The Role of Education in Curbing Cultism among Nigerian Youths

Jacob Omede (P.hD)
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba
ja_omed@yahoo.com

Abstract
This paper discussed the “Role of education in curbing cultism among the youths in Nigeria” by first pointing out litigies of problems challenging the global economy such as poverty, drought, flood, armed robberies, hostage taking, kidnapping, cultism and the general states of insecurities particularly in the developing nations of the world including Nigeria. The paper further discussed the indispensable roles of education in growing the economy of Nigeria, the worrisome state of the nation’s educational system as well as the meaning and origin of cultism in Nigeria and also what some writers pointed out to be the reasons why people join cults. The paper however, opinionated that as good as those reasons were, they are symptomatic rather than causatives and therefore, insufficient to warrant enlistment into cultism. The paper therefore pointed out and discussed intensively poor parenting, insufficient moral, values and religious education and the extravagant display of affluence by the few in the midst of the larger populace that are stricken by abject poverty, hunger, sicknesses and diseases as significant factors responsible for cultism and other vices in Nigeria. Recommendations such as responsible parenthood education, provision of training in honesty, truthfulness, hard work, good name and obedience as well as the inclusion of and the teaching of moral, values and religious education as examinable subjects were put forward among others.

Keywords: Insecurity, Education, Cults and cultism, Parenthood education, Moral, Values, Religious education

Introduction
The world economy particularly that of the developing nations is crippled by myriads of problems that range from poverty, drought, flood, corruption, brain drain, disease, power tussle, inadequate power supply, hostage taking and kidnapping. These problems culminate into more worrisome problems of insecurity and terrorism. For more than a decade now, Nigeria has been basking in the problems brought on it by a group of some Muslim fanatics that called themselves the “BOKO HARAM”. Boko Haram is interpreted to mean western education is evil and so must be abhorred and resisted. The resistance had been so forceful that none of the institutions, erections or byproducts of western education is to be allowed to stand by these terrorists. This religious sect is dreaded because of the insidious and frequent attacks it unleashes on institutions and merciless wastages of human lives. Victims of their
attacks cut across various ethnicities and nationalities and this is why despite the concentration of their activities in the North Eastern parts of Nigeria, other Nigerians in other parts of the country are affected either directly or indirectly.

Aside Boko Haram, another problem of insecurity that seems intractable and resilient is that of cultism. Many Nigerian youths have enlisted into cults so much that it has become so proliferated and cultists are found in virtually every community in Nigeria, no matter how remotest that community is. In Nigeria, think of any vice at all, the youths are at the vanguard as active players; they promote and sustain it (Omede and Odiba, 2010 and Oruh, 2004). The society is at pain because of how cultists are at daggers-drawn with other rival cultists. They compete for supremacy and in the process kill, mutilate, and destroy lives of the nation’s supposedly future leaders.

The future hope of any nation is in the strength of her youths and children. Any culture or community, whether macro or micro that allows a good percentage of her youths to be misdirected, risks her future viability and survival (Causes of youth restiveness and vices in our communities, 2001)). This is why nations that understand this will not leave the development of the youths to chance but embark on deliberate investments that would make them grow and develop into healthy individuals tomorrow, individuals that expectedly will be useful to self and the society in general. Nigeria leaders must therefore, be seen to take urgent steps to wretch her youths from the grips of this monster-cultism- and its associated evils by consciously using the instrumentality of education. Youths who are into cultism need a rebirth and through functional education this conversion can be achieved. It is for this reason that this paper examined the roles of education in curbing cultism in Nigeria. The highlights of this paper therefore, included: meaning of education, relevance of education to national growth and development, state of Nigeria educational system, cultism and its origin in Nigeria, reasons and why people enlist into cultism, and the role of education in curbing cultism in our society.

What is Education?
Hornby (2010) sees education as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills. This definition shows that there are certainly teaching, training and learning that take place outside the school and colleges such as the homes, churches and mosques, village squares and apprenticeships, hence the concepts of formal and informal education. Education supposedly should transmit and develop in a learner desirable habits, skills, attitudes and values that are necessary to make the individual learner a good citizen. Education as Omede and Odiba (2000) noted aims principally at pruning the individual in line with the aims and goals of national life and the process of this form of education is continuous and lifelong, from birth to death.

Education and National Growth and Development in Nigeria
Education is indisputably indispensable to the economic, socio-cultural and technological advancements of nations for which Nigeria is one. Williams (1976) for example noted that when some nations achieved self government, they turned their attentions to nation building by looking up to education as the tool to this end hoping that what it had done to the “great power” it can also do for them. No nation can rise above the level of its education. Accelerated national transformation of a nation is a function of the functionality of its educational system. When a nation’s educational system is in coma, economic and technological transformation will be hard if not impossible to come by. Through education, the following that catalyze economic growth and development will be achieved:
1. Production of technocrats that drive the engine of economic growth and development. Imagine what a nation would look like without medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, geologists, agriculturists and even teachers who are the trainers of people in these professions. All these men are trained in schools and they help to grow the nation’s economy.

2. Exploration of natural resources of the nation. This would have been impossible without trained men and women. How could we have brought petroleum to the surface, distil and refine the product for human use? Think of other mineral resources buried in the hearts of the earth!

3. Scientific and technological innovations and discoveries that make life easy and comfortable for the citizenry would have been impossible without education. Think of electricity, building of bridges across rivers, industrial machines and chemicals as well as automobiles in their different categories. All these are made easy through the instrumentality of education and they facilitate economic growth and development.

4. Unity of Nigerians in their diversities through boarding system in schools, NYSC, students’ exchange programs, etc. No meaningful progress can be achieved where there are disunities, rancor and acrimonies. Education teaches tolerance, respect for individual differences, elders and constituted authorities. Education therefore, enhances or promotes integration and communalism that are ancillaries to national growth and development.

5. Trained manpower for governmental offices and establishments. Civil servants, public and private servants are variously trained and are certified to have the requisite skills for the jobs they are employed to do. They generate revenue for government in their various locations by ensuring that machineries are put in motion for correct and prompt payment of taxes, levies and fines.

6. Crime waves will reduce as security agents have some minimal and sufficient education to track down criminals, abort criminal intentions and punish offenders as deterrent to others. Apart, through education, correct societal values, habits and skills are developed in the learners with the view to making them good and well behaved citizens.

7. Education sets up the structure of governance of a country, puts the security outfits in places, the legislators to formulate laws, the judiciary to interpret and punish offenders so that there could be orderliness, decorum and sanity that are necessary to grow and develop the economy.

The state of Nigeria Educational system
The Nigerian educational system is badly criticized by many educationists and other stakeholders in the education industry because of its inability to help solve myriads of problems that affect the nation. The structures had been criticized as well as the contents that it delivers. And so, since political independence, the nation’s educational system has been undergoing series of metamorphoses with the current being basic education. Many lamentations had been that the educational system is too bookish and as such turns out job seekers instead of job creators. This according to them is dangerous as the devil finds something for idle hands. The state of the nation’s education is indeed regrettable and worrisome because:

1. It lacks infrastructures in their right proportions
2. It lacks personnel in their right proportions
3. Inadequate to accommodate teeming students seeking admissions to higher institutions
4. Poor discipline, monitoring and supervision of learning translating in armed robberies, rapes, kidnapping, stabbing, gangsters, and campus cults
5. Incessant closures due to industrial trade disputes
6. Fraught with examination malpractices and certificate racketeering
7. It neglects character education. Morals, values and religious education are de-emphasized by the nation’s educational system. And these are very necessary now that most Nigerian youths have become animals than human (Omede & Omede, 2015).

Any form of education that is devoid of right or correct values, good morals and sound and balanced religious education is sure to produce “educated sinners” that could be recruited as political thugs, miscreants in garages and public squares, ethnic militias, armed and pen robbers, human traffickers, drug addicts and barons, hijackers and bombers (Omede & Omede, 2015) as well as cultists. Education humanizes a person but it must be that form of education that consciously strikes a balance between the three domains of learning-cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Any educated (head knowledge) person without proper moral and values education is at best an intelligent devil (Omede, 2012). Morality as noted by The Nigerian Voice (2011) is the border between animal life and human life; it is what gives the former a sense of humanity and spirituality.

Regrettably, as noted by Iheoma (1985), the current approaches to moral education in Nigerian schools are inadequate to cope with moral crises. Acknowledging the deplorable situation of moral and values education in Nigerian schools, Nwabuisi (2000) asserted that there is no school where honorableness is taught. There is no period on any of our school time tables for classes in honesty, unselfishness, and brotherliness among others. In fact, the current educational system neglects character education and is no wonder that products of our schools engage in all sorts of shameful acts in and out of school.

Cultism and its origin in Nigeria
Cultism refers to the system of practice of a cult. What then is a cult? Cult is defined as a group of people with a religious, philosophical or cultural identity sometimes viewed as a sect, often existing on the margins of society or exploitative toward its members.

Origin of cultism in Nigeria
Cultism in Nigeria according to Kadev (2008) is dated to 1952 when a group of seven students led by Wole Soyinka founded the Seadogs Confraternity in the University of Ibadan to fight colonialism and rid the Nigerian society of elitism and tribalism. The members of this sect engaged in humanitarian activities such as donations of blood to hospitals to save lives and presentation of gifts to orphanages to assist the helpless in the society (Kadev, 2008). They were as Issa (1998) noted a group of pressure group that monitored and defended the interest of students without violence.

But between 1952 and now, the face of cultism has drastically changed in terms of diversity and practice or operations. In the days of Wole Soyinka, it was a struggle against western imperialism and ideologies using not the instruments of guns, knives, machetes and clubs like the modern day cultists but organized intellectualism or rationalism. In addition, and as pointed out earlier, they were humanitarian and assisted to save lives of the less privileged...
Unlike cultism of our time that has become so factional and blood thirsty holding societies to ransom. Again, in the days of Wole Soyinka and until recently, cultism was confined only to institutions of higher learning. But today, the scope is extended to some secondary and even primary schools as well as the communities so much that no matter how small the community is, impact of cultism is felt.

Cult members in our days hide behind masks unlike in the days of Wole Soyinka where members were proudly known because they lived for just causes. Cultism in our days is characterized by all sorts of evils that manifest in:

- Killing of rival members as a show of superiority and vendetta
- Ritual practices of all kinds
- Armed robberies
- Rape
- Intimidation of those who dare to challenge them including members of law enforcement agencies
- Kidnapping
- Spearheading (communities, schools, colleges and political) riots
- Drug addiction and associative evils
- Forcing teachers to pass them in an examination they fail
- Forcing some girls into unwanted relationships culminating in illicit sex, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and death.

Being a cultist is like being recruited into the military and sent to the war front where the battle is hottest because of how they are hunted by law and other rival cultists. When a cult member is killed by a member of another cult, there will be a reprisal attack and so the merry goes round making killing of our youths—the nation’s tomorrow hope—to be endless.

**Why do people Join cults?**
The reasons are many. Kadev (2008:54) gave the following 7 reasons namely;

1. Inability to say no to invitation to join or to belong to a cult group
2. The inability to make right choice of friends i.e. following bad friends
3. Power tussle, especially over a girl friend
4. A feeling of insecurity and fear, the desire to look and sound tough, the inordinate desire to look beyond the ordinary
5. Ignorance of what is involved in cult membership
6. Submission to demonic and satanic influences
7. The uncontrolled quest for material things.

As good as these reasons are, they are symptomatic. In the view of this writer, the major causatives are: Poor parenting, insufficient moral, values and religious education and the extravagant lifestyles of some Nigerians at the glare of the poor masses. These three factors are discussed below in greater details.

**Poor parenting**
Every demonstrating youth on the street comes from a home with biological parents (Omede & Odiba, 2010). Every cult member has parents-dead or alive. Inability of some parents to bring up their children in godly and societal acceptable ways has resulted in many youths being drafted into all forms of social and economic crimes such as armed robbery, suicide bombing, pipe-line vandalism, homosexuality, lesbianism, kidnapping, and cultism to
mention these few. Parenting is a responsibility, a position of trust for which every parent will be held accountable. Therefore, couples that are not prepared for proper parenting should stop child birth. Proper parenting would require that children be loved, giving affection and attention, provide for his/her physical and basic needs (food, cloth, shelter, spiritual and educational). It is important that our children know that we love and care for them.

Many parents either due to the developing nature of the economy that puts them below the poverty line or the materialistic nature of some Africans, subject their children who are under aged to child labor like hawking, barrow pushing, concrete mixing, wood splitting, welding for commercial purposes and other energy sapping jobs that are not appropriate to their ages (Omede & Odiba, 2010). These have their immediate and long term negative consequences. A child who has become a bread winner when obviously he/she is supposed to be fended for by the parents automatically looses their control.

**Insufficient moral, values and religious education**

Children supposedly are to receive moral, values and religious education from homes, schools, religious institutions and the society from those who are significant to them at these various levels. But morality, good values and sound religious education are becoming rare commodities in all of these institutions today. Honesty, hard work, respect, discipline, punctuality, love, care and concern for others, as well as orderliness and turn-taking are fast losing their recognitions in our today’s world. At the home front, parents are supposed to be moral exemplars, promote and uphold approved moral and societal values which the schools, religious and other governmental institutions are supposed to reinforce. But some parents for instance, as noted by Clifford-Poston (2005) tell lies in the presence of their children either consciously or unconsciously. It is not better in the schools either as some teachers and administrators exploit their students sexually, and get money from their students to pass them in their courses. Religious institutions have become commercial ventures with prayers as merchandise. There are evidences of our religious leaders living exclusively flamboyant lives going by the nature and type of houses they build, cars they use, dresses they put on and the retinue of securities that guide them amidst congregations that wallow in abject poverty and who are largely unemployed (Omede & Odiba, 2010). Moral, values and religious education are consequential to national growth and development. Wrong moral, values and religious education is disastrous to both the individual and the entire nation. What on earth should make girls below 15 years of age wire themselves with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to detonate in a crowd as suicide bombers?

**Extravagant lifestyles of some Nigerians at the glare of the poor masses**

The picture of the Nigerian society seems to be that of “survival of the fittest”. Leadership is synonymous with abuse of power, corruption and exploitations and nobody seems to bother. Materialism, excessive love for and apparent worship of money are prevalent and have become values in themselves. Chieftaincy titles go to the highest bidders not minding whether they are thieves, ritualists, drug barons or traders in human parts. We live in a country where money answers all questions. Justice, certificates, good jobs, respectable titles, luxurious cars and houses answer to money. People worship money so dearly that nobody seems to care how it is acquired. A man that is rich in money, no matter his age, is a man that has people in his community at his beck and call, and could marry other peoples’ wives and acquire land sometimes forcefully in the choicest location within his community without anybody daring to challenge him.
If this is what money and power do and nobody questions the source, then we are not to be surprised why some of the youths want to cut corners to hurriedly get there quickly since the conventional routes are long, winding and tortuous. The social and economic ills of our time are the consequences of the mistakes of the adults. The law of causality is being fulfilled here. What is being planted into the society is what is being reaped.

The Role of education in curbing cultism in our society
Three factors as this writer supposes are the major factors responsible for cultism in Nigeria namely:
1. Improper parenting
2. Insufficient moral, values and religious education
3. The extravagant life styles of many Nigerian leaders and politicians amidst glaring mass poverty.

Until these factors are sufficiently addressed using the instrumentality of education (formal and informal), cultism and other vices will continue to increase. How then can education (formal and informal) address these cardinal problems?

Improper Parenting
This problem can be addressed through periodic seminars and conferences. In these conferences and seminars parents are to be sensitized about the following:
• Responsible parenthood and what it involves
• Need to give attentions to our children and be available to them
• Effect of divorce and single parenting on children
• Consequences of parental neglect as seen on the children, parents and the larger society
• Need to provide the basic needs of children (food, clothing, shelter, spiritual, educational and emotional) for healthier growth and development.
• Need for sexuality education for proper child spacing and effective management and control.
• Exposition to reasons why parents should be moral exemplars, and why they should be seen by their children that they practice good moral values and balanced religious education.
• Need for parents to teach and properly humanize their children.
• Need for parents to involve their children in major decisions of the home, show them love, be close to them and regulate the films they watch.
• The evil of Polygamy and why it should be discouraged. Polygamy is capable of dividing the loyalties, attentions and affections of parents for their children. Going are the days in Africa when the number of wives and children determine the labor force on the farm. The practice of Agriculture is largely more mechanized now than agrarian.

Insufficient moral, values and religious education
Through sufficient moral, values and religious education, parents would be able to humanize their children. Advisably, parents are to:
• Provide training in honesty, truthfulness, obedience, patience, good name, hard work, and punctuality among others to their children through periodic instructions, corrections and insistence that correct virtues be displayed. Parents are their children’s
first teachers. They are to demand these virtues from their children, reward their exhibitions and punish in antithesis when they see the opposite being manifested.

- Emphasize on life after death, religious tolerance, and respect for human life, need for holy living and the anger of God that hangs on the wicked. Parents must demonstrate evidence of possession of these virtues to make the lessons go down well for the children.

Our religious leaders, pastors, priests and imams are to:

- Reinforce these virtues in the churches and mosques.
- Ensure that godliness, righteousness, and the consciousness of eternity are drummed in the ears of members.
- Be God-fearing, compassionate and should have the spirit of discernment to help those that are being tormented by evil spirits. Some are into cultism and they don’t know why, such could be helped to denounce membership.

In the schools:

- Moral, values and religious education should be put into the curriculum to be taught like any other subject. It can be called character education and the contents should encompass virtues in moral, approved values of the society and religious ethics.
- Creativity should be taught to the learners as well to correct their wrong notions about success without hard work, and that life is a bed of roses.
- Teachers expectedly are to encourage and demand that students exhibit good moral character.
- Good behaviors like honesty, punctuality, obedience, humility, respect for laws and others etc should be deliberately rewarded as good performance in other academic subjects are rewarded.
- Teachers and school administrators must be exemplary in good conducts and seen to be living out values they tend to promote in the students. Teachers and administrators should not live or practice what they condemn.

**Extravagant life styles of many Nigerian leaders and politicians**

This can be corrected through:

- Proper moral and values education in seminars and conferences where selfless service, honesty and transparency in governance could be emphasized. This will help to reduce the extravagant lifestyles of some Nigerians where majority are in abject poverty.
- The agencies responsible for monitoring, investigating, probing and punishing public office holders such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Public Bureau (PB), states and federal auditors, the Judiciary and the Nigeria police through periodic seminars and conferences would receive trainings and education that could make them to be more functional and responsible in the discharge of their duties. These periodic training will help them to discharge their duties objectively no matter whose Ox is gored. When escape goats are made of offenders, others will be cautioned to be careful.

**Conclusion**

This piece of work examined the role of education in curbing cultism in Nigeria and suggested responsible parenthood education, proper moral, values and religious education as
well as a redefining of the negative and extravagant lifestyle of some Nigerians as ways that cultism and other vices could be reduced. This is because sufficient moral, values and religious education added to training in the other two domains of educational pursuit produces an individual with a balanced mind healthy enough to refuse to be recruited for any form of evil no matter how much it pays.

References