

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AFFECTING STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Contemporary issues are issues that are seemingly causing a lot of setback to educational attainment of students in the society today. These issues are mostly associated with cases of indiscipline both in school and the society. In schools today, indiscipline which is one among the major contemporary issues that seems to cause a lot of setback to educational attainment of students today. It stems from cultism, gangsterism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, truancy, cheating and bullying, thuggery among others. This issue has become so alarming in schools such that, students hardly have time for their studies. In most cases, even after graduation from school, some are distracted by these issues to the extent of not seeking to further their education. The major thrust of this study is to x-ray the contemporary issues affecting students' educational attainment in life. The paper looked at the concept of contemporary issues, educational attainment. It also specifically addressed various contemporary issues such as: cultism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, examination malpractice, bullying, indecent dressing and thuggery in terms of their negative influence on the educational development of the students and the way forward.

Keywords: Contemporary issues, students' educational attainment, cultism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity

Introduction

Every society trains her members to be useful and not useless. The main reason for the training is to instill discipline in them in a way of maintaining their cultural values and norms so as to enable them contribute positively in building the society. Moreover, schools are established for the purpose of transmitting what is worthwhile into the learners. This is through inculcating into the learner our cultural values, norms and good attitudes that will make him to become a useful and functional member of the society. Anti-social activities are rampant in the contemporary Nigerian Society. This is evident in the deluge of social problems witnessed on regular bases. These problems which include various factors such as social inequality, ethnicity, limited resources, corruption, poverty, criminality, and other socio-economic crises pervade the length and breadth of the country. There is a wide gap between the expectations of the society and its actual manifestations. Hardly would a day go by without a record of one form of social problem or the other (Eitzen, 2009). The success of any student in terms of academic achievement is determined by his level of discipline in school. Oladunmi

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(2010) observes that students in schools today are not performing well in their academic activities as expected of them. Oladunmi further states that the reason for students' poor performance in academic activities is as a result of their indisciplinary act which to a large extent affects their educational attainment.

There has been serious increase in cases of indiscipline in institutions of learning particularly in recent times. Commenting on disciplinary issues in secondary schools in the past, Agba (2008) opines that many schools today hardly provide the conducive, mental, social and psychological atmosphere of security so valuable to leadership skills and positive acceptable student behaviour. Contributing to the above, Enoch (2006) observes that schools today in Nigeria have become grounds for guerrilla warfare, anti-social behaviours and breeding grounds for unacceptable behaviours by students and teachers rather than being places where desirable and relevant changes in behaviours of learners occur.

In the opinions of Obiabo and Leke (2007), the act of indiscipline among students in schools today is characterized by truancy, cultism, sexual immorality, drug abuse, gansterism, cheating, stealing, fighting, bullying, indecent dressing among others. This makes most of the students lack proper concentration properly on their studies. According to Paddy (2009), some students end up repeating classes because of poor academic performance while others get suspended from school sometimes thereby loosing valuable academic activities that culminates in failures in their external examination. Orhungur (2010) opines that students who indulge in drug abuse spend most time in cult activities, gangsterism, fighting in schools and examination malpractice. Musa (2013) asserts that if students are to learn what the society expects of them and to encourage their behaviour to conform to these expectations, then their upbringing should be good. Aduloju (2007) lists the causes of indisciplinary behaviours among school students to include; poor parental upbringing, peer group influence and the school's inability to impact the right norms and values into the learners as well as indiscipline. This according to Adulogu has resulted in affecting their educational life.

Viewing the issue of indiscipline, Waraba (2008) opines that the societal expectation of every school-going child is to acquire the right cultural values and norms that will make him useful to his parents, relations and the society at large. Waraba reiterates that the act of indisciplinary behaviour on the part of students in schools today is really telling on them as most of them end up as drop-outs or finishing their schools without any valid certificates. Some even end up as drug addicts, political thugs and sex hawkers among others. This is because; their level of educational attainment has been badly affected by their acts of indiscipline while in school. In most schools in recent times, student's exhibit high level of truancy, indulge in cult-related activities and sexual immoral acts. It is difficult to assume or know when the school is on break. This is because of the level of students' truancy. They hardly stay in their classes for lessons but play truant or hang outside the class or school until school closes. Also students' level of involvement in cult-related activities is on increase particularly the secondary schools. They go about intimidating other students, teachers and even outsiders. This tends to keep them away from school programmes which seem to affect their educational attainment. Moreso, the extent of promiscuity among the students especially the female ones are high both in schools and even outside the school. Students now go about befriending each other and exhibiting immoral acts capable of jeopardizing their educational attainment. Most of the students who even after

graduation instead of working hard to proceed to higher institution rather decide to engage themselves in contemporary issues that end up jeopardizing their educational attainment.

Contemporary Issues

Contemporary issues are subjects that are currently in public discourse. Most often, it is a problem that people are discussing about and trying to find solutions for themselves in order to find a solution e.g. the issue of indiscipline in schools such as: truancy, cultism, sexual promiscuity, examination malpractice, drug abuse, indecent dressing, cheating and bullying. Moreso, the issue of Girl Child education in Africa, peace in the Middle East, the issue of insurgency (Paddy, 2010). "A contemporary issue can also be defined as any event, idea, opinion or topic in a given subject that is relevant to the present day. Contemporary issues can be found in almost any matter of interest." Any issue which has its implications, applicability, relevance, significance, effect and material presence in present time or at its given frame (period) of time can be sorted as Contemporary issues (Rogers, 2011:4).

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed. This is distinct from the level of schooling that an individual is attending (Voogt, & Roblin, 2012). In another view, Indyar (2015) define educational attainment as the number of years of education a person has attended and completed, or the highest degree earned. This includes the number of elementary and high school years completed, participation in college prior to graduation, and varying levels of degree attainment (i.e. Associates, Bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees). Educational attainment is not a measure of the quality of education received by the student during these years or their proficiency or grades in subject areas. Nor does the statistic explain contextual causes or influences, such as attainment of learning objectives, immigration patterns, test scores, discipline, or public policies. Educational attainment may also refer to the level of education completed (reported here as high school completion or higher,¹ an associate's or higher degree, a bachelor's or higher degree, or a master's or higher degree).

Educational attainment, in terms of the highest level of education completed, is associated with various positive outcomes. Pellegrino and Hilton (2013) reviewed studies and concluded that educational attainment is a stronger predictor of labour market success than measures of cognitive skills, personality traits, and intra-and interpersonal competencies. Workers who are better educated have better abilities to complete a given task, learn more from complex task training, and are more efficient in allocating work resources compared to workers who had attended school for lesser number of years.

Countries recognize that educational attainment is important to the economy because by logic of reasoning: more years of schooling means workforce will become more highly skilled and productive, leading to higher output of goods and services and eventually a stronger economy (Barro & Lee, 2011). Other than economic outcomes, educational attainment is also related to social outcomes, such as health, population growth, and income distribution (for data set of educational attainment in the world between 1950 and 2010, (Barro & Lee, 2013). To develop a workforce that can meet the demands of the new economy, education systems have to anticipate these needs and

keep up with the changes. Dede (2007) argued that the emergence of a global, knowledge-based workplace require the new generation of workers to gain 21st century skills and knowledge. Workers of the new economy does not necessary equate to employees of new businesses as current trends show that students are more likely to start their own businesses. Therefore, educational attainment is not only a matter of the number of years of schooling people complete, but also the range of knowledge, skills, and competencies they acquired to take on the responsibilities of leading the world's economy in the upcoming century.

Contemporary Issues Affecting Students Educational Attainment in Nigeria Cultism

Cultism is defined as any form of organization whose activities are exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others. Such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with the accepted norms and values of everyday life (Ogunbameru, 2014). Onikpe in Ezra (2014) maintains that cultism "contaminates" the school environment and jeopardizes the educational process. According to Onikpe, there can be long-standing effects such as physical, emotional and psychological implications for students including, distress, reduced self-esteem, risk of depression and suicide, reduced school attendance, impaired concentration, fear and a diminished ability to learn by students. This is also capable of affecting their educational development in the future. Anwuluorah (2008:7) opines that the youth's involvement in cultism is a serious concern for many Nigerians. The secret cults engagement in nefarious activities like armed robbery, petty stealing, murder/killings, rape, hard drugs, cruel acts, rudeness and fighting. The above lend support to the claim made by many that most of the unrest and the state of anarchy in educational institutions are due to cultism. Most student cultists sometimes end up as kidnappers. This is because, they look for money at any time they done have with any available means. Such act is capable of affecting their educational attainment in life as most of them end up being either rusticated from school, imprisoned or even killed.

Truancy

Truancy according to Orhungur (2010) is the act of staying away from school without permission by the school authority. To Jenkins (2011) truancy is any intentional unauthorized absence from compulsory schooling. It also refers to students who attend school but do not go to classes. Eze (2010) maintains that the term truancy typically describes absences caused by students of their own will, and usually does not refer to legitimate "excused" absences such as the ones related to medical conditions. Eze further notes that in most institutions of learning today, most students are seeing roaming around the street of markets, film halls, stadium and drinking joints during school hours without any genuine reason for staying away from school. In his opinion, Amema (2007) asserts that truancy has the following effects: stealing, dishonesty, sex offenses, disobedience, drug abuse, assault, wickedness, suicide and charms which has negatively affect their educational attainment of such students in life. This is because, students who truant may find it difficult to pass their internal and external examinations.

Sexual Promiscuity

Sexual promiscuity according to Musa (2013) is the deliberate violation of accepted principles of right and wrong which includes any form of "illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals". Musa puts it that sexual promiscuity has suddenly been dignified in most schools and this seems to have portrayed a very bad image on the school by the public. Accordingly, Okpani and Okpani (2010) wrote concerning the decline in the age of sexual experience among adolescents contrary to accepted moral and cultural values. They observed that this is a dangerous trend which affects the educational attainment of the child and the society at large. According to Akingba (2012), the estimated account for inducing abortion is currently between 20,000 to 50,000 maternal annual deaths in Nigeria. This could be the reason why Uchekukwu (2011, p. 14) wrote, "If one goes by the multifarious social problems plaguing the Nigerian society in recent times, one will appreciate the urgent need for the school to wade in and give parents a helping hand in the appropriate education on issues concerning sex early in life".

Drug Abuse

Drug Abuse is any drug taken without medically recommended or if its use causes physical, psychological, legal or social harm to the individual user or other affected by the drug users' behaviour (NDLEA, 2012). Nte (2008) observes that students who abuse drugs are found loitering and participating in other forms of criminal activities in the school and outside the school, thereby causing distraction to school academic activities. They are also likely to receive poor grades and are likely to drop-out of school. Denga (2011) stresses that drug, abuse does not only affect the academic activities of students, but also affect the lives of the students and the measure of their educational achievement. Denga further states that, some students end up dropping out of school because they cannot cope with school academic activities as drugs have taken their time and change their perception and thinking.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice is also a disciplinary problem and a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of our educational system today. Odo (2011) sees it as any irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates charged with the conduct of examinations or outside the examination hall before, during or after such examination. He further maintains that such irregular behaviour contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination. According to him, if his opinion is correct, then examination malpractice is another form of indiscipline during or after examinations. The negative implication of such acts is that, such students may end up being rusticated from school when caught or imprisoned for years. This is thus capable of affecting their educational attainment in life.

Indecent Dressing

In our institutions of learning today, students dress how way they feel and leave for school. They do not follow the acceptable way of dressing as students before going to school. Nivi (2012) observes that the issue of indecent dressing in institutions of learning is more pronounced than even outside the school setting. Nivi maintains that indecent dressing is the unacceptable and unconfirmed way of dressing by students of an institution to school. Nivi also notes that most students dress indecently to school. They are seen flying their shirt, while the girls dress with tight uniforms showing their

all round shape or with short skirts that attract a lot of attention by other students and teachers. Students are seen dressed half naked and exposes their bodies to teachers and other students. This is also an unwanted phenomenon that is bugging the Nigerian education system today. Answers.com (2011) maintains that there is the likelihood that female students who dress indecently or provocatively in their uniform like wearing of skimpy and tight fitting and transparent clothes could be pruned to sexual harassment and rape among students and teachers. Jacob (2011) avers that many students who dress indecently are easily invited for a suppressed sex only to become pregnant and drop out of school or being killed by ritualists. The negative consequences of indecent dressing have also been identified to include rape, prostitution, HIV/AIDS and other venereal diseases, infections as well as armed robbery and poor academic performance in school. Similarly, Articles base.com (2011) posits that students who dress indecently in their uniforms are easily forced to sex against their will which results to their contact of venereal disease such as HIV/AIDS because of lack of protection.

Fighting/Bullying

A critical observation of schools today shows that students are seen fighting or bullying each other while in school and after school hours. Thus, the stronger students take advantage over the weaker students by beating and bullying them unnecessarily. This sometimes leads to gangsterism and cultism. School bullying is a type of bullying that occurs in connection with education, either inside or outside of school. Bullying can be physical, verbal or emotional and is usually repeated over a period of time. According to Laving (2010) bullying in schools occurs in all areas. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it more often occurs in physical education (PE), recess, hallways, bathrooms, classes that require group work and/or after school activities. Ayainde (2009) stated that, bullying in school sometimes consist of a group of students taking advantage of or isolating one student in particular and gaining the loyalty of bystanders who want to avoid becoming the next victim. These bullies taunt and tease their target before physically bullying their target.

Targets of bullying in school are often pupils and students who are considered strong or different by their peers to begin with, making the situation harder for them to deal with. One student or a group can bully another student or a group of students. While bystanders may participate or watch, sometimes out of fear of becoming the next victim. This is also a form of disciplinary problem and act of indiscipline that is plaguing our schools from time immemorial. The act of this bullying may for example include; punching, pushing, shoving, kicking, and inappropriate touching, tickling, headlocks, school pranks, teasing and fighting with the use of available objects as weapons. This act is capable of earning a student suspension from school, rustication or even arrested and imprisoned which may affect their academic attainment in life.

Thuggery

Most students who graduate from secondary schools take profession of becoming political thugs. They do dirty deals for their pay masters who do not even care about their future educational attainment. For instance, during elections in Nigeria, politicians make good use of students' cultist as thugs to disrupt election exercises. Moreso, in the school settings, teachers and fellow students are beaten and manhandled for one reason or the other by students who are thugs. Some teachers are intimidated and threatened. Academic activities are halted in schools and fear of uncertainty freeze

human beings (Osarenren, 2012). Such act of indiscipline is capable of affecting students' educational attainment as most of them do not end up well in life. Some of them end up been frustrated in life, used and dumped by politicians or sometime are killed by political associates of their pay masters.

The Way Forward

1. Students who are caught practicing cult-related activities should be rusticated from the school and that there should be a standing policy that will warrant all their identity published in newspapers and announced on radio, televisions such that the students would be rejected anywhere.
2. Appropriate school authorities should device means of stopping truancy among students in schools. This can be done through checking of students regularly and giving them severe punishment.
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized periodically on the dangers of sexual promiscuity among students so as to scare them to desist from such act capable of jeopardizing their educational attainment in life. The government, Ministry of Health and some NGOs should also extend the fight against HIV/AIDS a bi-product of sexual promiscuousness to secondary schools and higher institutions where there is a larger group of people who are vulnerable to infection.
4. The management of the schools at all levels should intensify efforts at minimizing drug abuse among students in schools. This they can do through making it a policy in the school that students are regularly checked by medical team to know those who do drugs and either rusticate them or punish them in any other way so as to serve as deterrent to others.
5. Cases of examination malpractices could be minimized through the efforts of counselors, teachers and other educational practitioners who would take time to orient students on the dangers of engaging in examination malpractices particularly as regards the jail terms accrued to it when caught.
6. The management of schools should enact policies through the various Departments on the kind of dressing that would be worn by students. Anything different from the acceptable one should not be accepted. As such, any student caught flaunting the school orders should be dealt seriously with.
7. The school managers should make it a policy that any bullying act found among the student will amount to immediate rustication. This will help to serve as deterrent to other students with such characters.
8. Religious institutions should be more serious with our youths to indoctrinate them in virtues before they leave their homes. They should be made to know that they are leaders of tomorrow not just by name but by exhibiting characters that would prepare them to take over leadership and not allow themselves to be used as thugs and end up being killed at any time. Moreso, The signing of agreement by students and their parents with authorities on the prohibition of informal gathering of students which is capable of resulting to thuggery all in the name of protecting the interest of students. This will go a long way in helping to avert the problem of thuggery which sometime.

Conclusion

Educational institutions in Nigeria are in the war front because of indisciplinary acts of students and their activities. School environments are no longer conducive for effective learning. Lives of students, teachers or other personalities have been at stake. There is terror and sorrow in the school and the society. Government, parents and the community among others are not at rest as there are frequent cases of one form of students' misbehaviour and another. The educational attainment of such students is also at stake as most students who indulge themselves in such acts end up as drop-outs or even become political thugs who are sometimes killed. The future of the Nigerian youths and the nation is also at stake. All hands must be on deck to eliminate some of these contemporary issues like indiscipline especially in schools in order to produce graduates who would be useful and not useless in the society tomorrow. Indisciplinatory acts of students must come to an end to enable our students acquire mass qualitative and effective education for meaningful survival in the society.

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