

CULTISM EDUCATION: A NECESSITY FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

RITA AZUKA ATAKPA (PhD)
Faculty of Education
Department of Vocational
And Technical Education
University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria
ritaatakpa@yahoo.com

Abstract

The increase in the growth rate of secret cults on campuses, however have rubbished the legacy of brotherhood which the founding fathers of pyrate confraternity left behind way back in 1953. Today most of our students are not reading, the tertiary institutions are now producing graduates who are unemployable as they lack knowledge, skill and good character befitting the ivory tower. To ameliorate this situation, cultism education is a necessity in the curriculum of all tertiary institutions in Nigeria to enlighten students on the devastating effect of cultism on themselves, educational system, parents and the larger society. For students 9 to achieve success in life and be able to pay back to the society what has been given to them, they must be focused on their studies and eschew all vices which may truncate their academic programme and may even lead to untimely death. Reasons that predisposes students to joining cults were listed, strategies for curbing the menace highlighted. It was recommended that there should be restitution of our value system; religious organizations in campuses should be encouraged, recreational facilities provided on various campuses for students relaxation after the days activities; the government to beef up security in all tertiary institutions in the country and conclusion drawn.

Keyword: Cultism, Education, Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

Education is generally regarded as an impressive instrument for national development. It is not only an investment in human resources but more importantly a source of economic growth. Nnabue (2009) quoted Ukeje (1986) that education is power, it is the process of acquiring knowledge and ideas that shapes and conditions man's attitudes, actions and achievements. It is also the process of mastering the laws of nature and for utilizing them effectively for the welfare of the individual and for social reconstruction. Thus, education is recognized as a means of achieving positive change in human development. But the system and process of education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is bedevilled by myriads of social vices prominent among them is cultism.

The Longman English Dictionary describe cultism as an extreme religious group that is not part of any established religion. That anyone who betrays the cult could be

punished by death. Cultism on campuses have assumed a morally bad dimension threatening the basic structure of the nations educational system.

Since education serves as a veritable instrument for advancing positive change in human development it is therefore pertinent to introduce cultism education in the curriculum of tertiary institutions in the country. To enable educational institutions to successfully harness the potentials of the youths and prepare them for leadership positions in future. However, if the youths aspire to hold leadership positions in future they have to live responsible lives and shun such vices as cultism, drug abuse and all forms of violence that could be harmful to the national economic growth and even truncate their educational pursuits.

Concept Of Cultism

The word “occult” is derived from the Latin word “occults” which means hidden, secret sinister, dark or mysterious. According to Wallis (1990) occult is characterized by ‘epistemologic individualism’ which means that a cult had no clear locus of social authority beyond the individual members. Wallis remarked that a cult is oriented towards the problem of individuals, loosely structured, tolerant and non inclusive, making few demands on members and non members; having a rapid turnover of membership that stays for a short time with vague and flutuating belief system. He therefore noted that cults emerged from the social environment where one lives or work.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Sociology (1996) describe a cult as a set of practices and beliefs of a group in relation to a local God. It also gives a sociological definition of it as a small group of religious activists whose beliefs are typically secret, esoteric and individualistic: Aghotor (1998) opine that a cult is a group of people commissioned by satan, having made covenant with him through blood to perpetuate the principles, clever tricks and evil conduct of satan through the use of invisible powers as long as they maintain loyalty to satan. He remarked that cultism on campus involves a group of students who are dropouts, who mainly assemble at night to execute the groups edicts, conduct initiation rites and renew their contracts.

According to Wikipaedia (n.d) a cult is a social group defined by its religious, spiritual or philosophical beliefs or its common interest in particular personality, object or goal. The term is controversial and has been a source of disagreement among scholars across several fields of study.

Ogunbameru (1997) opine that a secret cult is as an organization whose activities are kept away from the knowledge of others. He stated that these activities are essentially secret, disguised and are mainly carried out behind closed doors. Cultism is an extremely secretive venture where most members seal their covenant with the devil with blood. Any covenant or contract that must be signed or sealed with human blood should be regarded as satanic, devilish barbaric and no person should belong to such demonic association (Airebanmen 2005).

Furthermore, Ojukwu (2006) state that cultism is a practice by a group of persons who are devoted to illegal activities that involve secret things rituals, robbery, drug peddling among others. Their purposes and intent are not open to the public, the names of their members are kept secret while their activities are held in secret.

Cultism is the practice of some evil acts by satanic group of people who have strong beliefs in some activities which are not established by any religion. These activities are usually protracted in the darkness and not open to the public except to their members. Since all their activities are done in secret, they are generally referred to as secret cults (Ali 2001). The writer describe secrete cult as a system of belief, practices or ideology of a group of people or set based on their individual convictions.

Cultism: Historical Overview

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary describe ‘cult’ as a system of religious worship or devotion to a person especially a single deity. Cultists are devotees of this deity or members of the sect. Cultism started in Nigeria in 1953 with the formation of the pyrates confraternity also known as the National Association of sea Dogs by the first African Nobel Laurete Professor Wole Soyinka and few others popularly known as the G7. The confraternity was founded at the University College, Ibadan (now known as the University of Ibadan) with genuine motive borne out of patriotism. They aimed at producing future Nigeria leaders that would be proud of their Africa heritage. The pyrates confraternity major objectives were to fight injustice, maltreatment and to revive the age of politeness and kind behavior. They boasted of the brightest, and the most politically conscious among the students. Their aims and objectives were boldly announced to the public. Members parade the street of their various campuses in broad day light. Their identities were also made known to school authorities and no one felt threatened by their existence.

But today as witnessed in campuses the ideologies and motives behind the formation of these confraternities or cults have given way to cruel and disgusting behavior of the merciless cult groups. The increase in growth rate of cults or confraternities have turned our universities, polytechnics and colleges of education into war zone for shedding innocent blood in order to achieve their goals and objectives. Secret cult groups are now dreaded in campuses due to their secrete activities embedded in mystics and power. And members are highly dreaded by non members. The ravages of cultism in campuses are manifest in the perpetuation of violence, destruction, death and generally instilling fears and superiority complex in the campus (FME, 1998).

There are about 45 secret cult groups in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and all are equipped with an elaborate hierarchy, insignia and distinct attire (Nwabudike, 2005). Some of the most notable of the groups are: Black Berret, Vikings, Buccaneer, Aiye, Black Axe and Vampire among others. Their methods of initiation differ from one group to another and their modus operandi is outrageous as well as blood chilling. But the 1990s saw the formation of all female confraternities. Which include Black Brazier (Bra Bra), the Viqueens, Daughters of Jezebel, the Damsel etc. it is common knowledge that the female confraternities have supplied spies for all confraternities as well as acting as prostitution syndicates:

However, it is disheartening that satanic crimes have destroyed the brotherly services on which the confraternity was founded. Hooliganism and unwarranted killings of innocent people within and outside the campuses have now become main occupational activities of cult members

Some instances will suffice in 1997 four students of the University of Lagos were murdered, three at Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) while in the

Lagos State University five students lost their lives in a gun duel between rival cult members within the same period. According to Deji Folatile (2005), at least 33 students lost their lives in cult related cases in Nigerian universities. This figure does not include non student victims. Two students were also killed in the University of Jos, in 2002.

In March 8, 2005 police shot dead a suspected cult member in a gun duel. The deceased happen to be a senior secondary school student in Yenegua, Bayelsa State, while in May 2005 three students of the Cross River State University of Science and Technology were murdered by suspected cultists. Even one of the students was killed with his younger brother who had brought him food stuff from the village. What a pity? Five students from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife were also killed in the early hours of June 10, 2006.

Within the same period at the College of Education Ekiadolor, Edo State, cultists beheaded a final year student of English/Social Studies at the college gate. His head was severed, burnt and dumped at the school gate by members of a suspected rival cult group who had kidnapped him. In addition, in 2006 thirteen students were butchered at Kogi State University and five students were also hacked to death at Rivers State University. In Imo State 2010, it was also reported that 10 students were killed and scores wounded in Imo cult war.

In 2016, two students were beheaded at the Abia state university and their heads used as goal post. However, incessant cult wars were also reported in Edo State leading to the death of seven cultist and police recovered cartridges and short guns from the dead cultists (ITV 2018). The British Broadcasting Corporation (2020) reported that cult groups have increasingly resorted to crime and 'brutal killings. That fourteen students were shot dead at University of Nigeria Nsukka.

The list is endless, it cuts across universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. These are just few of the examples of the evils perpetuated by cultists in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is worthy to note that it is only under a peaceful atmosphere and good frame of mind can efficient and effective teaching and learning as well as character moulding be meaningfully carried out.

The Need For Cultism Education In Tertiary Institutions In Nigeria

Education is universally accepted as a basic instrument for economic growth and technological advancement of any society; the federal government of Nigeria have recognized this fact, hence the commitment of great resources to provide the type of education that will be accessible to the generality of her citizens. It is therefore the responsibility of tertiary institutions in Nigeria to educate future leaders to enable them develop high level technical capabilities that will lead to economic growth. As such cultism education is a necessity in the curriculum of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education to enable them produce articulate youths who can perform creditably well in their chosen fields of study.

In recent times there has been an urgent request on the government to adopt a comprehensive approach towards the education of the Nigerian youths on cultism and its dangerous and devastating consequences. This is especially important as school authorities are left to tackle the problem alone whereas it is a societal responsibility. Nowadays, our

society has become increasingly materialistic with less emphasis on family values. Cultism is a product of the lapses in our socio cultural orientation. But despite the vulnerability of the youths to these social vices on campus and the speed at which it spreads, government efforts at educating the youths on the devastating effects of drug and cultism in order to create a positive behavioural change that will reduce its spread have not been fully realized. However, it is the realization of this abysmal failure that prompted some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious bodies and good spirited individuals to intervene by organizing youth education programme in tertiary institutions and secondary schools in the country. These organizations discovered that majority of the youths in our campuses are completely ignorant of the dangerous and embarrassing consequences associated with cultism. With many of them believing that it is a status symbol on campus and an insurance against victimization and unprovoked attack from cult members (Atakpa 2006).

However, the poor knowledge of Nigerian youths about cultism was recently exposed when one of the students apprehended during initiation at Delta State University, Abraka Delta State disclosed that he joined the cult group after losing his girl friend to a cultist. That after being subjected to unprovoked attacks he was cajoled into joining the ‘Aiye’ confraternity for protection. Another cultist confessed that he joined the cult group because his friend resident in London advised him to join the group he belonged while in school so that he can help him. He finally succumbed and got himself initiated.

Thus, the task of addressing the decay in the nations education sector is that of parents, teachers and government. Parents have a role to play. For teachers cannot bear full responsibility for the moral upbringing of the pupils. Since most hours of the day are being spent with parents. These pupils grow-up with parents and live with them from primary to secondary school level. As such parents ought to have inculcated discipline, moral values, ethics etc into the pupils during their formative years.

Reasons for Joining Cult Group on Campuses

There are many other reasons that predisposes students to join cult groups on campus. According to Jimeta (2005) there is misinformation in the recruitment drive by cult groups. The false information given to persuade students to join cult include:

- a. Cult members are generally feared;
- b. Those interested in elective student union government offices must align themselves with the powerful and influential campus cults:
- c. Cult members are protected by school authorities as they are referred to as management boys.
- d. Some lecturers are members etc

Other personal factors that compel students to join cults are desire for power and status. Cultism is essentially a result of false values that results in an obsession of lust for power, wealth and need for protection, poverty, fear, gullibility, search for identity, vindictive tendency, peer group influence, laziness, academic weakness among others. Institutional factors can be attributed to the recent development caused by student population explosion and the inadequacies of institutions of higher learning. These institutional factors negatively affects the teaching and learning service delivery and thus

promote crises on campus which compel students to joining cult groups in the futile attempt of seeking redress under secret cover.

Some students also join the cult group if they have problem with the authority or lecturer, more especially if they felt unjustly being victimized. However, power struggle in the society which also promotes secret society leaves the impression that one can only make it in life by joining a cult group.

According to a one time leader of the ‘Neo-Black Movement a.k.a. Black Axe most

students join cult groups out of curiosity. He stressed that groups on various campuses are confraternities doing things in common. If you fight one of them you have to fight all of them (Nuonagor 2005). He further remarked that the youths do not know the limit of fighting and in their bid to outdo one another they use guns and other dangerous weapons.

Why Cultism Persists in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

In our campuses today some students have developed the penchant to unleash a reign of terror on fellow students as they have backers among the academic and non academic staff of their various institutions. Situations abound where some members of staff use cult boys to settle scores against the system and to pursue other illegal objectives.

Incompetence of government officials’ and inadequate facilities to police campuses by authorities of tertiary institutions also led to resurgence of cultism. As renounced cultists who could not be protected by the law went back to their cult group to seek protection from rival groups who have noted their identities as a result of renouncement ceremony. This has resulted in a situation where cult groups became more established within and outside the campuses.

A university lecturer has also identified selective treatment as the major reason for the incessant re-occurrence of the hydra-headed mouster in our campuses Professor Ishaq

Olarewanju a onetime Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics) University of Ilorin, Kwara State, maintained that the problem of cultism is a mult-dimensional one. He regretted that instead of evolving wholistic approach to tackle the problem selective treatment was being adopted. He reiterated that cultism has several symptoms which when partially tackled will likely remain with us for a long time.

Thus, Professor Ishaq Olarewanju (2005) identified some of the symptoms via some posers like this:

‘Has authority been treating students as human beings? Do the parents themselves know their children well? Are they discharging their parental duties as expected of them? Are those using their offices to sexually harass the students dealt with after being identified as culprits? Are we not making scape goat out of other people.’

Finally, he concluded that until the government is prepared to arrest this ugly situation by sparing no culprit, the problem may regrettably persist in our society especially in tertiary institutions.

Strategies to curb cult activities in campuses

In recent times rivalries between members of secret cult groups such as Black Axe, Buccaneer, Aiye, Vampire, Black Beret, Daughters of Jezebel, Viqueens, Black Brazier etc. became the order of the day. The rate at which cult members have moved from nobility to criminality have become quite alarming. The confraternity which was founded by Professor Wole Soyinka and few others with genuine aims and motives have now derailed from its original motive and have claimed so many lives. To arrest this ugly situation which have continued to bring sorrow to many homes, causing irreparable damage to lives and ruins to many relationships; the government and authorities of tertiary institutions should adopt the following strategies:

Tertiary institutions should establish counseling outfits that would properly guide the students not only on academic matters, but also on better conduct. It could also be used to rehabilitate identified cultists whether on campuses or larger society. For it is not just enough to identify and expel a student cultist, but also you need to rehabilitate such a student.

The government should unban and register cult groups as normal associations. According to a one time president of Neo-Black Movement of Africa (NBMA) driving the cult groups underground make them faceless and more vicious. He remarked that cult related violence in tertiary institutions would stop if identities of the members are known (Onyebueke, 2005).

The government should sincerely co-operate with students. According to reports only students would be able to identify and expose cultists in their midst and stop their activities. This is because they interact among themselves. It is after the identification of the cultist that the law should be allowed to take its due course irrespective of the sons and daughters of wealthy Nigerians caught for infringement.

Proper information and sensitization on the dangers of secret cult on campuses: A giant bill board could be displayed boldly at the entrance gate of various campuses with the inscription.

CULTISM IS EVIL,
IF YOU JOIN SECRET CULT,
YOU RISK EXPULSION
FROM CAMPUS
REPORT ANYONE PRESSURIZING
YOU TO JOIN SECRET CULT

The bill board will act as a constant reminder to students on the risks involved in joining secret cult.

Orientation programme for newly admitted students should be planned to include lecture session on cultism, its negative effects and how to avoid it.

The installation of student union government that is totally against cultism and manifest agenda for the eradication of cult influences in Student Union Government (SUG) as well as penetration of cult members in Student Union election. In addition student union

election can be organized along ideologically inclined party lines. And parties which extols good virtues in their manifesto may likely win the election.

Conclusion

The unhealthy rivalries among secret cult groups often intensify acts of terrorism and hatred among students on campus. These often result in incessant closure of tertiary institutions thereby disrupting the academic programme which often culminate in the production of half baked graduates.

Finally, researches have shown that the menace has extended far beyond the walls of the ivory towers to the larger society; thus posing security challenges to the country. In Nigeria today, many youths with promising future have lost their lives as a result of cult clashes.

Recommendations

While tertiary institutions are battling with problems of cultism. It is quite shocking that the ugly trend has reared its head in a number of secondary schools to the astonishment of the larger society. We cannot fold our arms and allow this canker worm to destroy our youths who are the future leaders. To eradicate this situation the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Restitution of our value system: integrity, hardwork, honesty and impeccable achievement should be placed above other values (Njoku, 2001). He remarked that the best strategy is by individual stakeholders showing good personal examples of these desirable values.
2. Religious organizations on our campuses should be encouraged since religion has an important role to play in redirecting positively the ideas, attitudes, values and behaviour of members. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
3. Recreational facilities should be provided in colleges, polytechnics and the universities for students relaxation after the days activities. And institutions of higher learning should set up libraries well stocked with current books and journals.
4. Adequate security against counter attacks should be provided for school administrators and authorities of tertiary institutions that are courageous enough to confront cultist in their domain.

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