TACKLING CONFLICTS AND CULTISM AS SCHOOL PROBLEMS THROUGH POSITIVE PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND POSITIVE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMME

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Abstract

This paper focuses on positive physical activities and positive recreational problem as panacea to curtail conflicts and cultism in Nigeria institutions. The vices that stigmatized institutions of learning in Nigeria today are traceable to the uncontrolled behavior of students. School authorities and concerned government over the years have applied measures to check the excesses of students in Nigeria institutions of higher learning without noticeable success. Positive Physical Activities (PPA) and Positive Recreational Program (PRP) otherwise known as sports and games stand to provide the needed solution to these lingering problems of conflicts and Cultism in school. Sports are perceived as wholesome pursuits for students in schools as it channels their thinking and disposition toward worthwhile goals. Similarly, Sports provide students the opportunity to cultivate sportsmanship qualities, which are necessary for school discipline. This paper focused on the educational values of PPA and PRP that includes self discipline, self control, obedience, Respect and co-operation with constituted authorities among others. At the same time, sports provide students with safety values of letting off excessive energies, which ordinarily could have been mischievously channeled towards acts that are opposed to school discipline. Finally, recommendations were made on how participation in sports by students could help solve conflict and problems of cultism.

Keywords: Positive Physical Activities, Positive Recreation Program, Conflicts, Cultism, Nigerian Institutions

One of the greatest social crimes committed in institutions of higher learning in the country as of today is cultism. It is a social crime which is very rampant in Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics all over the country. It is a social menace which is not restricted to only the institutions of higher learning but that which is a common phenomenon that characterizes the entire society-the secondary schools and even the basic schools are not left behind.

According to Ogunade (2002), cultic activities are sometimes laden with blood. It may be the blood of an animal or that of human beings. He claimed that during initiation rites or during rival group clashes within the University setting, blood flows during which many lives are lost in the process. There are various secret cults now in Nigeria institutions of higher learning. They are called different names depending on the institution. There are those cults mostly meant for male students while there are some mostly for the female students. These various cults are usually in conflict with one another during which many of their lives including those of the innocent non-members are lost. Cultic action often leads to conflict which can arise between member of the same group known as intra group conflict, or it can occur between members of two or more groups, and involve violence, interpersonal discord and psychological tension, known as inter group conflict.

Cultism: The Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary defined cult as a small group of people who have extreme religious beliefs and who are not part of any established religion.

Secret Cult: Ogunade (2002) defined a secret cult as an enclosed organized association or group devoted to the same cause. It is an enclosed group having an exclusive sacred ideology and a series of rites centering around their sacred symbols. Secret cults is a terminology coined by a former Military Head of State – Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida between 1983-1984. Before this period, these gangs had always been referred to as fraternities. The members of the cult, according to Ogunade (2002) commit themselves to oath and allegiance, which serves as their strong bond. This group of people are always violent when defending their course.

Secret Societies: Maquet (1971) defined secret societies as close associations, guilds, and cult groups with closed membership. These societies are 'fraternities' established by a conjunction of purposeful intentions with a view to achieving specific ends. They are branded 'Secret' partly because only few people with a special knowledge or interest can understand them. Offiong (1939), explained further that societies make use of particular rituals, signs, symbols and forms of knowledge which are withheld from non-initiates, and these things are regarded as a special source of power though being kept private.

There are many secret cults in Nigeria and they are not restricted to any particular place in the country. They are found among the various ethnic groups. They have been in existence since the pre-colonial period in Nigeria. Some of them have now been reformed, Ogunade (2002) categorized them into three groups: religious secret societies, semi-religious secret societies and anti-social secret societies.

Physical Training: Oxford dictionaries define physical training as the systematic use of exercises to promote bodily fitness and strength (Sport).

Recreational Activities: These are referring to Sports such as football, baseball, volleyball, cricket, basketball and such different games.

Conflict: This is a form of friction, disagreement or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group.

Characteristics of Students in Nigerian Institutions

Today, there seem to be a general feeling that there is a social imbalance and injustice in the nation and students of higher institutions who are in their adolescent stage are highly sensitive to these feelings. Students, when in school have a feeling of togetherness and strong peer group formation. Ngoka (2005) emphasized that because of the prevailing socio-cultural and economic situation in the country, the incidence of secret cult activities is expected to be high. This he attributed to the special peculiarities of students in tertiary of students in tertiary institutions which include the following:

i. **Physical (Biological) Traits**: This is associated with the adolescent's growth which does not match the emotional development. The adolescent still perceives himself as a child even though he has grown to the size of an adult and might not thus adjust or act appropriately on normal situations.
ii. **Emotional traits**: Restiveness and youthful exuberant exhibition
iii. **Social traits**: Peer group formation resulting in peer influence
iv. **Urbanization**: Environmental changes, socio-economic status, movies, communication system and the likes are identified. The situation has not changed till date. It is believed that a wholesome participation in sport activities and spectatorship by students will dissipate undesirable drives and keep them away from negative vices.

Fundamental Issues Influencing Students' Participation in Sports

(i) **Sport Awareness:** It seems that a greater number of Nigeria institutions administrators are ignorant of the values of sports. To them, planning sports programmes is a waste of time. In some of the schools where sports programmes are present, a great number of students and staff alike are ignorant of the

potentials of sports. They are either too busy to play or regard sports participation as a waste of precious time.

(ii) **Perception of Sports in Curriculum:** The National policy on Education placed physical education as integral part and a core compulsory subject in the school curriculum. The attention given to sports is far below that required and consequently there is low students participation or no participation at all.

(iii) **Perception of Sports by Parents:** Most parents have wrong conception of sport programmes in school. They not only discourage wards from studying physical education as a subject but even go further to forbid them from participating in sports and games. Most parents feel that time allocated for sports should be spent on other academic activities. This is a misconception and as such these parents need proper education on the potentials of sports.

(iv) **Sports Facilities and Sports Personnel:** If students are to be gainfully involved in sports at all, there must be that enabling environment. Sports facilities, equipment and sports personnel are factors that make participation in sports worthwhile. Sports facilities, equipment and Sports personnel are required for a planned sports program in school. Sports facilities in Nigerian tertiary institutions are in pitable situation in most cases they are not in existence.

a. Formation of Sports club: It is rare to find sports clubs being organized in schools. Sports clubs if formed will bring students together to play under one healthy environment. Team spirit and understanding for each other's differences will be built.

b. Recreational Activities: A recreational activity in schools seems to be neglected and this is because recreational facilities are lacking. It appears that no meaningful effort is made in the direction of providing these facilities.

Sports in Nigerian Schools

Sports Program in schools is basically organized in three phases.

I. **Instructional phase:** This promotes acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in different motor activities. Skills acquired in instructional phases are applied in intra-mural sports. This phase ensures that students learn basic skills of sports. However, it appears not much has been achieved as the phase is plagued by inadequacies of facilities, equipment and personnel. At the instructional level, the rules and regulations of sports are taught and their experience could be carried outside the lecture room. Edwards (1973) stated that character and good behavior learned within the sports context, can be transferred to the school community and the society at large.

II. **Intramural Phase:** This promotes broad-based participation in sports activities. It democratizes sports participation by all students in the schools. However, it appears that intramural sports activities in Nigeria schools are no longer effectively organized. The development of intramural sports will enable majority of students to engage themselves fully in any sports activity of their choice. Students who are involved in sports are constructively engaged and their attention will be diverted from cultism. There will be possible transfer of fair play in sports to other aspects of their school life and this makes sports and indispensable instrument for controlling conflicts and cultism in the institutions. If intramural sports activities are properly organized, they will enhance the social relationship among students.

III. **Extra Mural Phase:** This phase provides opportunities for the most athletically talented students in schools to excel in their chosen sports through organized sports competition. Eke (2002) maintained that well organized extramural sports provide certain educational values such as reaction under pressure, quick thinking, immediate decision and response to emergencies on the field of play. Students also learn to play according to the rules of the game and obey constituted authority. Consequently, students who have opportunity to acquire these values are likely not to act defiantly.

Potentialities of Sports in Controlling Conflicts and Cultism

Today, it appears that a considerable proportion of secret cult activites arise from under utilization of leisure time by students. As the old adage goes, "the devil finds work for the idle hands". Cultism seems to be bye-products of idleness and so every effort should be made to ensure that properly planned physical training and recreational activities to engage the student's free time are put in place. According to Amiuche (1998), most students schools do not participate in sporting activities because they do not have the opportunity to participate or do not realize the importance of participating in sports. He further observed that students engaged themselves differently in various cult activities which are anti-social in nature.

Well planned outdoor sports programmes in schools could sublimate and satisfy the students urge and drives by channeling them towards worthwhile positive physical and recreational activities. This will leave them with no time for hatching any mischief. It is believed that Sports under good leadership has the unique capacity of gainfully engaging the students and free them from cult activities.

Apart from the above it is also worthwhile to mention other benefits of physical training and recreational activities (Sports) that can go a long way in maintaining students physical and mental well being. Sports help in enhancing student personality. They are a good source of exercise and entertainment.

Advantages of Positive training and recreational sporting Activities

Physical Benefits

- Increased Strength and Stamina
- Better body shape and increased agility
- They help burn calories and shed those extra pounds
- They give the body a good exercise

Psychological Benefits

- They encourage you to give your best every time
- They build your planning and analytical skills and increase concentration
- Sports boost confidence
- They build leadership and team skills

The Bigger Picture

- Achieve social integration
- Lead to infrastructural developments
- Create employment opportunities
- Boost the tourism industry

How Sports Benefit Students

Sport serves as an excellent physical exercise. Those who play sports have a more positive body image than those who do not. Sports often involve physical activities like running, jumping, stretching and moving about which turn out to be a good body workout. Playing sports is energy put to good use. Engaging in sports from an early age strengthens student's bones and muscles and tones their body. It helps to increase their stamina and endurance. Sports that involve jumping and stretching help increase height; for example basketball. Games that involve running, kicking or throwing a ball help strengthen the arms and legs; for example soccer and cricket. Swimming provides a full body workout. Thus sports provide the body with complete exercise and engaging in sports directly translates into overall fitness. Research shows that sports improve Mathematics skills in children. Sports that involve aiming and hitting, for example, tennis, badminton, baseball and cricket help them increase focus. They help develop leadership qualities and foster team spirit in students. They involve competition; they involve winning and losing. This exposes students to both aspects of life, successes and failures. Sports build a competitive spirit in students; these involve competition; they involve winning and losing. This exposes students to both aspects of life, {successes and failures}. Sports build a competitive spirit in students and teach them to be participative irrespective of whether the result is victory or defeat. Playing sports teaches them to accept both successes and failures with a positive spirit. Sports teach students to think with a cool head. The most important benefit of sports is the

sportsman spirit they inculcate. Sports help students to become more positive and stronger.

Playing sports is very beneficial for the development of social skills. Sports teach students to interact with people, communicate with them and collaborate as a team. Sports foster collective thinking and harness students planning and delegation skills too. Sports build confidence and winning a game gives students a sense of accomplishment, which boosts their confidence further.

Playing sports involves directed thinking. It requires them to strategize, by divising ways to score goals, run or earn points, as the case may be. Students need to devise strategies to win, need to decide whether to take an offensive stand or a defensive one. They need to judge their opponent's strategy and modify this accordingly. This definitely involves clever thinking, which sports encourage. Studies show that students who play sports regularly fare well in academics and do well in school.

Sports bring about happiness. Jumping about, running around racing to get ahead, hitting throwing, bouncing, kicking (the ball, I mean!), shouting, clapping, cheering, falling and standing up again… all are part of playing sports. In other words, sports are form of exercises that generates happiness molecules in our body, thus restoring mental health. Playing sport at these levels opens many employment avenues for not only sportsmen, women and students but also people who join tournaments as volunteers, cheer leaders or in the capacity of sports doctor and physical therapists. As developments are undertaken in cities hosting sports events, sports can lead to urbanization of rural areas. Many cities have started becoming hubs for sports tourism. Sports parks are being developed in many tourist destinations. It is the increasing inclination for playing sports which is responsible for such developments.

Playing sports reduces several health risks. As sports serve as an excellent form of exercise, it won't come as a surprise that they offer health benefits like lowering blood pressure, maintaining blood sugar and cholesterol levels and reducing other health risks. Playing sports regularly, ensures lesser risk of developing diabetes or heart diseases, it reduces the risk of hypertension and several other stress-related disorders. Research shows that people who play sports regularly can deal with stresses and strains in a better way. Those who engage in sports activities are less prone to depression, anxiety and other psychological disorders. Regular exercises that are achieved through sports according to Abubakar, 2012 leads to an improvement in the overall health thus improving quality of life. Accordingly the author maintained that sports are good combinations of recreation and exercise.

Conclusion

It has been established in the course of this paper that the problem of conflicts and cultism, among others is a symptom of society which is embroiled in moral decadence and where institutionalized and personal violence has become a way of life. Realizing the havoc conflicts and cultism have wrecked on both members and non-members of the academic community, all hands must be on deck to combat this menace. Besides, if the schools administration would come back to its glorious past as well as prepare the nation for the better days ahead, there is the need to rediscover and teach the people concerned the goals of university education.

Recommendations; Following the Outcome of this Study, the Points below are the Recommendations

1. The use of law enforcement agents or intimidation to enforce law and order in Nigeria schools should be minimized instead positive physical training and recreational activities that suit the interest of students at all times should be introduced by school authorities.
2. Adequate attention should be given to intra mural sports activities by the school authorities
3. Sports competition should be organized in all sports on regular basis to ensure effective occupation of leisure hours.
4. The entire student's population in school should be educated through organized seminars and workshops on the importance of positive physical and recreational activities in maintaining proper individual adjustment.
5. Social activities for free time occupation should be put in place and developed to enhance promotion of recreational awareness among students. This could be through the formation of various organized recreational club activities and competitions.
6. The National policy on Education should revisit its stand on physical education being optionally compulsory for students. Physical education and sports should be made core compulsory subjects.
7. There should be providing for adequate sport facilities for competitions and recreational activities that will attract fair and regular utilization.

   Finally, all hands should be on deck to put all mechanisms in place to ensure that participation in sports by students in schools yield the desired result of controlling cult activities.

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