UTILIZATION OF ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGIES IN HANDLING SITUATIONAL CRISIS IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

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ABSTRACT: *Situational crisis is becoming rampant in our tertiary institutions. The frequency of its occurrence signals the need for proactive plans and strategies to curb and diffuse the perceived effects of crisis in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The process requires the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to bring about behavioral changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and crisis, and peacefully resolve same at event of its occurrence, through the creation of conducive atmosphere of peace, at all levels of relationship (interpersonal intrapersonal, intergroup within the system. The paper is focused on providing alternative approach in the handling of crises in Nigerian tertiary institutions so as to avert the irreparable damages that could result from crises. The concept of conflict/crisis were discussed, and causes identified. Adult education strategies such as conscientization, dialogue and peace education were proffered to curb crises in the system. The study also outlined other ways forward which if followed will address the problem of conflicts/crises in Nigerian tertiary institutions.*

KEYWORDS: Adult Education, Strategy, **Situational crisis, Tertiary Institution**

INTRODUCTION

In every human configuration (gathering) situational conflict and crisis are unavoidable features. The re-occurrence of this phenomenon is an indication of the desire to protect interest. Individuals and groups have different interests to protect and if these desires are not handled with caution, the result is conflict and crisis. In educational institutions, the insensitivity of the actors within the system had been the root causes of the persistence of crisis in the education industry. However, in the event of any crisis, the utilization of adult education strategies for conflict resolution such as conscientization, peace education and dialogue will be most appropriate. All actors in educational institutions which include the government, school administrators, host communities, students and parents are expected to pursue a common goal; and until these actors realize that they need a joint effort to make the school system crises free, the achievement of the overall goal of the institutions will remain a mirage.

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Concept of Conflict/Crisis

Conflict and crisis are related in the sense that one leads to the other. According to Mitchell (1991) conflict is a situation in which two or more parties have incompatible objectives and in which their perceptions and behavior are commensurate with that incompatibility. Conflict on its self is not a bad occurrence, as it sends a signal or indication that something is not going well within the organization. Conflict, if mismanaged results in crisis. What may begin as person to person conflict, person to group, or group to group conflict, if not addressed properly could result to a full crisis in any organization. Conflict arises when interests collide, usually as a result of ambition, group loyalty, demands on scarce resources etc (Rahim, 1986).Crisis can be defined as an event or situation which outweigh a person's coping skill, thereby creating emotional inbalance, cognitive distortion and behavioural difficulties (Gilliand and James 1997). In the views of Roberts (2000) crisis is a period of psychological disequilibrium, experienced as a result of hazardous event or situation that constitutes a significant problem that cannot be remedied by using familiar coping strategies.Situational crisis is one which occurs uncommonly, an extraordinary event that has no way of forecasting or controlling its conception. Situational crisis can take any form, usually sudden and destructive.

Crisis has been viewed by different scholars in different ways. According to Schmid (2002) crisis is a sudden eruption of unexpected event caused by previous conflict. In the views of Charles and Hart cited in David (2013) crisis is a situation of severe threat to the basic structure or fundamental values and norms of a social system which leads to time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances which necessitates making critical decision. In the same vein, Best (2006) maintains that crisis is a degeneration of conflict, where threats to human security, intense violence characterized by fight, death, injury etc. occur.

Forms of Conflict/Crisis in Tertiary Institutions

Student's conflict or crisis usually start with demonstration, an activity if carried out peacefully would not result in breakdown of law and order. Nigeria as a nation upholds freedom of speech and association. This may be the reason behind the demonstrations and conflicts or crises witnessed in almost all tertiary institutions in the nation. As pointed out earlier, demonstrations or conflicts are signal of some perceived contradictions in the relationship between parties or actors, in the case of tertiary institution, students and school authority, Government, and Host community. From the composition of the actors within tertiary institution, it is observed that all conflicts/crises usually revolve round these actors. They take the forms of, students against the school administration, students against government and her policies, Group against group and sometimes students against the host community. At this juncture, it is imperative to consider each of these situations.

i) Students and School Authority

Over the years, the school system has witnessed demonstrations, conflicts and crises arising from misunderstandings between the students and the school authority. The students are always of the opinion that the University Authority does not consider their plight in her policies and decisions. They maintain that the Authority is always high handed and undemocratic. This authoritarian approach to issues in the school system constitute a major form of crisis. A contemporary example is the policy of "no school fees no examination" adopted by University of Port Harcourt at the beginning of 2016 /2017 academic year. The students demonstrated against the School authority,

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in the process, one student died and University recorded the worst destruction of school properties, and properties of the staff since the inception of the University. A similar situation had earlier occurred in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in 1986.

Students and Government
In all tertiary institutions the student usually have Student Union Government, (SUG) to handle the affairs of welfare of the students. In the perception of the students , any action that threatens the unity and cooperate existence of the students or any policy that will not be to their interest , wherther from the government or any other body meets stiff opposition. It is In line with the realization of this ideology that results in situations that brings crisis between students and the government. From time to time, different kinds of crises occur in the school system. In 1984, when the government introduced the payment of tuition fees in tertiary institutions, the students stood against it and that resulted to crises. The removal of subsidy on petroleum products in 1988 resulted in crisis and for fear of uncertainty, the schools were short down. Similarly, the increases in pump price of petroleum products in 2013 met with some forms of violent protest in some universities. In all the Students Union Governments have been as a tool in the hands of politicians as well as some universities, administration to go against some government policies that are not favourable. It is believed that the student union, is one of the organized union that can confront the government either at the state or Federal level.

Students and Host Communities
The roles of the host communities of our tertiary institutions are not to be overlooked .Every Nigerian tertiary institution is situated in a community and the community is expected to contribute to the success of the school system. It is also expected that the host communities of our tertiary institutions should protect the students. Since most of the students stay off campus, there is the tendency to bring to the communities behaviours that may not be acceptable to the communities. As host community, the community members are expected to collaborate with the university authority to keep them within acceptable conduct. Against this background, some situations arise contrary to expectation, resulting in crisis between the students and the host community.

David [2013] reported the incident in Olabinsi, Onabanjo universities where students of the school were killed by members of the host community in 2005 , which resulted in destruction of vehicles and buildings. A similar situation occurred in the university of port Harcourt where four students of the institution were killed which was popularly referred to as 'ALUU 4' in October 2012. The incident made the students go on rampage and properties were damaged.

Causes of Conflicts/Crises in Tertiary Institutions.
 Having indentified the forms of the crises and conflicts in our tertiary institutions, it is worthy of note that there are basic causes of these crises. No matter the form the crises may take, whether between students and the school authority, the government or the host community, conflicts in our tertiary institutions are caused by the variation in the roles expected of the government and school authority, the pattern of university administration, Government attitude towards education, Government interest on SUG politics, Teaching and learning conditions and Communication problem.

Administrative pattern of University authority.

Over the years, the administrative pattern adopted in Nigerian universities had been that of dictatorship. The university authorities usually impose whatever they deem fit on students without due consideration and consultation. Agreed, the students are expected to submit to the school administration which in this context is seen as the father but because of the non consultative and undemocratic pattern of administration, the students view most of the action of the administration as confrontational and hence always ready to match force with force even when they are not supposed to do so. This is a major cause of conflict and crises in our tertiary institutions.

Government attitude towards education.

The attitude of the government towards education especially at the tertiary level has been criticized by many scholars and concerned individuals. From the percentage of the budget allocated to education to the policies from time to time cause crises and conflicts in our school system. Available records show that Nigerian budget allocation to education appears to be the lowest in Africa. It is also lower than the minimum 26% bench mark budget allocation recommended by the United Nations. According to Abioudun, Dele and Abimbola (2015) the consequences of inadequate provision of financial resources to the university system are the decay of structures and decline in services and functions. This deprivation according to Alabi (2002) leads to frustration and aggression resulting in conflicts and crises in the system.

Controversies over Students Union Government and politics.

Due to the perceived influence of the SUG, almost all government authorities are interested in having a hand in the election of those who pilots the affairs of the students. The government at all levels, the school administrators, and influential politicians are all key actors in the installation of student union government   in tertiary institution. On the other hand, the students strongly oppose the imposition of those to mind their affairs. The notice of any interference in the process of student union election triggers off negative reactions from the students. Furthermore, influential politicians and political parties penetrate the Student Union Government and uses them to create problems against their opponents.

i)   Teaching and learning condition.

Conducive teaching and learning environment is a major factor in the achievement of educational objectives .The quest for conducive teaching and learning environment had been the cause of most crises in Nigerian universities. The above demand is true because while students demand for conducive learning environment, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) insists on conducive teaching and learning environment. Apart from the several protest of students concerning learning environment, the ASUU strike of 2009 stressed among other things, the improvement of teaching and learning environment in Nigerian universities.

ii)   Communication problems

In organizations, communication is a vital tool for direction and action. When communication is absent or distorted, people tend to act on their own perception of the situation. This error is usually dangerous and destructive in the school system. Any situation or action that is not explained or communicated to the students by the school authority is taken to be a challenge and if not properly handled can lead to conflicts or crisis. According to Mukoro [2013] communication gap between

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management and students is a leading course of conflict in the University system. The students expect that every action, change in the method of operation, introduction of a new policy etc; should be communicated to them adequately and on time. Unfortunately, most Universities administration do not take this into consideration hence the repeated conflict and crises arising from lack of information on issues concerning the co- existence of the students and school administration.

Contrasting views of the actors in Tertiary Institution

Crisis occurs in our tertiary institutions because of the conflicting interest of the actors in the system. If the fight against situational crisis must be achieved, then the involvement and collaboration of all the actors (Students, Host community, Government, School administration, and Parents) is essential. In the light of this, there is need to examine the interest of each of these actors.

Students: The students seem not to be aware that they are at the receiving end of whatever happens in the school system. All other stakeholders in educational institutions except the students could find alternatives should the system crumble. For instance, a government can ignore criticism of running a nation without higher education institutions. The host communities can live their lives without the students around the communities. The administrators can continue their career in companies and other establishments. What option has a medical doctor in the making, an engineer etc without a certificate? Being unaware of these facts, the students are only interested in the satisfaction of their immediate comfort at the expense of their future. Hence, whatever comes short of the students' expectations is not acceptable and can trigger off crisis.

Host communities: The communities within the place where the institutions are situated have their own interest. Whatever happens in the school system seems not to be their concern. They are only interested in the economic potentials provided by the presence of the students in their communities without checking the activities of the students until their actions breaches the activities of the community members, as noticed in the case of Aluu 4 of University of Port Harcourt.

Government and administrators: The government and administrators as actors in educational institutions of higher learning are only interested in the smooth running of educational system. They wish that the school system should continue without disruption, but are not sensitive to the daily complaints of the students on physical environment such as structure, light water etc until there is crisis. There is need to note that physical environment of schools has an impact on how students think of themselves and their attitude about their safety.

On the part of the administration, there is the expectation that students should not even express their feelings about any situation. They believe the student are children and must be under subjection at all times. According to Walker, Colvin and Ramsey (1995), the government and institutions should set up visible, consistent, functional, fair and enforceable rules with clear guidelines of what behavior, results in what action so that all students and staff would know exactly what the result of a given action will be.

Parents: All students in our institutions come from homes and have parents or guidance. To most parents, the only interest they have concerning their children's school is to see them graduate or complete their programme. They provide them with all they need to keep them comfortable while in school, without asking and counseling them on the implications of their actions in school. It could be recalled that the quality and character a child has is what he or she will bring to the school system. The parents are expected not only to provide for their children in school but to also address their moral and social behaviour while in school. In contrast, the parents are expecting that the schools should take care of their children's character and behaviour. This misplaced interest results in neglect, and uncontrolled actions of the students.

Some parents are not unaware of the fact that their children had been aggressive even before gaining admission to schools. To this category of parents, there will be a noticeable expression of frustration. They will even prefer that the children should be outside the home as a way of being free from their trouble. Institutions infested with this kind of students will be prone to crisis. In a study conducted by Corvo and William (2000) it was discovered that children who believe that their parents do not want them to behave violently in school are more likely to use nonaggressive approach at the event of conflict or crisis.

Adult Education strategies for curbing situational crisis in Tertiary Institutions.
In the recent past, Nigerian tertiary Institutions have witnessed several situational conflicts and crises which have lead to destruction of properties and lose of lives. Further more, the work of Aluede and Imhanlahimi in David (2013) reveal that when students demonstrate and schools are closed down it adversely affected the scope and curriculum of programmes offered in Nigerian Universities thereby reducing the quality of the products of our tertiary education system. Studies have shown that greater percentage of these crises are caused by the administrative pattern adopted in tertiary Institutions in Nigeria and the methods applied in handling crisis at its advent. This paper therefore provides alternative approaches in the handling of crisis in tertiary institutions, through the application of Adult education strategies such as Conscientization, dialogue and peace education.

Conscietization
Conscientization as a term was made popular by Paolo Freire, a Brazilian adult educationist who lived between 1921-1997. The concept has a permanent critical approach to reality and discovery. It implies that if one discovers he is oppressed, his libration can only come if he transform the oppressing structure. Ezimah in Wordu (2006) sees conscientization as the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristics of all emergence…Also Freire in Wordu (2006) maintained that conscientization represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness. To make our tertiary institutions conflict and crisis free, the awareness of the students should be deepened to understand the realities.

Dialogue
Dialogue is another Adult Education strategy, which if applied would curb situational crises in Nigerian tertiary educational system.
Dialogue is a directed discussion or deliberation with the aim of creating understanding which will address pressing problems as a result of change in thoughts and actions. In the school system

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dialogue could be initiated by any of the parties in the tricycle of major stake holders (government, school authority and students) of tertiary Institution. Dialogue could also be initiated by a facilitating body. According to Wilgus & Holmes (2009) facilitated dialogue helps disputants in the following ways;

a)   Share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with one another in a confidential space.
b)   Work toward mutual understanding of one another's opinion and beliefs.
c)   Identify areas of common ground and make decisions about how differences of opinions could be managed.
d)   Explore the possibility of reaching mutually agreeable solutions.

It is worthy of note that facilitated dialogue is not popular in Nigeria and completely absent in our educational system.

Peace Education

Conflicts and crises in tertiary institutions in Nigeria have become an intractable problem because of faulty approaches adopted by government to resolve them. Attempts by government to resolve these conflicts most times have often resulted in new forms of crises. The use of law enforcement agents against students on campus had never yielded any positve fruit. The application of peace education in handling conflicts and crises in tertiary institutions will enhance crisis free educational system. According to Fountain (2012) peace education is designed to build in the learners a sense of commitment to global solidarity, peace, acceptance of differences in opinions, social justice and environmental awareness. It aims at equipping the learners to be involved and accept the process of change as a necessary means of advancement instead of resorting to violence which characterizes   displeasure of intended policies. A well articulated Peace education curriculum will instill in learners the

knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of resolving problems peacefully as against the use of violence, having acquired peace related education concepts.

Way forward: From the forgoing, it is clear that crisis in institutions of higher learning can be reduced if not totally eradicated. This will take the efforts of all the stakeholders in our educational system. The following measures, if applied, will reduce or eradicate crisis in higher institutions of learning:

1.   There should be clear, visible, consistent and enforceable rules, on the mode of behaviour and the consequences of certain actions of school administrations and students.
2.   There should be collaboration with appropriate agencies such as social service, mental health department, Juvenile justice etc, to check unwanted social behaviour.
3.   Physical environment of schools (structure, light, water) should be improved for the students to have a sense of belonging.
4.   Parents of aggressive children should partner with the school authority to put them on check to prevent their peculiar acts.
5.   Parents should raise the awareness of their children to the fact that, there behaviour and conduct in school is capable of depriving them University education.
6.   Host communities should set surveillance on the activities of the students in the communities to prevent actions that could lead to crisis.
7.   Leaders of host communities should report all deviant acts of the students to the school authority for effective caution and not allow community members to take laws into their hands.

8.   Government through legislation should come out with a blue print on how grievances should be handled and the result of certain actions on both the students and administration.

9.   Government should give attention to the needs of the staff and students of tertiary institutions and as much as possible keep to agreements where promises are made.

10.   Students should cultivate the culture of peace and non aggression in handling issues.

11.   Government should constitute a body that will be in charge of facilitating dialogue in tertiary institutions.

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