

The cover features a central photograph of graduates in black gowns and caps walking in a procession. The background is a light blue world map. The title is enclosed in a rounded rectangular box with a green-to-blue gradient background.

JEEI
JOURNAL OF
EDUCATION
& EMERGING ISSUES

VOL. 1 NO. 1, JANUARY 2018

MORAL DECADENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA; IMPLICATIONS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Education in tertiary institutions is geared towards actualizing the dreams and aspirations of students whose minds are made up to achieve a particular goal at the point of departure from the secondary school. At this point, the burning desire to become a doctor an engineer, a pharmacist among others depends on set goal as soon as the admission was provided. But, in most contemporary higher institutions of learning, the self-driven dreams have been cut short because of many antisocial vices, ranging from cultism, kidnapping, drug abuse, examination malpractice and stealing to mention a few. The thrust of this paper therefore is to critically examine moral decadence in higher institutions which has destroyed institutions and bring about the ridiculousness of education in Society. This paper which is set out to adopt the group theory as a basis of analysis will adopt the use of secondary and primary sources of data to examine this academic discourse. Empirical evidences have shown that no nation can make meaningful progress in the absence of quality education which is the responsibility of higher education. The paper went further to make recommendations believing that if they are strictly and effectively adopted and implemented by the authority concern, it will reposition these citadels of learning and make the students to reason sharply, responsibly and thus become good ambassadors of their respective schools and national development a sustainable one.

Keywords: *Conceptual issues, National Development, Education, Higher Education and moral decadence.*

INTRODUCTION

The desire of every nation is to develop the young generation to be useful to themselves and the society at large. One sure way of doing this is through education. In trying to achieve this, education is declared as a right to every child. By implications, every child should be given basic education irrespective of sex, physical and social status. However, giving basic education to child is seen as stepping stone to societal advancement through advance development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and behavior pattern of the learners. In line with this desire, higher institutions of learning are put in place. Higher institutions of learning (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) are believed to be the hope of every nation the world over informs of human and societal development. Consequently, students are always certified as graduates when they are sound, worthy in learning and in character. Any variation from this standard calls for questions. Perhaps it is in the light of this that according to Bulya (2011), a nations functional educational

institution exhumes human resources productivity geared at instituting positive national development and calling quits national underdevelopment.

The number of higher institutions in Nigeria would have placed Nigeria as a developed nation if there are no issues with the system. One of the issues identified with Nigeria education system is that of quality. No development can take place in a society without quality education (Okezie, 2009). Ironically, Nigeria education system has been struggling with the issue of quality. This has necessitated several reforms which have not yielded the desire results. Apart from quality, the attitude of the behavior of the product of the system questions the types of value transmitted in the system. Again, the happenings in tertiary institution, the institutional culture and the behavioural dispositions of students tend to negate with the essence of setting up higher institutions. Higher institutions should not be associated with cult activities, examination malpractices, fraud of different types and several types of anti social activities prevalent in higher institutions in the society. It calls for questioning. This necessitated this study.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATIONS

Development: Development is a widely debatable concept. As a multidimensional concept, development is defined by Rodney (1972) as increase in skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well being. Hence, development is not limited to population growth nor is it based on economic strength. Okowa (1996) sees development as that which comes from hard work, discipline, commitment, skills and the intelligent utilization of the above faculties of man in a sustained manner over a fairly long period of time. Development in this context is the national development in terms of political economic and other aspects related to social existence like peace and security. Development can equally be seen as a social type of change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capital income and levels of living through modern production methods and improved social organization, Obi (2006).

National Development: National development is a concept that encompasses all it takes to promote and enhance better qualities of a nation's political system. This could be politics, education, culture, religion and other gamut of human endeavour. It could be viewed through the lens of economic development, which deals with qualitative and quantitative changes in the economy expressed through areas like development of critical infrastructure human capital through qualitative education, health social induction, environmental sustainability and regional competitiveness. National development as conceptualized by Todaro (2005) means that which must be concerned with the economic cultural and political requirement for effecting rapid structure and institutional transformation of entire societies in a manner that will most efficiently bring to fruits of economic progress to the broadest segments of their population.

Education: Education implies the knowledge acquired by a child through formal or informal process. Education is the foundation of development in every nation. It unlocks the door to modernization. Thus, Nwaham (2010) states that the economic property and reduction of global poverty cannot be accomplished unless all children in all countries can at the minimum, complete a primary education of good quality. Being education is synonymous with reading, writing and speaking good English (Odeh 2016). Education "is a social science that encompasses teaching and learning specific knowledge, beliefs and skills" (Singh 2010). Education is the aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops abilities skills and other forms of behaviour of positive and sometimes of negative value in the society in which he live, Fafunwa (1998).

Higher Education: This encompasses tertiary institutions that offer different courses of professionalism. In these institutions such as colleges of education, polytechnics and universities, students are expected to study courses that will prepare them to become useful ambassadors of their schools and nation. The higher education exposes the individual to a lot of things such as skills of different magnitude, social education more independent living, development of morals and a lot more.

Moral Decadence: This is a reflection of students indiscipline or deviant behaviour arising from examination malpractice, kidnapping, drug addict, stealing, among others within the school. The behaviour, attitude which is supposed to portray the student in good light has now become so derogatory and recalcitrant in the eyes of the public. Consequently, these outrageous behaviours translates to hooliganism or gangsterism which make their academic endeavour to suffer and thus seen as a nuisance to the school and society in general.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The group theory have been advanced in this study to explain the emergence of moral decadence in higher education in Nigeria. Arthur Bentley is widely acknowledged to have originated the group approach to the understanding of politics. The approach seeks to explain politics by reference to group. The group rather than the individual is used as the unit of analysis in the study of politics. To most group theorists, a political group exist when men with shared interests, organize, interact and seek goals through the political process. In the context of this study, the group approach conceives interest groups with cross cutting membership. Here, it takes a group of students with similar intention, shared interest, interaction to organize themselves to achieve the following goals; kidnapping, stealing, examination malpractice, gang rape, robbery, among others while in school. An advocate of the group theory, like Arthur Bentley argues that every society includes within it a large number which remained engaged in perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. The case of cultism for instance is a perfect example of this group theory since an individual can not constitute a cult organization. The school is seen as comprising different groups pursuing or promoting their interest

makes competing claims against one another. Bentley, introduced the concept of "interest" in trying to answer the question as to what gives direction to group activity. According to him, it is this interest that differentiates a genuine group from a coincidental collection of people. So, this is the collective interest with which students on campuses carry out their nefarious activities which consequently inhibit learning, discipline and development.

MORAL DECADENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Higher education in Nigeria is education pursued at the tertiary institutions such as the colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. The essence of this is to inculcate into the mind of the citizens to see the avowed need to bring to bare some levels of technological advancement, development, wealth creation among others into a society that is evolving. No self-conscious government's of any existing country can afford to ignore her higher institutions and hope to have any meaningful target to which her government efforts are directed. It is the quality of the students borne our of quality education that can be relied on to move a nation forward.

Higher education constitutes a major force for the development of the nation through raising high quality human resources that are sensitive and responsible to the needs of the larger citizenry. Quality education cannot be compromised and should be for personal fulfillment and national development. When education is compromise in quality and standards the nation's future will be in jeopardy. In standard of education has fallen drastically at all levels of the Nigerian educational system and in all walks of life. In Nigeria, for instance, adequate attention seems not to be given to the education sector. This, perhaps affect the full implementation of "Education for all (EFA) policy". Nigeria is yet to achieve the education component of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations which among other priorities envisage the attainment of universal enrolment in primary education, elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education and a strong tertiary education system to support development efforts (Economic commission for Africa, 2015). The goals of the tertiary education as entrenched in the National Policy on Education (2014) are to; contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training, develop the intellectual capability of individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society, promote and encourage scholarship and community service etc. But the reality on ground is that these goals are almost defeated as the mind to study is weak and full of recalcitrant actions. Hence, the society is full of half baked graduates which consequently has placed national development in Jeopardy. All these antecedents trigger off diverse human activities, generate the scares in higher education in recent time. Students now return home with unbridled and scary behaviour that are contrary to the norms of human dignity.

Evidently, higher education must be recognized as a vital dimension of national development. This is because it encapsulates character development and is associated with values and attitudinal development which makes it a fulcrum on which all dimensions of national development revolve and should, therefore, be accorded major priority recognition and adequate attention. Nigeria today has a multiplicity of educational institutions with some of the institutions looking like glorified secondary schools without functional and quality educational dividends that impact positively on the subjects. The resultant effect is moral decadence that rears its ugly heads in most of the campuses. Again, teachers who are supposed to be role models end up being cultists with behaviour and dressing style that remind you of informal gathering. The bitter truth is, when quality education is jettisoned, there is nothing to positively expect from the students.

Students' cult activities are rampant in Nigeria's higher education (Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities) and features several violent anti-social activities such as physical assault and murder, sexual harassment/assault, kidnapping, arson, among others. Staff and students are not spared of the negative activities of these cultists. There were instances where lecturers were abducted, flogged and made to sign cheques for their release by students. So, many horrendous activities that are most horrible, are noticeable in higher institutions of learning. In University of Lagos for example, the executive members of the Students Union Government in April 1994 clashed with cult groups in a bid to eradicate them, Ekoko (2012). Several persons were injured as they resorted to arson, vandalisation of school property, and other forms of violence, Anifowoshe (2004). Similarly, in Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), some student leaders mobilized non-cultists, beat some cultists and burnt their property and the spate of cult activities reduced. In spite of these efforts, cult members usually re-group, initiate new members and perpetuate their existence in the universities. Ekoko, (2012).

In Nigeria, education has been identified as the key that would unlock the potentials of people as they strive for greater prosperity NUC, (2004), Ekundayo & Ajayi, (2009). The logical extension of this is that, it is the bridge that carry the traffic of economic and social advancement that is so much required in the country so that people can secure the necessary platform for the resolution of their development problem. The point in emphasis is that this can only be achieved in an atmosphere of peace, discipline and commitment to study. Not through terrorism but gross abuse of human rights and belligerent behaviour.

Admittedly, moral decadence is motivated by influence of peer group, some even beyond social factor like value. One noticeable cause of the falling standard of education in Nigeria is students lack of interest towards studying. The culture of reading and studying is fast fading away in Nigeria. Reading is the hall mark of education. It is "a means by which we develop our knowledge, broaden our scope of experience and as well extend our enjoyment" (Deji-Afuye & Ayena 2014)

It is also common knowledge that the Nigerian education system is decaying and corrupt particularly the higher education. This assessment is no exaggeration considering, the lost standards and sharp practices of cultism, drug abuse among others that pervade some of the higher institutions. Indeed, the edifice that holds the key to the students prosperity is fast collapsing and the government does not seem to be seriously perturbed. Its response to the numerous crises plaguing the system has been lukewarm since it does not readily back its rhetorics with actions. Consequently, many parents seek solace in finding placements for their children in private institutions at all levels of education. This is because these private institutions have infrastructure that are better than those of public institutions.

Education in higher institution in Nigeria is now more or less a paper education – education that capitalizes on paper qualification. One is a West African Examination Certificate, Diploma, National Certificate in Education, Higher National Diploma, or its equivalent (degree holder) because one has the certificate to show for it without the requisite knowledge of such a certificate holder. Education is not just to crave for certificate but to crave for knowledge as lack of knowledge brings retardation, stagnation or improvement. Infact, the greatest education in all human life is the development, activation and emancipation of ones mind. This, Jonace (2007) opined, Education is a mental activity which is developed in the mind by the soul that is hungry for knowledge. The emphasis here is that education acquired in the higher institution should aimed at developing the personality of the individual and his relevance to himself and to contribute to national development.

There are plethora of challenges in the higher education sector that prevent the development of the right caliber of graduates that is expected from the existing citadel of learning. If the school administrators of these higher education, in reality wish to develop human capital (that is, the students) and imbued them with the quality that could drive the country's developmental process towards the anticipated national goal and ideals, the school will be less volatile with occultist activities and other mundane behaviour and sharp practices that may act contrary to norms and values of human dignity. To create trust and confidence among Nigerians, Metzieobi, Domike and Osakwe (1996) asserted that it is necessary to provide Nigeria the type of education that characterizes Nigerian intercultural education.

IMPACT OF MORAL DECADENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Moral decadence in the higher education is a very serious problem working against the effectiveness and sustainability of academic pursuit in Nigeria. The effect of this unpleasant development is not only paramount in the schools or homes but also on national development which calls for worry and apprehension. The worrisome dimension this trend has assumed in higher education seems to make mockery of these institutions. Consequently, Students who graduate from the university become serious threat to their parents and society. In all the aforementioned moral decadence in the higher education, examination malpractice

is the most serious and unhealthy practice amongst students. Examination malpractice is a deliberate wrong doing to place candidates at an unfair advantage or disadvantage (Wikyat 2009). These views were also projected by Azonge (1993), Ahmed (1998) and shoneka (1996).

The point in emphasis is lack of discipline created in the minds of students who cheat in examination. By implication, it constitutes moral debasement and decadent in the schools. The overall implication is that, should such students eventually graduate they would become social nuisance to the society. They either become kidnapers, drug baron or incurable social misfit to a society that is in want of human capital development. Education transforms the character of the individual to become good and amiable person in the society. Njoku (2004) recognized that education is the instrument that transforms the totality of the individual into a functional citizen.

In the same vein, the higher education in Nigeria, given the manifestation of different moral ills that have made some of these citadels of learning laughable invariably constitute the fall of the standard of education which bedevils the development and progress of Nigeria. These weaknesses, which have endured for long despite the nation's overwhelming resources in the higher institution of learning explain its underdevelopment. People the nation counts on after their years of graduation to help promote and sustain national development become problems to the society. Surprisingly, these category of persons find themselves in power given the manipulative role of dysfunctional electoral system. National development is in quagmire, consequently, there is a growing lack of basic needs. Worse still, the structures sustaining Nigeria's underdevelopment frustrate economic, and social transformation, thereby solidifying the foundation that regenerates poverty in the country. Of particular interest in this regard is the education system. It is obvious that the standard of learning has drastically reduce in some of the tertiary institutions. The ivory towers that are supposed to be standard setter are affected (Eyisi, 2015). Regrettably, a good number of the students in higher education can not effectively write good letters or essays, bad grammar conspicuously manifested in concord and tense errors and a lot more. Students most know that education holds the master key that unlocks a country's potentials towards national transformation and national development. In the same manner, education plays a key role in the ability of development country to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity for self sustaining growth and development (Todaro & Smith, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Moral decadence in higher education has brought about high level of indiscipline, poor value system and most regrettably impoverishment and disillusionment in the political system. Students/grandaunts, are supposed to be good ambassadors of the schools. The production of students from higher education constitutes human capital development of any nation. The ineffectiveness of these

grandparents are visible in the attitudes and character of adults who have claimed to have undergone some learning and are now graduates. They are more prone to misbehavior of varying kind, they are very unpatriotic dubious, and contribute less to the development of nation building. The authorities of these higher education need to be more proactive. They need to come out with more proactive measures to sanitize the system. Everybody cannot go to school. The unwanted ones that turn themselves to nuisance must be shown the way out without any fear or favour. The point is such recalcitrant students having been found culpable have no business to be within the school environment. Academic is a serious business. Such category of students must be treated as scapegoats so that those nursing similar behavior will have cause to review their actions. This approach will enhance good neighbourliness and promote national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Genuine efforts should be intensified to make the teaching and learning process a sustaining and energy driven one. Teachers and students should be made to challenge each other academically. An environment of give and take should be established. When such symbiotic relationship exist, the teaching learning process would produce some genuine results that will make the students not only independent when they graduate but will make some relevant contributions to national development.
2. Government at all existing levels should be seen to be adequately committed to the funding and moral development of school right from the secondary to the higher education level. Government through the instrumentality of the institutions of learning should as a matter of urgency and seriousness send the unserious and cult oriented ones out of the school so that it can serve as a deterrent to others.
3. For school administrators and lecturers who aid and abet the unpleasant and destructive behavior of some of these students in the higher institution should be shown the way out if found guilty. This is because no academic environment can thrive successfully in an environment where there is mutual understanding between the perpetrators of abnormal behavior and those who are supposed to frown at it and come up with punitive measures against such disdainful act.

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