

CAUSES OF STUDENT UNREST IN NIGERIAN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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Causes of Student Unrest in Nigerian Higher Institutions

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the meaning of the terms 'Higher Institution' and Student Unrest'. Both internal and external factors causing student unrest in Nigerian Higher Institutions were also looked in to and formed the major theme of the paper. Conclusions and recommendations were made as to how students unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions can be minimized if not completely avoided.

Introduction

One common phenomenon in Nigeria Higher Institutions today is students unrest. This phenomenon is so common that hardly do students complete a session successfully in school without facing an unrest. Student unrest occurs in form of demonstrations, strikes, non- attendance (boycott) of classes, riot and a times destruction of properties and even loss of lives. This unrest often gives no room to adequate coverage of academic syllabus and consequently leading to the alleged falling standard of education,(Abdulkareem, 1992).

Higher Institution s are academic communities that are established in the society to make available to the students, the needed knowledge, to promote research making and to make other subsidiary services to the society. Higher Institutions consist of some categories of personnels. For instance, the Head of institution, his Deputy or Assistance, other staffs and students. They are structured in such a way that the personnel within the organization must combine efforts to collectively achieve the organization's objectives. In combining efforts, the individuals have to interact, as interaction must occur wherever two or more people exist for an understanding (Ogunsaju, 1993). While interacting towards the achievement of a common goal, collision may occur between the students and the school head or between the students and the government. This collision is what is mostly referred to as student unrest.

Student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions is getting too frequent, and this is not in the best interest of both the students, school authority , government, specially when we consider the negative effect these unrests reduces the quality and quantity of education the students receive. Since we all want peace to reign in our Higher Institution, we must find solutions to the frequently occurring student unrest in these institutions.

What is Higher Institution

Higher Institution could be referred to as a post Secondary School Institution of learning duly recognized by the Federal government of Nigeria. The federal Government of Nigeria , National Policy on Education (1981) refers to Higher Institutions as any Institution of Post Secondary Section of the national education system which is given in University , Polytechnics and College of Technology including such course as are given by the College of Education , the advanced Teacher Training College, correspondent designs and such institutions as may be allied to them.

Higher Institution refers to the third level of educational institutions above primary and secondary school levels.

What is Students Unrest

Student unrest is a term that has been perceived in a number of ways, for instance, Odetan (1991) views it as of double folds. He said the first fold is between the students and the school authority and the second is between the students and the government. He said the second is usually more infectious and of wider realm as it usually involves many higher institutions at the same time.

Oloko (1986) perceives student unrest as a situation in which students in higher institutions resort to the use of threat or violence against people or property in attempt to resolve issues or conflicts of interest they may have with other people. These other people may be the other students , lecturers, school administrators, on one hand, and public authorities on the other hand.

Oyedeji (1980) also looks at student unrest, is a way for students to demand the perpetuation of the privileges enjoyed by them and even to seek additional concessions, rather than conform to the rules and suffer in silence. He believes that student revolts appears to be an international affaire since Universities all over the world are involved and that every campus is gripped by a vicious circle of crises and commotion.

Students Unrest can be defined as a disturbed situation in tertiary institutions whereby students resorts to the use of threat or violence against the school authorities or government.

Causes of student Unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions

The causes of student unrest can be categorized into internal and external factors.

Internal Factor

Ajibade (1993) says internal factors causing student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions as those arising from the institutions internal administrative policies like students' welfare- food problem, accommodation problem, inter campus transportation problem, rising in tuition and other fees, shortage of basic facilities (water, light e.t.c). Strained relationship between institutions officials and the Student Union executives, lack of involvement on matters that affect them and a host of others. Internal problem therefore are those that emanate from issues that are exclusive to happening on the campus.

Ajibade (1993) further explains that internal problems include the problem of competition, i.e. competition for space after the initial competition for admission. The competition for space according to her, would continue while seeking for room space, classrooms, libraries, staff and other facilities.

Odetara (1991) supports this when he discovered that students enrolment in tertiary institutions has been rising briskly while there are facilities and staff can not increase at the same rate. He notes that the available facilities are therefore becoming inadequate and this is further compounded by economic depression.

Students of Higher Institutions have been found to react against scheduling of examination while some do complain about their preparedness to write the examinations and would therefore want such examination cancelled or postponed. In support of this assertion, Odotara (1991) opines that ill preparation of students for examination may lead to student unrest as they may resort to witch-hunt the school authority in an attempt to cause violence.

As part of internal factors causing student unrest in Higher Institution, Babarinsa (1987) reports that in 1971, there was a demonstration by students in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) over poor food, and in 1978, there was a brutal students uprising against the 100% hike in feeding fees in the Universities.

Shortage of learning facilities is another internal factor causing student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institution. Jimoh (1991) supports this when he notes that inadequacy of

facilities for learning, such as reference materials, books, lecture room spaces and seats lead to student unrest in higher Institutions.

As part of internal factors causing student unrest, Adesanya (1991) notes that a higher percentage student unrest could be attributed to clashes between students and school authority. In support of Adesanya (1991) Jayaram (1979) reported that student unrest in university can lead to demanding for the institution of judiciary enquiring into the university affairs, removal of the vice chancellor and removal of the police station from the university campus.

External Factors

External factors causing students unrest in Nigeria Tertiary Institution whose fact are arising from outside the institution, internal administrative policies, i.e. the problem relating to off campus issues which will include national and international issues(Ajibade, 1993). Other external factors include social-economy situation of the society, police or security agents, influence of the press and the influence of the outsiders e.tc. For instance, on national issues Bereday (1983) opines that students in higher Institutions often protest to correct internal government abuses or what he calls 'domestic cleavages'.

Students of Nigeria higher institution often demonstration against some particular wrong committed by the government or against particular person in government. This is one of the external factors causing student unrest. In support of this, Fagbougbe (1983) explains that in 1961, a few months after political independence was achieved in Nigeria, the students of the university college, Ibadan protested by opened confrontation against the Nigerian government the student of the university college as a veiled form of perpetuation of Britain's hold in Nigeria. This is in line with what Bereday (1983) tags "International cleavages" in Tokyo when he says

International disatification to student unrest became easily documental. In 1949, Dutch students at the Hague protested about their country's colonialism. In Indonesia students demonstrated against the Japan Korean treaty. In 1966, Pakistan students fought against the Tashkent agreement with India (p.177).

This shows that students in Higher Institutions in Nigeria have been found expressing their views on National and International issues, and even they are usually taken as

mouthpiece of the public to express the opinion of the public on certain issues. For instance, Ajibade (1993) expresses that the student body led the 1985 protest against the abortive coup of late- General Maman Vatsa. They also reacted to the hike in fuel price and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

The security agent (or police) is part of external factors causing student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions, since the police is usually called upon to quell student unrest. The students are easily provoked at the sight of police on or around the campus. Newswach of no. 5, 1989 reported. "On seeing the Police , the students of LASU gathered together and demonstrated against the presence of Police on their campus.(p19). In the same token, Oki (1990) observes that the interference of the police at any sight of tension or unrest in the institution of higher learning often degenerated in to conflict. The general mistrust between the students and the Police usually aggregates already tensed situation. This undoubtedly shows that the police, instead of helping to manage student unrest, is one of the external factors causing student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions of learning.

Conclusion and recommendations

By and large, we have seen how different writers have perceived students unrest and Higher Institution in various way. We have also looked at both the internal and external factors causing student unrest in the Nigerian Higher Institutions. The physiological and psychological needs of students like feeding and accommodation arrangement of students are some of the areas of internal factors causing Unrest in Higher Institution. While National and International issues as well as security agents fall under external factors causing student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions.

The following recommendations are therefore made in order to reduce the frequent occurrence of student unrest in Nigeria Higher Institutions.

First and foremost, student Union Officers should be made to meet with the school authorities on regular basis to discuss internal issues affecting the student's welfare. This regular meeting between the school authorities and the students Union Officers becomes important as it will bridge the communication gap between the student's body and the school authorities. Bridging the communication gap between the school authorities and the student

body improves student/ school authorities and student/ staff relationship. This will enable the school authorities to know ways of attending to students' genuine complaints on time before students start to protest.

More fund should be provided for Higher Institutions Nigeria by both Federal and State Governments. This will enable the school authorities to improve the welfare conditions of students in their various schools. For instance the school authorities will be able to provide better accommodation facilities, better instruction equipments, basic facilities like water, electricity. This will be provided by the school authorities. Not only that, learning facilities in form of reference materials like text books, Journals, magazines, and other periodicals will be provided by the school authorities. In the same token , Ikoku (1990) has suggested that one way to deal with student unrest is for the government to improve on the funding of higher institutions, this according to him will enable the higher institutions to operate normally.

The invitation of Police into the campus of higher institution in Nigeria at the sight of slightest student demonstration should be avoided by the authorities of higher institutions, during students demonstration, the students' officers should be called upon for dialogue, during the process Police should be disallowed from entering the campus. The Police should be invited only when things are getting out of hands and want on destruction (s) and or loss of live(s) are at sight. That is, invitation of police should be the last resort in quenching the furnace of student unrest in Nigerian Higher Institution.

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