

PARENTS GUARDIANS FORUM: A NECESSITY FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL VICES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The establishment of parents guardians forum (PGF) in Nigerian tertiary institutions has become imperative considering the spate of social vices that has engulfed higher education in Nigeria. These vices include cultism, sorting, bribery, rape, prostitution, drug abuse, immodest dressing among others seriously militating against the philosophy and goals of education, and also the values which quality of instruction is anticipated to inculcate in the citizens at all levels of education. Things have fallen apart because parents and guardians are not involved in the management of issues affecting their wards. The influence parents or guardians have on their children should not be undermined. There should be a periodic meeting of parents, guardians, students body and management to deliberate on issues concerning the welfare and academic excellence of the students. This paper therefore, determined to examine PGF, its roles and functions, composition, social vice –types and causes in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Key words: Parents guardian forum, Effective management, Social vices, Tertiary institutions

The role parents play in moral upbringing of their wards cannot be overemphasized. The biological tie connecting parents with their

children cannot be represented by “*loco parentis*”, especially when it involves managing social vices. It is that tie that empowers the ability of parents to speak to the children and they listen and obey. This is the more reason why when Children are still living with their parents or guardians they are easily influenced by the teachings or mode of living of their parents or guardian. It has been noted that this influence reduces drastically as soon as the child gains admission into an institution of higher learning due to less contact with the parents or guardian. This, most times results to the child picking one social vice or the other from peers. Before you know it, he or she has cultivated an attitude which is quite alien to the family. Egelson (2012) observed that low parents interest in a child’s schooling is associated with substandard student’s achievement and that parents lay a critical role in their children’s academic and social-emotional development.

Most times, parents or guardians are shocked at the behaviour their wards put up or exhibit when they come home on vacation. Some of them turn away completely from the once obedient, honest and humble child to become a cultist, rapist, prostitute, drunkard, armed robber etc and also involve in examination malpractices and even sorting.

Immodest dressing has become the order of the day in campuses, female students dress nude while their male counterparts perm, braid their hair, wear ear-rings and tattered jean trousers deliberately cut open. Students go neck deep into these vices without any recourse because they are sure their parents or guardian will not check on them or find out, neither will the school authority call the attention of parents and guardians when students are derogating. Studies have shown that the major cause of the existence and the inability to effectively manage social vices in Nigerian tertiary institutions is the absence of parents guardian forum in the schools.

Parents Guardians Forum (PGF)

Parents guardians forum is a voluntary body in the tertiary institution comprising of school management, parents, guardians of students admitted in the institution and lecturers who aim at fostering understanding and mutual co-operation between students and the institution and the community for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives of higher education in Nigeria. Though this body is not in existence in Nigerian public tertiary institutions, it is available in some private universities. In a nut shell in the structure of tertiary education, PGF is not in existence in Nigeria. The resultant effect is that social vices have become a culture and the order of the day in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Institutions of higher learning have become a place where mundane activities are being carried out without recourse. A place which is supposed to be the citadel of learning is now harboring things of the absurd.

The rate of social menace in higher institutions is a thing of great concern. To effectively manage and curb these vices, the government should mandate all tertiary institutions in Nigeria to establish Parents Guardians Forum. Benedict (2013) observed that parents and guardians to a great extent wield some influence on their children and wards and

that as stakeholders, they should be involved in issues affecting their children. Periodically, there should be parents, guardians, lecturers and management meeting in the universities and other tertiary institutions to discuss peace and stability enhancing issues since parents and guardians constitute a formidable force to reckon with in terms of disciplining of their children.

Their presence at such fora will equip them from time to time with necessary information required to admonish, counsel and guide their wards on peaceful co-existence (Benedict, 2013). In private universities where they exist, they make significant contributions to the wellbeing of the students and ensure an atmosphere devoid of corrupt practices in the campus. A lot of benefits are derived from functional PGF.

Benefits of Parents Guardians Forum

When an institution establishes functional PGF, the following benefits will be observed:

1. Reduction or complete elimination of social vices on campus.
2. Improved learning for all students.
3. Improved conducive learning environment.
4. See to peaceful co-existence among institution community.
5. There is improved moral standard.
6. There is opportunity for parents and guardians to be involved in making decisions concerning their wards.
7. It makes parents and guardians assume key roles and responsibilities in school improvement.

North Central Region Educational Laboratory (2008) identified the following as benefits of establishing parents guardians forum in tertiary institutions:

1. High test scores and grades.

2. Improved lecture attendance.
3. Students are committed to studies.
4. Students exhibit positive attitudes and behavior.
5. There is high graduation rates.
6. There is greater enrollment in higher education.

The institutions of higher learning which ought to be ideal places for training of minds, have become a crime zone where various kinds of social vices are learnt and practiced. Social vices have eroded creativity, played down the value of hard work and enthroned mediocrity in the nations tertiary institutions. Nta (2012) observed that it is imperative to note that corruption exists in all spheres of our economy including the education sub-sector. To redeem our tertiary institutions of these rot, PGF should be established.

Social Vices

The spread of social vices in Nigerian tertiary institution is a thing of concern. Jonathan (2013) attributed the increase of social vices to deterioration of value system, it is the product of a society that nurtures cheat and mediocre and turn them into celebrities (Chiemeka, 2013). According to him, it is the reflection of the moral decadence of our society that has pen rubbers, smugglers, kidnappers and drug barons who are glorified by their ill gotten wealth. Social vices are practices, behaviours or habits generally considered immoral, sinful, depraved or degrading in the associated society (Newhauser, 2005). It is a negative character trait and immoral activities in tertiary institutions which include cultism, armed robbery, prostitution, rape, immodest dressing, sorting, drug addiction, alcoholism, thuggery, kidnapping, killing and examination malpractice. In tertiary institutions, these vices appear to have been deep rooted into the system and poses serious threat to the

successful achievement of higher educational goals.

This calls for urgent need for parents/guardians involvement in the management of social vices in tertiary institutions through the establishment of parents/guardians forum. With frequent interaction between parents, guardians and the institution's authorities, more students will receive encouraging message from various people on the importance of good conduct, hard work, thinking creatively, peaceful co-existence, assisting one another and staying in school. The forum will create shared solutions for improving opportunities and services to ensure quality education, safety, health and well-being of students. There is a saying that there is no smoke without fire. There are reasons why students take to social vices.

Causes of Social Vices

There are many reasons why students indulge in social vices. These include:

1. **Negligence on the part of parents.** Parents hardly find time to visit their wards while they are in higher institution, to inquire about their performance and progress. As a result, they would not be aware when the child begins to derail.
2. **Absence of Parents Guardians Forum in the institutions.** Lack of link between the institution and the parents and guardians is a big gap. Lack of synergy between the school authority and parents and guardians left a lot to be desired. The presence of parents and guardians in the institution from time-to-time will go along way to checkmate student's excesses. Involving parents and guardians in decision-making in the institution will strengthen bonds between students, families and school authorities.

3. **Sorting.** It is an academic corruption normally referred to as sorting, runs or blocking. It is a situation whereby lecturers inflate grades in exchange for money or other gratifications (Admin, 2014). Metro (2014) posited that sorting is the practice whereby lecturers compel students to pay large sums of money so that their examination scores can be boosted to ensure a pass or even get 'A' or 'B' grade. He further said that to perpetrate this evil, lecturers purposely fail students, compel them to 'sort' without minding whether the student is brilliant or not. That some lecturers will say 'A' is for God, 'B' is for lecturer, 'C' is for brilliant students while 'D' is for average students and 'E' is for the students who know their way. This group is the group that knows that they have to sort to obtain good grade. This situation creates concern on the quality of graduates Nigeria has nowadays. Hardworking students are frustrated and female students are made vulnerable to sex as some randy lecturers will categorically reject money for sex. Sorting has made some students not to be punctual to lecture, writing of assignment or term paper and studying for examinations. While some students have resorted to keeping some of their allowances they collect from parents and guardians for sorting, some resort to prostitution or armed robbery to be able to acquire fund for sorting. This menace has eaten deep into the rubrics of quality of tertiary education in Nigeria. Toscany (2013) identified ways to make second class Lower or Upper Division in Nigerian University without working hard as follows:

a. **Sorting.** It is a familiar and well known word in our higher education environment. Sorting is a means of paying directly or indirectly a course coordinator or lecturer a certain amount of money and in return the lecturer will pass you in the course irrespective of what you wrote in the examination and in certain situations, the amount you paid will determine the grade you will get. The higher the pay the better the grade.

b. **Expo/Use of Unaccepted External Materials and Resources.** The use of external materials like minimized version of study handout, notes on topics that are likely to come out in the examination and many other tools have helped many students to achieve success in Nigerian universities. It is always very easy to accomplish if the security system in the examination hall is very lax.

c. **Making out with your Course Teachers.** This is a two-way problem and female students in our higher institutions are always in greater risk for sex in return for good grade. Many morally low female students take advantage of this, once they notice that the course teacher is interested in having intimate relationship with them. There are many promiscuous male lecturers out there in the universities and they are gladly giving away good grades to girls they have slept with and some of the girls will even miss the exam and later come to their office to write and submit.

d. **Buy Expensive Gift to Course Lecturers.** The researcher remembers someone who bought a set of different expensive gift items for his lecturer the estimated amount of the gift was around #200,000 then. The lecturer looked at the student and told him that he will never fail any of his courses even if he did not attend the exams. As the saying goes, gift opens the way even in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

e. **Sitting beside a Smart Student by Arrangement.** This is what is normally referred to as "giraffing" or "Rank Xerox". It is a situation where all dull students target the bright and smart students in the class, they either pay them in cash or kind to copy verbatim from their solutions during exams. One common trait with the students that do not

study as they should or prepare for exam is the ability to learn how to copy from other people's work even from a far distance.

f. **Swapping answer Script after Examination.** Many students hardly know that this system exists. This is always the case with graduate assistance working with a lecturer because they help out some lecturers with their courses and do have access to offices where examination answer scripts are parked before marking, they usually accept money from students and let the students rewrite the exam. Thereafter, they will replace the old examination sheet with the new one.

g. **Personal Relationship and Family Ties.** This is a situation whereby people take their friends to their close uncle who works as a lecturer to beg that their friends be given good grade in the examination.

h. **Partners in illegal Business.** Students who usually partner with lecturers in different illegal and unethical businesses they carry out are always assured of passing their courses with good grades. Sometimes, the lecturer will beg their colleague to also pass their accomplices in their courses.

i. **Paying Someone to Write the Examination for You.** There are many student impersonators out there in the universities that are willing to write examinations for you once you pay the agreed amount of money.

j. **Upgrade your Final Result in Examinations and records Department.** This is another means in which students with the right connection also use to push up their grades during final computation. Though it depends on how student results are secured in each university. It might be pretty easy in one university and very hard in another university.

4. **Parental lifestyle and home background.** Student's participation in social vices may be influenced by parent's involvement in similar activities. For example, parents who are members of secret cults will not see anything wrong in their children's involvement in cultism. In fact, they may even encourage their children to join.

5. **Peer Group Influence.** Motivation to be involved in any social vices may come from peer influence. Some students have been prostitutes, cultists, armed robbers, drunkards etc. because their friend is one. The peer group members influence one another with experiences gathered from their various environment and families.

6. **Un-conducive learning Environment.** Learning facilities provided in some educational institutions are grossly inadequate, to the extent that students cannot cope academically. Because of crave for certificate, intellectually weak students go into prostitution, cultism, kidnapping etc. to raise fund and sort their way through.

7. **Inadequate Religious and Moral Instructions.** Some parents have abandoned their responsibilities in the area of moral upbringing of their children because of the craze to wealth. They don't have time to follow up their ward's progress at school. Educational institutions only teach Islam and Christian religious studies for students to pass examination without emphasizing moral lessons that can be learnt from the contents.

8. **Administrative Leadership.** Leaders of various tertiary institutions are paying lip service to the rot in their schools. It has never been heard that a lecturer was dismissed or suspended because of involvement in sorting,

sexual harassment, cultism, falsification of examination scores, yet these atrocities are daily occurrences in tertiary institutions. Rather, any student who ventured to expose such lecturers is threatened, intimidated and punished. Metro (2014) observed that many students who ventured to report to school authority were victimized by some other lecturers who are like a mafia group.

9. **Mass Media.** The mass media exposes the students to all kinds of risky behaviours. There is importation of magical films, occultic literatures, advertisements, films are shown on how to dress nude, join occultic groups and how kidnapping and armed robbery are carried out. Continuous interaction with these materials by students easily influences their attitude.

10. **Inadequate Welfare Programme for students.** Nigerian tertiary institutions have inadequate basic amenities like accommodation, electricity, water, sports and other recreational activities. Some students capitalize on these to involve in risky behaviours within and out the campus.

Way Forward

1. Parents should always find time to visit their wards while on campus unannounced. This will enable them to know the type of life they live on campus.

2. Establishment of Parents Guardians Forum. This will take care of the disconnect between parents or guardians relationship with their wards.

3. School authorities should provide sufficient facilities and enabling environment for learning. There should be internet facilities, enough lecture halls and rooms. There should be adequate basic amenities like good water, electricity, accommodation, transportation and other recreational facilities.

4. Authorities of higher institution of learning must show doggedness in their determination to stamp out social vices. They must brace up to the challenges of social vices on campus.

5. Social vices should be integrated into curriculum contents of all levels of education so that students are sufficiently sensitized about the meaning, types, effects and consequences so that they can avoid them.

6. School authorities should seriously address and check the issue of sorting to return academic excellence. Culprits of such activities should be dismissed or relieved of their duty or studentship

7. Parents should be role models. They should leave good legacy for their children to emulate. They should give their wards adequate home training. A child that is well brought up is not easily influenced by peer group.

8. Government and non-governmental agencies should mount advocacy campaigns against social vices in tertiary institutions and often organize seminars and jingles even mount bill boards and posters to sensitize the school community on the danger of these vices.

9. There should be a capacity building programme for lecturers and administrators on social vices, effects and management. This is to step-up their knowledge on the consequences of social vices on quality of tertiary education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

It has been established in this paper that the establishment of Parent Guardians Forum in Nigerian Tertiary Institution is strategic to effective management and eradication of social vices in the institution of

higher learning. And that sorting is a serious threat to the moral disposition of Nigerian children, the future of Nigeria's tomorrow leaders and the achievement of the philosophy and goals of tertiary education in Nigeria. The paper concludes that all hands must be on deck to combat the menace. If tertiary education would come back to its glorious past as well as prepare the nation for better tomorrow, there is need to rediscover and teach the people concerned the goals of tertiary education.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents/Guardians Forum should be established in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
2. The school authorities should be more aggressive in their quest to deal with erring lecturers who have compelled the female students to prostitution and males to armed robbery to be able to sort their course.
3. The school authorities should see it as an issue of necessity to eradicate sorting in the school system, if Nigeria will be able to produce those who can manage her economy in the nearest future.
4. Students who are found in the act of thuggery, cultism, drug abuse, alcoholism, armed robbery, prostitution and rape should be expelled.
5. The school authorities should appoint disciplinary committee on social vices, comprising of Parents/Guardian Forum members to try and punish any student, lecturer or administrative staff who is involved or who perpetrates social vices.
6. Examination questions should be cross-checked if it is in-line with course contents

covered with students because some lecturers set questions that are off-syllabus so that many students will fail and come for sorting.

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