

CURBING STUDENTS RESTIVENESS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA THROUGH RECREATIONAL SPORTS

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Abstract

Educational institutions are established to provide holistic education to the learners and to help them acquire skills and competencies in various ways of human endeavour. This could only be achieved if there is peace in these institutions. Regrettably, this has not been the case especially at the tertiary institutions level in Nigeria. This paper examined the role of recreational sports in curbing students' restiveness in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It also discussed the status of recreational sports, causes of students' restiveness as well as justification for students' participation in recreational sports programme. The paper recommends among others: providing wide range of recreational programmes to cater for the varying needs of the students. It equally recommended the provision of adequate facilities and equipment and also maintaining them so as to motivate the students and sustain their interest in recreational sports programme.

Key Words: Students, restiveness, tertiary institutions, recreational sports

Introduction

Education the world over has been accepted as a strong weapon for nation building. For any nation to survive and compete favourably with other nations, she must be able to transmit her knowledge and skills from generation to generation through a system known as education. In Nigeria like in any other nation, there are different levels of education starting from the primary and terminating at the tertiary institution level.

Tertiary institutions are institutions above secondary school level which provide education for people aged 16 and older in Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Education, School of Health Technology and Sports Institutions as well as institutions offering correspondent courses. Walker (2004) defined tertiary institution as the third stage or level of education following the completion of secondary education. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), the objectives for the establishment of these institutions include: to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training, developing and inculcating proper value for the survival of the individual and society, developing the intellectual skills which will enable the individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments. Others are, acquiring both physical and intellectual skills which will enable the individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society, to promote and encourage scholarship and community service, forge and cement national unity and promote national and international understanding and interaction and finally research.

Unfortunately, for several years, tertiary institutions in Nigeria have witnessed a lot of turbulent times. The situation has degenerated into different forms of vices ranging from cultism, drug abuse, sexual harassment, alcoholism, prostitution, arm brandishing, rape and vandalism. The unfortunate thing is that some of these vices are gradually finding their way to the secondary and even primary schools in Nigeria. (Atiatah, 2013).

This is a reminiscence of the larger society, since tertiary institutions form a small mirror of a larger society (Iroegbu, 2009). The Nigerian society as Neswen (1998) stated is unstable politically, economically, socially and ecologically and is often characterized by different forms of violent behaviours. It is either religious crises which often is between Moslems and Christians, communal clashes, kidnapping, arm robbery and rioting. At other times, it is clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, between political parties or the masses protesting one government policy or the other. Example was the mass protest of oil subsidy removal by the Federal Government in 2012 which paralyzed all facets of the country's economy for about one week. As if these problems were not enough, a Moslem religious sect Boko-Haram took up arms in 2009 against the Nigerian nation

especially in the North-Eastern part of the country which has resulted in the loss of over 20,000 lives and property (Folasode, 2016). The author also stated that, recently a group which called itself Niger Delta Avengers and other sister groups have also taken up arms against the nation blowing up oil pipelines and also kidnapping, killing and maiming soldiers and oil workers. Besides, on the economic scene, the picture is no more booming because of economic recession. All these problems both in the tertiary institutions and the larger society call for immediate intervention in order to stem this tide and prevent it from degenerating into uncontrollable situation, and thereby derailing the existence of tertiary institutions in the society.

It should be noted that students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are youth who are full of youthful exuberance and have a lot of energy to dissipate. There is need therefore, to assist them channel this surplus energy towards worthwhile ventures that will be beneficial to them, their institutions and the nation at large. One way of doing this is the promotion of recreational sports practices in these institutions.

Recreation is defined in various ways by different experts in the field. To Ajisaje (1991) recreation is a worthwhile accepted leisure experience that provides immediate satisfaction to the individual who voluntarily gets involve in an activity which will enhance the quality of life. According to Richard, Kathryn, Craig and Lynn (1997) recreation is a diversion from work, a retooling of energy for work or positive and socially accepted leisure activity. Elendu (2005) defined recreation as physical or mental activities which an individual voluntarily participates during leisure time because of the enjoyment and satisfaction he or she finds in those activities. Angner (2008) defined recreation as any action that refreshes the mental attitudes of an individual. It is also a wholesome activity that is engaged in for pleasure. The author further explained that recreation may take different forms but the results are the same. This paper perceives recreation as worthwhile leisure activities one engages in based on his or her own volition due to satisfaction and personal fulfillment inherent in the activity. When recreation relates to sports, it is referred to as recreational sports.

Sports is a boundless series of physical activity, blended into a more general sphere of leisure creation and recreation; while some people look at sports as fun (Dagili, 2007). Jones (1989) perceived sports as an activity that involves formal rules and procedures, requires tactics and strategies, specialized neuromuscular skills and a high degree of difficulty and effort. The author further stated that sport is one form of recreation. Recreational sports therefore refer to those voluntary activities which through casual and organized participation, aims at expressing or improving physical fitness, mental and emotional well-being and forming relationship among the participants. At the tertiary institution levels, it includes such activities like soccer, basketball, volley ball, handball, table tennis and badminton. Others are swimming, chess, hockey, scrabble, draft, ludo to mention but a few. Umeakuka (1997) on his part identified a total of sixteen recreational activities that readily constitute the recreational pursuits of students. They include arts, craft, writing and speaking, social recreation, outdoor recreation and special events. Others are physical events, self-testing activities, drama, indoor games, music, voluntary service, formal activities, relay, yoga and meditation activities. The implication of the availability of these broad spectrums of recreational pursuits according to Chigbata (2007) is to afford an individual including students in tertiary institutions the opportunity to select any activity in which they are interested and which will provide the refreshment and fulfillment they need. Where this is not possible, coupled with the challenges associated with academic programmes in our tertiary institutions, the students become bored, impatient and dissatisfied which most often lead to restiveness.

Youth restiveness is a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths (Elegbeleye, 2005). It is usually marked by violence and disruption of lawful and other academic activities in the campuses. At times lives are lost and property worth millions of naira are usually lost too. Recreational sports activities should be both active and passive for everyone. However, since these students are mostly adolescents who have high energies, which if not well deployed in a positive direction, might engage in youth restiveness; it is therefore better to plan recreational sports programmes that will be beneficial and optimize the energy and free time that they have. This therefore necessitates the recreational engagement of these students which is the crux of this paper. In pursuance of this, the paper discusses:

- a) Status of recreation in tertiary institutions
- b) Causes of students' restiveness; and

- c) The justification for students' participation in recreational sports programme.

Status of Recreation and Leisure Practices in Tertiary Institutions

Everybody needs recreation, children, youth, adults the aged and both sexes, Udoh (1988). In fact, students of tertiary institutions are expected to participate in recreational sports activities most, because they are in their youthful years and are full of energy to dissipate. Besides, this set of students represent a separate group in the population and normally experience pressure on routine academics. Therefore, the out-come of boredom and tiredness is as a result of daily academic bout which makes it imperative for them to engage in restorative and recuperative activities, both active and passive in nature.

Regrettably, this is not the situation in most tertiary institutions today. That is why the institutions are brandished by the society as centres for developing and nurturing social vices (Adiniji & Abdullahi, 2009). The academic programmes in institutions of higher learning do not take into consonance the importance of recreation. Where these activities are introduced, they are not even monitored. In some institutions variety of recreational sports activities are not provided for varying needs of the students. Emphasis is usually on football and a few other major games; forgetting that variety is the spice of life. In a situation of this nature, the students' work mostly involves reading, writing and listening to lecture at sitting position. They are mostly stressed by academic work and by the end, they will like to find outlet endowed on them by stress and strain of life.

Besides, scarcity of recreation and leisure activity facilities in tertiary institutions is a big cog in the recreation programmes (Atare & Sanubi, 2009). According to Awosika (1998) facilities present a sensitive area in all ramifications of recreational sports administration. They occupy such available position since their provision carries with them certain standards as determined by age, weight and experience of the users as well as the types of activities. Surely when adequate and well maintained facilities are in campuses there is possibility of having a good recreational programme that will occupy the free time of the students.

In some institutions, academic programmes are choked-up leaving no time for students for recreational sports activities. This is not fair; adequate time should be allotted for students to participate in leisure activities. Poor funding of recreational sports programmes is yet another problem faced by tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This lack of funds affects the provision of equipment and this invariably affect the recreational services rendered to students.

Causes of Students Restiveness on Campuses

Many studies have identified the causes of youth restiveness. Elegbeleye (2005) identified three major causes which include peer motivated excitement of being a student, the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas and perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation. Besides Ofem and Ajayi (2008) and Anasi (2010) identified lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good administration, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programme, unemployment, inadequate facilities, lack of quality education as the reason for incessant youth restiveness. Some of these reasons will be discussed as they pertain to tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Good administration is required for the growth and development of any institution. In Nigeria, most administrators are not appointed on merits. They are placed there by their god fathers who at times request kickbacks from those they placed on these so called "juicy offices". These administrators exhibit the following characteristics while in office: failure to properly distinguish between what is public and what is private, leading to private appropriation of otherwise public resources (World Bank, 1997). Others are excessive rules and regulations which impede the functioning of the institutions, arbitrary increase of school fees and other charges and high handedness on both staff and students matters. Thus, in cases of this nature, the students are restive and agitate and are sometimes are violent in the least provocation.

Another cause of restiveness in tertiary institutions is poverty. According to Anasi (2010) poverty connotes inequality and social injustice and traumatizes the poor. More than 70 percent of people in Nigeria are in abject poverty, living below the poverty line, and one-third survive on less than US \$1 dollar a day (Zacharia, 2006). Most students in tertiary institutions are from this kind of homes. They are in these institutions because the parents see tertiary education as the only means that can emancipate their wards from the challenges faced by them. These set of students are faced with

many financial problems such as money to feed, buy textbooks and other materials, clothing, pay for accommodation and attend to other life requirements. Disillusioned, frustrated and dejected, such students seek for any opportunity to express their anger against the institution. Amorawo (2000) and Zakaria (2006) agreed that there is a relationship between poverty, loss of livelihood, inequality and youth restiveness.

Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness and cohesion (Anasi, 2010). The author further stated that, the skills that young people acquire help determine their degree of patriotism and contributions to national integration and progress. Between 2000 and 2004, about 30 per cent of Nigerian youth between 10 and 24 were not enrolled in secondary schools (Population Reference Bureau, 2006). This might have been caused by prohibitive cost of acquiring education (Anasi, 2010). The author stated that the after effect of this situation is that thousands of young people roam the streets in cities in Nigeria. Those who manage to complete secondary school have no opportunities for tertiary education. Having been deprived the chance to reach their potential, they are disoriented and readily available for antisocial actions (Onyeikpe, 2007). Worse still, some who struggled to enroll in various educational institutions drop out due to lack of basic learning facilities as well as other personal problems. This situation is attributable to the dwindling resources of government at both federal, state and local levels as a result of corruption. Under this kind of situation, the students having remembered how much they suffered before gaining admission in school, are prone to violence as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction.

Behind social unrest and youth restiveness in the country is the agitation for equitable distribution of resources (Anasi, 2010). Most tertiary institutions in Nigeria have no regular supply of portable water, electricity and health facilities. These facilities are necessary to the students. Often times, some managements of our campuses toy with these essential things while in their offices and residential quarters, they make provision for expensive generators with public funds which supply them electricity while the students suffer. This attitude triggers violence with the accompanying slogan "We No Go Gree" meaning they will not allow that kind of situation to continue. Their action often lead to loss of lives, property as well as extension of academic calendar as long as the riot lasted.

Another cause of restiveness in our tertiary institutions is communication gap between the administrators, staff and students. According to (Anasi, 2010) communication creates room for sharing of information. It helps people express their thoughts and feelings, clarify problems and consider alternative ways of coping or adapting to their situation. Some administrators of our institutions only preach running open door administration, whereas the reverse is the case. Students and even their students' union representatives often find it difficult to meet them in times of need. This creates tension, impatient and frustration in the students. It should be noted that effective communication promotes social cohesion. Students must have access to communication facilities, as well as being free to communicate with people making the decisions that affect them.

Justification for Students Recreational Sports Practices in Tertiary Institutions

There are many benefits derivable from engaging in recreational sports activities by students. For instance, scholars like Preb (2009) have documented such benefits to include: promotion of good health, reduction of stress and depression, character development, and promotion of democracy.

Promotion of Good Health

The primary contribution of recreation to the field of health lies in its values of preventing illness as well as promoting healthful and happy living. A few of the documented health benefits of staying, active include reduced obesity, reduction in risk of disease, an enhanced immune system and increased life expectancy and promotion of democracy (Ekong and Andrews, 2013). Obesity is a major health concern and is closely linked to physical inactivity. Overweight and or obesity is associated with increased risk for disease, mortality and chronic medical conditions such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, cardiovascular heart disease. A sure panacea to increased incidences of obesity and other associated disease conditions is participation in recreational sports activities.

Recreation sports also can enhance one's immune system. Mooney, Stanten and Yeager (2002) reported that people who exercise for at least once a week were significantly less likely to fall sick than those who are sedentary. Recreation also increases life expectancy of the participants.

According to Ekong and Andrews (2013) regular participation in physical activities reduce the risk of developing or dying from some of the leading causes of illness or death.

Reduction of Stress and Depression

Stress is a pattern of behavioural and physiological responses to cope with events that match or exceed an organism's abilities (Gazzaniga and Heartherton, 1993). To Samuel (2012) stress is an unpleasant reaction one has when he or she perceives an event to be threatening. Depression on the other hand is a mental condition in which a person feels very sad and without enthusiasm (Hornby, 2010). The symptoms include feeling of loneliness, despair, calmness, worthlessness and sometimes thought of suicide. Depression is a disease that affect people of all ages including students. As regards stress, the tertiary institutions are stressful for they represent a period of change that requires teenagers to adapt. They are believed by many to be among the most stressful years in life (Ekong & Andrews, 2013). Some of the signs of stress are palpitation of the heart, rapid shallow breathing and dryness of the mouth and throat, while the psychological signs include among others irritability, tension or depression, impulsive behaviour and emotional instability.

Stress reduction and depression through recreational sports come from group activities that strengthen social tie and the calming effects of desirable outdoor setting. Generally, being more relaxed promote academic performance better interaction and a general well-being among the students and reduce stress and depression.

Diversions from Violence

Participation in recreational sports activities enable the students to maximally use their leisure hours wisely. They have little or no time for restiveness other than to play and read. Such calibre of students would not have time to involve in unproductive ventures like vandalism, cultism or planning to disrupt the academic work of the institution. It should be noted that one of the greatest social benefits of recreation is that engaging in recreation diverts attention from criminal activities. Violent crime in tertiary institutions is on the increase and it has become something of great concern. Participation in recreation helps one to relax, refreshes one's self, reduces stress and tension and helps one to face life challenges with maturity instead of resorting to violence.

Character Development

Recreational sports contribute immensely to the character development of students. In recreation, especially in games and sports, participants play according to the rules and are expected to obey and respect officials. Appropriate sanctions are given to those who contravene the rules of the game. Participants are taught to be patriotic, selfless and co-operative. It should be noted that personal/social development chains have been an integral part of recreation or sports which is related to the attributes of affective domain such as self-esteem, courage, co-operation and fair play which moral and in turn enhances the whole role of ethical character development and also the person as a whole.

Promotion of Democracy

Democracy and recreational sports are alike in spirit. Democracy is committed to giving each individual the opportunity to grow fully, express himself, feel and achieve an abundant life. Recreation, which represents activity freely chosen offer the individual the opportunity for satisfaction, creative expression and the development of his God's given potentials. Recreational activities foster the development of citizenship, community integration, obedience to constituted authority and intergroup relationship.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper focused on the role of recreation sports in curbing students' restiveness in our tertiary institutions. The paper has revealed that students' restiveness poses great danger to the development and peace in tertiary institutions in particular and the country at large and if this is allowed to continue, it may destroy the very future which the students are supposed to lead. This paper is of the view that if recreational sports activities are encouraged on campuses, it has the

potential of instilling discipline in students, strength, knowledge, and skills needed to cope with the stress and strain of academic pursuits and take them away from crimes. The paper recommends that:

- i. Wide range of recreational programmes to cater for the varying needs of the students be provided.
- ii. Adequate facilities and equipment should be provided and also maintained in order to provide, a clear and efficient programme for the students. This, apart from motivating the students to participate in recreational sports activities will also help in sustaining their interest.
- iii. Designated recreational centres around the hostels, should be created so that the students could engage themselves in recreational sports activities of their choice during leisure hours particularly, students who might not be interested in highly competitive games. The recreation centres should have badminton, volleyball courts, table tennis boards, monopoly, scrabble, chess and viewing centres.
- iv. There should be free flow of information between the students and the administrators of the institutions. This will promote better understanding, trust and confidence among the students and the administrators.
- v. Administrators of the tertiary institutions should ensure regular supply of water and electricity to the student to meet both their domestic and academic needs.

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