

Eradication of cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions

Through active participation in sport

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Abstract

This paper focuses on sport as panacea for cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The vices that stigmatized the tertiary institutions today are traceable to the uncontrolled behaviour of students. School authorities and concerned government over the years have applied measures to check the excesses of students in tertiary institutions without noticeable success. Sports stand to provide the needed solution to these linger problems of cultism in tertiary institutions. Sports is perceived as wholesome pursuits for students in tertiary institution which channel their thinking and disposition toward worthwhile goal. Sports provide students the opportunity to cultivate sportsmanship qualities, which is necessary for school discipline. The paper focused on the educational values of sports to include self discipline and control, obedience to and co-operation with constituted authorities among others. Similarly, sports provide students with safety value of letting off excessive energies, which ordinarily could have been mischievously channeled towards acts that are opposed to school discipline. The sports programme organization in schools were highlighted the components of a sound sports programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions from which students can benefit in building up desirable behaviour were also discussed. Finally, recommendations were made on how participation in sports by students can help solve the problems of cultism activities in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Tertiary institutions, sports, education

1. Introduction

Cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions today is of great concern to the school authorities and society at large. Most acts of indiscipline in tertiary institutions are traceable to cultism. Cultism are on the increase in Nigerian schools and have been a source of worry to lecturers, parents, school authorities, the government and the society at large Eke (2002) noted that cultism have soared high that the resultant indiscipline have culminated in misconduct of various degrees.

According to Udoh (1999), moral decadence, an act of deviance in Nigerian tertiary institutions system has reached a worrisome state that all stake holders in the education industry are in the search for possible solution. He opined that cultism amines partly from lack of opportunity for sporting activities. A reflection of the colonial school years reminds of an ideal school environment where students were well behaved according to laid down norms. Tertiary institutions were places where the character of the adolescents were modeled. The adolescents in school were trained to develop self control, character orderliness and efficiency. One way to achieve this was through participation in sporting activities in school.

There is a general notion that sporting activities are capable of solving the problems of cultism in tertiary institutions. As evidence by Udoh (1999), who posited a widely held belief that a considerable proportion of delinquency among the students in schools stem from misuses of leisure times. The vices of cultism could be many but engagement in sport activities could absorb most of these criminal tendencies among the students. Amuchies (1989) predicted that the act of indiscipline will be on the increase, having observed the current trend of increasing misuses of leisure times by students today. He further stated that there would be increase in the number of drunkards, psychotics, drug addicts, armed robbers and juvenile delinquents. Sports activities in schools could be the safety value through which to address these problems. It is against this background that this paper intends to examine the role sports could play in the control of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

This paper therefore, focuses on the following areas:

- Concept of cultism
- Characteristics of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- Fundamental issues influencing students participation in sport.
- State of sports in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
- Potentials of sports in controlling cultism in Nigerian tertiary institution.

2. Concepts of Cultism

The oxford concise Dictionary of Sociology gives the sociological definition of cult as a small group or religious activities whose beliefs are typically secret, esoteric and individualistic. In the same vein Lexican Webster's Dictionary define secret cult as a group of people who share a common cause and whose mode of meetings and agenda are unknown to the public and where invitation into rank and file is usually done in secret.

Secret cult could be said to be any form of organization whose activities are not only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others but such activities are conned out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with the accepted norms and values of everyday life. Cultism can be defined as a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, policy and invitation formalities as well as their mode of operations are done in secret and kept secret with their activities having negative effects on both members and non – member alike.

Pfuihi (1980) opined that understanding cultism and the motivation behind it can be valuable in a wide range of school settings and the society at large. He stated that doctors may like to know why some patients do not comply with medication regimens, while teachers may not know the roots of bullying in schools and how to address students who are cult members. Cultism is that which does not adhere to widely accepted social and cultural norms. He further emphasized that what promote cultism in tertiary institutions is the inhibition of the right communication with the school authorities. He enumerated other causes as follows:

- i) The home background of the students, due to divorce conflict within the family, neglect, abuse and parents who themselves might be members of secret cults.
- ii) Peer group influence.
- iii) Media images
- iv) Generic influence.

Owens and Forman (1981) also identified secret cult acts in tertiary institutions to include bad character of students, deficient traits, bad family background, poor moral development, socio-economic status, societal value, system boredom and peer influence.

Shepherd (1981) stated that cultism is a property conferred upon behaviour by the audience who directly witness them. It therefore suffices to say that the meaning of cultism involves value judgment by the social audience who forms the critical variable in the concept of cultism.

It appears that in recent years tertiary institutions in Nigeria have witnessed various forms of secret cult activities. The activities in most cases have resulted to vices which have frequently destabilized the university educational system. Njoku (1998), Babarinsa and Mohammed (1987) identified some of these vices in campuses to include: Cultism; Scuffles; Rape; Hooliganism; Disrespect for constituted authorities and Examination malpractices and others.

3. Characteristics of Students in Nigerian Tertiary Institution

Today, there seem to be a general feeling that there is a social imbalance and injustice in the nation and students of tertiary institutions who are in their adolescent stage are highly sensitive to these feelings. Students, when in school have a feeling of togetherness and strong peer group formation. Ngoka (2005) emphasized that because of the prevailing socio-cultural and economic situation in the country, the incidence of secret cult activities is expected to be high. This he attributed to the special peculiarities of students in tertiary institutions which

include the following:

- i) **Physical (Biological) Traits:** This is associated with the adolescent's growth which does not match the emotional development. The adolescent still perceives himself as a child even though he has grown to the size of an adult and might not thus adjust or act appropriately on normal situations.
- ii) **Emotional traits:** Restiveness and youthful exuberant exhibition.
- iii) **Social traits:** Peer group formation resulting in peer influence.
- iv) **Urbanization:** Environmental changes, socio-economic status, movies, communication system, and the likes are identified. The situation has not changed till date.

It is believed that a wholesome participation in sport activities and spectatorship by students will dissipate undesirable drives and keep them away from negative vices.

4. Fundamental Issues Influencing Students' Participation in Sports in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

The issues border on the followings:

i) Sports Awareness: It seems that a greater number of Nigeria tertiary institutions administrators are ignorant of the values of sports. To them, planning sports programmes is a waste of time. In some of the schools where sports programmes are present, a great number of students and staff alike are ignorant of the potentials of sports. They are either too busy to play or regard sports participation as a waste of precious time.

ii) Perception of Sports in Tertiary Institutions Curriculum: The National Policy on Education placed physical education as an integral part and core compulsory subject in the school curriculum. The attention given to sports is far below that required and consequently there is low students participation or no participation at all.

iii) Perception of Sports by Parents: Most parents have wrong conception of sports programmes in school. They not only discourage their wards from studying physical education as a subject but even go further to forbid them from participating in sports and games. Most parents feel that time for sports should be spent on other academic activities. This is a misconception and as such, these parents need proper education on the potentials of sports.

iv) Sports Facilities and Sports Personnel in Tertiary Institutions: If students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are to be gainfully involved in sports at all, there must be that enabling environment. Sports facilities, equipment and sports personnel are factors that make participation in sports worthwhile. Sport facilities, equipment and sports personnel are required for a planned sports programme in school. Sport facilities in Nigeria tertiary institutions are in pitiable situation and in most cases they are not in existence.

a) Formation of Sports Club: It is rare to find sports clubs being organized in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. Sports Clubs if formed will bring students together to play under one

healthy environment. Team spirit and understanding for each other's differences will be built.

b) **Recreational Activities:** A recreational activity in Nigerian tertiary institutions seems to be neglected and this because recreational facilities are lacking. It appears that no meaningful effort is made in the direction of providing these facilities.

5. Sports in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Sports Programme in Nigerian tertiary institution is basically organized in three phases.

i) **Instructional phase:** This promotes acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in different motor activities. Skills acquired in instructional phases are applied in intra-mural sports. This phase ensures that students learn basic skills of sports. However, it appears not much has been achieved as the phase is plagued by inadequacies of facilities, equipment and personnel. At the instructional level, the rules and regulations of sports are taught and their experiences could be carried outside the lecture room. Edwards (1973) stated that character and good behaviour learned within sports context, can be transferred to the school community and the society at large.

ii) **Intramural phase:** This promotes broad-based participation in sports activities. It democratizes sports participation by all students in the schools. However, it appears that intramural sports activities in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are no longer effectively organized. The development of intramural sports will enable majority of students to engage themselves fully in any sports activities of their choice. Students who are involved in sports are constructively engaged and their attention will be diverted from cultism. There will be possible transfer of fair play in sports to other aspects of their school life and this makes sports an indispensable instrument for controlling cultism in tertiary institutions. If intramural sports activities are properly organized, they will enhance the social relationship among tertiary institutions students.

iii) **Extra Mural phase:** This phase provides opportunities for the most athletically talented students in the schools to excel in their chosen sports through organized sports competition. Eke (2002) maintained that well organized extramural sports provide certain educational values such as reaction under pressure, quick thinking, immediate decision and response to emergencies on the field of play. Students also learn to play according to the rules of the game and obey constituted authorities. Consequently, tertiary institution students who have the opportunity to acquire these values are likely not to act defiantly.

6. Potentialities of Sports in Controlling Cultism in Tertiary Institutions

Today, it appears that a considerable proportion of secret cult activities arise from under utilization of leisure time by students. As the old adage goes, "the devil finds work for the idle hands". Cultism seems to be by – products of idleness and so every effort should be made to ensure that properly planned sporting activities to engage the student's free time are put in place. According to Amiuche (1998), most students in tertiary institutions do not participate in sporting activities because they do not have the opportunity to participate or do not realize the importance of participating in sport. He further observed that students engaged

themselves differently in various cult activities which are anti-social in nature.

Well planned out sports programmes in tertiary institutions could sublimate and satisfy the students urges and drives by channeling them towards worthwhile activities. This will leave them with little or no time for hatching any mischief. It is believed that sports under good leadership has the unique capacity of gainfully engaging the students in tertiary institutions and free them from cult activities.

7. Conclusion

It has been established in the course of this paper that the problem of cultism, among others is a symptom of society which is embroiled in moral decadence and where institutionalized and personal violence has become a way of life. Realizing the havoc which cultism has wrecked on both members and non-members of the academic community, all hands must be on deck to combat this menace. Beside, if the tertiary institutions administration would come back to its glorious past as well as prepare the nation for the better days, ahead, there is the need to rediscover and teach the people concerned the goals of university education.

8. Recommendations

- 1) The use of law enforcement agents or intimidation to enforce law and order in Nigeria tertiary should be minimized instead sporting activities that suits the interest of students at all times should be introduced by the school authorities.
- 2) Adequate attention should be given to intramural sports activities by the school authorities.
- 3) Sports competition should be organized in all sports on regular basis to ensure effective occupation of leisure hours.
- 4) The entire students population in school should be educated through organized seminars and workshops on the importance of sports in maintaining proper individual adjustment.
- 5) Social activities for free time occupation should be put in place and developed to enhance promotion of recreational awareness among students. This could be through the formation of various organized recreational club activities and competitions.
- 6) The National Policy on Education should revisit its stand on physical education being optionally compulsory for students. Physical education and sports should be made core compulsory students.
- 7) There should be providing for adequate sport facilities for competitions and recreational activities that will attract fair and regular utilization.

Finally, all hands should be on deck to put all mechanisms in place to ensure that participation in sport by students in tertiary institutions yield the desired result of controlling cult activities.

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