

CIVIC EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP: A PANACEA TO MORAL DECADENCE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Effective leadership is vital to the success of the school in achieving its objectives especially in the moral upbringing of the students. This study was carried out to ascertain the extent through which school leadership curb the menace of moral decadence in our tertiary institutions through the teaching of civic education. It is a descriptive study carried out ex-post-facto. The population of the study consisted of all final year students in three government-owned tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 2,120 students drawn using the simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled "Civic Education and Leadership as a Panacea to moral Decadence in tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (CELPMDTIQ)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire items were validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 which was considered adequate for the study was obtained using the Pearson Product Moment correlation statistic. The findings indicated that the extent of using the teaching of civic education to curb moral decadence is poor. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that lecturers who are not civic education specialist should not be allowed to teach the course. Also there should be regular enlightenment programme on the negative effect of the absence of moral values on students.

Key Words: Civic Education, Leadership, Moral Decadence and Students

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Introduction

The barely or little citizenship moral traits in the life of students of any nation's tertiary institution has been responsible directly or indirectly for the experience of injustice, anarchy, disorientation and non-achievement of the education goals of such a nation. No form of national development can be achieved without the contributions of the citizens of such a nation (Falade, 2006). In other words, the development of any nation is dependent on the active participation of the youths of which no meaningful development can take place without their active involvement. One viable way of achieving this is through civic education which inculcates sound moral values in the youths. It is the education which aims to assist students learn how to become active, informed and responsible citizens. Such values regulate the life of a nation and project good image for the country and in so doing, teach the citizens the virtues of good citizenship particularly the values of obedience, humility and respect for the rule of law.

Effective leadership is vital to the success of a school in achieving its objectives, especially in the area of moral upbringing of the students. Tertiary institutions are environments created not only for the upbringing of students academically but also morally. It is therefore pertinent that these institutions have a crucial role to play in training competent graduates with a sense of civic responsibility, morality and social justice (UNESCO, 2008). Teachers and educational administrators are very crucial to the success of using the teaching of citizenship education to reduce the rate of moral decadence among students in tertiary institutions through inculcating the right kind of values through effective instruction and supervision. Evidence confirmed that there is a slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality learning environment without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning.

Marishane and Botha (2011:7) see leadership "as a process of directing the behavior of others towards the accomplishment of goals". Abu-Nayeem (2011) asserted that schools that lack effective leadership seldom achieve their articulated goals. Successful leadership is people-centred and attaches importance to human needs rather than to organizational needs according to personal and professional value (Harris, 2002). Lack of effective leadership is responsible for the collapse of many organizations or institutions (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2001).

Successful leaders are able to identify and overcome challenges to make their schools effective. They need to be able to recognize problems, explore options and develop innovative solutions to move towards school excellence (Abu-Nayeem, 2011). Iyer (2011:4) observed that "schools would be regarded as effective if its processes result in observable positive outcomes amongst its students consistently over a period of time". In the words of Omonijo, Nnedum and Ezeokana (2011), leadership is more or less like an engine that propels man's society to either advancement or backwardness.

Civic education has been identified as a potent tool that can foster national development through the production of responsible citizens who will maximally contribute to the building of a useful society. When the citizen's capacities and commitments are well developed through the curriculum, every citizen will become conscious of his or her responsibility to the growth of the nation (Lukman and Audu, 2014). According to Oladele (2009), this subject area is the type of education provided to students so as to enable them become active and functional citizens. Thus, effective implementation provides a philosophical and structural framework on which to base the teaching of skills and strategies that reinforce reasoned decision-making skills,

evaluation of information, practical application of civic virtues as well as an in-depth understanding of citizenship responsibilities (Kidwell, 2005).

To Azebanwan (2010), civic education issues are not only what affect lives but also topical and sensitive because it can affect people at a personal level. The issues are moral because they relate to what people think is right or wrong, good or bad, including important and unimportant issues. Ogundare (2000) noted that some specific citizenship responsibilities have been abandoned by political leaders while the citizens have thrown most of their social obligations to the wind.

Mofoluwawo, Jarimi and Oyelade (2012) aver that civic education is out to develop in the leaders those values and skills that will make them responsible citizens, thus developing the spirit of effective citizenship and loyalty to the nation in the citizens is one of the major objective of civic education. It then means therefore that the increasing level of moral decadence will constitute a serious setback to the attainment and sustainability of any nation. Bello and Amali (2012) noted that good character exhibition is not automatic but instead developed overtime through a sustained teaching process. They noted that if civic education is taught in schools, it will help to educate the students through providing them with the platform for developing positive thinking and skills.

The problem of moral decadence has been in existence for a long period of time, which are not only seen in tertiary institutions in Nigeria but the world at large. Moral decadence in our tertiary institutions can be attributed to the inability of the administrators in our institutions to tow the path of moral rectitude. According to Ujomi (2001) as cited in Ogunji (2009), leadership challenges in tertiary institutions has negatively affected the acquisition of knowledge by students as well as the inculcation of knowledge, skills, values and good conduct among the students, hence leading to the students being involved in anti-social vices. Consequently, the enforcement of moral standards in our schools rest on the shoulders of the teachers and the school administrators. But neither of them can enforce morality if they are immoral or even amoral.

Badijo (2004:2) as cited in Ugoji (2010) defines moral decadence as a moral depravity or decay. Morally decadent behaviors hampers the progress, peace, unity and development of the nation (Ugoji, 2010). Evidence of decadent behaviors especially on our campuses come in the form of indecent dressing, examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse, prostitution, indiscipline, etcetra. These problems reduce the value of education, destroys the human capacity for leadership and good citizenship, including lowering the academic integrity of institutions.

It is quite glaring that the dress patterns of most tertiary institution students especially in the sub-saharan Africa is so indecent. It is so improper and provocative that it has exposed the high rate of moral decadence in the present modern society generally and our tertiary institutions in particular. It should be noted that indecent dressing cause divided attention on students during teaching and learning process which makes it impossible for them to receive adequate practical training in their discipline in order to acquire marketable skills for employment after graduation. Adeshinda cited in Ugoji (2010) stated that indecent dressing is the root of all evil in our higher institutions. Furthermore, indecent dressing not only cause incessant rape cases but also constitutes distraction to both lecturers and students as its tendency is to impart negatively on their academic performance as the output of the teachers cannot be at optimal level due to its distractions. Gbadegbe and Quashie (2013) stressed that indecently dressed students are prone to academic failure as they paid little or no attention to what is being taught during

lectures. They battle with carry-over (failed) courses with a consequence of spending more years than is normal to graduate.

A university environment which should thrive through exchange of intellectual and moral ideas suddenly becomes a battlefield where moral decadence looms large. Chebli, Kallon, Harleston and Mansaray (2007) citing Azelama, Alude and Imhonda views cultism as an assemblage of people united by certain ideals or symbols and whose rights and ceremonies of veneration are unique and shrouded in mysteries with a secrecy that cannot be broken.

The activities of cult groups most times do lead to death incarceration, rustication, hospitalization of both innocent and guilty students thereby putting to halt academic activities for such students. Again, apart from the physical destruction and disruption of learning processes, life in these tertiary institution (communities) can be insecure (Opaluwah, 2000 ; Ugoji, 2010). Chebli et.al (2007) pointed out that both teaching and learning process, mentality of the students and the general peace and tranquility of various campuses are adversely affected due to cult activities. Youths cannot fulfill their destiny in a volatile environment saturated by fratricidal wars, illiteracy and barbarity, for such an environment will produce youths infested with the virus of injustice, bizarre life style and low intellectual development.

Adequate and proper acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills in disciplines of study is invariably a function of quality education (Okara, 2012). Usman (2005) sees examination malpractice as cheating in examination or any intention to benefit or give undue advantage to oneself or another by deceit or fraud, before, during or after examination. The frequency of occurrence of examination malpractice indicates a state of hopelessness and helplessness (Emaikwu, 2012). Emaikwu (2012) aver that a wide spread examination malpractice in tertiary institutions has lead to a situation where the use of formal examination as a basis for determining the level of proficiency of the students has been impossible. Ada (2004) note with dismay that owing to malpractices in tertiary institution examination, results tends to give a false picture of state of affairs; hence a good number of school graduates cannot defend the grades obtained in examinations.

Omonijo, Uche, Rotimi and Nwadiolor (2014) noted that where moral values are lacking, development could be virtually impossible. Supporting this, Bello and Amali (2012) asserted that civic education promotes academic excellence for quality life because it lays the foundation for all learning that takes place in schools. In otherwords, without proper implementation of civic education (citizenship education), it will be impossible to assure of graduates who possess good moral values. Lickona (2004) insisted that through civic education (citizenship education), the society will help the young (students) develop good judgment, integrity, trustworthiness and other essential virtues. But Ajayi (2009) felt that moral decadence cannot be curbed unless the entire society displays high degree of responsibility, integrity and honesty by fighting this menace with vigour and rigour it deserves.

Statement of the Problem

Education system, especially at the tertiary level in Nigeria today, is bedeviled by numerous challenges one of which is moral decadence. The alarming rate of moral decadence among Nigerian students call for conscious and concerted efforts towards the cultivation of a civic society (Mofoluwawo, Jarimi and Oyelade, 2012). Nigerian youths are no longer upholding societal values which they were known for because not much

emphasis is laid on the teaching of civic education in Nigeria secondary schools as these products are later turned in to study at the tertiary institutions. A decadent free society can only be possible when the youths (students) who are expected to take up leadership roles are aware of the factors leading to such a decadent behavior and a way of avoiding it.

The researchers have observed that the prevalence of indecent dressing, drug abuse, cultism, prostitution, examination malpractice, disrespect for constituted authorities are clear manifestation of high level of moral decadence in our tertiary institutions, especially in Abia State, Nigeria. This may have been as a result of non-inculcation of appropriate values through the teaching of civic education.

It seems that the leadership of schools is handicapped over the control of this escalating rate of moral decadence in our institutions. They seem to have lost grip of their leadership responsibilities in having a decadent free institution. It is against this backdrop that it has become pertinent to ascertain the possibility if effective teaching of civic education, coupled with good leadership in schools can salvage the battering image of our tertiary institutions as a result of high rate of moral decadence.

Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions are formulated.

- 1) What is the extent of curbing indecent dressing through leadership and effective instruction of civic education (Citizenship education) in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria?
- 2) What is the extent of curbing cultism through leadership and effective instruction of citizenship education in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria?
- 3) What is the extent of curbing examination malpractice through leadership and effective instruction of citizenship education in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria?
- 4) What is the extent of curbing moral decadence in tertiary institutions through leadership and effective instruction of citizenship education?

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey which adopted ex-post-facto design. The population of the study consisted of all final year students in the three government-owned tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria. The use of final year students is because they are the most experienced of all the students' population in the area of observing the prevalence of moral decadence in their respective schools. The sample consisted of two thousand, one hundred and twenty (2,120) students drawn using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for the collection of data was the researchers constructed questionnaire titled "civic education and leadership as a panacea to moral decadence in tertiary institution questionnaire (CELPMDTIQ) and was validated for face and content validity by experts in educational administration and planning and measurement and evaluation of Abia State University, Uturu. The reliability of the instrument was tested on 30 individuals who were not part of the sample, using the test re-test method.

A reliability coefficient of 0.75 which was considered adequate for the study was obtained using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistic. The researchers, with the help of trained research assistants personally administered the questionnaire on the respondents. The administered questionnaire was collected

through same process thereby recording a 100% return rate. Percentages were used to analyze the research questions.

Finding

The data gathered from final year tertiary institution's undergraduates on the effect of the teaching of civic education in solving the problem of moral decadence are presented in tables one to four respectively.

Research Question One: What is the extent of curbing indecent dressing through leadership and effective instruction of civic education in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria?

Item Numbers 1-6 of the questionnaire provided answers to the research question. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table: Civic Education, Leadership and Indecent Dressing

S/N	Item Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Our school leadership use billboards/signboard to fight against indecent dressing in our school	1,590	75	530	25
2	There is a regular enlightenment campaign on the negative effect of indecent dressing in my school.	742	35	1,378	65
3	Teaching of citizenship education in my school impact positively on the need to avoid indecent dressing.	1,484	70	636	30
4	Our lecturer's at times admonish students that engage in indecent dressing.	848	40	1,272	60
5	Security department in my school play an active role in checking indecent dressing in my school.	1,696	80	424	20
6	Students who are indecently dressed on campus go about their business as without much molestation by school authorities.	212	10	1,908	90
Aggregate Percentage			52%		48%

Table 1: Percentage analysis of civic education instruction and curbing indecent dressing among tertiary institution students in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 1 shows the opinion of final year undergraduate students regarding the extent of curbing indecent dressing through the acquisition of knowledge through civic education. Questionnaire item 1-6 indicated that 52% of the respondents agreed that school leadership and the teaching of civic education had a positive impact in curbing or controlling indecent dressing amongst students in tertiary institutions while 48% of the respondents disagreed. A summary of the analysis showed that 75% of the sample students agreed that their school leadership use billboards or signboards to fight indecent dressing amongst the students while 15% disagreed. 35% agreed that there is a regular enlightenment campaign on the negative effect of indecent dressing while 65%

disagreed. 70% of the students agreed that the teaching of civic education has positively impacted on the need to avoid indecent dressing, while the students who disagreed represented 30%. Also 40% of the respondents agreed that the teachers at times admonish the students over indecent dressing while 60% disagreed. 80% agreed that the school's security unit play an active role in checking indecent dressing while 20% disagreed. 10% of the respondents agreed that students who dressed indecently on campus move freely without much molestation by the school authorities with 90% disagreeing.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of curbing cultism through leadership and effective instruction of civic education in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria?

Items Numbers 7-11 of the questionnaire provided answers to the research question. The results are presented on Table 2.

Table 2 : Civic Education, Leadership and Cultism

S/N	Item Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Cultism has been reduced to its barest minimum in my school due to the contributions of the teaching of civic education (citizenship education).	–	–	2,120	100
2	The teaching of citizenship education has impacted positively on students in curbing cultism.	742	35	1378	65
3	Some members of my school administration encourage cult groups.	742	35	1378	65
4	There are billboards mounted in my school to show the negative effect of cultism.	848	40	1272	60
5	Our school administration has done much in curbing the activities of cult groups.	1,802	85	318	15
Aggregate Percentage			39%		61%

Table 2: Percentage Analysis of civic education instruction and curbing cultism among tertiary institution students in Abia state, Nigeria.

Table 2 showed the item responses to questions 7-11 of the questionnaire which indicated that overall 39% of the student respondents agreed that the teaching of civic education had helped school leadership in curbing cultism on campus, while 61% disagreed. An analysis of each of the items show that 100% of the respondents disagreed that cultism has been reduced to its barest minimum in campuses as a result of the positive impact of the teaching of civic education, though the students insisted on the existence of cult groups on campus, 35% of the respondents agreed that the teaching of civic education has impacted positively on students in curbing cultism while 65% disagreed. 35% agreed that some members of the school administration encouraged cult groups, while 65% disagreed. Also 40% agreed that billboards are mounted on campuses to show the negative effect of engaging in cultism while 60% disagreed. 85% of the respondents agreed that school administration has done much in curbing the activities of cult groups while 15% disagreed.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of curbing examination malpractice through leadership and effective instruction of civic education in tertiary institutions in Abia State, Nigeria?

Items 12-16 of the instrument were used in answering this question. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Civic Education, Leadership and Examination Malpractice

S/N	Item Statement	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Teaching of civic education has reduced the involvement of students in examination malpractice.	636	30	1484	70
2	The regulation on the involvement of students in examination malpractice is still effective in my school as students caught face the disciplinary action.	742	35	1378	65
3	Students care much about the moral implication of involving in examination malpractice.	318	15	1802	85
4	Invigilators at times receive gratitude from students and aid them in examination malpractice	116	55	954	45
5	Lecturers do not care much about students caught cheating in examination involving them.	848	40	1272	60
Aggregate Percentage			35%		65%

Table 3: Percentage analysis of civic education instruction and curbing examination malpractice among tertiary institution students in Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 3 shows the responses of students regarding the curbing of examination malpractices through good leadership and teaching of civic education (citizenship education). The overall percentage of items 12-16 of the questionnaire indicate that 35% of the respondents agreed that the teaching of civic education has gone a long way in curbing students involvement in examination malpractice, while 65% disagreed. Based on the information from each of the items, 30% of the students agreed that the teaching of civic education has reduced the engagement of students in examination malpractice while 70% disagreed. 35% of them agreed that the students caught cheating during examination still face disciplinary action, while 65% of them disagreed. Also students caring much about the moral implication of involving in examination malpractice has 15% of the students agreeing to that fact, while 85% disagreed. 55% of the respondents agreed that examination invigilators at times receive gratitude from students so as to aid them partake in cheating during examination, while 45% disagreed. Finally, 40% of the respondents agreed that lecturers do not care much about students caught cheating in examination papers involving them, while 60% disagreed.

Research Question 4: What is the extent of curbing moral decadence in our tertiary institutions through leadership and effective teaching of civic education?

The information from the respondents on the extent of curbing moral decadence in tertiary institution was used in answering this question. The results are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Civic Education, Leadership and Moral Decadence

Item Specification	Percentage Agree	Percentage Disagree
Indecent Dressing	52	48
Cultism	39	61
Examination Malpractice	35	65
Aggregate Percentage	42	58

Table 4: Percentage analysis of civic education instruction and curbing moral decadence among tertiary institution students in Abia State, Nigeria.

The table shows that 58% of the undergraduate students did not agree that the teaching of civic education in our tertiary institutions has been able to provide the needed platform in helping to curb the menace of moral decadence in our institutions in particular and the society at large while 42% agreed. This evidence goes on to prove that Nigerian undergraduate students have not been able to have sound moral values inculcated in them through the teaching of civic education.

Discussion

The findings of this study as presented in table 1-4 indicate that so far the expectation vested upon the teaching of civic education towards the achievement of part of the objectives of the National policy on Education on inculcation of proper values may not be soon achieved. The inability of students in our tertiary institutions to be inculcated with sound moral values through the teaching of civic education is an indication that the leadership of schools need to put in extra effort in seeing that the development and proper training is achieved before the graduation period of these students.

The findings of table one shows that curbing the menace of indecent dressing as a moral decadence through the teaching of civic education in tertiary institutions is high with 52% score. This goes on to prove the effort of school leadership in ensuring that this aspect of moral decadence do not hamper the effort of government in inculcating proper moral values in students during their period of studentship which will enable them to live well in the society. The findings of this study is in consonance with that of Mofoluwawo, Jarimi and Oyelade (2012) who noted that civic education is out to develop in the leaders those values and skills that will make them responsible citizens. It also agrees with Beth and Amali (2012) who observed that good character exhibition is not automatic but instead developed overtime through a sustained teaching process. The findings of this study disagrees with Gbadegbe and Qvashie (2013) who stressed that indecently dressed students are prone to academic failure as they pay little attention during teaching and learning process.

Evidence from table two show that undergraduate students may not have acquired the needed moral values through the teaching of civic education which would have helped to curb the excesses of cultism in schools with a percentage of 61%. This implies that the school leadership need to set a machinery in motion so as to impart positively in the lives of the students through the teaching of civic education. The findings of this study is in line with Opaluwale (2000) and Ugoji (2010) who aver that life on the

campus environment can be insecure apart from the physical destruction and disruption of academic activities due to cult activities. It also agrees with the work of Chebli et al. (2007) who noted that due to cult activities on campus, teaching and learning processes, mentality of the students including the general peace and tranquility of various campuses are adversely affected.

Results from table three show that the extent of curbing examination malpractice through the teaching of civic education is poor with a percentage of 65%. This shows that the effort of institutional leadership and the teaching of civic education has not yielded much dividends in inculcating that moral consciousness in students to show examination malpractice. The findings of the study is consistent with Emaikwu (2012) who attributed the widespread of examination malpractices in tertiary institutions to that which has led to a situation where the use of proficiency of the students has become impossible. It also concur with Ada (2004) who noted that results in tertiary institutions tend to give a false picture of the state of affairs due to examination malpractice.

The data presented in table 4 (four) show the extent of curbing moral decadence in tertiary institutions through the teaching of civic education is low with a percentage of 58% disagreeing. This shows that the efforts being made so far by educational administrators in controlling the menace of moral decadence which has eaten deep into the fabrics of society has not yielded an acceptable result. The findings in consistent with the of Ajayi (2009) who noted that moral decadence cannot be curbed unless the society displays high degree of responsibility through combating this menace with the vigour and rigour that it deserves.

Conclusion

It should be noted that proper education of students through civic education will enable them acquire good values and skills necessary for good lifestyle as they will take cognizance of their responsibilities and limitations but the absence of the teaching of civic education may lead to disorientation in school, lack of focus in the lives of the students and future bad leadership traits in the larger society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be regular enlightenment programme on the negative effect of the absence of moral values on the lives of students in tertiary institution.
2. Students should be encouraged to develop more interest in civic education courses as it will help them to acquire proper moral values that will enable them live as responsible citizens in the society.
3. The curriculum content in the teaching of civic education should be broadened to cover areas that are limited in scope as well as areas not covered by the already existing curriculum.
4. Tertiary Institutions through the electronic media should sponsor civic education programmes to educate the students the more on profitable values and norms.
5. Lecturers should be specially trained in the civic education instead of using teachers from any field in teaching the course.

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