



Functional Physical and Health Education Mechanism: A Panacea for Curbing Cultism in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined cultism and ways of curbing it in Nigeria secondary education system. It was driven by the notion that cultism is digging dip into the education system as witnessed by the paradigm shift from tertiary to secondary education. This paper high-lighted the need for concerted effort ranging from the family, the community, academics and government to ensure eradication of cultism in Nigeria schools. From the history of cultism, this paper observed that the main aim of cultism was to affect lives positively but on the contrary in this century, cultism has taken a deathly dimension. Diverting from what the founding fathers meant it to be. This paper elucidated reasons for enrolling in cultism to include but not limited to economic hardship, peer group influence, injustice, exposure to violent and crime related films, curiosity which also result in havocs such as loss lives, moral decadence, rape, violence loss of loss hope and aspirations criminal tendencies, kidnap, arm robbery examination malpractices and drug abuse. Most cultists believe that being a member of a cult could earn them respect, recognition, superiority, over other non-member students, security, and means of financial security and sign bravery. It was suggested the need for health education measures such as: peer counselling programs, safety education, education on promotion of self-esteem, physical activities, nutrition education and health education evaluation in order to assess students' decisions. For secondary education to go beyond literacy and numeracy and to achieve functionality there must be provision of an enabling environment in secondary education free of cultism as this would allow health education to play its key role.

Keywords: Curbing Cultism Functional Physical and Health Education Mechanism Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Functional education in our secondary schools has become necessary due to increase rate in cult activities witnesses at that level of education. The rate at which secondary school students are getting involved in cultism is becoming alarming (Nairaland Forum, 2017). The society stands at risk of being saddled with the burden of substantial dysfunctional youth population that need to be given urgent attention. Cult culture has gone down the ladder to secondary schools which is a disturbing trend that has left school administrators, teachers, parents and even students dumbfounded. Education in any country is expected to bring about social changes in attitude, motivation and incentive which will culminate to technological change, intention and imitation.



Education is also expected to play a vital role in the structural integration of a plural society by equalizing occupational and economic opportunities, raise the level of self-reliance, and make meaningful power of deductions, social responsibility, nationality, and loyalty. Also creating a sense of co-existence, cooperation, fair-play and understanding. Cult activities in secondary schools have posed a serious threat in the society even on national unity fighting against these lofty societal ideals.

Ajayi, Ekundayo and Osalusi (2010) explained 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 often casting with the accepted norms and values of everyday life. Ogbondah and Ewor (2014) opined that cultism refer to a group or movement exhibiting a great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea or thing and employing unethical manipulative techniques of persuasive and control designed to advance the goals of the group's leader, to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families or the community. Recent decades have seen major changes in health issues. This development has been marked by the relative increase in behavioural changes associated with lifestyles and behaviours considered to be "at risk" for negative health consequences.

Physical and health education is synonymous with prevention and promotion of physical fitness and healthy society. The World Health Organization (WHO 2010) defined physical health promotion as "the process of enabling people to increase control over their environment and to improve their health". Health prevention on its part are the numerous activities physically involved in reducing risks and modifying behaviours with the aim of improving the quality of life and prolonging it. Health education is defined as any combination of learning experiences designed to help individuals and communities improve their health, by increasing their knowledge or influencing their attitudes (Johnson, 2010). Health education helps provide health knowledge, enhance wellness behaviours, promote health situations, facilitate healthful relationship and enables community members make responsible decisions about their health.

History of Cultism in Nigerian Schools

The historical development of secret cults in Nigerian schools dates back to 1952 when the Pyrates (Seadog Confraternity) was formed at the University of Ibadan by the likes of Professor Wole Soyinka, Pius Olegbe, Alg-Imokhuede, Olumniyiwo Awe, Nath Oyelola and Ralph Opara to "fight" injustice and oppression in the society. Therefore, the group utilized positive means for purposeful social service delivery such as blood donations to health institutions and financial assistance to indigent (poor) students. The proliferation of the cult groups became life by the early 1990, when several secret cults emerged in our public school which include White Angels, the Mgba Brothers, Dirty Virgins, the Red Devils, Daughters of Eve, red Barrets, Black Barrets, Black Queens, the Amazons, Green Barrets, the Maphites, Dirty Bra, K.K.K, Supreme Daughters of Medusa, the Sharons, the River Angels, the Daughters of Jezebel, the Black Cat, Trojan Horse, and the Scorpions among others. From 2000 till date, the activities of cultism in Nigerian public schools have assumed an alarming rate and worrisome situation, unleashing terrors and woes to schools, communities and beyond (Ogbondah and Ewor, 2014). Activities of cultism include: violent attack, killings, robbery, vendetta, hooliganism, gangstarism, force, unjust denial of other students rights, false confidence,



examination malpractice, fraud, violation of rules and regulations of schools among other bad acts that are against acceptable societal norms and values.

Reasons for Enrolling in Cultism

The following reasons have been put forward by Penalysis (2016).

1. **Family Background:** Faulty upbringing encourages some people to join cult. Some parents are cult members and when their children grow, they also become members of secret cult.
2. **Economic Hardship:** Some students are from poor background and so when they are induced financially they easily fall prey to their deceivers.
3. **Peer group Influence:** Some people join secret cult as a result of the influence their peers have on them.
4. **Injustice:** When there is social injustice in the society, some join cult groups or form their own cult groups to seek an avenue to prevent injustice in society.
5. **Exposure to Violent or Crime Related Films:** Exposure to such films that promote violence or crime provides ideas on how to plan and organize crime.
6. **Curiosity:** A lot of information has been spread about cult members. Some individuals join in order to find out if the things they have heard are true.
7. **Respect and Recognition:** Secret cult members create fear and intimidation. This act earn them some form of respect and recognition.
8. **Security:** The need for security due to individual inability to act, think and survive independently make some students join cult.

Havocs Resulting from Cultism

Penalysis (2016) also identifies the following havocs resulting from cultism.

1. **Loss of Lives:** Cult activities have resulted in loss of great future leaders/personality.
2. **Moral Decadence:** Cults have no good behaviour and attitude. They contribute to the fall in standard of education.
3. **Rape:** The menace of cultism on our campuses did not spare violating female students against their will and consent at gun points. The cult members approach girls and their refusal most often lead to forceful penetration or rape, undermining the dignity of women.
4. **Violence:** The activities and operation of cult groups are always violent. Break down of social values. Their activities do not have respect for our social values. They have no respect for human life, human being are murdered without mercy. They lure and initiate innocent students to become new members at the beginning of every academic session.
5. **Loss of Hope and Aspiration:** Most of the students involved when caught or identified by the school administration are either expelled or suspended which invariably leads to loss of hope and aspirations.
6. **Criminal Tendencies:** They are involved in lots of crime such as raping, maiming, murdering, lawlessness and armed robbery.
7. **Kidnap:** The menace of cult activities have manifested in kidnapping teachers, school heads and students from wealthy homes or whose parents occupy public offices. They ask for ransoms before the victims are released.
8. **Armed Robbery:** Due to the fact that members of cults possess and use dangerous weapons and arms to operate in order to scare non-members, they extend their operations



into armed robbery within and outside the school communities and all sort of vices such as stealing, car snatching etc. most of the armed robbery gangs apprehended by law enforcement agencies were mainly students.

9. **Examination Malpractices:** Most cultists in schools don't have time to read and as such they are involved in examination malpractices.
10. **Drug Abuse and Alcohol:** The menace of campus cultism is also manifested in excessive use of drugs and consumption of alcohol making them wild, destructive, void of human feelings and abnormal which eventually take them away from academic activities. This havoc affects individuals, families, communities, states and the entire nation called Nigeria.

Health Education Preventive Measures against Cultism

For this menace to be tackled to the barest minimum, the following health education and promotion services, activities and programs would play key role:

Nutrition Education in the midst of Poverty and Economic Hardship

Nutrition education involves teaching the students about the importance of nutrition, providing educational materials that reinforce messages about healthy eating, teaching adolescents skills essential for making dietary change even in the face of economic hardship and poverty. Information gathered during nutrition screening or assessment will provide the necessary information on which nutrition issues need to be addressed during nutrition education and counselling sessions.

Nutrition education can lead to positive impact on academic outcomes since it has been observed that a well fed child is more balanced emotionally, socially, academically and highly accommodating. Nutrition education has also been observed to be effective in increasing preference for and creating positive attitudes towards fruits and vegetables among students. It will also help the student to even suggest to the parents on practicing balanced nutrition or diets (Hard, Uno and Koch 2015). It will discourage the child from engaging in smoking and drinking of alcohol, as well as engaging the child meaningful in family trade and subsistence farming. School meal that has been introduced should be made to cover junior and senior secondary schools.

Peer Counselling Programs:

E-Dynamic Learning (2017) explained peer counselling as a service that is provided by peer counselors. Peer counselors are compassionate guides that use the application of knowledge, specific tools and follow certain rules to help students overcome encountered obstacles to reach their goals. One of the tools these counselors use is treating others with deep respect. The rules counselors follows include setting therapeutic boundaries and keeping confidentiality with students they help students. A counsellor's knowledge base must include the five universal human needs of physical wellbeing, security, belonging, appreciation and personal development. An experienced peer counselor can help the students to become self reliant and maintain a positive outlook in life. If a peer counselor is not properly trained, they can provide improper or wrong information causing the students not to progress in a normal healthy way. Peer counselors should be able to: make appropriate referrals; help the students complete all of the required counselling sessions, and conduct group discussions on the topics of self help.



Safety Education

Safety education is a program that formally teaches a group of students how to work or live safely. This kind of education is essential to reducing incidents and is often required by law. In this case the knowledge of who a cultist is or how to identify a cultist is exposed to the students. A child could be taught on how to identify a cultist with the following characteristics: opposing critical thinking, isolating members and penalizing them for leaving, emphasizing special doctrines outside the scriptures, seeking inappropriate loyalty, dishonouring family unity, crossing biblical boundaries and separation from the church. Other signs are handling of dangerous weapons like: guns, machetes, gaggers, rods, chains and hammers. Keeping late night, intimidating other students, drinking of alcohol and smoking (Herrington, 2014).

Education on Promotion of Self Esteem

The term self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. In other words, how much you appreciate and like yourself. Self-esteem can involve a variety of beliefs about you, such as the appraisal of your own appearance, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. Self-esteem can play a significant role in motivation and success throughout life. Low self-esteem may hold the student back from succeeding at school or work because the student doesn't believe his/her self to be capable of success.

By contrast, having a healthy self-esteem can help the student achieve academic success because the student navigates life with a positive, assertive attitude and believe in accomplishment of set goals (Cherry, 2017).

Physical Activities and Programs

Physical activity is any bodily activity that enhances or maintains physical fitness and overall health and wellness. It is performed for various reasons, including increasing growth and development, preventing aging, strengthening muscles and the cardiovascular system, honing athletic skills weight loss or maintenance, and also enjoyment (Phyu, 2017). Other activities that could engage the students are Inter-House Sport Competition, School Inter-Club Competition (Literary and Debating Club, Young Farmers Club, Home-Makers Club, Readers Club, Art Club and Science Club). These activities could earn the student better recognition and engage them meaningfully.

Health Education Evaluation

This is carried out by the health educator. Health education evaluation is the systematic collection, analysis and reporting of information about health education activities. Evaluating means finding out how well the students are doing in their health education work in their school/community, and making a judgment about their achievements. It is a critical assessment of the good and bad points of the health education interventions, and how they could be improved. Evaluation is the process of assessing whether specified objectives have been achieved (Phyu, 2017). Adoption of the above stated health education measures which include



health preventive and promotion, without doubt will make cultism a thing of the past if the students are carefully involved.

Conclusions

Health education activities taught by health educators to students can influence the decisions and actions of students that are exposed to these programs and activities as students will be better exposed to the knowledge and culture of cultists within and outside the school. A school free of cultism is linked to educational achievement because a non cultist will devote his/her time for better academic pursuits. This helps assure that the educational gains achieved by a student will be maximized by a long and healthy life as an adult. A comprehensive, well-coordinated school health program can promote the optimal physical, emotional, social and educational development of students. Beyond numeracy, health education cannot be over looked in the achievement of functional secondary education in Nigeria.

Suggestions

The curbing of cultism through health education for functionality in secondary education in Nigeria can majorly be achieved through the following means:

1. Curriculum experts in Physical and Health Education should be specifically defined for secondary education. This means that, there should be integration of the health education curriculum with the physical education curriculum for both to be effective tool for youth development.
2. Physical and Health Education teachers should utilize integrated teaching method which allow youths to explore, gather, process, refine and present information about topic investigation without constraints imposed by traditional subject barriers.
3. Important social activities physical and health activities should be created and implemented especially by Physical and Health Education teachers in public secondary schools.
4. Regular training, seminars and symposium should be organized by the state ,ministry of education for physical and health teachers to stay abreast of current events in the field of games, sports and overall human development.
5. Akwa Ibom State Government need to enforce laws against cultism to the letter without respect of persons.
6. Awards by the state ministry of education and the school management should be given to students who have distinguished themselves exceptionally in character and learning periodically.
7. There is need for the principal of secondary schools from time to time admonish the students with spiritual and ethical re-orientation, instilling moral values, the fear of God and the tenets of hard work embedded in business before pleasure.
8. Physical and health education students should be conscious of their friends, ensuring that birds of the same feather flocks together.

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