



THE CULTURE OF PEACE AND CITIZENSHIP: AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND LECTURERS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

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ABSTRACT

The study was a descriptive survey of perception of students and lecturers on the culture of peace observed on campus as a result of teaching and offering Peace and Citizenship Studies in Uniuyo. The main objective of this study was to examine the opinion of lecturers and students as major stakeholders in Peace and Citizenship Studies in University of Uyo. Social constructivism theory provided the theoretical guide for the study. The study benefited from multiple sources of qualitative data collection techniques such as focus group discussion; in-depth interview and key informant investigation. Instrument used for data collection was interview guide designed with open-ended questions, reliably organized and arranged to achieve the research objectives. Interviews were conducted at selected offices with the study participants. Data were collected as raw narratives from competing interrogations. Field report were analysed thematically with each study objective forming a theme for analysis of result. Findings showed that, the teaching of Citizenship and Peace Study has great positive impact on students offering the course; Gathered data also showed that there are variations in the perception of students toward the course in University of Uyo, among other findings. Based on these findings the study recommends improvement of facilities and number of

days designated for the teaching of the course at tertiary level; made it compulsory in primary and secondary schools in order to create more impact within the Nigerian society.

Key Words: Culture, peace, citizenship, Students and Lecturers

INTRODUCTION

Topical issues relating to peace and conflict resolution have drawn the attention of numerous universities and other higher education establishments across the globe, and for many years, politicians, academics and other stakeholders in peace management in cultures the world over, continue to inject robustness in peace debate thereby underscoring the importance of studying peace and conflict resolution (Nkang and Uwah, 2021). The 2004 Nigerian National Policy on Education highlights the importance of citizenship in Section 3, Paragraph 14(c), states clearly that education is fundamental for actively engaging in and enhancing society. In the fourth section, the policy reiterated the fact that, education should aim to cultivate in our young people a feeling of togetherness, nationalism, and affection towards our nation and feeling of belonging to the country

According to Uribe (2024), the development of war and peace history in the world's political equations have brought about the evolution and progression of peace and citizenship education. It must be pointed out that peace and citizenship are inextricably linked since both aim to satisfy human potential. Good citizenship produces good peace, and good peace produces good citizens. Their relationship is reciprocal and mutually influential (Bevington *et al.* 2019). The concept of peace has become an indispensable social fact, inspired by the realization across the world today that, if progress is made in all fields and aspects of academic activity, education also has to take into consideration and analysed very closely ethics and peace studies which is one of the major interest in peace awareness through education (Elkhateeb, 2015).

Uribe (2024) further maintained that during the 1960s, in addition to accounts of war, mainstream peace history concentrated on diplomatic traditions and elite foreign policy decision making which created the need and the platform for peace and citizenship education. Oueijan (2018) reported that civic society and its increasing involvement in issues of war and peace is closely linked with citizenship, peace and education. According Oueijan(2018), within this view, citizenship has synthesized several themes under which peace education has been studied or put into action, like: anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality. According to Nkang and Uwah (2012), peace education involves human rights and conflict resolution education.

Peace and citizenship studies bring into focus questions regarding what it means to be a person, a citizen, a human, and what it means to live a good life in good relation with others despite tribe, race, class, and status, thereby bringing about many points of connection like, the common aims of peace and citizenship education (Bevington *et al.*, 2019). Milton (2020) emphasizes that peace education is highly necessary for higher education to build peace in Libya after a prolonged conflict in the region. Yedi *et al.*, (2023) posit that peace education also plays an important role in subsiding and neutralizing the history of terrorism which occurs at a global scale. According to Sardi (2012), peace and citizenship studies can address acts of terrorism by encouraging students to explore other factors contributing to conflicts, such as discrimination against individuals based on their religious beliefs which can be seen as contradictory to the principles and teachings of the respective religion itself.

Reardon and Cabezudo (2002) posit that education for peace specialists are of the opinion that peace education does not aim to achieve peace as an educational process, but rather it prepares students to achieve peace in the society. According to Uribe (2024), there are certain central elements that any education for peace program must consider: knowledge, skills and values must be a core part of any peace education programme. For citizenship education, Elkhateeb (2015) further maintained that citizenship education trains good citizens, and that as a citizen, one must be aware of the human and political issues at stake in their society or nation, this therefore, requires from each citizen ethical and moral qualities. Elkhateeb(2015) further posits that all forms of citizenship education must inculcate or aim at inculcating respect for others and recognition of the equality of all human beings; and at combating all forms of discrimination like racist, gender-based, religious, etc. by fostering a spirit of tolerance and peace among human beings.

The role that universities play in studying and pioneering peace education is highly needed to help create a peaceful, safe, and harmonious atmosphere throughout the world (Yedi *et al.*, 2023). Millican *et al.*, (2021) opined that higher educational institutions need to ensure that peace education goes well. Universities can contribute to the development of peace education which educates students to be agent of peace (Oueijan, 2018). Chelule (2014) reports that few public universities in Kenya offer peace education courses due to the lack of qualified faculty, limited availability of relevant textbooks, and training materials especially those by African scholars.

Owan and Agunwa (2019) observed that it is quite obvious that the human resources of any university consist of people with diverse cultural, religious, social, political and economic background. This is shown in their attitude to lectures, work, temperament and frame of reference, which certainly makes their control often complex. Due to the differences among

students and workers in tertiary institutions, conflict is bound to occur. This is because conflict is inevitable in any organization (Arop *et al.*, 2018). However, to promote peace, unity, and synergy among students and workers, there is a need for peace studies and appropriate resolution strategies to be adopted by managers (Yedi *et al.*, 2023).

Lecturing in the university is a great task, and every response as form of attitude depends on the assimilation of the given lectures to students in the universities. Lecturing peace, conflict resolution, or citizenship studies is a great task within universities, especially, in Nigeria. According to Obeidat (2005), the changing scope and pace of society has become increasingly knowledge-based so that higher learning and research now act as essential components of cultural, socio-economic and environmentally sustainable development of individuals, communities and nations. Lecturing peace and citizenship education as a course in the University of Uyo is teaching a general course study (GST) which all the university students in their early year in the university must offer and pass at examination level as a basic requirement for obtaining a first degree in the university.

University of Uyo otherwise known as “UNIUYO” is the oldest federal university in Akwa Ibom State. Located within the Uyo metropolis the capital city of the state, University of Uyo Town Campus and the Annex campus are located at Ikpa road within the heart of Uyo main city and the main campus is located at Nwaniba road. Scholarly literatures have shown perceptions on peace and citizenship studies from other institutions, but this paper examined the perceptions of lecturers and students on teaching and receiving lectures on peace and citizenship studies within the University of Uyo, Uyo.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of lecturers and students on peace and citizenship studies in University of Uyo, Uyo. The study sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the impact of citizenship and peace study on students in University of Uyo, Uyo.
2. To examine the impact of Citizenship and Peace Study on the Nigerian society.
3. To examine the challenges of Citizenship and Peace study in University of Uyo, Uyo.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Constructivism Theory

Social constructivism developed by Lev Vygotsky is a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasizes the collaborative nature of much learning. Social constructivism is a sociological theory of knowledge according to which human development is socially situated, and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others (McKinley,

2025). Social constructivism was developed by post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky who argued that all cognitive functions originate in (and must therefore be explained as products of) social interactions and that learning did not simply comprise the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community for corresponding actions (McKinley, 2025).

Emphasizing the symbolic and interpretive character of social relations through and corresponding practices, this theory, which is influenced by symbolic interactionism, states that war is a product of our socially constructed interpretations of ourselves and others. Mead's emphasis on the social and interactive construction of self is compatible with a host of philosophical and sociological theories that have emphasized the significance of language in defining human reality. Unlike utilitarian and rationalist theories that perceive humans as selfish and competitive, the linguistic turn emphasizes the social and cooperative nature of human beings. Since being with others is the very constitutive element of human consciousness and self, the realization of peace requires a new social interpretive construction of reality (McKinley, 2025).

Applicably, this theory emphasize that students develop sense of conflict due to socially or culturally constructed learned behaviour or senses. At their arrival at the university, through the learning process of peace and citizenship studies, there are tendencies for the students to integrate new knowledge and understanding of peaceful co-existence with each other within and outside the university, tolerance and needs for conflict resolutions. At this level of development, the educated student becomes more civilized than the uneducated looming the streets of Uyo, and has the readiness to work for and seek peace and peaceful resolutions on matters pertaining to or generating conflict.

METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitatively designed and conducted within the University of Uyo community. As a qualitative research, sample size was not necessarily calculated as the main aim was to gather good quality information toward achieving the research objectives through big-net approach (Fetterman, 2010). Method of data collection was focus group discussions (FGDs). Focus group discussions (FGDs) In-depth interview and personal observation were conducted with lecturers in the University of Uyo, who were teaching or has ever taught Peace and Citizenship Studies in the university at any level. The study participants were selected based on the inclusive criteria that they were students offering peace and Citizenship Studies or Lecturers facilitating the course.

Instrument used for data collection was an interview guide which was constructed by the lead researcher and his assistant. The instrument was constructed with open-ended

questions that were reliably organized and arranged to achieve the research objectives. Interviews were conducted at selected offices with the study participants. Data were recorded, written and coded for analysis. Each interview session lasted for about one hour with both the lecturers and students' sessions respectively. Data collected for report were analysed thematically with each study objective forming a theme for analysis of result. Each study participant was granted the liberty to willingly participate in the study with the freedom to withdraw willing if so desired as part of ethical consideration.

RESULT

Impact of Peace and Citizen Studies on Students

A report from the gathered data shows that, the teaching of citizenship and peace study has great positive impacts on students at the University of Uyo. This was revealed through the narratives of study participants, both students and lecturers, who revealed that the course has helped the students understand the importance of having peace and living in peace. Gathered data revealed that students are empowered through the course to understand the need to have peace within themselves by maintaining good health status, which will translate into living a peaceful life with one another. One of the participants under the lecturers' category narrated that:

I teach about health in the course using HIV as a disease because it helps the students to understand what health is all about and what disease is all about which helps the students to have understanding and knowledge and how to achieve peace within themselves from the point of good health (*Lecturer*).

According to study participants, the course was said to have great importance on national unity which is key factor in achieving peaceful co-existence among Nigerian citizens. One of the study participants in his narratives reported that:

I teach Nigeria as a social system, where all the parts have to rise for the whole system to survive (*Lecturer*).

A participant narrated that:

The course and the textbooks have influenced positively. Though, the case of lack of venue discourages me from attending classes. The textbook and the course are creating the view of the life we are living; we must drop what we came with from home to take-up or pick up what we learnt from the course (*Student*).

Another participant of the study in his narratives on the capacity of the study to create in students the spirit of national identity and unity reported that:

A national unity and identity, I believe that for a society to be at peace there must be understanding of the place of national identity so students come to know for the first time their identity through

engaging in citizen and studies. The students have started to know their identity and who we are as a nation (*Lecturer*).

The study is believed to create opportunity for student to have deep understanding of variety of issues involve in peace and conflict resolution.

A study participant had this to say:

The teaching of citizenship and peace helped us to gather evidence-based data on peace and conflict resolution issues; increased knowledge and embolden us to work for peace as citizens of the nation through ability to resolve conflict and maintain peaceful co-existence.

Another study participant narrated that:

We were taught by our Lecturer that as human beings, we are sub-units in a broader social system. Therefore, we are expected to embrace each other and work together for the wellbeing of the society at large. We are told no society can attract development without peace... ..peace is the building block for development initiatives.

Analysed data show that citizenship and peace study is one of the courses under general studies (GST) for undergraduate students in the University of Uyo, Uyo. The course is taught by lecturers from different fields that use the subject matter of their field like health, social science , and others to teach the students about peace, the importance of peace, how peace can be achieved and the need for peaceful co-existence with other students and those in the wider society.

One of the study participants narrated that:

I make students to understand that unity started from us, from the single cell through fertilization of the egg which forms different parts. Attitude with examples like I am in Uyo and Mr. Bassey lives in Ife and you said I should leave Uyo, will Mr. Bassey leaves Ife because he is not a Yoruba? That is what genetics teaches. Genetics teaches us that we are one and there's help us to understand that we are one and we don't need to fight each other. Therefore, from genetic aspects I make students to know that we are one and we can only ask ourselves after the exposure how can we build on this? Genetics has ways of explaining the physical variations in human features despite the fact that we are one. There have to be a follow-up to build on it if, we have to really achieve national unity (*Lecturer*).

Another study participant in his narrative explained that;
though it takes time for students to digest the course content, later the students will know that it is not just about to protect them but in their relationship with others.

Teaching and learning Citizenship and Peace Study are of great importance. According to the data acquired from the interviews, the understanding of the importance of the course first by the lecturers commands the prompt for effective and committed transfer of the importance to the undergraduate students in University of Uyo, Uyo.

Impact of Peace and Citizen Studies on Nigerian Society

Gathered data showed that there are variations in the perception of students toward the course (citizenship and peace studies) in University of Uyo. Some study participants were of the opinion that the course is greatly important for all the Nigerian citizens both within and outside the university.

According to narratives of the study participants:

Nigeria should go beyond institutionalizing citizens and Peace studies and education because there are many outside the university. The students in the university are like a drop of water in an ocean (*Students*).

Another participant of the study in her narratives stated that:

I am looking at our societal value system because these students come from different family backgrounds where moral values and cultural system play serious roles in a child's character disposition. That is, if a child comes from a violent family and attend the course irregularly for one semester, such students should be helped. We should be taking our teaching from the highlight of such students, it is so, because if a student belief in conflict and has benefited from such, it will be difficult for the student embrace the principle of peaceful co-existence. Such student must be rightly nurtured by this course and eventually through this course, the person will be transformed (*Lecturer*).

The course according to gathered data has capacity to build political leaders with new mentality of peace and peaceful co-existence. It was discovered from the study participants that if course is properly imparted upon the students, there are tendencies of transforming the current political situation of the nation through conflict resolution.

One of the study participants in her narrative reported that:

There is a faction of political sharing and restructure of policies of allocation of resources appropriately. Such topics should be added and maybe someone from political science can be called upon to teach such topic. If such is done, the course has the potential to instill peaceful habits with capacity to produce new phase of political leaders who understand peace and peaceful co-existence (*Lecturer*).

Need for dialogue is created through the teaching of peace and conflict studies in the university. Study participants were of the opinion that peace and citizenship study have capacity to create awareness for need for dialogue among Nigerians.

One of the study participants in his report, narrated that:

I was taught through the course that conflict can be resolved through dialogue with reference to Boko Haram which if we could dialogue with them; I think we can solve the insecurity problem (*Student*).

Peace and citizenship study is a course with capacity to reposition the Nigerian students in the right frame of mind through proper enlightenment on peace and patriotism as citizens of the nation. The teaching of the course within University of Uyo has equipped students with knowledge to understand to need for need and peaceful social-relation with others within the Nigerian society.

Challenges of teaching Peace and Citizenship Study in University of Uyo, Uyo

There are variations in the situations that pose barriers to either teaching or in acquisition of taught knowledge as the case are widely applicable. The situations within University of Uyo in correlation with teaching Citizenship and Peace studies as experienced by the lecturers as provided from gathered data differ from the experiences of the students. According to study participants, lecturing the course within the University of Uyo comes with challenges which include inadequate lecture hall for students, over populated lecture hall, unconducive lecture hall, inadequate course lecturers, inadequate course contents for the expected results, and others which were emphasized in non-verbal expression of some of the study participants.

According to the narrative of one of the study participants, there is inadequacy in the course content of the Citizenship and Peace Studies as offered by the university students:

During my first year in this university I saw this course as routine of thing or as a requirement to move on to another level. There was no effort on my part to factor in what I was taught into practical life

experience and quite sure this was applicable to majority of students at that level of study. We were so overwhelmed with the euphoria of gaining admissions into the University. The jammed- packed class room condition did not help matters at all.

Another study participant in his narratives presented the challenge of over populated hall by students during the course lecture which by emphasis as reported study participants is a major challenge of teaching Citizenship and Peace Study as a general course in University of Uyo.

A narrative from one of the study participants pointed out:

You will take the course at CBN hall and the hall was filled up. So, only few students can hear you because there is no public address system to be used in such big hall. There are many students who say they don't benefit from the course because they didn't hear the lecturers and stay at the back in groups and watch videos in their phones and in one occasion, I had to send one away (*Lecturer*).

Inadequacy in availability of course lecturers to teach the Citizenship and Peace Study was another challenge which was gathered through interview. According to reports from study participants, the over populated lecture halls during the course lectures provides the need for more lecturers for the course most especially as a general study course for all the university students during their early year of the undergraduate programmes in the University of Uyo. One of the study participants reported that:

There is need for more lecturers to meet up with the large size of students. This is because anytime I go to lecture at CBN hall, the hall is always full with students such that those at the back do complain that they don't when I am at the front and those do not hear when I moved to the back because there is no public address system to use in such a large class size (*Lecturer*).

Another participant narrated that:

We go there to deliver lecture that is our own path. Professor Uko used to supervise the course of GST very well but after that the office of the directorate of GST should work not just to assign us to where we are to teach. We used to have 50 students per lecturer but now we have over 80 students so the university management should be blamed (*Lecturer*).

Another challenge of teaching the course as gathered by the reports of the study participant is the unpleasant behaviours of some students toward lectures and during lectures. According to a participant, some students report for lectures late and some do not come for lectures until the last week of lectures. He narrated that:

What has been regular with science students is that we discovered that the students resume very late for the studies (*Lecturer*).

A participant during interview reported a situation whereby a student transferred his aggression on him. According to his report:

Sometime ago I went to teach at a venue and I met a student who was addressing the student I tried to talk to him to leave the venue for me to take my lecture, the student slapped me at the venue and the thing was on social media and the school management did nothing about it (*Lecturer*).

There have been many discovered challenges facing the lecturers and the students in the course of teaching and learning through Citizenship and Peace Study as a general course in the University of Uyo, Uyo. These challenges differ and change respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Data collected indicates that teaching citizenship and peace studies at the University of Uyo has a significant positive influence on students. This information came to light from the stories shared by participants in the study, including both students and lecturers, who disclosed that the course has aided students in grasping the significance of peace and peaceful living. Collected information indicated that students are given the tools to comprehend the importance of inner peace and good health, leading to a harmonious life with others. This finding gives credence to Bevington *et al*, (2019) who proposed that peace and citizenship education raise inquiries about the essence of being an individual, a member of society, a human being, and the concept of leading a fulfilled life in harmony with others regardless of tribal, racial, social, or economic differences, resulting in various similarities such as the shared objectives of peace and citizenship studies. Elkhateeb (2015) also corroborates the findings by arguing that citizenship education is essential for cultivating responsible citizens who are conscious of the social and political challenges in their community or country, and emphasizes the importance of ethical and moral values in every citizen.

The Peace and Citizenship course has the ability to shift Nigerian students' mindset towards peace and patriotism as citizens of the nation through proper education. The course offered at the University of Uyo has provided students with the knowledge to comprehend the importance of maintaining harmonious and peaceful social bonds with others in Nigerian society. Teaching peace and conflict study at the university fosters the necessity for dialogue. Participants in the study believed that peace and citizenship studies can raise awareness about

the importance of dialogue among Nigerians. Collected data indicates that there are differences in how students perceive the course (Citizenship and Peace Studies) at the University of Uyo. The class holds significant value for every Nigerian resident, whether they are enrolled in the university or not. Based on the collected data, the program is able to cultivate political figures who embrace a fresh mindset focused on peace and harmonious living together. The study participants found that effectively teaching a course to students can lead to transforming the nation's current political situation through conflict resolution. These findings give credence to Yedi *et al.*, (2023) who posited that peace education also plays an important role in subsiding and neutralizing the history of terrorism which occurs at a global scale and Milton (2020) who emphasizes that peace education is highly necessary for higher education to build peace.

Gathered data showed that, different circumstances can create obstacles in either teaching or learning. These situations are common in various contexts. The experiences of lecturers at University of Uyo teaching Citizenship and peace studies, as reported from collected data, vary from those of the students. Based on the narratives from the participants, teaching and learning Citizenship and Peace Study at the University of Uyo is difficult due to issues like insufficient lecture space, crowded lecture halls, uncomfortable learning environment, lack of enough teachers, insufficient course materials, and non-verbal cues from some participants highlighting further challenges. This finding agrees with Owan and Agunwa (2019) who posited that the differences in the universities within the system, lecturers and students are responsible for conflicts which generate barriers even for the teaching and learning the course in the university.

Conclusion

Peace and conflict resolution has drawn the attention of numerous universities and other higher education establishments across the globe, and for many years, academics from a wide range of fields and numerous influential politicians worldwide continue to concur on the importance of studying peace and conflict resolution. The 2004 Nigerian National Policy on Education highlights the importance of citizenship in Section 3, Paragraph 14(c). Peace and citizenship studies bring into focus questions regarding what it means to be a person, a citizen, a human, and what it means to live a good life in good relation with others despite tribe, race, class, and status, thereby bringing about many points of connection like, the common aims of peace and citizenship education. The role that universities play in studying and pioneering peace education is highly needed to help create a peaceful, safe, and harmonious atmosphere throughout the world. Universities can contribute to the development of peace education which educates students to be agent of peace. University of Uyo otherwise known as “UNIUYO” is the oldest federal university in the Akwa Ibom State and it is located at within the Uyo metropolis the capital city of the state. Citizenship and peace study has repositioned the students in University of

Uyo into agents of peace which is witnessed in the changing phase of peace as experienced in the institution as compare to what was in some years past. The course being a general course for all the students at undergraduate level, is faced with numerous challenges ranging from insufficient lecture space, crowded lecture halls, uncomfortable learning environment, lack of enough teachers, insufficient course materials to bad attitude of some students toward the lectures which is also due to the frustrating nature of the totality of teaching and learning citizenship and peace study in the University of Uyo.

Recommendations

Based on the study objectives, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be an improvement in the number of days designated for the teaching of the course, Peace Studies to ensure the realization of the desired impact.
2. Peace and Conflict Studies should be taught every semester at tertiary level and also made compulsory in primary and secondary schools in order to create more impact within the Nigerian society.
3. The Directorate of General Studies (GST) in University of Uyo should interface with management of the institution to improve classroom facilities and make more conducive for learning. Lecturers teaching the course should be adequately remunerated and given other incentives for effective services.

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