Using students' musical theatre as a Medium for addressing students' social vices

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Abstract

Social vices such as violence, cultism, cybercrimes, pornography, prostitution, examination misconduct, obscenities, amorous dressing often displayed by students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions are alarmingly on the rise. These repugnant, flagrant and reprehensible acts among students require extermination,and with, parentsconstantly overwhelmed by fear and anxiety concerning their children's physical/ moral safeties while in school. Governments and the school authorities have tried to put in place some measures that can help check some of these vices. Much still needs to be done to achieve this goal. This paper thus explores various concepts on the subject of social vices. It highlights some contributing factors on students' social vices and how they can be discouraged. The supposition this paper explores is that musical theatre is a medium through which students can speak out against depravities in their midst. This action will consolidate the already existing efforts of school authorities, discourage defaulters, and help bring positive changes in Nigeria's tertiary institutions.

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Introduction

In formulating Nigeria's education philosophies, it is believed that "Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society"(FGN, 2014, p.4).The worth and development of every individual member of society are not only judged based on the intellect but are also measured based on sound moral and social behaviours. Ideally, tertiary institutions are places for acquiring, preserving and expanding knowledge and skills needed for the progress and sustenance of a nation and the society. In anticipation, therefore, those who aspire to this level of education ought to bear in mind that the formation of character while learning is not negotiable. Unfortunately, this is not always the case with many students, due to blatant appeals to vanities. Behaviours displayed by individual members of a social group do affect the team either positively or negatively. A student's behaviour may present him either as "an asset" or "a liability" to society.

Some agents such as the home/family, religious organisations, schools, and friends, have been recognised as contributing to the adverse behaviours of students of tertiary institutions. A life of virtues has power, confidence, and boldness. Contrary to this, students with behaviour problems often have social difficulties (Vaughn & Bos, 2009, p. 111).Many students have brought shame, pain, regrets, sorrow, deaths, among other ills, to both themselves and others, by their negative attitudes, thus, jeopardising the goals of education in Nigeria. Students' social vices are on the daily increase. Cultism, robbery, violence, prostitution, examination misconduct, insubordination, disrespect to constituted authorities, brawling, amorous dressings,among others, are often associated with Nigerian students. The dangers that these acts pose to the members of the society, as well as the students themselves, can be grave. They are capable of causing deaths, permanent disabilities, hurts, emotional traumas. They are so wide-spread that it takes only those students who have a solid moral foundation to withstand their pressures. A social issue becomes a "real big problem" when those who are directly affected choose to remain silent and adamant about it. Why

behave as though everything is fine, instead of unanimously raising a voice to deter perpetrators.

It is unfortunate that Government and school authorities cannot find a permanent solution to the frequent occurrences of social vices among students.Nonetheless, students who have sound moral foundation and structure should step out and make an audacious difference.

Smooth and profitable running of society requires the cooperation of all social agents. Tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria must contribute their quota towards ensuring civilised and decent society. Theatrical art forms such as music,dance, and drama, as well as their integrated forms, can be used for the delivery of messages intended to influence any target group. The integration of music, dance and drama, as well as visual aesthetic elements of the theatre, can fund constructive purposes in tertiary institutions. One of the ways of doing this is by employing musical theatres as media through which students can vocalise and act against negative activities of miscreants.Theatre can be used to appeal to the consciences of defaulting students, resulting in instant remorsefulness and positive changes.This act of employing the theatre for these purposes is a form of "Punisher" capable of decreasing the probability of more occurrences of vices among students. Through musical theatres, foreseen negative consequences of vices can help produce a positive shift in one's behaviour.

Factors that contribute to Social Vices in Students

According to a theory in epistemology, individuals are born without built-in mental content, and all of their knowledge comes from experiences and perception. When it comes to issues that border on social behaviours, a person's nurture is to be held responsible, which therefore favours the epistemological theory. However, there is another school of thought that believes in nature having a part to play in the aggregate of an individual's behaviours. Whether caused by nature or nurture, positive and negative behaviours will always produce consequences.As a result, this paper discusses some of the contributing factors to students' social vices below.

1. Wrong up-bringing

The family is an agent of socialisation. It has significant and vital roles to play in the upbringing of a child. Where those roles are in default,the effects may be disastrous. Consistency in showing a child the proper way to follow is crucial. It ensures a sound moral foundation for the future. The act of caring and training helps to socialise a child with the members of the family who is involved in the act. Shaffer (2005) asserts:

> From a developmental perspective, the most important function that families serve in all societies is to care for and socialize their young. Socialization refers to the process by which children acquire the beliefs, motives, values, and behaviours deemed significant and appropriate by older members of their society. And the socialization of each successive generation serves society in at least three ways. First, it is a means of regulating children's behavior and controlling their undesirable impulses. Second, socialization promotes the personal growth of the individual. As children interact with and become like other members of their culture, they acquire the knowledge, skills, motives, and aspirations that should enable them to adapt to their environment and function effectively within their communities. Finally, socialization perpetrates the social order: Appropriately socialized children become competent, adaptive, prosocial adults who will impart what they have learned to their own children (p. 347 &348).

Parents and guardians must be very careful concerning the kinds of experiences to which they expose their children/wards. These experiences have the power to stamp images in the minds of these young ones. The family is a laboratory for moulding the lives of children.Carelessly exposure to negative experiences later in the life of a child, may play out in manners that are sometimes most despicable. Parents and guardians with sound moral judgements will certainly have an influence on those under their tutelage, the

reason being that they are the closest examples they see and feel. Unfortunately, some parents preach morality to their children but practice something different, forgetting that it is their actions that will speak louder. Myers (2001) states "When parents practice what they preach, their moral principles have an impact" (p.148). Vaughn and Bos (2009) believe that behaviour and social adjustment difficulties that teachers identify might be a function of the students' cultural and home backgrounds (p. 112).

2.   Wrong religious teachings

Shaffer(2005) quotes Brody, Stoneman, and Flor's view that "Religious institutions, for example, provide important emotional supports and moral socialization that often increase family cohesion and promote healthy developmental outcomes" (p.348). Religious bodies have the onus to teach sound moral doctrines that will help build up the youths in the society. Good moral conducts are expedient for peaceful and fruitful co-existence. In the regard above Shaffer (2005) also quotes Gleitman, Fridlund, and Reisberg thus:

> But civil societies require that their citizens resist temptation even when they are not being watched, and so one aim of socialization is to inculcate moral values that are abided by not only to avoid punishment, but also because people believe that they are right (p. 523).

In this era of church proliferation, it is rare to find a student who does not belong to a religious group. Apart from the church, there are other faith-based organizations expected to teach healthy moral behaviours. These institutions should exist primarily for sound spiritual teachings,in addition to other functions. However, sometimes, one cannot help but wonder if a good number of students receive the true lessons. Consistency in disseminating sound moral teachings is part of the duties of all religions, especially during the times that students find themselves. The youths of the society are vulnerable and often easy instruments for social vices. Some of them are determined to lose all restraint to achieve their immoral goals. Counselling and teaching activities focused on moral

rejuvenation that is faith-based can help children out of their lifestyles. Unfortunately, some leaders in religious circles have their focus rather on things material instead of the spiritual. It is expedient to know that some religious teachings and doctrines have misled some students into prostitution, robbery, sexual dressing habits, and other immoral lifestyles. Wrongly interpreted scriptural writings for self-indulgence by some religious leaders have often been passed on to student-members of campus fellowships, resulted in thewrong quest for self-esteem and acquisition of power to intimidate other students.

3. Wrong friendships

Shaffer (2005) states:

> It is often said that there is a "chemistry" to close friendships and that best friends seem to be "in tune" with each other. Research clearly supports this notion." According to Field et al., "Casual conversations among pairs of sixth graders are much more cheerful, playful, and relaxed when the members of these pairings are good friends rather than mere acquaintances (p. 445).

When a student's close friends are miscreants, it is often difficult to withstand the temptation or pressure to join in the wrongdoings. The inclination to do so is often strong. A student's likes and dislikes are determinant factors selecting close friends in school. People of similar characters and behaviours relate well. Birds of a feather they say, flock together. A student who wants to be known for positive behaviours will not desire the company of miscreants. On the other hand, a student who has no goal or purposeful living will readily be susceptible to an invitation of a vicious lifestyle. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Close association with wrong friends in school can destroy high aspirations and purposes.Oetting and Beauvais, reference Myers (2001) that the best predictor of whether a teenager smokes marijuana, for instance, is simply how many of the teen's friends smoke it (p. 148).

4.   Societal influences

For Myers (2001) "Morality is doing the right thing, and what we do depends not only on our thinking but on social influences" (p.148). He believes that because of social influences, people's willingness to cheat, to discriminate racially, and to smoke marijuana cannot be determined by their attitudes toward cheating, race, and drugs.

Students often do things in conformity to the value systems of groups or personalities they admire, which could be negative or positive. Myers (2001) defines conformity as adjusting our behaviour or thinking to bring it into line with some group standard (p. 651). He outlines factors that can increase conformity based on experiments. They include when:one is made to feel incompetent or insecure; the group is unanimous; one admires the group's status and attractiveness; others in the group observe one's behaviour (p.652).

To avoid being rejected or to gain the approval of their social groups, some students have become miscreants. Myers (2001) opines that only an uncommonly stubborn person will never listen to others (p.652). Any well-groomed student has all it takes to interact successfully with his/her environment without falling prey to social vices. Education is a race. Negative societal influence can make students lose focus onthe reasons for this race.

5.   Wrong personal decisions

Sometimes, students' choices are based on personal decisions, rather than extraneous factors. A consistent pattern of behaviour produces an identity for any living entity.Some students have become deeply entrenched in vices due to their impulsive actions. Their personal choices have produced unacceptable attitudes which become their identity mark. Cognitive dissonance theorists explain that behaviour shapes attitude because people feel discomfort when their actions go against their feelings and beliefs; they reduce the discomfort by bringing their attitudes more into line with what they have done.

6.   Technology

Shaffer (2005) reveals that,

> As early as 1954, complaints raised by parents, teachers, and experts in child development prompted Senator Estes Kefauver, then Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, to question the need for violence in television programming." Quoting Mediascope and Seppa, he adds "Yet more than 40 years later, the National Television Violence Study, a two-year survey of the frequency, nature, and context of TV violence, revealed that American television programming remains incredibly violent (p.388).

From Shaffer, it is made known that an experiment in which participants are exposed to aggressive films and almost immediately encounter a situation in which they may choose to behave aggressively showed that boys who watch an unedited and highly violent programme do subsequently become more aggressively inclined when interacting with peers in their natural environment. (p.389).

The Power and Synergy of United Voices

There is authority and synergy when voices unite to fight peacefully against happenings, behaviours, attitudes and actions that pose a danger to the existence of a group of people in a community. No sane mind would desire the jeopardising of positive goals and plans. All independent and moral entities want peace and sanity in all aspects of life. There is always a discomfort in the lives of members of a community whenever there is a disturbance in their equilibrium of living. When such disturbances do occur, it is proper to rub minds together, bring ideas and strategies to control or check them. The move for a change in matters that concern or involve others begins with one person's idea, complaint or passion. To be united in voice against any social miscreants within a community, someone from among the group must possess the ability to persuade others toward the goal. This ability is a special one. It is a social competence. A socially competent person can relate to others appropriately, no matter who they are or what the situation is. They are seemingly at

ease socially. According to Foster and Ritchey,

> Social competence is defined as those responses, which within a given situation prove effective, or in other words, maximise the probability of producing, maintaining, or enhancing positive effects for the interactor (Vaughn & Bos, 2009, p.111).

Social competence is a vital factor that can enable an activist to win the cooperation of others against social vices. Voices, United against vices, must not be many to achieve positive results. The important factor that will determine success is unity of purpose. United voices of a few persons can topple the negative power of an individualistic majority. Myer (2001) reveals:

> As the life of Mahatma Gandhi powerfully testifies, a consistent and persistent minority voice can sometimes sway the majority. The non violent appeals and fasts of the Hindu nationalist and spiritual leader were instrumental in winning India's independence from Britain in 1947 (p.660).

To resonate with the above, reason instructs that any consistent and persistent student-minority voice can call to order a straying student-majority.

Using Students' Musical Theatre as a Medium to vocalise against Students' Social Vices and the Factors responsible for them

Musical theatre is an art form that consists of music and other forms of the theatre, such as drama, dance, dialogue among others. Experiences and observations show that the interest, willingness, readiness, eagerness and enthusiasm to learn from others and to change from any unpleasant behaviour are high when the challenge to do so is sparked off by one's peers and contemporaries. The staging of theatrical performances by students in tertiary institutions with the intention to contribute to cutting social vices displayed among

them is laudable. Students are always to strive to make educational goals realisable. According to Dienye (2012):

> The students are the clients of the school to achieve the ultimate of the school which is learning, every member of the school which includes the students has to contribute their own effort. If students refuse to play their roles, the goals of the school will not be achieved even if the principals and teachers play their roles. The students should be seen also as members of the school social system interacting with other members striving to attain the school goals (p. 118).

The preceding applies to students and staff of tertiary institutions, too. There are of course several avenues available for students to contribute towards realising school goals. Moral behaviours of students are important, thus, need attention. One of such avenues through which students can apply themselves to achieving school goals is a musical theatre where dialogues, imitated actions, music, dance, and choreography, as well as other stage arts, constitute aspects of performance to bare social vices, factors responsible for their manifestations,and their consequences.According to Omoruan and Aluede (2013) "In both traditional and contemporary societies, songs are means of communicating messages, information, feelings and emotions" (p. 88). Music is a universal language, loved and accepted by all humanity. Vocal music has the mystical power that can enthral, charm, capture the attention of the audience; captivate hearts, minds, and thetotal being, through its melodically and (or) harmonically combined tunes and lyrics. Okpeki (2013) affirms:

> *The lyrics of music are so powerful that they affect listeners either negatively or positively. What one listens to can go a long way in making or marring a person judging from recent experiment carried out by Akpomndjere and Udom (p. 136).*

Music is also didactic.Contemporary musical genres such as

Rap, Ballad, as well as Rhythm and Blues (R&B), are the favourites of most students in tertiary institutions. The popularity of these genres among the young population of the society can be of significant advantages: to attract their attention, arouse their interests, awaken their potentials as well, and engage their minds for didactic purposes.Drama consists of actions and spoken words.It vivifies and enacts the subject matter, thought or theme intended for the target group. It is, therefore, an important art form for addressing behaviours, to elicit positive changes. Students' perceptions of their society, the world and themselves experience challenges through drama. Drama can serve as an outlet for students' self-expression, emotions, thoughts, and dreams. Drama creates the opportunity for actions and their consequences to be examined, discussed and experienced without the dangers and pitfalls that such experimentation would obviously lead to in reality. Although realistic dramatists advocated for a theatre where real life situations are brought to the stage, dramatic art should be able to present real issues in the most decent artistic manners, without distorting the needed message across to the audience or spectators. Wagner in Brockett (1969) argued that the greatest truths cannot be approached through realism (p. 317).

The drama will enable right activists to communicate their messages to their targets without having to appear judgmental. Students associated with negative conducts can change after playing roles similar to their behaviours and dramatically experiencing their consequences.Discipline acquired by participating in dramatic presentations endures.A longing for a better attitude to life due to a positively satisfying end for a protagonist or dramatic hero often occurs among an audience as they come to the dramatic resolutions. The purpose of dance more for spectacle than didactic, nevertheless, it may be used to remind one of the important scene lessons.

The integration of different forms of arts should not end in mere entertainment, but be employed for correction. When music, drama, dance and choreography are well combined, the resultant force is a powerful entity capable of instantly influencing any target audience, and producing long-term or lifelong changes in them. Through this infusion, students can socialise and interact with one

another and their environment. In the course of these, they can learn and make adjustments to avoid being left out. Education is a form of socialisation, and best acquired through socialisation. This integrated art form thus, is expected to produce effects far greater than the various arts in their separate forms. With this in mind, issues, subjects or messages on students' behaviours can be effectively expressed and enacted. The aesthetic and expressive natures of music, drama, dance and choreography make their integrated forms relevant for use as a tool to directly address students' matters in the educational system.

Conclusion

In addition to the efforts of the Government and the school authorities in Nigeria's tertiary institutions, students have the onus to lend their voices against social vices in their midst. Musical theatre is an entertaining medium capable of attracting the attention of those who take to social ills. Through this medium, factors that contribute to students' social vices and the consequences of such life styles can be reiterated and emphasised with the aim of eliciting positive changes. Any effort to help in bringing sanity and decency in the tertiary institutions of learning requires sustenance. Students need emotional and social stability to function academically. Avenues for learning should always focus on positively affecting and influencing learners towards the ultimate goal of formal education which in a nutshell is the total development of the learners for the sustenance of culture. Students' musical theatrical works and performances are good avenues by which students can teach fellow students and provide them with emotional and social stabilities that will guarantee proper behaviours required for academic pursuits and excellence. Musical theatres can be used to teach both abstract and concrete sociological topics in the field of Sociology.

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