

ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF CORPS-MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND MORAL RECTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study tries to assess the influence of corps members' participation on the academic performance and moral rectitude of secondary school students in Anambra state. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Simple random sampling was used to select one thousand and seventy one (1071) respondents. The instrument for data collection was carefully organized questionnaire. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts to validate the instrument. The researchers adopted a test retest method of reliability to ascertain the degree of consistency of test results obtained from the instrument. The data was analyzed using statistical mean. The respondents agreed that even though some corps members are competent and good, a respectable number of them have a lot of bad influence on these students kept in their care. It was also discovered that this is so because they do not work under supervision as supposed. This in turn was discovered to be the aftermath of lack of enough qualified teachers in the system. It was recommended among other things that the government should employ more teachers to cover the gaps in our secondary schools and that the corps members should work under supervision and only those that read education should be allowed to teach in our schools. However, when one is found wanting, he or she should be withdrawn from the classroom.

Keywords: Corp members, academic performance, moral rectitude,

Introduction

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is an organization set up by the Nigerian government to involve the country's graduates in the development of the country. Since 1973 graduates of universities and later polytechnics have been required to take part in the National Youth Service Corps program for one year. This is known as national service year.

"Corp" members are dispatched throughout the thirty six (36) states of the country which are not their state of origin. They are expected to mix with people of other tribes, social and family backgrounds, to learn the culture of the indigenes in the places they are posted to. This action is aimed at bringing about unity in the country and to help youths appreciate other ethnic groups. There is an "orientation" period of approximately three weeks spent in a military controlled boot "camp" away from family and friends. There is also a "passing out ceremony" at the end of the year and primary assignment followed by one month of vacation.

Completing the service year entitles one to employment. During the service year, Corps members have the opportunity of learning the cultures of other people an opportunity many Nigerians never get in their lifetime. The program has also helped in creating entry-level jobs for many Nigerian youth.

The objectives of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme are clearly spelt out in Decree No.51 of 16th June 1993 as follows: To inculcate discipline in Nigerian youths by instilling in them a tradition of industry at work, and of patriotic and loyal service to Nigeria in any situation they may find themselves; To raise the moral tone of the Nigerian youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about higher ideals of national achievement, social and cultural improvement. To develop in the Nigerian youths the attitudes of mind, acquired through shared experience and suitable training which will make them more amenable to mobilisation in the national interest. To enable Nigerian youths acquire the spirit of self-reliance by encouraging them to develop skills for self-employment; To contribute to the accelerated growth of the national economy; To develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration. To remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups and to develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.

The equitable distribution of members of the service corps and the effective utilisation of their skills in area of national needs thus That as far as possible, youths are assigned to jobs in States other than their States of origin. That such group of youths assigned to work together is as representative of Nigeria as far as possible; That the Nigerian youths are exposed to the modes of living of the people in different parts of Nigeria That the Nigerian youths are encouraged to eschew religious intolerance by accommodating religious differences; That members of the service corps are encouraged to seek at the end of their one year national service, career employment all over Nigeria, thus promoting the free movement of labour. That employers are induced partly through their experience with members of the service corps to employ more readily and on a permanent basis, qualified Nigerians, irrespective of their States of origin.

Meaning of Moral Rectitude

Merriam online dictionary define moral rectitude as the quality or state of being straight, moral integrity, [righteousness](#), the quality or state of being correct in judgment or procedure. English dictionary online said it is concerned with or relating to human behaviour, especially the distinction between good and bad or right and wrong behaviour. It means adhering to conventionally accepted standards of conduct. It is based on a sense of right and wrong according to conscience. It can be said to be based on a knowledge of the tendencies of human nature, a concise truth; maxim. It is the principles of behaviour in accordance with standards of right and wrong.

Academic Performance

Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals. Academic performance fulfils a number of purposes which include areas of achievement and failure in student's academic career. It is also evaluated in order to foster improvement and makes full use of the learning process. Academic performance is a measurement of success or how well as student meets standards set out by the institution itself (Bell, 2014). Academic performance is how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. It is also the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or down on paper (Siva 2009).

According to Sharm (2012), academic performance is how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies, but there are quite a number of factors that determined the level and quality of students' academic performance, these factors include Grades, Attendance and Extracurricular activities. Grades are certainly the most well-known indicator of academic performance; grades are the students "score" for their classes and overall tenure. Grades are most often a tally or average of assignment and test score.

Nigeria is interested in creating a school system that would run under standards of discipline for both moral rectitude in daily behaviour and high standards of academic performance. Strictness and discipline are important parts of this learning process.

Role of the Teacher in Academic and Character Formation

Before discussing the role of a teacher in character formation, we should look into the meaning of character. The term "character" refers to the tendency to act in ways that are consistent with what one understands to be morally right. The person having good character will always act morally in all situations of life. According to Lictona (1991), "The character is a universal phenomenon descriptive of people who possess the courage and conviction to live by moral virtues". A person of character has the wisdom to know the right and wrong, is always honest, trustworthy, fair and respectful, responsible, admits and learns from mistakes. He/she is always committed to whatever they do.

Character education is an [umbrella term](#) loosely used to describe the teaching of children in a manner that will help them develop variously as moral, civic, good mannered, well-behaved, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant or socially acceptable beings. Concepts that now and in the past have fallen under this term include social and emotional learning, moral reasoning and cognitive development, life skills education, health education, violence prevention, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and conflict resolution and mediation. Many of these are now considered failed programs, i.e. "[religious education](#)", "moral education", "values clarification".

On the days of convocation, certificates are given with these declarations by whosoever is in-charge of the institution, *"in character and in learning"*. With those words, people expect from the said graduate a character that is sound and a strong evidence that he/she is enlightened and has been through school (expression of competence and general knowledge). Recently, the influx of corruption to the system has made it difficult, sometimes, to see our graduates as senior citizens with sound character formation and competence in academics. It is worthy to note that anybody seen in the four walls of the classroom assumes the position of a teacher. These abated characters enter into our secondary schools as corps members, instead of being moral agents (*ndinkuzi*), they become destructive forces (*ndinkugo*) because you cannot give what you don't have. There have been regular cases of unwanted pregnancies and all manner of misconduct attributed to these folks in the course of serving their father land *"under the sun and in the rain, with dedication and selflessness"*.(Source) They introduce these naïve students to all forms of evil during the teaching process.

Like Abraham Lincoln rightly puts it "Reputation is the shadow. Character is the tree." Our character goes beyond what we try to display for others to see, it is who we are even when no one is watching. Good character is doing the right thing because it is right to do what is right". Because of our poor supervision, nobody tries to find out what they do to/with these innocent children until alarm blows or a danger light is seen. Sometimes, some months after these culprits are gone. This is a common sight in the rural areas.

The basic foundation of good moral character is values and virtues, where virtues are good habits cultivated from within the individual and help in the improvement of intelligence and character like hard work, sincerity, courage, perseverance etc. whereas, values helps in searching for purpose of living on this earth and motivates the human being to act. After home, school is the only place where the teacher plays a vital role in character formation of the students thereby helps in the overall development of the individual. Anybody seen in the classroom and/or in any academic setting is a teacher, qualified or unqualified, corps member etc. Suffice it to say that when the teacher is polluted, the smell is perceived from the students. It (By who) has been rightly said that:

When you sow an action, you reap a habit,
Sow a habit, reap a character,
Sow a character, reap a destiny"

Schools are the laboratories which produce the future citizens of the country and teachers play a vital role in such laboratories. Students understand character as 'who you are' and have a set of core values that shape their moral identity. They have three sense of learning and changing overtime, becoming a better person and taking responsibilities for their growth as human beings. They have a strong sense of values but they are not able to put them into practice. Here education plays a

vital role in the formation of character of the students. The good relationship between teachers and students helps in the character formation of students which is based on trust and respect. Teaching is a very complicated business in today's scenario as students are unexpected blend of character, personality and background. A teacher should always influence the life and character of his/her students and give ideas/values which will help them to become important citizen of the country.

Morals are caught, not taught. They take shape not through precept, but rather through the uncountable ordinary and informal contacts we have with other people. No single event or deed "causes" us to become patient or impatient, or attentive or inattentive to others. Rather, these dispositions emerge unevenly, if they do so at all - through fits and starts, as we act in environments such as the home, the school, the community, (Chein, 1972). Regardless of which way the process goes, however, the point is that it cannot be forced. It cannot be preset according to a timetable or schedule. Character and personal disposition materialize over time. They take form through potentially any contacts an individual has with other people.

Statement of the Problem

Every year, corps-members are deployed to various parts of Nigeria for their national service year. These are vibrant young men and women from every field of endeavour. Most of these are sent to our various secondary schools, as a way of motivating these young ones, under the scrutiny of a qualified teacher who inspects and corrects when necessary and who is conversant with their students and their levels of development, academically and otherwise. Recently, it has been discovered that our schools are filled with these corps members to fill the subject gaps in our various secondary schools in Anambra State which sometimes are not their areas of specialization. These corps members, we must understand are not all trained teachers, they are inexperienced, some have no zeal nor inclination towards teaching, their duration is too short and their full identity, most times, are not known.

It has also come to our notice that these young men and women often leave our secondary schools worse than they met it by the several unwanted pregnancies, cultism, bullying, and all manner of evil recorded against them, sometimes, after they have left. These students want to find out these influences, why they occur, and how to ameliorate them.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to give bearing to this study

1. What influence does corps members have on the academic performance of our secondary school students?

2. What influence do they have on the moral rectitude of our students?
3. Why do these influences occur?
4. How can it be ameliorated if not eradicated?

Empirical Study

There was a clear consensus from stakeholders that the nature of quality education should be centred on appropriate outcomes for students. It was important that the students received education which contributes to their all-round development, and that they should be able to contribute to the economic prosperity of the nation. This view was in line with the government policy and identified teachers' work as extending beyond the classroom to include the cultivation of a certain optimistic attitude to life and a resilience that would support students in later life. Once entering society it is impossible for a person to always live smoothly and in good times throughout their whole life. Frustration, failure and rough times are unavoidable. Therefore, to have an optimistic, positive and high-spirited attitude and the philosophy of life is very important I think education is to foster students as being a useful person but without forgetting to cultivate them as being a happy person.

From the nation's point of view, on one hand, various kinds of talents are cultivated via educational institutions in order to serve our country and society. On the other hand, education is to promote overall quality of citizens and from the view of individuals, I think, we're now receiving education to serve our future life and job. Such sentiments led to the view that being a teacher has been traditionally regarded in very broad terms, having many responsibilities in relation to their student. Schools are a place for incubation and development of talents. Therefore, 'people' are important. There are two aspects that should be reflected on. First, schools have to be student-centred and this should drive how schools arrange all their work including resource allocation, the second is about the quality of people who deliver teaching as these would influence students. The quality of people delivering teaching includes their personality, knowledge, approaches, spirit, etc.

Such professional characteristics also included commitment, a moral and ethical dimension, quality education included, as Talabi (1985) rightly said that:

a teaching workforce with commitment which reflects the overall academic atmosphere, work ethic and responsibilities, team morale, and the ability of distinguishing right from wrong. This theme was taken by Ukeje (1996) who said, I think a good teacher not only has a high teaching level but also has ethics which I think is particularly important. Being a teacher, he or she has to set an example by personally taking part.

This requirement for teachers to act as moral agents and role models reflects the influence of Confucian civilisation and long-established culture where teachers

have, traditionally, been respected members of society, having a moral responsibility to attend to their students' needs. Every adult is a teacher, but whenever we see ourselves in the four walls of the classroom, we assume a higher role and that is the role of a professional teacher.

Since ancient times, we are influenced by East Asian Confucian civilization. There is a proverb saying that it is a teacher's laziness or irresponsibility if he or she does not strictly supervise his or her students and teach them with diligence. Nigerian culture also puts great emphasis on collective responsibility, collaboration and success of the group. It is not enough to be successful in your own subject area, there is a responsibility to contribute actively to the success of the group.

Methodology

The sample for the study comprises the two hundred and fifty nine public (259) secondary schools in Anambra State. The researchers adopted the simple random sampling technique and selected one thousand and seventy one (1071) secondary school students within the State and administered them with questionnaires.

The researchers in order to collect useful data used well-structured questionnaire method. Four research questions were formulated based on the research topic and the respondents were to tick (✓) the questions based on their personal opinion. They were not given any form of kickback but were encouraged to give the right answers as this would go a long way to solve their educational problems.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. These experts vetted the instruments and made some corrections. However, their corrections were taken into effect and the items of the questionnaire were modified and used for data collection.

The researchers adopted a test re-test method of reliability. This is to ascertain the degree of consistency of test results obtained from the same instrument. The instruments were first administered to the ten (10) respondents outside the area of study. Afterwards the researchers repeated the exercise to the same group of students after one week. The two sets of response were correlated using Pearson Product Moment (PPM) correlation co-efficient. The results obtained from the two variables are 0.85 which shows a high correlation indicating that the instrument was reliable enough for the study.

The questionnaires for the research were distributed to Senior Secondary Students in the area as a means of collection of data for the study from the selected areas. The responses to the questionnaires were collected and analysed using mean frequency system.

The data was analysed using the frequency table and weighted mean category which includes;

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| 1. Strongly agreed (SA) | 5 points |
| 2. Agreed (A) | 4 points |

3. Disagreed (D) 3 points
 4. Strongly disagreed (SD) 2 point.
 5. Undecided 1point.
 Weight Mean = $\frac{5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3.0$

The decision rule was drawn on the criterion mean for agreeing or disagreeing on the item used for the analysis. The criterion mean score is 3.0. Therefore, weighted mean score of 3.0 and above for any item indicated that the respondents agree on the items whereas a weighted mean score below 3.0 revealed that the respondents disagreed on the items.

Research Question 1

What influences do Corper members have on the academic performance of our secondary school students in Anambra State?

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOT	X	Remarks
Improved academic performance	255 1275	578 2312	204 612	0 0	34 34	4233	4.0	Agreed
Stimulated interest in academics	187 935	612 2448	187 561	34 68	51 51	4063	3.8	Agreed
Fostered interest in competence and skill acquisition	221 1105	442 1768	306 918	51 102	51 51	3944	3.7	Agreed
Better comprehensibility of the subject taught	187 935	391 1564	289 867	102 204	102 102	3672	3.4	Agreed
Healthy competition in the academic pursuit among students	238 1190	340 1360	374 1122	51 102	68 68	3842	3.6	Agreed
Dependence on examination malpractice	153 765	306 1224	340 1020	221 442	51 51	3502	3.3	Agreed
Imbibing other forms of corrupt practices on the students	85 425	391 1564	323 969	170 340	102 102	3400	3.2	Agreed
Introduction of a shorter cut to excellence	255 1275	442 1768	170 510	153 306	51 51	3910	3.7	Agreed
Improved reading culture	357 1785	289 1156	323 969	85 170	17 17	4097	3.8	Agreed

Research Question 2

What influence do corps members have on the moral rectitude of secondary school students in Anambra State?

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOT	X	Remarks
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Exposure to the dangers of sex	255 1275	425 1700	221 663	119 238	51 51	3927	3.7	Agreed
Recurrent unwanted pregnancy	221 1105	289 1156	289 867	187 374	85 85	3587	3.3	Agreed
Exposure to bullying	153 765	459 1836	272 816	187 374	0 0	3791	3.5	Agreed
Initiation into cultic activities	136 680	187 748	306 918	340 680	102 102	3128	2.9	Disagreed
Introduction to alcohol and drugs	51 255	221 884	340 1020	391 782	68 68	3009	2.8	Disagreed
Improved spirituality	102 510	153 612	408 1224	306 612	102 102	3060	2.9	Disagreed
Acquaintance to the risk of abortion	136 680	289 1156	357 1071	153 306	136 136	3349	3.1	Agreed
Indecent dressing	289 1445	357 1428	170 510	221 442	34 34	3859	3.6	Agreed
General misdemeanor	119 595	272 1088	255 765	289 578	136 136	3162	3.0	Agreed
Disrespect	221 1105	238 952	255 765	272 544	85 85	3451	3.2	Agreed

Research Question 3

Why do these influences occur?

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOT	X	Remarks
Poor supervision by the educational body (LGI & MOE).	408 2040	374 1496	136 408	85 170	68 69	4182	3.9	Agreed
Poor supervision by the school.	272 1360	527 2108	136 408	68 136	68 68	4080	3.8	Agreed
They were given charge of what they do in the class	221 1105	476 1904	204 612	102 204	68 68	3791	3.6	Agreed
They are not trained in the teaching profession	255 1275	408 1632	170 510	187 374	51 51	3842	3.6	Agreed
They have no interest in the teaching and learning process	255 1275	374 1496	272 816	136 272	34 34	3893	3.6	Agreed
Not matured enough to train adolescents	153 765	204 816	374 1122	306 612	34 34	3349	3.0	Agreed
They see students as their colleagues	289 1445	357 1428	289 867	119 238	17 17	3995	3.7	Agreed

They become so familiar with the students	408 2040	323 1292	225 765	51 102	34 34	4233	4.0	Agreed
Their duration is too short	170 850	255 1020	391 1173	204 408	51 51	3502	3.3	Agreed
Not skilled nor competent in subject areas	289 1445	323 1292	306 918	102 204	51 51	3910	3.7	Agreed

Research Question 4

How can these influences be ameliorated if not eradicated?

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOT	X	Remarks
They should work under the supervision of a qualified teacher.	680 3400	340 1360	17 51	17 34	17 17	4862	4.5	Agreed
They should work under rules and regulations	561 2805	374 1496	68 204	34 68	34 34	4607	4.3	Agreed
They should be prevented from getting too close to the students	306 1530	340 1360	238 714	136 272	51 51	3927	3.7	Agreed
They should be given little teacher training before allowed into the classroom	527 2635	425 1700	68 204	34 68	17 17	4624	4.3	Agreed
Only those interested in teaching should be selected	527 2635	221 884	187 561	102 204	34 34	4318	4.0	Agreed
Their competence and skill should be verified	425 2125	527 2108	68 204	17 34	34 34	4505	4.2	Agreed
More teachers should be employed to fill the gaps in our schools.	629 3145	187 748	136 408	34 68	85 85	4454	4.2	Agreed
Provision should be made for them so that they don't leave the students at the middle of a term	561 2805	357 1428	51 153	85 170	17 17	4573	4.3	Agreed
The less matured ones should be disqualified from the classroom	374 1870	238 952	255 765	170 340	34 34	3961	3.7	Agreed

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

It takes someone special to be an educator; a person who cares for others, and aims at helping students grow to their fullest potential. The best teachers are capable, dedicated and hardworking, along with having an interest in making a substantial difference in the future of children and in their moral capabilities.

If the corps members help to improve their academic performance but teach them to depend on exam malpractice, imbibe corrupt practices in them, and teach

them short cuts to excellence, it is surprising and very controversial that they stimulate interest in academics, improve their reading culture, foster healthy competition among them. Suit is to say that it is either the students are not being sincere or they learn the good and the bad from the purported teachers. A teacher they say, affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence stops.

The corps members have been a very bad influence on the moral of these up-comers. Several cases of sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies are connected with them. By implication, they should be posted to schools and work under the supervision of professionals. Students and their problems should be directed to the teacher and not a corps member to avoid unnecessary closeness with the students that can lead to ill behaviour. They should work under scrutiny and students' feedback should be investigated. When a corps member is found wanting, he/she should be withdrawn from the classroom and be verified academically, morally especially as regards dressing (for the ladies) before they enter the class.

Finally, corps members are not permanent teachers. Researches have shown that changing teachers regularly affect the performance of students. The government and stakeholders should employ as much as possible permanent teachers for our/their schools instead of making up with corps members. If assessed and found worthy, he can be retained after the service year.

I will summarise by saying that intelligence and character are the goals of true education. Anything worth doing is worth doing well. Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit. The ancient Greeks reminded us that "character is destiny." Educators and all those concerned must work together to see that the objective of education is not jeopardized.

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