

THE IMPACT OF PEACE EDUCATION IN CURBING CULTISM IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The real problem and challenges that cultism activities herald is usually generated by the absent of peace-culture through peace education means. Cultism and undertakings of cults are more predominant in the tertiary institutions such as Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities, secondary schools, and eve among the neighbourhood. Although, sporadically, the threat of cultism in educational establishments in Nigeria, mostly in ESUT Enugu State has become worrisome, it is against this statement the researcher understands there is existing gap which both previous researchers and policy makers ignored to focus on, which this study intended to bridge. Therefore, this paper examined the impact of peace education in curbing cultism in institution of learning in Nigeria. The objective of this paper is to examined how peace education can be used in alleviating the menace of cultism in high institutions of learning. Both primary and secondary sources of data were applied in this study as methodology. Therefore, the paper discusses the concept of peace education and cultism in clear term. The causes and nature of cultism has also been discussed in the paper. However, the study touches the place of moral peace education in cubing cultism. The paper concluded that peace education is an essential tool as well as a veritable technic that when deployed can help control the menace of cultism in our institutions of learning. The study concluded with some recommendations that there should be encouragement of religious Activities. Apart from that, students must be encouraged at any cost to see every reason why higher academic accomplishments and realizations are essential with peace culture.

Keywords: Peace Education, Cultism, University, Enugu

Introduction

Cultism is undeniably one of the social settings that set the development of academic and non-academic progress of Nigeria backward. Secret cults in Nigerian schools, according to Oguntade (2018) was established in 1952, at the University College, Ibadan, known as the National Association of Sea Dogs (Pirate Confraternity). This association had honourable philosophies and commitments at inauguration but transmuted into well-known dreadful group with the passage of time. (Alanamu, Olanrewaju and Muhammd, 2018) mentioned that cultism was hitherto a higher institution activity but that secondary school learners and non-students today are accomplices. The cult groups turned Nigerian institutions of education into killing grounds. (Osakinle and Falana. 2011).

According to Richardson. (2012). the word cult is often associated with religion, though a cult does not need to be religious in outlook. In the case of the religious cult, Weber's dictionary (20011) describes cult as a scheme of religious piety directed towards a specific figure or object. That is, a moderately small religious group observed by others as a weird or as improving extreme control over members. A religious cult can also be defined as any religious group which varies expressively in some one or more respects as to established manifestation of that religion. Religious and social cults are overtly or covertly practiced in Nigerian institutes of higher learning. The word cultism originated from the Latin word "cultus" with the verb "colare" meaning to cultivate, to worship. Peace-education involves the utilization of educational instruments to pass unto leaners attitude, behavior and ultimately a culture of peace. It can therefore be seen as a deliberate endeavor to modify the pattern of social relationships to breed a healthy society. Theory of Social Conflict was used for this study Faleti, S. A. (2006). Through the aids of Peace and Conflict Studies, the researcher found out the gaps which have greatly encouraged cultists in Nigeria institutions, and mostly ESUT in Enugu State, and recommended that Peace education remains the tools for change of attitude.

Conceptualizing Peace Education

Peace is a broad concept with practical and spiritual connotations. It can imply a state of inner calm or end of conflict. Peace has been understood to mean the absence of conflict or violence and conversely as the presence of states of mind and of society such as harmony, accord, security and understanding. Peace education is a planning strategy of eliminating the conflicts and violence caused by injustice, which equally prevents conflict.

Therefore, peace education is a goal of education. There is no universally accepted definition for peace education. There are good numbers of definitions available on the basis of different perceptions and approaches.

According to Freire (2006) “Peace education is a mechanism for the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace through a process of “conscientisation”. “Peace Education is the attempt to promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transforms the present human condition by changing the social structures and patterns of thought that have created it”. “Peace Education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence of scale ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures said by Laing, (1978). According to John Dewey “Peace education is grounded in active citizenship, preparing learners for assiduous participation in a democracy, through problem – posing and problem – solving education, and a commitment to transformative action in societies.” From these definitions it is understood that the peace education inculcates the higher order human values among the individuals. Further, “Peace education definitions” reveal that it aims at the overall development of the individuals and helps to enhance eternal values in their minds.

Cultism

A cult is observed as a group which demonstrates a high form of obligation or devotion to a specific cause or belief, while making its undertakings and members to appear mysterious in the eyes of the uninitiated (Galace, 2003). Their membership and undertakings, as described

above, are often blanketed in secrecy and as such, they are also often referred to as secret cults. Onyechere (2008) simply defines cult as a group of persons who share and spread peculiar philosophies only to members. This suggests that undertakings of a cult are mysterious; non-members are not granted access to information about a cult as well as distinguishing ideology of such groups. Others have described cults from the religious point of opinion. For instance, it is observed as a unique, tentatively stylish system of devotion or belief (Ukpong, 2003).

This clarifies why diverse cults vary in terms of their rules, standards, emblem, and other characteristics, which are hidden from the uninitiated. Ogunbameru (2004) considered secret cults as not only establishments whose modus operandi are concealed, but such undertakings are carried out at irregular hours of the day while also clashing with convention or widely acknowledged ways of life. Igodo (2002) distinguishes a cult as a collection of persons who share strange philosophies and beliefs and participate in secret unconventional behaviour.

The degree of cultism among secondary school students has been on the surge. The earliest record of secret cults in Nigerian schools, according to Umeh. (2001) was in 1952 in the then University College, Ibadan, when the National Association of Sea Dogs (Pirate Confraternity) was established. This assembly had noble principles and purposes at commencement but transformed into full blown atrocious group with the passage of time. T

hen, they brought to focus public ills, valued humanitarian services, and established relationships for future benefits. Long ago, Eneja. (2008) witnessed that many students have cultured the habit of laziness towards their academic pursuit and channelled their energy to cultism. They spend much time playing music, organizing and attending parties, engaging in various clandestine and occult practices, and other forms of vices. Cultism appears to rank very high among the maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students.

Causes of Cultism in and out of Nigeria Academic Institutions

There are various causes of cultism on educational institutions some of which are studied as follows:

1. Influence of Peer Group

There is no doubt that peer group stimulus is a powerful factor that induces young undergraduates to join secret cults. Ibeh (2005) postulated that the era of adolescence is marked by intense social relationship in any environment he/she finds himself. At adolescent, there is a change of emphasis on social relationship from the parents to the peer group. As adolescent breaks the total dependence and interaction with his/her parents, he/she moves same to the recently acquired group which in most cases is any group on campus he/she hugs. Akinfolarin (2003) and Omoegun and Akanle (2007) also stated in their schoolwork that peer group influence is one of the motives students join cultism. Example: Peer group can influence an innocent fellow into drugs abuse, which might lead to other unpredicted acts like raping, cursing troubles. Such fellow may equally want to remain relevant, hence, getting self-attached to bad gang.

2. Parental Background

Students, who come from backgrounds where codes of good behaviour and discipline are not firmly imposed, are more predisposed to cultism. Olajugbe (2001) described that parental background, absence of moral teaching at home and the method in which the child is carried could be a factor in recognition as a member of a cult. The author elucidated that extreme control by parents, too many rules could make individual anxious and restless while a child whose independence knows no bound may be a prepared nominee for cult membership. According to Mgbekem (2004), some parents love their children to the degree of indulging them. When they do a wrong thing instead of admonishing them, they let the children go free from the wrongdoing. They develop up with such undesirable pattern and consequently imbibe criminally-oriented conduct which lead them to joining cult groups, Owoeye (2007) also recognized a very vigorous link between fragile and malfunctioning family background and influence and predispositions for students to join secret cults. According to the writer, parents themselves might be associates of secret cults. Cult members may come from disjointed homes where child mistreatment and neglect are very widespread. Ayodele and Ayodele (2002) also

recognized family collapse as one of the causes of cultism on campuses. According to them, a child who comes from fragmented home is exposed to parental inattention and frustration. Such child is easily persuaded into cultism.

3. Societal Depravity

Ogunbameru (2007) lamented that the Nigerian society has cheerfully or unwillingly delivered an empowering atmosphere for all forms of crimes among which is the problem of campus secret cult. The author maintained that Nigeria has replaced honour with dishonour as a normal attitude. Mgbekem (2005) also bewailed that youths nowadays imbibed depraved principles instead of instructing moral and decent principles. The author posited that this accounts for why the youth see or feel no misgivings in joining secret cult. Okeowo (2004) also connected youths' tendency to join cult to the general state of normlessness surviving in Nigeria.

4. Corrosion of Education Standards

The economic recession in the 1980s and early 1990s in the country strengthened corruption and deterioration of standards in the educational system. Most students gained admission into the universities with suspicious qualifications (Akinfolarin 2003). Such students, because of their low self-perception find security in cultism in order to survive the academic exactitudes at all cost. For such students, to endure the academic system becomes a game of existence at all cost and as such they join cult groups to intimidate lecturers and the school authorities.

4. Political Influences

Political influence is one of the major factors that influences Nigeria youths into cultist. Due to poverty, politicians easily influence them with money for them to make themselves available for campaign purposes. In other for them to remain powerful and relevant, they found themselves joining cultist as means of protection.

5. Excessive Drugs

Excessive drugs are another factor that leads or influences young students to cultist in school. Once they get drunk or under the influence of drugs, they take some ugly decision by joining the cult groups.

Effects of Cultism

I. Malicious Destruction of Lives of Stakeholders in the Education Sector

Cultists release mayhem on teachers, students and members of school administrations, to the amount that some have been killed or forever disfigured through violent acts such as shooting, and other perfidious attacks. Such attacks undermine the educational system by generating perceptible fear in the hearts of its accomplices.

II. Atrocious crimes like armed robbery, rape

Cult members involve in robbery and other crimes to frighten their victims and commonly to make money needed to hold out their luxurious lifestyles, procure arms, buy security from corrupt law enforcement agents, pay hospital bills when confronted and pay for legal fees when their members are arrested for crimes.

III. Examination misconduct

Cultism equivalently leads to examination misconduct as cult members, who do not study hard, attempt to compromise assessment procedures through the use of bribe, pure hostility or intimidation. This ultimately diminishes ethics and quality assurance in the Nigerian education system.

IV. Reduced academic performance

The manner of horror unleashed by cults in educational institutions constrains learning by producing terror and pressure in the school environment. Learning is known to flourish best in an atmosphere unoccupied by fundamentals of threat, therefore, it takes its toll on academic performance of students. Cultists also fail to study hard while attacking competitors or their targets or worse still while endeavouring to elude attack.

V. Destruction of property

Cults are known to destroy the property of their targets or institute, to draw attention to their complaints. Houses, automobiles, and other accommodations belonging to educational institutions have been destroyed or utterly damaged by cults. The economic consequences recession, is best imaged.

Demonstration of cultism at different levels of the education system

Cultism and undertakings of cults are more predominant in the tertiary institutions such as Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities, although sporadically, the prevalent influence of cults gradually penetrate other levels of the education system, especially the secondary school level, where the associated violence, torment, harassment and terrorization connected with cultism have since found its way in Nigeria (Adewale, 2005). The influence of cults and cultism has also infused the whole society, meaning that it has found its way into social groups and organizations, establishments and even religious organizations. Little wonder why cults have been recounted to manifest in Nigerian secondary schools (Abayomi and Nnabugwu, 2012).

The Role of Peace Education in Curbing Cultism Institutions of Learning in Nigeria

There are a number of ways by which peace education can alleviate the menace of cultism activities in the institutions of learning in Nigeria. The mediums of peace education play pivotal role in cocurate moral education to the students. The medium of peace education includes the following:

Public enlightenment

Public enlightenment can be created through seminars, workshops, symposium, posters, handbills, jungles and public lectures. Onghba (1998) advocated for a special enlightenment programme aimed at education the public on the evils associated with crime. Though public lectures and seminars, Idogun (1999) agreed that the issue of cultism will be eradicated. He however, suggested that such lectures must not lose sight of students' involvement. At the University of Lagos, there was a drama presentation organized by student tag "The Dean of Decision" written by Fabiyi a former student union president. The drama created had impacted in eradication of cultism in the institution. Apart from that film show, drama sketches are also recommended as medium through which most students can be conscientized to shin cultism (Omemu, 2015).

The moral of peace education

1. To promote the knowledge and understanding of moral values geared towards fostering good moral conduct in human society.
2. The promotion of an attitude of mutual concern for one in order to build a society in which the most possible good exist.
3. The promotion of harmony and sense of fair play in human relation.
4. The strengthening of the basis and motivation for behaviour as an essential foundation for social order (Godwin, 2019).

Conclusion

Family financial background has no significant influence on students' interest in cult activities however peer pressure seems to be a major influencer. This thesis provided insight into the current state of cultism in Nigeria educational system. Nigeria has responded positively by formulating educational policies that have led to rapid expansion of education which particularly and to a significant extent has benefited lower social class groups thereby reducing the prevalence of cultism. Although these efforts seem not to have produced obvious and tangible results to the expectations of Nigerians it has become imperative that the introduction of peace education in our educational curriculum will in no little way establish and sustain more gains in the fight against this dreadful scourge. Peace education is an essential tool as well as a veritable technic that when deployed can help control the menace of cultism in our institutions of learning.

Recommendations

The concerns highlighted in this study call for policy backing. Thus, this study advocates for the following policies:

1. School authorities should commit to decreasing the connection between social status and certain learning consequences by eradicating any form of discrimination and prejudices relating to socio-economic status of students, they must let the students relish the levelled-field of learning process and must also inspire them to partake in all academic activities.

2. Delivery of counselling and motivation to less-privileged students must be stimulated.
3. Government, parents and teachers must attempt to recognize whether there are certain economic circumstances largely liable for classes of cult activities and come out with relevant legislation, implementation strategies and political will power to address them.
4. Concrete parental care: Charity they say starts at home. Children are best cultivated, shaped and educated by both parents to enhance good upbringing at home. Parents should instill the fear of God and respect for fellow human beings in attention of their children at home. We should as a matter of determination give our youths the anticipated moral education so that, when they get out of their homes, they will not be swayed by bad company.
5. Decent counselling: Guidance counsellors should extend their work to comprise child study, the discovery of origins of problems noted in the lives of problem students, academic counselling in addition to upholding regular contact with parent/guardians of problem students in institutions, mostly in the secondary schools. Besides, a feasible guidance and counselling center should exist in every institution. The center should be well financed to perform its role like issue of bills, inviting students for chat and mounting counselling programme regularly. Since fragmented home is one of the causes of cultism, efforts should be made by our counselors to counsel the family unit not to promote broken homes at all cost.
6. Discipline: One of the foremost religious and moral standards of the society is discipline. Maintenance of discipline at home, in the school and in all school and in all places by the parents, teachers and top government officials on the younger ones is very important. This will help to build up an integrated total individual that promotes personal growth and social modification. Parents, lecturers and the established authorities in tertiary institutions should find ways of helping students advance worthwhile curiosity, standards and life goals so that they would be able to repel the entreaty of secret cults. Of prominent importance in developing such attitudes is the very example set by adults as prototypes.

7. Encouragement of religious Activities: The management should encourage the students to partake vigorously in religious undertakings. The religious leaders should be stimulated to preach powerfully against the existence of secret cults in Churches, Mosques and Schools. Our religious leaders should make it a point of duty to always go to our higher institutions to pray and preach to our youths.

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