



## **Curbing students' undesirable behaviours in secondary schools in Nigeria: The school administration/management role**

**Okanezi Bright<sup>1</sup>, Vareba Giobari Patrick<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

The paper focused on secondary school students' undesirable behaviour in Nigeria: The school administration and management role. It is a truism that the society established schools for the impartation of knowledge, skills and inculcation of good morals (desirable behaviours). Ordinarily, the school as a miniature of society is expected to groom the students in desirable behaviours such as honesty, obedience, good morals, kindness, peacefulness etc. Unfortunately, rather than good morals, the students are involved in almost all forms of undesirable behaviours such as cultism, truancy, indecent dressing, sexual harassment, examination malpractice, rape, disobedience etc. This situation is a source of worry to the society. It was found that some school principals who by virtue of their position as head of the school administration or management are ineffective. Most of them lack the administrative and managerial competence essential in their roles. Most of the principals are not playing their roles of planning, organizing, coordinating, integrating and directing the human and material resources of the school optimally. It was however recommended among other things that the school management (principals) should be more professional in their functions or roles; the school management should articulate rules and regulations for students as well as sanctions for transgressors; introduce meaningful extra-curricular activities to occupy the students; assign teachers on duty to oversee students' activities; involve law enforcement agents and community vigilante in the fight against undesirable behaviours.

**Keywords:** undesirable behaviours, school management and school administration, principal

### **Introduction**

Every human setting has a culture which guides the conduct of its members. Such culture could be a set of norms, values, beliefs and generally accepted ways of life which members of the society are expected to adhere to. Members of society whose behaviours and attitudes are in line with the above-accepted ways of life are said to portray desirable behaviours. Conversely, characteristics or attributes exhibited by members of the society that do not conform to the accepted ways of life of the society are referred to as undesirable behaviours. Deviance is synonymous with undesirable behaviour. Deviance signifies non-compliance to existing rules and regulations guiding the conduct of group members. It means going against the general set of rules and accepted direction (Okeke, 2016) <sup>[10]</sup>. Meanwhile schools were established to impart knowledge, skills, morals and desirable behaviours generally. For this singular reason, parents invest huge chunk of their scarce resources in the education of their children. It is rather unfortunate that the situation in some secondary schools seems that the peoples' hope has been dashed. There is prevalence of undesirable behaviours among secondary school students. To buttress the above, the Acting Registrar and Chief Executive of National Examination Council (NECO), Abubakar Gana as reported by Oweh and Nnadozie (2019) <sup>[11]</sup> remarked that

*The number of candidates involved in various forms of malpractice in 2019 increased with 40, 630 as against 20, 181 cases recorded in 2018. Gana explained that the reason for the increase in detection of malpractice was not in unconnected*

*with the deployment of biometric verification devices during 2019 SSCE exercise (P.32).*

The excerpt above shows only one aspect of the undesirable behaviours which is examination malpractice and the extent to which the dimension has gone. Apart from the above, secondary school students indulge in several other undesirable behaviours such as involvement in cultism, indecent dressing, arrogance, extra-marital affairs, sexual harassment, fighting, stealing, lying, truancy, disobedience, disrespectfulness etc. These undesirable behaviours affect not only the school but also the society at large.

Invariably, the society looks up to the school to salvage the situation because even the societal women are being raped by these youngsters and teenagers who are either still in secondary schools or dropouts. Accordingly, it is expected that these negative attitudes be nipped in the bud. The onus is on the school management to checkmate these undesirable behaviours among secondary school students. Secondary education has certain objectives outlined for it to achieve. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), the objectives of Junior Secondary Education are to:

- a. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and educational advancement.
- b. Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and the performance of their civic responsibilities.
- c. Inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking and who appreciate the dignity of labour; and

- d. Inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic and socio-economic background (P.12)

The school management ought to remain resolute in achieving the above-stated objectives. The school management refers to the school principal as the arrowhead and the vice principals (administration and academics). The principal is seen as the school manager while the vice principals are his assistants. To achieve the goals of the school, which are akin to eliminating undesirable behaviours the principal must demonstrate managerial and administrative competence and skills. Sergiovanni *et al.* (as cited in Peretomode 2012:6) <sup>[12]</sup> defines administration as “the process of working with and through others to efficiently accomplish organizational goals. Administration is also the careful and systematic arrangements and use of resources (human, material and financial), situations and opportunities for the achievement of the specific objectives of a given organization (Nwankwo, 1987) <sup>[8]</sup>. Furthermore, Peretomode (2012) <sup>[12]</sup> opines that administration is

*Concerned with the performance of executive duties; the carrying out of plans, policies or decisions in order to fulfil a purpose. It involves controlling the efforts and coordinating the employees in the day-to-day running of an organization to achieve set goals (P.7).*

Similar to the definition above, Peretomode (2012: 7) <sup>[12]</sup> views management as “a process concerned with the formulation of strategies, plans, policies and programmes with a view of achieving set organizational goals”. Considering the two concepts, “administration” and “management” which are central in leadership, one finds that there are myriads of similarities and both are sine qua non. For somebody to be appointed a principal, he ought to have been tested and proven to possess administrative and managerial competence and skills. Whereas each school in Nigeria has its management and administration the society remains flabbergasted that undesirable behaviours are holding sway among secondary school students. The thrust of this paper, therefore, is to explore the term undesirable behaviours, factors that can lead to undesirable behaviours among students; and the school administration, management role in curbing undesirable students’ behaviour in Nigeria.

### Undesirable behaviours

Undesirable behaviors are attitudes, traits or characteristics exhibited by individuals that go against the norm or laid down rules of a particular place or organization. Undesirable behaviors are attributes that are not wanted in the society. The Collins dictionary defines undesirables as “people who a particular government considers to be dangerous or a threat to the society and therefore wants to get rid of. From this definition, undesirable behaviours are therefore harmful behaviors that create an unpleasant, hostile or even threatening environment.

In Nigeria, there seems to be an increase in unpleasant behaviors among students and even perpetrated in the classrooms. These undesirable behaviours can impede the teaching and learning process if not properly checked. These undesirable behaviours exhibited by students most times is

not a function of the socio-economic background of the students. According to Winzer (2002) <sup>[14]</sup>, “behavioural disorders in children occur among the rich, the poor, the gifted, the intellectual, disabled and members of all racial and ethnic groups”. Undesirable behaviour according to Wantanabe (2008) is any “behaviour that violates school rules such as physical fighting, skipping classes, poor class performance and poor class or school attendance”. These behaviours do not conform to the rules and regulation of the school.

The school is an effective and primary agent of socialization. It is a place where teaching and learning take place. The school is designed to educate individuals. According to Harden (2001) <sup>[6]</sup>, “the school is an organization that is set up to formally educate individuals”. The main aim of the school as an organization is to educate and transform individuals. The school has a structure and a function. The school also has its own culture and laid down rules and regulations that both the taught and the teachers are to obey. The school is subject-oriented, age oriented, attendance mandatory, pupil/student and teacher involved. Without these, the school cannot operate as a school. The school is a mini-society in the large society, it represents the large society, as much as the society influences the school, the school also influence the society and so, the school transmits the cultures of the larger society to students because the students are part of the large society and they go back to the larger society from the school. The school apart from teaching students, it also transmits culture and brings about innovation and change.

According to Okeke (2002) <sup>[9]</sup>, the school is formally designed consciously to transmit societal culture from one generation to another.” It does this through the curriculum of the school such as in the teaching of trades and crafts, teaching students the National Flag and anthem, this transmits the Nigerian culture to students. The school also implements change in the society, it has the capacity to welcome change, implement change and refute bad changes in the society. The school is an important institution in the society.

### Factors that can lead to Undesirable Behaviour

Undesirable behaviours have been explained as traits or characteristics that are unpleasant and can result in a hostile and uncomfortable environment. In the school environment, there are different forms of unpleasant behaviours such as fighting, stealing, truancy, bullying, rape, cultism, assault, violent demonstration, destruction of school properties, among others. These behaviours are however the results of some factors, which instigates and increases the level of student’s behavioral disorder. Some of these factors include the population of students, the curriculum, parental neglect, peer influence, poor student’s monitoring and nonexistence of disciplinary measures.

**1. Population:** The number of students in the class increase the level of students engaging in undesirable behaviours. According to Okeke (2016) <sup>[10]</sup> “overcrowding is when the number of people in the house is more than the rooms in the house.” Using this definition, we can say that an overcrowded classroom is one which the number of students in the class is more than the chairs in the classroom. In most public schools in Nigeria, the classrooms have a small number of chairs, some students have to share seats, others sit on

the floor, while others stand behind the class for lessons. Consequent upon the above, some students skip classes, others do not bother getting to the school at all, while some others stay at the rear of the classroom to disturb others.

2. **The curriculum:** The curriculum is a package that contains all the activities that the students will go through. If learners are exposed to irrelevant school curriculum, it will increase their tendencies to engage in unpleasant behaviour. When the curriculum contents do not contain relevant items that will be of interest to the students, the students will begin to show some bad attitude towards classes or the teachers, some will refuse to attend classes or become rude to the teachers.
3. **Poor parental upbringing:** Students whose parents are nonchalant about their well-being in school, often engage in behaviours that are un-seemingly. Some of these students who are being neglected by their parents do not respect elders, teachers or do not obey the school rules or regulations.
4. **Poor teachers monitoring:** The school and teachers in the school act as *'loco parentis'* in the school, they serve as guides to the students and so, they monitor the students. When students are left unattended to or unmonitored by teachers, they begin to engage in their personal or group interest and these groups discussion or activities may not be in tandem with the aim of the school. Most times, students form gangs and bad cliques because they have been left unattended to. In most public schools, some teachers prefer to engage in their personal businesses or sit in the staff room discussing and since students know that they are not being monitored, they begin to engage in other activities regarded as undesirable behaviours.
5. **Non-existence of disciplinary measures:** In a situation where disciplinary measures are inadequate or not provided, then students can freely engage in undesirable behaviours. Schools that do not have a laid down punishment for every wrong behaviour may continue character among students in the school.

### Curbing undesirable behaviour of secondary school students in Nigeria: The School Administration/Management Role

Management according to Hornby (2000:902)<sup>[7]</sup> is "the act or skill of dealing with people or situations in a successful way". The management of any organization is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring violent free atmosphere and stability for the achievement of set goals. Undesirable behaviours can affect school activities negatively. This ultimately can hamper the achievement of set goals of the school. Undesirable behaviours like fighting, truancy, involvement in cultism, rape, sexual harassment, indecent dressing, arrogance, disobedience to constituted authorities, drug abuse, examination malpractice, hooliganism etc. are becoming the order of the day in secondary schools. In support of above with regards to arrogance, fighting and having extra-marital affairs, while one is yet a teenager in secondary school, Akingboye and Akinfenwa (2018)<sup>[2]</sup> reported that

*A 24-year-old youth identified as Saliu Ladayo allegedly murdered his girlfriend, confidence Nwanma at Oshinle Quarters in Akure, after calling*

*him lazy. The late Nwana, a 19-year-old lass was writing her senior secondary school Certificate Examination. The State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Femi Joseph confirmed the report. Mr. Joseph however, added that the suspect confessed that he stabbed his girlfriend because she cursed him that he will not make it in life and he had not made it; and also, that things had not been going well for him and this infuriated him to take a knife and stab her (P. 12).*

The above excerpt shows that students indulge in immoral act at such an age. Moreover, the student talks vulgarly. This indicates that the affective domain of the students is not well nurtured. This is with respect to Bloom's taxonomy of learning. The school management has fallen short of that role of all-round development of the child. A situation where cultism exists in primary and post-primary schools signals danger to the society. Most of the cult involvement of students in tertiary institutions and in communities are post-primary school students who were not checkmated when they were in school. Some dropped out and practiced cultism in their communities while those that proceeded into tertiary institutions became perpetrators of such reprehensible acts. Furthermore, on undesirable behaviours some schoolgirls in Lagos told their ordeal while being forcibly initiated into cultism by cult members who were their schoolmates. Making further details on this Ayinla (2018)<sup>[3]</sup> reports that

*One of the victims who identified herself simply as Alaka, said that one of the cult boys, Dare took her and her friend Suliat, to join his group. Dare took me away from school with gun and when we got to the place at Agarawu, I was asked to kneel down by seven boys. They took me away through tricycle. Dare and Wakilu covered my eyes with black handkerchief. They poured something on my body, raped and initiated me. Dare slapped me three times and said I have been initiated (P. 8)*

This excerpt reveals that some secondary school students are involved in secret cults and use it to cause mayhem on fellow students as well as the society at large. If the children (secondary school students) are not controlled then the future would look bleak for not only the children but their families as well as the society in general.

A little ponder over the situation, one may wonder whether school management exists at all. And if it does, what role has it been playing to stop the menace? In fact, it does seem that those at the helm of affairs of secondary schools lack the technical know-how or the managerial acumen to administer the resources at their disposal. This view stems from the fact that the rate of crimes or undesirable behaviours among students in secondary schools is high yet the schools have managers (the principal, vice principals Administration and Academic). Besides, there are auxiliary managers which include Year Heads, Form Masters, Heads of Department, Teachers on Duty and teachers in general). It is factual that the onus of the management lies squarely on the principal because he is the chief executive officer of the school hence, he receives praises if the school achieves its goals and he is blamed if failure is recorded. The bottom line is that generally there is the prevalence of undesirable

behaviour among secondary school students and the school principal (management) is to be blamed for inefficiency. In support of the foregoing, Berezi (2017) <sup>[4]</sup> was particularly apt in her comment thus

*In the past, educational leaders were men of distinction, paragons of virtue, who rose in the ranks through hard work, proven competence and distilled wisdom. In those days, they were not only technical experts in the art of teaching and school administration but also are moulders of character to whom parents could entrust their children. Today leadership positions are available to men and women with connection, who hold down jobs for which they are ill-equipped and ill-prepared (Pp. 225).*

The above ineffectiveness and inefficiency on the part of the school principals could be attributed to their ignorance of the process of management. Many think that when once a person is made a school principal, he has been licenced to enrich himself financially by charging money as admission fee, examination fees for both internal and external examinations as well as several illegal charges. These becloud their thinking and as such make them lose focus. These thinking's and activities of the principals are contrary to the roles originally set out for them.

The actual role and process of management are compressed in view of Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (2000) <sup>[1]</sup> as they stated thus the process of management has two important attributes. Management is in one sense an economic resource that comprises the technical functions connected with administering other resources. These include planning, organizing and integrating a complex division of labour and directing the activities that occur within an enterprise. Management is secondly a structure of control, which ensures the compliance of subordinates and the direction of their activities along the lines laid down from above (P.206-207).

Going by the excerpt above, technical functions connected with administering other resources which include planning, organizing, integrating and directing would be analyzed one after the other.

Planning is a major function of management and administration. Plan is a set of things to do in order to achieve something especially one that has been considered in detail in advance. On noticing that students are portraying undesirable behaviours, the management ought to make plans on how to curb it. The principal of the school can decide to expel any student who is identified as the culprit. He can also plan with his vice principals on how to handle such situation since it is said that two good heads are better than one.

Accordingly, the principal and his vice can form a group of people with a shared aim thus plan the school activities in an efficient way. This could include plans that would reduce students' chances of exhibiting undesirable behaviours. If students' activities are organized from rising bell (5:30 am) to lights out period (9:00 pm) the chances of undesirable behaviour would be curbed.

More so, the management has to do work of integrating the various personnel into the situation management. In this case the parents through the Parents Teachers Association, the students (Prefects), the teachers, the law enforcement

agents, the school host community Chiefs, Community Development Committees (CDC) as well as the school host community vigilante. The above personnel can work synergistically to achieve the desired result. Lastly, the management would be directing the various personnel's and entities. The teachers can be organized to be on duty all through the day. The school management can control all the resources to curb undesirable behaviors among students.

### Conclusion

Schools are established to impart knowledge and skills as well as the inculcation of good morals (desirable behaviours). Apparently, students in secondary schools portray undesirable behaviours which are detrimental to both the school and the society at large. This showcases inefficiency on the part of the secondary school managers (principals), especially in most Nigerian public schools. Therefore, if undesirable behaviour among students must be curbed, the school management must play the role of planning, organizing, coordinating, integrating and directing optimally the gamut of human resources in the school enterprise.

### Recommendations

In view of the foregoing findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made thus

1. The school management should be more focused on their duties.
2. The school principals should be technical in their functions by engaging in planning organizing, coordinating and directing school human resources.
3. The school management should articulate rules and regulations for students with its attendant sanctions for transgressors.
4. It is important to introduce meaningful extra-curricular activities for students since it is said that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop"
5. Meeting of Parents Teachers Association should be summoned to make certain crucial decisions.
6. Teachers should be assigned to duties of overseeing what the students are doing and each teacher should submit a report at the end of the day or week as the case may be.
7. Law enforcement agents, as well as community vigilante, should be integrated into the fight against undesirable behaviours.
8. The school management should not admit students beyond the capacity of the school resources.

### References

1. Abercrombie N, Hill S, Turner BS. The penguin dictionary of sociology (4<sup>th</sup> ed). London: Penguin Books, 2000.
2. Akingboye O, Akinfenwa G. Youth murders girlfriend for calling him lazy. The Guardian. 2018; 34(14383):12.
3. Ayinla M. Initiation: Cultists gang-raped us for days-Schoolgirls. New Telegraph. 2018; 4(1462):8.
4. Berezi II. Management strategies for reduction of fraudulent conducts of secondary school administration of Yenagoa Education Zone in Bayelsa State. Niger Delta Journal of Education. 2017; 9(1&2):224-230.
5. Federal Republic of Nigeria National policy on education (6<sup>th</sup> ed). Abuja: Nigerian Educational

- Research & Development Council, 2014.
6. Harden RM. AMEE Guide No. 21: Curriculum mapping: A tool for transparent and authentic teaching and learning; *Medical Teacher*. 2001; 23:2.
  7. Hornby AS. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
  8. Nwankwo JI. School administration and human learning in school. In E. E. Ezewu (ed.) *Social psychological factors of human learning in school*. Onitsha: Leadway Books, 1987.
  9. Okeke EC. *Sociology of education: Concepts and applications*. Owerri Springfield Publishers, 2002.
  10. Okeke EC. *Education and society*. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers, 2016.
  11. Oweh I, Nnadozie C. 71% candidates score five credits as NECO release SSCE results: Blacklists 18 supervisors for aiding malpractices. *Daily Independent*. 2019; 17(1281):32.
  12. Peretomode CF. *Theories of management: Implications for educational administration*. Benin City: Justice Jeco Printing & Publishing Global, 2012.
  13. Watanabe N. Effects deviance on academic performance. Retrieved on, 2019 from, 2008. <http://soar.wichita.edu/bitstream/handle/10057/2055/t08038.pdf>.
  14. Winzer M. *Children with exceptionalities in Canadian classroom*. Ontario: Pearson Education Canada Inc, 2002.