

## **Infusion approach to moral education in Nigerian tertiary institutions: Towards curbing cultism**

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### ***Abstract***

*The damaging effects of the anti-social phenomenon of cultism on learning and character formation of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are no less than shocking to an average mind. In some of the institutions, it is dangerously ravaging the fundamental structures and principles of the academia and beyond. Many cases of armed robbery, kidnapping, disruption of school programmes and public peace, thuggery, and the like, have been linked to cultism in our tertiary institutions. Some students have dropped out of school on account of this. This ugly scenario could be causally linked to poverty, lack of proper parental care, peer group influence, bad leadership, etc. Without neglecting these, this study considers that the most fundamental cause, which lies underneath them, is the decline and erosion of moral values. This paper proposes that, unless in-school promotion of infusion approach to moral education complements the efforts of the family, religious bodies, and the State, the problem may remain unabated. Infusion approach, being a pervasive and engaging approach to moral education, allows moral values to permeate the entire school curricula and programmes, be they academic, administrative, social, or cultural. It embraces the contents and methods of instruction, the personality of the lecturers, relationship among students, between them and the lecturers, and between the school as an institution, her students and other relevant bodies. This is because this*

*approach touches the hearts and minds of persons, it also enables students to look beyond the immediate and ephemeral trappings of cultism and acquire the requisite lasting moral values for a positive change of character.*

**Keywords:** cultism, infusion approach, moral education, moral values, tertiary institutions

### **Introduction**

The tertiary institutions in Nigeria, which encompasses all academic institutions on the post-secondary level of the national education system, viz., Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Colleges of Technology, Advanced Teacher Training Colleges, correspondence colleges and such institutions that may be allied to them (Federal Government of Nigeria 2004), have for long been fertile grounds for the operation of secret cults in their varied shades and forms. Their nefarious and anti-social activities are experienced not only within the precincts of these institutions, but also in the neighbourhood and host communities. The violence they unleash on innocent citizens and on rival groups, which sometimes lead to destruction of lives and property, disruption of academic programmes, termination of study for some students, as well as temporary closure of schools, is a serious source of concern and worry for all well-meaning Nigerians. Their activities, Adeyemi (2005) observes, have changed the academic culture of our tertiary institutions for the worse, making them become a mockery of what they ought to be. The level of fear and intimidation from the secret cults, he opines, has disrupted the relationship between lecturers and students and among students themselves.

Successive governments in Nigeria, many stakeholders, including parents, religious bodies, school authorities, non-governmental agencies and organizations have made concerted effort to stamp it out, but it appears to be a hydra-headed and an undying phenomenon.

Without pretending to be ignorant of the various approaches already adopted and applied to solve this problem, this paper proposes infusion approach to moral education as a more viable solution to this dangerous trend. It is an approach that is undergirded by the belief that, at the root of the causes of the nefarious activities of secret cultism lies regrettable decline in moral values among the population, especially the youth. The infusion approach advocates for convergence of efforts by all relevant stakeholders geared towards making moral qualities of honesty, accountability, perseverance, respect for human dignity, selflessness, among others, permeate all facets of the life of the school and its activities, curricular and non-curricular alike. The approach will aid students to value moral integrity and probity, think about it, talk about it and make it part of their relationship with one another, with lecturers, school authorities, and the communities which they form part.

The paper will begin by examining the concept of cult and cultism. Then comes an inquiry into the basic characteristics of secret cults and the motivations that drive students into becoming part of them. The paper will end by discussing the concepts of moral education, the infusion approach to moral education and its merits, as well as how it could bring about a plausible, genuine, and lasting solution to the problem under study.

## Concepts of cult and cultism

Cultism refers to the observances and practices of a cult. Chambers English Dictionary (1990) defines cultism as “adherence to a cult.” A cult, it says, could mean “a system of religious belief; formal worship; a sect; an unorthodox or false religion; a great, often excessive admiration for a person or an idea; the person or an idea giving rise to such admiration.” Cult has its root in the Latin word, *cultus*, which can be rendered in English as culture or cultivation (Walker 2007). Adeyemi (2005), who seems to use cultism and cult synonymously, refers to cultism in general as “groups of persons or individuals who cherish and believe in certain ideals and ethical and sometimes unethical conduct, which are known and perfected only by members of the cult” (p. 222). Cult could refer to either a group of people with some system of belief and worship or to the belief system and worship itself.

Singer (1979) brings out three senses in which cult has been employed, viz., a) groups with certain beliefs and practices that differ from the traditional religious groups; b) those who explore philosophical practices of non-westerners; c) those groups among whom exists deep relationship between followers and a powerful idea or a leader. In religious circles, cult is often used in a pejorative sense. In ancient Israel, cult means “illicit non-Israelite forms of worship” (Harper’s Bible Dictionary 1999, p. 196). Many Christians today use it to refer to a false alternative to authentic Christian faith (Walker 2007).

Many cults often hide their activities from non-initiates. Hence, the term, secret cults. The note of secrecy associated with them makes them suspicious *prima facie*. It is on this note that cult or cultism bears some relationship with the word, occultism, which is derived from the Latin word “*occultus*” meaning hidden,

covered, or veiled, especially from the gaze of outsiders. The usage of cult in the remaining part of the paper invariably carries with it the connotation of secret cult.

### **Secret cults and secret societies**

In Nigeria, secret cults are used synonymously with secret societies, which have been part of the Nigerian traditional society for ages. Kalilu, as cited in Adeyemi (2005) mentions some of such secret societies as Ekpe society, Ogboni Fraternity, Oboni Society, Egbesu group, Oro Group, and Odudu masquerade group. According to Adeyemi, these groups wield influence in the society and do not operate within the school system. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 as amended) clearly outlaws the formation of secret societies, and forbids all her citizens from participating in their activities or belonging to them (Sec. 38, 4). The constitution delineates what it means by secret society:

‘Secret society’ includes any society, association, group or body of persons (whether registered or not) (a) that uses secret signs, oaths, rites or symbols and which is formed to promote a cause, the purpose or part of the purpose of which is to foster the interest of its members and to aid one another under any circumstances without due regard to merit, fair play or justice to the detriment of the legitimate interest of those who are not members; (b) the membership of which is incompatible with the function or dignity of any public office under this Constitution and whose

members are sworn to observe oaths of secrecy; or (c) the activities of which are not known to the public at large, the names of whose members are kept secret and whose meetings and other activities are held in secret (sec. 318, 1).

Adeyemi (2005) argues that, going by the above constitutional delineation, secret cults in our tertiary institutions are secret societies. They are, therefore, unlawful associations.

### **Secret cultism in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria**

What we have today as secret cults in our tertiary institutions could be understood as transmogrified versions or offshoots of Pyrate Confraternity that began in the University of Ibadan (then University College) in 1953 as an innocuous group. The major aims of which included the enhancement of patriotism among students, fight against colonialism and elitism, enthronement of the sense of cultural nationalism, combating of tribalism, oppression, and maltreatment of students on campus, as well as giving voice to the ordinary people. They were known for their charitable deeds, and there appears to be nothing secret or dangerous in their activities (Uchendu 1999; Adeyemi 2005). While many believe that it was this one-time harmless group that later metamorphosed into a dangerous group alongside other rival or splinter groups formed by other students with different motivations and ideologies, the founding members of the 1953 Pyrate Confraternity; like Wole Soyinka and Olumuyiwa Awe, disavow any link between them and the current violent secret cults on our campuses (Eguavoen 2008).

With rapid increase in the number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria and students' enrollment in the 1990s, various cult groups

emerged, such that today, it may appear impossible to chronicle them. Ekeanyanwu and Igbinoaba, as cited in Mediayanose (2016) made some attempts and named up to 53 of them. These secret cults do not usually see eye to eye among themselves. There is often rivalry, clashes, and struggle for supremacy, resulting in killings, and maiming of the members of rival groups by others (Adeyemi 2005).

### **Some general and basic features of secret cults**

Secret cults, be they formed on campuses or outside of them, exhibit peculiar features that easily distinguish them from any other group. These are discussed below:

**a) Sense of supremacy and commitment:** Members of secret cults usually display an uncanny sense of commitment to their specific groups and their activities. This usually starts from the day of one's initiation, when the new member takes an oath of allegiance and total dedication. The oath is believed to bind and knit them together, as well as their shared values and beliefs; hence, the nomenclature of brotherhoods, sisterhoods, or confraternities with which they address themselves (Eguavoen 2008). They are guided by a body of stringent rules and regulations, and in their oath-taking, they vow to keep them to the latter. Failure to do so may entail serious penalties that may lead to loss of life, depending on the gravity of the offence. Such rules are seen as absolute, sacrosanct, and uncompromising. Complete, uncompromising, and unflinching allegiance to the group and its activities is valued far more than individual opinions, goals, aspirations, or interests (Walker 2007). Anything to the contrary, is perceived as weakening the group solidarity. They also use

such strict measures to prevent members from deserting the group once they become initiated.

The solidarity noticed among them is such that they usually rally round to help any member in need, or one unfairly treated by a non-member, or when there are misunderstandings or struggle for supremacy with rival secret cults. In tertiary institutions, they sometimes acquire joint accommodation for their members in order to enhance togetherness, facilitate regular meetings, and ensure greater security (Eguavoen, 2008). Adeyemi (2005) observes that, once a member dies, they usually organize a ceremony to sever his or her relationship with them.

Just as they promote solidarity among members, they also restrict their association with non-members, ex-members, and critics. Sometimes restriction of contacts with one's family is also advocated for (Walker 2007). Such restriction is intended to foster greater commitment and adherence to the aspirations of the group (Springer 1979).

**b) Secrecy:** Of course, to have a secret cult without some elements of secrecy would be a contradiction *in se*. Secrecy in this sense means “concealment from the observation of the other or from the notice of those not initiated” (Uchendu 1999, p.196). Members usually take the oath of secrecy by which they resolve never to divulge the dealings of the group to outsiders. As Uchendu notes, sometimes the secrets they keep are insignificant, and only assumes importance simply because they are shared among members who alone understand it.

**c) Claim to possession of spiritual powers:** This aspect of secret cults also helps to bind members together as well as frighten any member who wishes to go against the regulations of

the group. This comes out well in their initiation rites. The new members are often led through elaborate rituals that may involve visiting of shrines and secret religious sites, in order to instill fear in them and convince them of their claim of having spiritual connections with occult powers. According to Ezeokafor (2019), “Their activities usually involve incantations and repetition of set formulae. In all, they involve the deadening of their consciences in order to submit fully to the devil and his agents. That is why they seem heartless when they handle situations and people” (p. 32).

**d) Weapon of indoctrination and mind control:** Secret cults use indoctrination as an effective tool for psychological coercion of people into joining them or for keeping those within from leaving. Unlike education that aids individuals to open up and develop their abilities in a critical, reflective, and engaged fashion; indoctrination makes people accept beliefs uncritically, that is, without raising questions (Puolimatka, 1996). It negates such ideals of sound educations as rationality, autonomy, and tolerance. Even though some of the beliefs held through indoctrination may run counter or be antithetical to one’s personal goals and aspirations in life, because no room is given for questions or critical enquiry, one gulps them, the outcome of which one may regret later. Indoctrination gives unlimited power to the indoctrinator over his or her victim. In fact, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) based in Florida, USA, as cited in Walker (2007) believes that some of the cults regard one’s use of independent thought as being selfish, while critical thinking is termed evil.

Louis Hughes (1993) who understands cult to mean any group that uses “unethical mind-control process” on its members,

argues that what helps to keep members of cult groups unreservedly obedient to their leader is the level of control the leader has over their minds, emotions, and behaviour. According to him, in some, the mental domination reaches to such an extent that they even regard the leader as their “God”, and could do literally anything he or she commands them to do without any question (p. 352).

From an ethical point of view, they are taught to believe that it is the end that justifies the means. Anything seems justifiable so long as it advances the goal of the group (Hughes 1993; Walker 2007). Researches, Hughes reveals, show that in extreme cases, cults leave psychiatric damage on some members which has longtime effect on them after they have left the group. Some reported longtime experience of nightmares, suicidal tendencies, amnesia, delusions, violent outbursts, irresistible repetition of chants, etc. (p. 253).

One of the founders of the Boston Personality Development Institute, Dr. Clark, as cited in Collins (1982), and who has been involved in treating ex-cultists, believes that cult recruiters in America usually devote great amount of attention to their new recruits in order to turn their minds to the group. He maintains that majority of people succumb to the tactics of cult recruiters because of the amount of mental pressures they exert on them. The level of control they establish through meditation, compulsive prayer sessions, sleep deprivation, relentless lecturing or preaching makes the mind weakened, and at a point emotional crisis sets in. It may lead to psychosis in some instances, especially when the person fails to adapt to the new environment. If, however, the person does adapt, he or she accepts the dogma of the group and re-identifies himself or herself with the surroundings.

### **Motivations for involvement in campus secret cults**

A wide variety of factors could be pointed out as causes of campus secret cults. These include lack of good parental upbringing (Adesina and Oriababor, 2012), peer group influence (Eneji, 1996), sponsorship of secret cults by community leaders and politicians (Edgal, 2018), lack of political will and bad leadership (Udoh and Ikezu, 2014), lack of adequate resources and facilities in the universities (Adeyemi, 2005). At the background of all these, is the massive erosion of moral values in the Nigerian society, especially among the youth.

It is good to distinguish the above-mentioned causes from motivations. Whereas these causes are extrinsic to persons whose actions they influence by providing the fertile ground for the emergence, sustenance, and strengthening of secret cults, motivations cannot be thought of independently of “I,” because motivation is an ego-activity (Cox, 1978). Having been derived from the Latin word *movere*, meaning “to move,” motivation generally means forces that move a person, usually from within himself or herself to choose a definite line of action or effort. The motivations for campus cultism are considered below.

Because of the nature of the school environment, students have some basic needs that may help them to cope maximally with school challenges. If the secret cults on campus appear to be the only avenue for the satisfaction of one or more of such needs, this could motivate students to join them. The initial attractiveness of such gestures usually hides the real dangers inherent in the secret cults (Mediayanose2016).

Some ex-cultists reveal that their involvement in cultism was occasioned by some moment of depression and confusion at one point or the other in their lives (Singer 1979). As far as our tertiary institutions are concerned, a student who, for instance, is

emotionally wounded by situations, like loss of a friend or a lover, a family member, or who is stressed up and confused by issues related to admission, payment of fees, study, or exams may desperately need someone who can offer him or her some kind of emotional stability, peace of mind, and comfort. If the student finds the secret cults as appearing to offer these, without having any other plausible alternatives, he or she may be attracted to be part of the group. New students who may not yet have trusted friends on campus usually fall victims to this.

The sense of community and belonging among members of secret cults could also motivate students to identify with them. Because members usually go together, do things together, sometimes sharing common accommodations, as well as rallying round to assist their members in need, new students could easily be motivated to join them. They can use this as an easy bait to lure unsuspecting students into membership (Eguavoen, p. 6; Hughes 1993, p. 357).

Since some influential members of the society and politicians get involved in the activities of the campus secret cults and could sometimes use them for dirty jobs, they often offer them huge financial support. Through these avenues they become financially buoyant, and may easily display this on campus, use it to solve some problems of fellow cultists and live flashy and flamboyant lifestyles. Students, especially those from very poor backgrounds and who lack basic morals, could be moved by their display of wealth and want to belong. A member of one of the secret cults – Black Axe –as cited in Eguavoen (2008, pp. 3-4) has this to say on this:

So like the first thing I moved into [ . . . ]  
we were all boys. Most nights they don't  
stay at home. [ . . . ] They ask you if you

want to come.[ . . . ] You have to go in pairs, drink, girls are there [ . . . ] Then somebody talks to you, nobody oppresses you [ . . . ] Maybe when you are not financially okay, they lend you a helping hand, see, and they make you know that: Look all these incentives come from people who make sacrifices for you to be well cared for. So you have to belong to [a] brotherhood if you want those kind of good things to continue. [ . . . ] they tend to get close to you, tell you: Okay that look, that they are a kind of ensured, they can do anything on campus and walk away with it. [ . . . ] If you want to be like them, you know, to be above the law, it means also a [member of a hit] squad cannot longer talk to you. No lecturer can oppress you [ . . . ] They tell you all these offers. Look, there is money involved. You are free. We take care of your exams for you and so on (Eguavoan, 2008, pp. 3-4).

From the above, it is clear that safety concerns on campus also motivate students to join secret cults.

Hughes (1993) sees the search for transcendent experience as the most basic motivation for joining secret cults by students on campus. Since people usually sense that there is more to life than the pleasures of the material world, they unconsciously yearn for spiritual experiences. According to Hughes, since the secret cults offer people some form of spiritual alternative that satisfies their craving for what lies beyond, and claim to possess spiritual

powers and the ability to influence the fortunes of their members to any degree, students seem to be attracted to them. These claims entice unsuspecting, lazy, and confused students who want to get good results and juicy positions in the society without hard work.

### **Moral education in our tertiary institutions**

Moral education has been recognized from antiquity as an important avenue for preparing citizens for making the world a better place to live in harmony with one another. Both Plato and Aristotle taught about the significance of educating emotional responses for virtuous character development (Homiak, 2003). Apart from the family, which is the primary locus for moral education of children and youth, school seems to rank next in the order of importance.

Due to changes in today's society that result in many parents not having enough time for their children, many look up to schools and religious bodies to assume more responsibility in the moral education of children and youth. But how can our tertiary institutions integrate this task into the school system, make it theirs, mobilize the forces of relevant stakeholders, including the staff, students, and religious bodies on campus to achieve a reliable, efficient and lasting result? This paper proposes infusion moral education as the answer. But before delving into that, there is need for some clarification of the concept of moral education.

### **Concept of moral education**

Moral education is known internationally by different names, including values education, character education, and ethics education. The word, moral, is derived from the Latin word, *mores*, which means manners, character, code of conduct, or customs of a people. According to *Concise Oxford Dictionary*

(1999, p. 927), moral, as an adjective is “concerned with the principles of right and wrong behaviour,” or “adhering to the code of behaviour that is considered right or acceptable.” As regards the term, education, it is often associated with two Latin words as its roots, viz., *educere*, meaning to “lead out,” and *educare*, meaning “to train.” Even though there are controversies among some scholars over which of the two Latin words represents the authentic root, Barrow and Woods (2006) believe that the Romans used both *educere* and *educare* to refer to the process of educating children. Thus, education does not merely consist in facilitating the bringing out or “leading out” of innate talents in students, but also in helping to mold or impart knowledge in them, which they are hitherto ignorant of.

Moral education, therefore, is that aspect of education that helps the people to develop the principles needed to address issues of right and wrong in their daily lives. As far as students are concerned, it aims at assisting them to acquire those virtues and moral habits that will help them live well in the society as good citizens, as well as contribute to the progress of the society. Shaaban (2015) defines it “as strategic teaching of basic values and principles – such as fairness, honesty, and respect for others – that would develop in learners a sense of social and personal responsibility” (p. 201). Dewey (1964) sees the primary aim of education as nothing but to produce moral judgement in people; thus, all education is in actual fact moral education. Kohlberg (1963) understands all human development to have been driven by moral challenges faced by humans. In his six-stage theory of moral development, Kohlberg projects moral education as central to all human growth, intellectual growth being part of it.

As a matter of fact, moral education involves the development of cognitive, social, and emotive skills for effective

moral decisions and choices of action. The America's Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, ASCD (May 1988), defines moral education as "whatever schools do to influence how students think, feel, and act regarding issues of right and wrong" (p. 4).

### **Infusion approach to moral education**

Infusion approach is one of the approaches to moral education that is recently gaining currency in the education sector, especially in the United States of America. Others include service-learning and value (or virtue) of the month approaches. Service-learning approach, sometimes called community service, is based on Aristotle's concept of character formation, whereby one becomes virtuous by repeated performance of virtuous actions. Here, students are periodically given some tasks with moral lessons that "address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby 1996, p. 5). In value (or virtue) of the month approach, educators single out a particular virtue for the month and pay attention to it, such that it reflects in the students' assemblies, classrooms, curriculum, and other activities of the school.

Just like the first two already mentioned, infusion approach also wants the students to be practically involved in maximizing the use of opportunities available for character formation, but unlike them, infusion approach is more pervasive and engaging. It is an approach that allows moral values to permeate the entire school curricula and programmes, be they academic, administrative, social, or cultural. The teachers are encouraged to use all the opportunities that exist in the school curricular and non-curricular engagements as avenues for considering critical

values for proper integration. According to Campbell (2003), it is “by weaving ethical considerations into the discussion of teaching materials, styles, approaches, and other technical aspects [that] teacher educators are able to make ethical real, concrete, and readily applicable to all components of teaching practice” (p. 31).

The infusion approach is so pervasive that the academic curricula and the entire school life are used as moral educators (Lickona, 1991). The moral education so infused into the curricula and school life aims at molding character alongside the intellectual development of the students. DeRoche and Williams (2001) define this approach as that in which “character education is an integral part of school life, in which the school becomes a community of virtue fostering, modeling, teaching, expecting, celebrating, and practicing responsibility, hard work, honesty, and kindness” (p. 3). The approach wisely incorporates the parents and the community as partners in the education of the students (Jackson and Davis, 2000).

Infusion approach is nothing short of being holistic. It does not consider moral education as secondary to the intellectual development, but as part of what it means to be an educated person. Kevin Ryan (n.d.) understands this approach as being based on the belief that promotion of good morals in students will definitely contribute to the achievement of their academic goals.

In the Nigerian primary and secondary schools, moral education is usually taught as a separate course. We do not have the course in our tertiary institutions. In America, there are debates on whether or not to introduce a course on moral education in the Universities (Kiss and Euben, 2010). Both sides of the debate have sound reasons for their positions. This paper does not favour introduction of moral education as a separate course in our tertiary institutions, because it will not have the

intended effect on the lives of staff and students. Students may just study it to pass exams. And the staff who are not part of the course may not benefit from it. The infusion approach that is proposed in this paper is one that is integrated into the whole education system, such that everyone, staff and students, feels challenged and personally motivated to uphold moral values for the good of all.

### **Infusion moral education and Kirschenbaum's "Comprehensive Value Education"**

Infusion approach is akin to Howard Kirschenbaum's (1992) "comprehensive value education," the comprehensiveness of which has four basic features. The first is its content, by which it touches all issues related to values, from personal value choice to ethical and moral issues, affecting all aspects of the life of students that have to do with making choices between right and wrong, good or bad. Secondly, it is comprehensive in its methodology. It incorporates "inculcating and modelling values, as well as preparing young people for independence by stressing responsible decision making and other life skills" (p. 775). In other words, it is not all about leaving young people on their own to make choices of actions all by themselves, but also involves inculcating in them moral values, through good examples and teaching.

The third feature is its extensiveness. By this, Kirschenbaum means its encompassing attribute by which it takes place throughout the school and its activities, from classroom to laboratory, conference hall, sports arena, and indeed all aspects of the life of the school. It allows such values as human dignity, kindness, hard work, respect for human life, love, and community spirit, among others, to flourish in all aspects of school life and

activities. This way, gardeners, gatemens, typists, sports coaches, electricians, students, teachers, and other workers realize that, in their different areas of work, they need to promote good values for themselves and for the overall benefit of the school. The fourth and last feature of Kirschenbaum's comprehensive approach is its community orientation, embracing parents, civic leaders, security and community agencies, among others. According to Kirschenbaum, "To the extent that all these sources are consistent in their expectations, their modeling, their norms, and their rules, a comprehensive approach has a greater likelihood of succeeding in influencing community values and morals in youths and adults" (p. 775).

It is clear that comprehensive value education and infusion approach has similar goals and methodology. The only easily discernible difference is the higher level of emphasis laid by infusion approach on making the value deeply "incarnate," so to speak, in the life of the school. For clearer understanding of infusion approach, we shall discuss it below under the following headings: content of instruction; method of instruction; role of the teacher; relationship between school and students, and between school and religious bodies. These seem to correspond to the ways enunciated by Trow (1976), through which tertiary institutions may influence the morality of their students.

**a) Content of Instruction:** Infusion approach pays attention to the contents of the different courses, especially those whose primary focus is the study of human beings, real or imagined, and their behaviour in society, making sure that moral dimension of the contents of instruction forms part of the curriculum. This is especially the case with the curricula of language arts, social studies, and history (Ryan, d.). According to Ryan, great

narrative tales have a lot of moral lessons to pass to the students. It behooves teachers not to teach such narratives as containing mere historical information, but also to show students the kind of people admired and needed by the culture, and therefore to be emulated for optimum development and good of the society. While teaching students narratives of violence, war, hatred, bigotry, and betrayals, teachers should make students know how devastating such actions could be to the dignity of the human person and the sustenance of progressive society. Trow (1976) demonstrates how the study of literature could also be done in such a way that it bears on the moral lives of students, increasing their capacity to make moral choices, decisions, and judgements. Similarly, the study of mathematics and sciences could lead students into greater appreciation of the value of intellectual honesty (Ryan).

Contrary to ignorance that constrains moral choice, knowledge gained through education exposes students to different alternatives to issues. It also brings to light the consequences of different courses of action so as to enable them to make informed moral choices, as well as to pass moral judgements (Trow 1976, p. 22). This notwithstanding, education can also limit students' power of choice and moral decision-making depending on the type of content they are exposed to.

The level of consternation with which teachers and school authorities view and punish instances of plagiarism based on its moral implications, which implies attack on honesty and integrity, is an important avenue for promoting moral qualities in students. Students should be made to know how serious intellectual dishonesty could be. Other campus publications can also be utilized as avenues to teach the students the right moral codes to follow, dissuade them from secret cultism and encourage

them to strive for purposeful and meaningful engagement with the school and its programmes.

**b) Method of Instruction:** The method used by teachers to arrive at knowledge is very important in the moral development of students. As Trow (1976) notes, the process of basing conclusions on evidence entails a lot of discipline from researchers. Besides, the ability to search for and discuss negative evidence for better grasp of the subject matter, and not just concentrate on positive ones, has the advantage of inculcating in students the moral quality of tolerance of other people's views, and the need not to be too rigid with one's opinion, with possible effects of fanaticism and other extremities. The moral quality of tolerance is also promoted by the principle of interdisciplinary exchange that is now encouraged in our tertiary institutions, especially in the social sciences. This is encouraged by helping people to look at issues from different perspectives, knowing the complementarity of knowledge. Of course, the virtue of tolerance and academic collaboration that interdisciplinary exchange encourages, seems diametrically opposed to those propagated by the secret cults for whom the words of their leaders are unquestionable; and for whom non-members are always wrong.

Furthermore, the critical method used by researchers in many fields of study also helps students to develop rigorous intellectual discipline which runs counter to the indoctrination of secret cults.

**c) Teachers' Moral Influence:** By virtue of their profession, teachers are expected to embody moral qualities in their personal lives and in their relationship with students. Just like other significant adults that interact closely with students on daily basis, the behaviour of teachers affects the appreciation or

otherwise of virtuous life by the students (Weissbourd, 2003; Sanger and Fenstermacher, 2000). According to Weissbourd, to develop moral qualities in students, teachers must be ready to appreciate students' good qualities and their way of visualizing issues. They should also be humble enough to admit when they themselves err morally and learn from it. Part of their duty is to assist students to develop moral autonomy without denying the authority they have over them on moral issues.

The level of dedication or apathy with which teachers undertake their assignments would be a source of either encouragement or discouragement to students, as the case may be. A teacher who does not make efforts to bring freshness of perspective to bear on what he or she teaches may not encourage innovative and creative thinking in his or her students. His or her behaviour is capable of projecting to the students that life is all about routine and recycling of old stuffs.

The Latin adage has it that *nemo dat quod non habet* (no one gives what he or she has not). So, if teachers do not appreciate enough the ills associated with secret cults, the risks that these cults expose students to, and their devastating effects on their lives, and if teachers do not set good examples, it may be difficult for them to influence students positively. The students must see their teachers to be just, fair, time and duty conscious, non-violent, respectful of human life and dignity, punctual, lovely and loveable, hardworking, sincere, respectful, and humble, in order to be easily convinced on why they should not get involved in the dastardly activities of secret cults, which contradict these moral qualities. Conversely, if the secret cults are supported, covertly or overtly, by teachers who are either sympathetic to them, or who may have some affiliations with them, students may hardly get inspiration to avoid such groups.

Researches by Gilligan and Rozin et al., as cited in Weissbourd (2003) reveal the significance of emotional development in influencing growth of moral qualities. According to them, such moral qualities as caring and sense of responsibility can be weakened by emotions of shame, anger, and cynicism. Educators should note this and help to make students better through the manner of their associations with them. Where a teacher tries to frustrate a student, for example, because of minor issues, the student may develop low self-esteem, or be pushed into frequent tantrums and bitterness. It is likely for him or her to see involvement in the secret cult and violence as a way of letting out such feelings. On the other hand, a teacher who listens to students, proposes high moral ideals to them through his conduct, and opens opportunities for them to express themselves more confidently will definitely help in the development of moral qualities in them (Weissbourd).

**d) Relationship between school and students, school and religious bodies:** Every school has a culture of its own that distinguishes it from others. This comprises values it holds dear, its code of conduct, and folkways that influence and shape how staff and students behave and relate with one another. The specific culture of a given school may elude clear explication, but its influence could be massive, and could easily be felt once one enters a school. Freiberg (1988) likens it to the air we breathe which has much influence on us but is hardly noticed until it becomes foul.

School culture can either be individualistic or collaborative (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996), positive or toxic (Peterson and Deals 1998). While collaborative and positive school culture helps to foster team work, love, appreciation of one another,

innovative thinking, collegiality, and hope; individualistic and toxic culture breeds suspicion, hatred, mistrust, isolationism, conservativeness and rivalry among staff and students. The culture of individualism and negativity provides fertile ground for secret cultism. If, on the other hand, the environment is positive and collaborative, the development of moral qualities is enhanced, thus discouraging students from anti-social activities, like secret cultism.

School authority has a lot to do in the promotion of healthy school culture. The way she handles secret cults and interprets their activities will either promote their existence or make them understand that their activities are like a tumor in the life of the school. The school rules, regulations, code of conduct and official language should convey the message of zero tolerance to secret cultism, as well as extol and reward moral virtues of hardwork, honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, and lovely working environment among staff and students.

This section will not be well ended without touching the relationship between the school authority and religious bodies on campuses, because issues of morality touch peoples' most fundamental beliefs, where religion operates in their lives. Since, Nigerians are a deeply religious people, to divorce questions of morality from religion is to avoid confronting issues as they are. Religious bodies must know the significant place they occupy in guiding the students on questions of right and wrong, good and bad. The authorities in our tertiary institutions must therefore establish good rapport with religious bodies, especially those on campus, so that they could also help in molding the students in the right direction as far as morality is concerned. Their cordial relationship will make both see each other as partners in progress,

who should work together for better moral standards among staff and students.

The fear of God instilled in the students, the development of their consciences, the promotion of greater love for one another, respect for human dignity and other values promoted by the different religions will help to dissuade students from joining secret cults that have totally different values and orientations. Since religion can also be manipulated by people to instigate violence, there is also the need to monitor the activities of the different religious bodies on campus to avoid their aiding of breakdown of law and order, by making students inclined to violence and war in the name of fighting for God.

### **Conclusion**

The tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot experience the tranquility, serenity, and peace, necessary for effective study and research, if they do not take the question of eradicating secret cultism very seriously. Many students live in constant fear of molestation, abuse, and torture at the hands of the cultists. The uncanny sense of commitment and unflinching loyalty by members to the cause of the cults make them glue together in times of crisis and sometimes become difficult to identify and penetrate. If only our tertiary institutions could make virtuous life penetrate the school culture through infusion approach to moral education, which touches all aspects of the life of the school, this ugly development may continue to appear very difficult to address. All hands must be on deck. To complement the efforts of the family and the State to discourage involvement in the secret cults, staff, students, and school management, in collaboration with religious bodies must be unreservedly committed to the task of making moral qualities the hallmark of intellectual

achievement in schools. Eradication of cultism in our tertiary institutions should be seen as a joint responsibility of all, if we want these institutions to become citadels of learning and character formation that they are meant to be.

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