed out of a general peace education curriculum designed for tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
6. Peace oriented events should be frequently organized and planned into the academic program to receive adequate attention for participation by staff and students, get right publicity and feature competent guests and hosts to make any general conference, symposium, seminar or workshop organized for this

purpose to be mandatory for all staff and students in these institutions, with proper monitoring and tracking of active participation in them especially by students, while micro groups are formed at class levels with regular meeting activities structured with formal leadership and properly monitored across all departments such that anyone who isn't active within them can be penalized or fined.

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