Moral Education an Essential Element to Extirpate Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

Morality is an essential ingredient in educational development in Nigeria in the 21st century, because moral education inculcates, good character or proper conduct such as honesty, hard work, love for one's neighbour, value for life and property, respect for constituted authority and peaceful co-existence. Cultism in higher institutions is characterized with violence, killing, maiming, raping and destruction of property. It is a pervasive evil that poses great challenge to Nigerians hence the need to enthrone morality and moral education to salvage the nation from destruction and prevent shortage of human and financial resources and insecurity in the nation. Therefore if cultism is not checked anarchy will reign supreme in the institutions and the educational development will be hindered. The major causes of cultism are influence of peer group, parental background, societal decadence, militarization of the Nigerian polity, lack of recreational facilities and quest for power and protection. However some of the effects of cultism include loss of lives and property, disruption of academic activities on campuses, unsafe school environment rustication or expulsion. It is therefore recommended that moral education should be included in the school's curriculum. In addition, parents should live exemplary lives and also inculcate moral virtues to their children. Government should be more aggressive in her quest to eradicate cultism in the tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Moral Education, Cultism, and Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which knowledge skilled and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to another through learning training or research. However, this could be hindered through the menace of cultism in tertiary institutions. Cultism affects teaching and learning negatively, Ogunbameru (2024) define secret cult as any form of organization whose activities are not only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others but such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with the accepted societal norms and values. Infact the introduction of cultism in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become a serious social vice which has defy all solutions. Cultism is one of the greatest social crimes committed in the Nigerian tertiary institutions which is given every Nigerian a serious concern, hence the need of moral education to curb it. Morality plays a very crucial role in the social lives of individuals and the nation at large. This is because it deals with values, behaviours and attitudes exhibited and encouraged by members of the society. Therefore, moral education is essential for curbing cultism in tertiary institutions to enhance educational development Okorodudu (2004) Opines that moral education means any activity or process geared towards helping the individual imbibe the societal norms or moral values in order for such an individual to become useful to himself, others and the society in general. It is imperative that salient moral virtues are inculcated in the student to enable them eschew cultism and impart positively on the educational development. The aim of this paper is to review the continuing plague of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions and to provide solution to it through the enthronement of moral education in all institutions of learning.

The Concept of Moral

The word moral comes from a latin word "Mores" which means the code of conduct or custom of a people, and define how individuals should live together in peace (educational encyclopedia 2023).

Okwueze (2023) defines morality as a form of social consciousness in which one relates with others. It is the manifestation of high principle for proper conduct.

The Concept of Moral Education

Moral education is a set of training designed to inculcate fairness, sense of justice and concern for the needs and rights of others. Nwenearizi, Egwuelu and Asabor (2024) define moral education as the teaching of right conduct. It is the teaching of individuals to become better people. It is also the process of growth in moral awareness, understanding and action.

Moral education encourages individuals to develop moral uprightness, attitudes and other positive values, which make them to conform to societal norms. Moral education can be regarded as the process of guiding the characters and development of an individual in the society in order for him or her to be able to do what is right or just. According to Lawal (2023) moral education is a process to teach standards of right or wrong, as well as their applications to individual lives. Agha (2023) states that morality is concerned with the field of human values or with the good and desirable conduct. It is a term used to refer to the goodness or badness of a human act, or good behaviour.

Masquid (2024) opines that moral education is the process of producing individuals who can manifest the following behavioural traits.

a. A positive moral virtues and value for morality.
b. Ability to communicate with others effectively.
c. The ability to have feelings for others
d. The ability to value life and property
e. The ability to live in peace with others

Concept of Cultism

According to Awele (2023), a secret cult is an external relationship between a group of people who are out to achieve set objectives for members, even though these objectives go against the interest and norms of the society. It is a group of people who share and propagate peculiar beliefs only to members.

Adam (2023) defines cult as small group of people who share a common cause and whose mode of meetings and agenda are unknown to the public, and initiation into their group is usually done in secret. furthermore cultism is a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership and their mode of operation are

done in the secret and their activities having negative impact on both members and non members.

The Concept of Education

Fafunwa cited in Okobia, et al (2023) define education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he lives. From the above view, education involves the development of the whole personality of the citizen in relation to his contributions to the general development of the society and its moral or ethical foundation.

History of Cultism in Nigerian Higher Institutions

The most embarrassing problem facing tertiary institutions in Nigeria today is the menace and activities of cult members. There is hardly no academic session without reported cases of cultism in most Nigerian Institutions and there is no single Nigerian institution of higher learning that has not experienced the menace of cultism for some time now. According to Okwu (2023), as at September 2022, 10,000 students and lecturers have died on Nigerian campuses as a result of cult related violence clashes. Lives of promising young men and women have been cut short by the bloody hands of wicked cultists on campuses. Cult groups in tertiary institutions are violent, destructive and carried out many anti-social activities on campuses. This calls for various efforts to bound them in the institutions.

Nigerian educational institutions were not associated with secret cults until 1952 when Wole Soyinka (now Professor) and six others Olumuyiwa Awe, Ralph Opara, Tunji Tubi, Daign Imokhuede, Pius Olegbe and Olu Agunloye formed the Seadogs confraternity (a.k.a. Pyrates). The ideas behind the formation of the confraternity were both patriotic and regardful of others as it was not imagined as a secret cult. The main objectives of the seadogs according to Orintusin (2023) were: to fight against the imposition of foreign culture tribalism and the belief that a society should be run by an elite.

Today, there are about one hundred (100) secret cults in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions and are all equipped with an elaborate hierarchy, and different attire.

Some of the most notable of these secret cults include the Black axe, pyrates, confraternity, Vickings, Amazons, Buccaneer, Mafia, and Dragons. The female students are not left out as they have their own groups among which are Temple of Eden, Frigrates, Barracudas, Daughters of Jezebel and others (Adewale 2024).

The Activities of Cultism on Campuses

Although the history of cultism on the university campuses in Nigeria dates back to some seventy three years, its involvement in violence became manifest forty years ago. The existence of these groups on campuses have made life unsafe and meaningless to both staff and students. Their activities include; harassing any non-member who snatched a member's girl friend or 'sugar daddy' (in case of female cultism): harassing any female student who refuse their immoral advances and harassing any lecturer who insist on merit for passing examinations (Ajayi, et al 2023).

According to Akor (2024), one of the earliest reported secret cult violence occurred at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1984 when a non-cult student incurred the wrath of a cult leader by snatching his girlfriend. Adewale (2024) states that in 1991 a student of University of Port-Harcourt was beheaded during a clash between cult members. At Delta State University Abraka. The activities of secret cult groups resulted in the death of Principal Assistant Registrar. On 5th August, 2002 a 300 level economics student was shot dead and slaughtered at the Dallimore area of Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State.

On 8th June, 2006, some cult members invaded University of Ado-Editi at 12 noon where they burnt the cadet's office, killed three students and wounded many students and staff of the university (Omoegun and Akanle 2023). They also reported that on June 28, 2006, a lecturer Seun Oyodola was abducted and killed during a clash between cults at the Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. Cultists have killed many students in higher institutions in Nigeria, with the most horrific one at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife when about ten students were gunned down in a day by cultists (Jamiu 2024). Activities of cults are deviation from what started as a forum to awaken socio-cultural consciousness of our elite to fight oppression and racism. Ogidefa (2024) posits that on July 10.1999, five students of Obafemi Awolowo University were killed (the students

were George Yemi Iwilade, the then Tunde Oke, Amember of Democratic Socialist movement, Efe Ekede, Eviano Ekelemu and Yemi Ajiteru). On October, 2003, three students-Kehinde Dosumu, Kwara State polytechnic were killed.

Ogidefa (2024) states that Tony Heogbuna, acting Head of Geology department at the Enugu State University of Science and technology was murdered; Yomi Edeki of University of Benin was killed on February 14th 2004 and on March 9th 2004. Vincent Uloho of University of Benin, Benin-City was also murdered in cold blood. In July 2004, Wale Adeyori and Banji of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro were also killed; Ashifat Olatunji Saheed, a student of The Polytechnic Ibadan was slaughtered in March, 2005; Gbenga Joseph, a policeman attached to anti-cult squad of Kwara State police command was killed by suspected cultists in June 2005. Cultists slaughtered Bolaji Toniwa, a student of Lagos State University in September 2005.

The birth of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions has become a serious threat and social problem. Cultism has become a major social problem both within and outside institutions of higher learning which has tended to defy all solutions. Hence the enthronement of moral education to curb it and bring lasting solution to these great social crimes committed in the institutions of higher learning in the country.

Cultism has inflicted untold hardship on non members and members of other secret cults. Most of our campuses are unsafe for students and lecturers, as cultists embark on rampage, using guns and other deadly weapons on their victims. Indeed the trend has changed from fighting oppression to oppressing others, shedding and drinking of blood and robbery (Amaele, 2023).

According to Egbule and Okobia (2024) secret cult activities have negative impact especially within the schools environment and the country at large. Many Nigerian students have negative stories to tell whenever the word cult is mentioned. This is a major threat to conducive school environment in tertiary institutions, it makes school management (teaching and non-teaching staff), students, and the host community, to sleep with one eye open. Cultism has systematically infected educational institutions in Nigeria to the extent that both

cultists and non-cultists within the institutions and the environ have lost their peace. This has justified the researcher's outcry against students' cult activities in tertiary institutions.

Causes of Cultism in Nigeria Higher Institutions

According to Ajayi, et al (2023), the various causes of cultism on campuses are as follows:

1. **Influence of Peer Group:** Peer group influence is a potent factor that compels some students to join secret cults. Ibeh (2024) posits that, the period of adolescence is marked by instant social relationship in any environment he/she finds himself/herself. At adolescent stage, there is a shift of emphasis on social relationship from the parents to the peer group. As adolescent breaks the total reliance and contact with his/her parents, he/she shifts same to the newly acquired group which in most cases is any group on campus he/she embraces. Akinfolarin (2023) and Omoegun and Akanle (2024) also state that peer group influence is one of the reasons students join secret cult.
2. **Poor Upbringing**: Olajuigbe (2024) opines that parental background, lack of moral instruction at home and the manner in which the child is brought up could make a student to join cult. Furthermore, excessive control by parents, too many rules could make a student whose freedom knows no bound to join secret cult. According to Mgbekem (2024), some parents love their children to the extent of pampering them. When they do wrong things, instead of scolding them, they allow the children to grow up with such negative habit which make them to join cult groups. A child who comes from broken homes is exposed to parental negligence and frustration. Such child is easily lured into cultism. So some students joined cult to get over the frustration they encountered because of broken home.
3. **Societal Development:** Ogunbameru (2023) lamented that the Nigerian society has directly or indirectly provided an enabling environment for all forms of crimes among which is the problem of campus secret cult. He argues that Nigeria has replaced honour with dishonor as a standard attitude. Mgbekem (2024) also lamented that youths nowadays imbibed immoral values, instead of moral and decent values. This accounts for why

the youth see nothing wrong in joining secret cult. Okenwo (1994) also state that youths join cult as a result of lawlessness existing in Nigeria.

4. **Low Standard of Education:** According to Akinfolarin (2013) the economic downturn in the 1980s and early 1990s in the country encouraged corruption and low standards in the educational system. Most students gained admission into the universities with dubious credentials. Such students, because of their low self esteem find solace in cultism in order to survive the academic rigours at all cost. For such students, to survive the academic system becomes a game of survival at all cost and as such they join cult groups to intimidate lecturers and the school authorities.
5. **Militarization of the Nigerian Polity:** Adewale (2024) avails that the culture of violence which has become part and parcel of the Nigerian polity has many faces among which are military coups, state sponsored violence, political assassinations, activities of ethnic militia and communal clashes. He further states that the emergence of military coups in the Nigerian polity marked the official introduction of violence as a way of resolving political conflicts. He also highlighted militarization of the Nigerian polity for decades as a factor for cultism, in Nigerian tertiary institutions. While the happenings in the university are off shoot of the larger society, violence became pressed into the mind of an average Nigerian. Poor economic prospects that accompany democratic governance in Nigeria seem to make cultism an attractive option for youths. Besides, efforts by some power-drunk politicians to gain power at all costs, make them to train or recruit members as thugs in order to suppress their political opponents. Other reasons for cultism in tertiary institutions include lack of recreational facilities, decay in social life and increasing materialism of the society lack of vibrant students union, quest for power, status and protection, the desire to hold elective posts in the students union and the desire for security, support given by staff of tertiary institutions. In some institutions, certain administrative staff and lecturers are members of secret cults. The students are used against other members of the academic community to promote selfish interest Government lukewarm attitude to applying sanctions against cultists who violate the laws of the land this is because of the protection offered by those who are close to the corridors of power. Others are un-conducive learning environment, inadequate religious and moral

instructions, the negative impact of the mass media, inadequate orientation and welfare programmes for students.

The Effect of Cultism in the Higher Institutions

Cult activities have led to the closure of institutions thereby affecting a number of academic programmes. They also caused fear in the school community and prevent both academic and non-academic staff from putting in their best. They also disrupt the administration of the institution as precious time is spent on police investigations, internal investigations, panels, etc (Arnaele, 2023).

Egbule and Okobia (2024) posit that some cult members have been known to spearhead protests and demonstrations against school authorities on campuses. When students (non-cult members) are dissatisfied and decide to fight against social ills perpetuated by cult members, unrest follows, several instances exist where students had resisted attacks on them by cult members and such resistances results in unrest on the campuses. Cult activities on campuses have also resulted in lawlessness, molestation, real terrorism, assault, intimidation, rustication, victimization, death of innocent persons (sometimes through stray bullets), trauma and other catalogue of evils done by cult members have instilled fear in the innocent students who do not belong to any cult. There is constant feeling of insecurity and fear of the unknown as they can descend on their innocent colleagues any time. In fact cultism is a serious threat to peaceful and progressive co-existence in our campuses and vicinities. Hence the need of Moral Education which enhances peaceful coexistence through love for one another and sanctity of life.

According to Igbinosun and lyiewuare (2024) cultists have over the years attack many Nigerian tertiary institutions in order to have dominion over students and staff, perpetuates examination malpractice, extortion, theft, robbery and intimidation of students. The resultant effect of this is that both cultist and non cultist sleep with one eye open, In fact, the existence of cult groups in tertiary institutions have made life unsafe and meaningless for both staff and students as female students who refuse the amorous advances of cult members are manhandled, lecturers who insist on merit for passing examinations are insulted, beaten up or killed, paving way for fear, violence and feeling of insecurity. As a

result of this effective teaching and learning cannot take place as lecture halls and laboratories have to be closed at odd times due to insecurity.

Igbinosun and Iyiewuare (2024) state that male members are turned thieves and robbers in a bid to pay protection and membership dues while female students are turned into prostitutes, while the freedom of staff and students is curtailed. The management of institutions is faced with unnecessary security problems that consume time and resources that could have enhance the smooth running of the institutions.

Furthermore, cult activities led to lose of school property through burning, theft, or physical destruction in fact, some cult clashes are so disastrous that the fund that would have been spent on the provision of other facilities and infrastructure are used in replacing the damaged ones. The effect of the waste of capital is reduction of the quality and quantity of education as there will not be enough funds to purchase the necessary learning equipments. Therefore, cult activities in tertiary institutions have had negative effects on the academic activities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, which led to academic decline and un-conducive learning environment.

The Ways Moral Education can be used to curb Cultism in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions.

Negligence of moral and religious instructions in schools has led to low moral standard in the society which many believe is responsible for the wide spread of cultism with its attendant consequences. As a result of low moral standard in the society, decay has set in and hard work is no longer regarded as important. Those who work hard are looked upon as fools in the society. Moral education is a force that can be used to curb this social vice; because moral institutions play the role of inward conviction which will exert the strongest influence upon all citizens of the country.

Moral education inculcates moral discipline into individuals which will help in eradicating cultism in the school. It provides inspirations required by Nigerians to unite and fight against the vice. More so, moral education is a potent element for the eradication of cultism as well as a veritable weapon for promoting

educational development in the nation. Therefore students and teachers must adhere to moral instructions and religious tenets to enable them produce total transformation of lives for the enhancement of educational development.

Omorogbe (2023) opines that the moral sickness of an individual is the moral sickness of the society and the cure should start from him or her. Morality enhances societal development and progress. More so moral education exposes students to the norms, customs, values and interrelationship that exist in the society. Moral education transforms people's character by making them to live responsibly and shun cultism and other social vices.

Furthermore, moral instruction permeates every aspect of human life. It lays emphasis on moral consciousness which is the life wire of any society. As Nigerian education system today is characterized by cultism, moral education has to be given a priority because a morally conscious individual thinks better, acts better, and is amendable to the details of consciousness which will enhance educational development and peaceful co-existence (Eze, 2022)

Conclusion

For effective teaching and learning to take place, moral education which inculcates positive attitudes, values and morals should be enthroned in the school to bring sanity in the educational system. Moral education is an indispensable and critical element for the shaping of character of students which will promote love for ones neighbour, peaceful co-existence, value for life and property and enhance educational development. The moral decadence in the school system caused by the negligence of moral instruction will be eradicated through the entrenchment of moral education studies in the school because it will discourage students from participating in cultism.

Recommendations

- The actualization of educational development will continue to be a mirage if cultism is not eradicated from the school system. Therefore, Government should lay more emphasis on moral education at all levels of education for the inculcation of right morals into the students.

- There should be moral upbringing of children by their parents to checkmate their unruly behaviour and exhibit character that conform to the societal norms and values.
- Government should enforce anti-cultism, laws which will discourage students from involving themselves in this vice and bring sanity to the school system.
- There should be re-orientation in our tertiary institutions and government should provide adequate funding which will enable the school system to be conducive for effective teaching and learning.
- Certificate should be awarded to the students based on their performance and character exhibited during the course of study. Any student with character disorder should not be awarded the degree and must be punished accordingly.
- Government should de-emphasis laziness and fraudulent act and emphasizes more on hard work, integrity and peaceful co-existence.
- Students should be made to appreciate and value knowledge because knowledge as they say is power". Therefore, students should obey and respect the constituted authority for them to achieve the knowledge required for the enhancement of educational development.
- Government and non-governmental agencies should start their campaigns against cultism and its destructive tendencies. The evil nature of cultism should be explained to young people in schools at all levels through sensitization, seminars, workshops, symposium, posters, handbills and public lectures, cultism may be effectively combated.
- Parents should desist from being members of secret cults and also prevent their children from joining bad groups.
- Moral education should be re-introduced in all spheres of our lives and the decadent society should be spiritually reawakened.
- The parents, religious organizations and government are to work jointly on this measure. Parents should be more vigilant concerning the activities of their children within and outside the home.
- The higher institution should be reorganized, funded and should be provided with sport facilities to make them attractive and Involving so that youthful exuberances of students will find a rewarding outlet in

competitive sports like football, athletes which could engage students in their spare time.

- The authorities of higher institutions of learning must show doggedness in their determination to stamp out cultism. They must brace up to the challenges of cultism, which has become one of the most potent evils of the recent time.
- The committees of Vice Chancellor of the Nigerian universalities should adopt a common and uniform approach to solving the problem of cultism. The issue of former cultists who sometimes return universities as staff must be looked into.
- Students who do not belong to cults can be organized into anti-cult vanguard to watch and report cult members to the university authorities or to law enforcement agents.
- The school authorities must intensify armed patrol and surveillance on campuses. The current effort where students form vigilante groups to monitor cultists should be encouraged. Prompt action concerning cases of cultism is also a necessary condition as delay in taking actions against offenders worsens the situation.

  Finally, any member of the public, no matter how highly placed, linked with the activities of cultism on campus should be tracked down and brought to book

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