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Polytechnic Education as a Strategy for Crime Prevention

Thomas Imoudu Gomment

Department of Sociology,

Faculty of Social Sciences, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

E-mail: imoudugomment@gmail.com

Abstract

Knowledge is a cherished value that every society is not expected to trivialize. In the Bible, it was stated that people perish for lack of knowledge; in Islam, Prophet Muhammad instructed adherents to go in search of knowledge irrespective of the distance; in academics, if you don't publish, you perish; in a common parlance, knowledge is power. One of the ways to acquire knowledge is through polytechnic education. There is a common parlance that prevention is better than cure. It is cheaper and safer to prevent crime than controlling, treating, and curing it. The paper interrogated the nexus between polytechnic education and crime prevention. The paper used secondary source of data and Frustration/Aggression theory as the theoretical framework. The study found that there are various strategies and types of crime prevention. These include: crime prevention through social development, crime prevention through environmental design, crime prevention through the role of the victim, punitive crime prevention, corrective crime prevention, and mechanical crime prevention. How does polytechnic as a citadel of learning constitute a strategy for crime prevention? The answer is not farfetched. Of all strategies and types of crime prevention, it is crime prevention through social development and corrective crime prevention that make polytechnic education a strategy for crime prevention. These two strategies or types of crime prevention advocated for the alleviation of causes of crime as the only sure way of preventing crime. They identified poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy as major causes of crime, and that the only way to prevent crime is to put up measures to reduce poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. These are some of the major opportunities that polytechnic education provides as demonstrated in the study. The paper recommends that polytechnic education should be prioritized in order to prevent or reduce crime.

Keywords: Polytechnic education; Crime Prevention: Strategies; Frustration/aggression; Development.

Introduction

The word, 'Polytechnic', originated from the Greek word, 'polytechnos', which means skilled in many arts, and a French word, 'polytechnique', meaning pertaining to many (technical) subjects. The aim of establishing Polytechnics in Nigeria is to train technologists, technicians, and management skills in courses leading to the awards of

Certificates, ND, HND and Advanced Professional Diploma which are relevant to the needs, aspirations and the development of the nation's diverse economy and industries (Jahun, 2017). A polytechnic is a tertiary institution that focuses on hands-on experience and technology-related courses. According to Kadiri and Oluwatoyin (2016), polytechnics are tertiary institutions where technology is taught and the first time polytechnic education was experienced in life was in Britain in the year, 1865 when Quinn Hugg began a local effort at training artisans. A building in Regent Street later grew into a polytechnic which serves as an educational institution providing instructions on technical subjects.

Technical education started in Nigeria when the colonialists realized the deficiency in technical and vocational manpower to process the raw material at a cheaper rate. Attempt at introducing technical education in Nigeria resulted in the establishment of the first technical institution, Hope Wadell Institute, Calabar in 1895 by Christian Mission while Yaba College of Technology was the first tertiary and technological institution established in 1932 (Kadiri and Oluwatoyin, 2006). National Policy on Education (1981 cited by Ede 1997:16) defines technical education as "that aspect of education which leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge". There are five types of technical education institutions outside the universities. These include pre-vocational and vocational schools at post primary level, the technical colleges, the polytechnics and colleges of education at the post-secondary level. It is the quest for technological advancement and industrial revolution of certain sectors such as agriculture in Nigeria, just like other nations in the world that led to the establishment of polytechnics. Some scholars have observed that developed countries have been able to apply modern technologies in industry and agriculture to an extent that they have become self-sufficient in food, and other social amenities and possess surplus for export. Polytechnics in Nigeria are under the purview of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The Board, NBTE, established by Law (National Board for Technical Education Act 9 of 1977), approves the setting up of each polytechnic, regulates the courses, and also sets the minimum standard on admission, teaching and infrastructure.

National Policy on Education (1981 in Ede, 1997:16) put the aims of technical education which polytechnics offer as follows:

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- 1 To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades.
- 2 To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- 3 To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- 4 To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
- 5 To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self reliant.
- 6 To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to ask question on what technology means. Technology is the application of skills and knowledge on machine, products, processes or design towards the manufacturing of goods and services. Nigeria, in an attempt to increase technological development and socio-economic transformation now, has established so many polytechnics.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on Frustration Aggression theory. The theory propounded by John Dollard, and reviewed by Berkowitz and Aubrey, seems to have a very sound explanatory relevance to crime prevention strategy in Nigeria. According to the theory, when an individual or a group is deprived or blocked from attaining a particular goal, there is every tendency of becoming frustrated which could lead to aggression. Consequently, the aggression can be expressed in a criminal way inform of transfer of aggression (crime). Remarking from the frustration-aggression point of view, Akor and Audu (2016) explained that frustration causes aggression but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. According to Ugwuoke (2015), the activities of criminals can be explained as the outpouring of accumulated

frustration and grievances motivated by unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. To prevent crime, it is pertinent to initiate policies that can adequately address the issue of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. If sound policies are made and implemented on polytechnic education, it can reduce the problems of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy which are three of the potential causes of crime in Nigeria. Polytechnic education as a strategy for crime prevention is incubated at the bowels of crime prevention through social development and corrective crime prevention as we shall see later in this piece. According to Dambazau (2007), crime can be avoided if the conditions under which crime is thought to flourish are alleviated.

Methodology

The paper, as a theoretical study, made use of secondary source of data collection. Relevant data were extracted from reports, textbooks, academic journals, magazines, and from other secondary sources such as the internet and library. The data collected were content analyzed.

Importance of Polytechnic Education

Polytechnics are established to train and produce the technical man power necessary for the execution of nation's development plans, goals and strategies. Polytechnic students, at a stage, are expected to go for industrial attachment to enable them acquire requisites on-the-job practical experience which prepares them for Higher National Diploma (HND) programme. For Nigeria to be able to compete with other technologically developed countries, the development of polytechnic education is not negotiable. The polytechnic education is important because it emphasizes practice-based learning and the acquisition of certain life skills.

In line with the aforementioned, polytechnics in Nigeria, all other things being equal, can or should provide the technical know-how required to take the country to a higher economic pedestal. To do this, government's emphasis on paper certification instead of technical education, that polytechnics offer should give way to a more impactful form of education in line with the earlier stated objectives of technical education. Cognizance

should be taken of the policy of the Federal Government as it affects the encouragement given to polytechnic education.

If policy on technical skills is adopted, the polytechnic education would help in providing man power to the country's industries and firms and consequently reducing dependence on foreign expertise for industrial development. The money paid in hard currency to engage the services of foreign expatriate would have been saved and the proper use of that money can propel development.

If the technical skills that polytechnics offer are applied to manufacturing activities, Nigeria would move away from being a producer of primary goods to producer of secondary goods in the international division of labour. This will increase the foreign exchange earnings that will make our local currency appreciate which will make our economy strong and compete favourably with other strong economies of the world. By extension, Nigeria will be experiencing balance of payment surplus as against the deficit balance of payment that has been the bane of Nigerian development.

If the technical education or polytechnic knowledge is applied to agriculture, Nigeria will engage in import substitution and export promotion which are strong strategies of African development that will elicit favourable terms of trade and discourage over-dependence on foreign goods. The technical skills acquired from polytechnics can be applied to diversify the economy because of the technicalities involved.

Sustainable development is what Nigeria needs now. This is a brand of development that does not affect the environment adversely. Most of the technologies we use today are imported which can affect and has affected our development negatively. The need to encourage indigenous technology that is compatible with our environment is germane to sustainable development. The technical skills needed to bring about improved indigenous technology can be provided by polytechnic education if good policies are formulated and implemented.

Polytechnic education can equally boost the manufacturing sector of our economy. If polytechnic education with its technical outlook is encouraged and supported, there is the

likelihood that Nigeria, instead of exporting crude oil, will be exporting processed oil and there will be no need to import fuel. Instead of exporting timber, Nigeria will be exporting upholsteries. Instead of exporting groundnut, we will be exporting groundnut oil. Instead of exporting cotton, we will be exporting textiles and clothing like Morocco, England, Senegal and Holland. Instead of exporting hides and skin, we will be exporting leather shoes, bags and belt. Instead of exporting cocoa and coffee, we will be exporting beverages.

Development is desired by many nations including Nigeria. Ake (1981) has identified some of the strategies for development in Africa to include increase and diversification of export commodities, import substitution, export promotion, the unified approach, integrated rural development and regional cooperation among others. In all these, technical man power from polytechnics and other colleges and universities of technology are indispensable for the execution of these strategies for development. In tandem with the above, Ede (1997) observed that the establishment of polytechnics and universities of technology and agriculture across the country are also pointers to the importance of technical education of which vocational education is the solid foundation.

Polytechnic education, if it is fully supported and well-managed, will be very functional and impactful on the society. Polytechnic education with the provision of technical skills and knowledge can or should produce employers of labour unlike non-technical education that can only produce labour. The impression is that rather than waiting for what your society can do for you, with technical education, one will concentrate on what one can do to his country. Nigeria is bedeviled with high rate of unemployment which is one of the factors that account for its underdevelopment. If favourable and workable policies are made and implemented, Nigeria will have more employers of labour that can ease the problem of unemployment in the country. This can reduce the level of poverty and inequality in Nigeria which are some of the obstacles to Nigeria's development.

Non-technical education can only give one fish while technical education teaches one how to catch fish. In a more specific term, non-technical education is quantitative while technical education is qualitative. It is the best for Nigeria as a developing nation. While non-technical education can benefit the possessor of that certificate, technical education

can benefit generations. Emphasis should be placed on how institutions of higher learning will turn out graduates that will be able to earn decent living and contribute meaningfully to the society. It is only technical education which the polytechnic offers that can make Nigeria a vibrant, strong and self-reliant nation.

Polytechnic Education as a Crime Prevention Strategy

Crime prevention are efforts made by individuals, groups, government and other agencies in order to reduce or avoid criminal events from taking place. It is an attempt at using different means to make criminal behavior unattractive and law-abiding behavior attractive. It is an attempt at negatively sanctioning violators of the criminal law, removal or reduction of factors that can push people into crime, as well as making the environment hostile or allergic to crime. Dambazau (2007:234-235) defined crime prevention as a pattern of attitudes and behaviours directed both at reducing the threat of crime and enhancing the sense of safety and security to positively influence the quality of life and to develop environments where crime cannot flourish. He went further to define it as the anticipation, recognition, and appraisal of a crime risk and the initiation of some actions to remove or reduce it. According to Ugwuoke (2015), crime prevention is cheaper, more beneficial to society and indeed more desirable than crime fighting. Agbola in Ugwuoke (2015:213-223) has identified three strategies of crime prevention which include: crime prevention through social development, crime prevention through environmental design, and crime prevention through the role of victims.

Crime prevention through social development. This is a relatively new approach to crime prevention, pioneered by sociologists and victimologists. This approach relies on the premise that there is a well established body of research that can identify factors contributory to crime. It is the effects of these contributing factors that crime prevention through social development strives to alleviate. With reference to Agbola, Ugwuoke highlighted the efforts to this approach to include initiatives to reduce poverty, and to increase the availability of proper housing, employment, education and adequate recreational facilities. Proponents of this approach are of the opinion that the less

privileged and vulnerable groups are disadvantaged in the scheme of things. Reactionary to the social injustice experienced by the disadvantaged, they resort to crime in order to correct societal imbalances. It is believed that like virus or bacteria, when the crime parasites in the social system is eliminated or alleviated, crime can be prevented or reduced. It is against this backdrop that Ugwuoke inferred that the only measure that can reasonably prevent or reduce the volume of crime in Nigeria is to initiate and enforce flawless social policies that would address the problems of; lack of educational opportunities, unemployment, social injustice, poverty and social inequality.

Crime prevention through environmental design. The second strategy of crime prevention identified by Agbola is crime prevention through environmental design. This involves the manipulation of the physical environment in order to deter crime. This approach comprises of territorial behavior strategy, surveillance, electronic monitoring, lightning, landscaping, and scare tactics. It is believed that when an environment is fortified or protected by any or a combination of these sub-types of crime prevention through environmental design, criminals will keep their distance and crime can either be prevented or reduced.

Crime prevention through the role of the victim. The third strategy is crime prevention through the role of the victim. Some notable criminologists such as Mendelsohn, one of the founding fathers of victimology, have contended that a large proportion of criminal deed is necessitated by the behavior of victims themselves. According to Ugwuoke (2015), the emphasis is on the role of victims in increasing the probability of being victimized. From this viewpoint, it is believed that the avoidance of crime-inviting behaviours like; indecent dressing, careless talk, display of wealth in public places, revelation of secrets and polite insults, among others, can help in preventing or reducing crime victimization.

Similarly, Dambazau (2007:236-237) has identified three types of crime prevention. These types of crime prevention which are briefly summarized below include;

Punitive crime prevention. This is an attempt by law enforcement agency to forestall crime through the threat of apprehension and punishment. Enactment of tougher laws and

full enforcement of same can deter potential criminals from going into crime. It is believed that the fear of punishment can prevent people from committing crime.

Corrective crime prevention. The basic premise of corrective crime prevention is that criminal behavior is caused by various conditions such as poor housing, poverty, lack of education, family problems, and drug or alcohol addiction. From this point of view, crime can be avoided if the conditions under which crime is thought to flourish are alleviated. For instance, if unemployment and inequality are identified as the causes of crime, it then follows that provision of jobs and reduction of inequality is capable of preventing crime in the society concerned.

Mechanical crime prevention. This involves the need for law enforcement, other government agencies, and the community, to initiate an organized process for reducing or removing the opportunity for crime through data collection and analysis; the accurate identification of problems by a number of factors; development of crime control objectives and strategies; and implementation of the strategies (Dambazau, 2007). This is public/private partnership strategy of crime prevention and control.

The nexus between polytechnic education and crime prevention is captured in the strategies and typologies of crime prevention at the levels of social development and corrective crime prevention put forward by Agbola and Dambazau respectively. There is congruence of ideas on the fact that crime can be prevented or reduced if the perceived causes of crime are alleviated. This is possible through the initiation of appropriate and workable policies and programmes that are capable of eliminating, preventing or reducing the causative agents of crime in our society.

Moreso, poverty, unemployment, lack of education are among other causes of crime identified in both crime prevention strategy through social development and corrective crime prevention. As stated before now, polytechnic education, if sound policies are made and implemented, can provide employment, reduce poverty and provide educational opportunities. This is in tandem with the findings of a study conducted by Bukar and Timothy (2013) that Ramat Polytechnic graduates in Nigeria engaged in entrepreneurship businesses in technical, vocational and other areas. These have been captured in the aims

of technical education in previous section. To achieve this, polytechnic education should be given the attention it deserves by individuals, groups, organizations, and governments at all levels in order to provide job and educational opportunities and to reduce the level of poverty. This will definitely prevent crime using our social development and corrective measures as points of departure.

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