MBA UCHENNA ABALI

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ASSIGNMENT

CULTISM

The origin of cultism was traced to the Seadog confraternity (a.k.a Pyrates), founded by Wole Soyinka and six others at the foremost University of Ibadan in 1952. The peaceful, and non-violent confraternity set up then, in the 1980s, metamorphosed into a secret cult whose activities have been characterized by some bizarre and violent activities. It was against this background that this paper x-rayed the possible causes and consequences of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Cultism is defined as the activities or practices of a group of people with one common spiritual, religious or philosophical belief. The group of individuals involved in these practices is known as a cult. In general sociological studies, the term cult has been subjected to a whole lot of controversial and divergent definitions. But most cults are referred to as secret cults. They are called that because their activities and practices are hidden from the public and non-members. Members of secret cults often swear an oath of allegiance or go into covenant with each other. They are meant to defend their beliefs and practices down to their very last breath.

The major causes of cultism in tertiary institutions were influence of peer group; parental background; societal decadence; erosion of education standards; militarization of the Nigerian polity; lack of recreational facilities; quest for power and protection among others. However, some of the effects of cultism include loss of lives and properties, disruption of academic activities on campuses, unsafe university environments. It was therefore recommended that all the stakeholders in the university education system should fuse efforts to combat the menace. It was also recommended that government should be more aggressive in her quest to eradicate cultism in the universities.

Over the years, institutions of higher learning have come under intense pressure as cultism, which as brewed internal wrangling; frequent students’ unrest and industrial disharmony now characterize the higher education system. In spite of concerted efforts by government and institutional heads to arrest the drift engendered by these undesirable factors, not much success has been recorded. As the problems continue to Fester, many have reasoned that there is need for a more pragmatic public relations approach described as purveyors of knowledge, nursery of intellect and character rediscover their mission of inculcating proper value orientation for the survival of society as well as building individual and institutional capacities. It is against this background that this study was designed .Data were sourced from one hundred respondents drawn from Moshood Abiola polytechnic through the use of questionnaire. Opinions expressed by the respondents revealed that institutional heads owe it a duty, in collaboration with their public relations personnel, to ensure the creation of a conducive atmosphere on campus devoid of rancor, bickering and incessant students’ unrest. The study identified the nature of crisis that has bedeviled the institutions and the strategies applied to manage the crisis and their level of effectiveness. The study we help to checkmate and manage students and staff related crisis on campus; Institution of administrative disciplinary measures-the rustication or expulsion of students caught in cult related activities that disturb the peace and tranquility of life on campuses.

Cultism is a menace that should be frontally tackled to protect lives and property in the nation. It is important for it to be addressed to save our youths from self-destruction. Unemployment is one of the major plights of Nigerian youths. The devil finds work for idle hands. The rate of youth and graduate unemployment calls for concern and we should put in place measures to address them.

Cultism is something that cannot be separated from the poor environment where students live and learn. Many of our campuses are not conducive to learning.

In many of the country’s institutions of higher learning, the infrastructure has broken down. To curb cultism in our institutions therefore, government must ensure it creates an enabling environment to promote teaching and learning.

Government should also engage in the provision of massive infrastructure which would include recreational facilities for sports to engage the students positively. Currently, there are so many distractions on our campuses. One of them is having politicians invading our campuses to campaign and lure students with so many promises and offer them money. At the end of the day, some of these students end up as thugs for these politicians. Government must stop this ugly trend by discouraging such action.

Again, government must provide adequate security on our campuses. By so doing, it will provide security for law abiding students and other members of the academic community and dissuade those who may have sinister motive. The problem of cultism should be urgently looked into from all angles with a view to eradicating it. It is unfortunate that the demons of cultism were created by the political class. Most of those seeking elective offices engage the services of youths including students, who they arm. These boys are used to attack political opponents; the same youths turn out to become tormentors on our campuses.  Politicians should stop arming students for violence to ensure peace on our campuses and in the society as a whole. I believe cultism will be drastically reduced if our politicians can play down on violence. The boys will know that they do not have any covering anywhere and they can be held accountable for any atrocity they commit.

The issue should also be tackled by some vice chancellors and their allies, who use cult members to attack student union leaders, who do not submit to them. This has happened in various higher institutions. Managements should stop using the boys for violence and complaining of the nefarious activities of the boys at the same time.

Government should also ensure that enough hostels are built on the campuses and that the hostels are habitable for decent humans. This will discourage cultism. What the school management needs to do is to ensure that students are dissuaded from staying off campus because their activities will be monitored on the campus. Security agencies should also seek to gather intelligence from various campuses by relating well with students, who would supply them with useful information that can help them. The most important factor is that parents and guardians should teach their children and wards the fear of God; they should inculcate this in them at the early stage. This will prevent them from being manipulated by unscrupulous persons, who will want to use them for their own selfish interests.

There is no government to protect the ordinary man. This is the feeling of the students and this is one of the things that fuel cultism. They want to create a system for their own protection. You see somebody that kills a person is detained for one month and released, while another person steals chicken and he is left in prison for two years. This kind of thing encourages youths to create their own world. So, the government has to address the social justice system in the country. For me, if the family plays its fundamental role, the society will be a better place for us all and the government will have less crime to fight.

In summary, government cannot end cultism. But its membership cum activities can be reduced by engaging the youth positively, changing their orientation against the mindset that might is right and violence is the fastest way to make it in life. However, stringent laws should be put in place and fully implemented, no matter whose ox is gored.