

APPPLICATION OF PLATO'S CONCEPT OF CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS IN SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the application of the Plato's concept of crime and punishment in secondary school education system in south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. A survey research approach was employed in the study. Two research questions were posed while two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study consisted of 31, 322 teachers currently teaching in 1,960 secondary schools in the five states of the south-east geopolitical zone. Simple random sampling procedure was used in selecting three states used in the study, while disproportionate stratified random sampling procedure was adopted in selecting ten secondary schools from which 563 teachers were randomly sampled and used for the study. A questionnaire of four-point scale was used as instrument for data collection. Mean was used to analyze data relative to research questions while the t-test statistic was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis showed, among other issues, that measures Plato took in controlling crime during his own time should be applied in controlling crime among secondary schools students in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that Plato's measures of addressing crime should be integrated into Nigerian secondary school system. This should be done urgently because of geometric increase in crime rate among the present day secondary school students in Nigeria.

Introduction

The social life of every citizen in a nation, such as Nigeria, depends largely on the willingness of its members to follow certain stipulated rules to regulate their behaviours in accordance with certain norms. A society according to Popere (1971) can only survive and function as long as most (if not all) of the people obey the rules. Ideally, when social rules exist, chances are that on certain occasions and for a variety of reasons, some people are going to break some of the rules. Those who obey the

rules are to be admirably rewarded with praise and honour whereas those who break them are punished. Breaking the rules is an act of committing crimes which contravenes law of the society. And more crucially it renders the person who is responsible for it to be liable to some kind of punishment following from the proceedings which are usually initiated on behalf of the state in court and which are designed to ascertain the nature, extent and legal consequences of the person's responsibility (Nwobodo, 2008). Crime is an act of

commission or omission which is considered in itself or in its outcome to be harmful and which the state wishes to prevent (Curson, 1993). It is also an intentional act of omission in violation of criminal law committed without defence or justification and sanctioned by the state as a felony or misdemeanor (Tappen, 1960). These definitions suggests that students going contrary to the school rules and regulations invariably commit crime or contravene the law. The other term punishment is a kind of pain inflicted on evil doers for a certain purpose. Punishment is the authoritative deprivation of food, operating on some wrong doers against their will in order to wipe out a fault committed (Higgnus, 1949 in Nwobodo, 2008). This suggest that punishment will cause students (offenders) to suffer for the offence by inflicting a penalty or by making them suffer either mental or physical pain.

In the recent time, the Nigerian government and the Federal Ministry of Education (2004) placed ban on the use of punishment to correct the criminal acts of students to only the school headmasters/principals or any other teachers authorized to apply punishment to students who committed crime. This edict therefore made teachers not to have courage any longer to punish any student for a misdeed for fear of being queried or sanctioned by the employer. Consequent upon that, there is

persistent increase in student indiscipline such as truancy, lateness to schools, loitering, bullying, irresponsibility to duties, fighting, lack of motivation, among other forms of scandalous behaviour and non-observance of school rules and regulations. Moreover, the increase in students' indiscipline in schools could be linked to inappropriateness in the application of punishment in school system. Yet more, the ban on application of punishment as corrective measure of criminal activities of students appears to be one of the major causes of the fallen standard of Nigerian educational system, especially in Secondary Schools. A great deal of research has been directed at exploring the problem of decline in the standard of Nigerian educational system on the one hand and investigating the causes and consequences of deviant behaviours among students in schools on the other hand (Okechukwu, 1989; Emeka, 1990; Azo, 1991; and Aroh, 1997). Literature search revealed that no one has made any significant effort to discover and articulate for the benefit of contemporary society how the grandmaster of educational and philosophical thoughts handled the

problem of crime and punishment. One of the greatest of these grandmasters of education Plato believed that punishment is another remedy for crime committed. Thus, Plato maintained that punishment should be inflicted on the offender but that punishment should neither be severe nor minimal otherwise it turns counterproductive. Plato believed that a well-intentioned punishment is necessary so as to enable the child to select an alternative that is rewarding. The child or student should understand clearly what the punishment is for (Plato in Rusk, 1969).

A well-intentioned punishment when moderately administered in schools as a preventive and reformatory measure will minimize the rate of crime among students and enhance their learning in schools. Onu (1985) while trying to define the actions of teachers towards punishment of students on the crimes they committed said that it is frightening to hear that some parents go to court because children are flogged or engaged in one punishment or the other for involvement in some bad acts. But regrettably they (parents) in their

own homes engage their children and wards in more stressful punishments. Okeke (1985) revealed that some teachers use or apply punishment to students purposely for class control and maintenance of attention span. However, many psychologists and educationists such as Skinnah (1953) and Trainers (1977) have indicated that the use of punishment as a corrective measure of criminal acts of students has an adverse effect. Blumenthal (1975) in support of administering punishment on violators of certain standards of behaviour believes that punishment teaches violators to conform in the future and to set examples that could deter others who might consider violating the rules. Based on the foregoing, it appears that the use of punishment in reducing or controlling crime rate among students in the secondary school system appears to be controversial and therefore needs further enquiry to clarify the controversy.

Statement of the Problem

Obviously there is a general notion of the steady decline in the quality of education in Nigeria in recent times. The decline is perceived to be associated

with the wide rate of crime and criminal activities among secondary school students. Students who commit crime or violate the school rules and regulations will be punished. Several researches have been carried out to explore the problem of decline in standard of Nigerian educational system on the one hand and the causes and consequences of deviant behaviours among students in schools on the other hand (Okechukwu, 1989; Emeka, 1990; Denga, 1991; Aso, 1991; and Aroh, 1997). Literature search revealed that no research effort was made to discover and articulate how the grandmasters of educational and philosophical thoughts handled the problem of crime and punishment during their time of existence. Among such grandmasters is the philosopher called Plato who believed that a well intentioned punishment is necessary as reformative measure that can enable the child to select an alternative that is rewarding. Ideally, Plato has different conceptual view about the applicability of punishment to crime committed by students in school. It is against this background that one would need to investigate the extent Plato's concepts of crime and punishment would have implication for secondary education in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria and the benefits therein.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of the study is to

critically examine Plato's concepts of crime and punishment and subsequently highlight their implications for secondary education in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine whether the measures Plato advanced for addressing crime are tenable in Nigerian schools
2. Ascertain the extent to which these measures can be applied to the prevailing situation in Nigeria.

Scope of the study

The study is limited to Plato's thought with regard to crime and punishment in order to ascertain the extent to which the wisdom can be applied in solving related contemporary problems affecting the education of the Nigerian citizen and to highlight the measures which Plato used in addressing crime. Moreso, the study is focused on the extent these measures can be applied to the prevailing situation in Nigeria. Finally, only secondary school teachers in south-east geo-political zone were involved in the study.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What were the measures Plato advanced to address crime which are tenable in Nigerian schools?
2. To what extent could the measures

advanced by Plato to address crime be applied to the Nigerian situation?

Research Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses, which were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of male and female teachers on the measures advanced by Plato to address crime which are tenable in Nigerian schools.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of the male and female teachers on the extent the measures advanced by Plato to address crime could be applied to the Nigerian Secondary School situation.

Method

Research Design

The survey research design was adopted for the study. This research design was adopted because Aroh (1997) and Ofordile (2002) adopted the design for similar studies and were successful.

Sample and Sampling techniques

The target population for the study comprised all the 31,322 teachers currently teaching in 1960 Secondary Schools in the five states of south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. A sample of 563 teachers were

randomly selected and used for the study. The sample was selected through disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques. Probability proportionate sample size method (Nwanna,1980) was adopted in selecting 2.5% of the population. This 2.5% of the population was purposely chosen so as to enable the researcher handle the sample size effectively. The sampling of the respondents was done according to gender using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The 24% of the sampled teachers were male while 76% were females. Hence in Enugu State, 43 males and 138 females were randomly sampled; 44 males and 138 female teachers were randomly sampled in Anambra State, while in Imo State, 48 males and 152 female teachers were randomly sample. This brings the effective number of sampled subjects to 135 male teachers and 428 female teachers used for the study.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher developed a questionnaire instrument which was used. The instrument was composed of 12 items and has the form of a four-point rating scale. The instrument was organized into two sections. The instrument was facially validated using three lecturers of philosophy and 5 experts in educational

measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined, using Cronbach Coefficient alpha technique which yielded a coefficient of 0.76.

The administration of the instrument to the sampled subjects was done by 21 trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires to the subjects directly by hand. The administration and collection of the instrument provided data for analysis. The analysis of the data was done using mean and t-test statistic. The bench-mark for

any item to be selected as having plausible relevance for the purpose of the study is that the item should gain a mean score of 2.5 and above.

Results

Analysis of data in respect of research questions one and two are presented in Tables 1 and 2 while those in respect of hypotheses one and two are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1: Mean responses of the respondents on the measures advanced by Plato to address crime which are tenable in Nigerian schools.

S/ N	Item description	Item mean of teachers			Decision
		Male (\bar{x}_1)	Female (\bar{x}_2)	Total (\bar{x}_3)	
1	Acquisition of the right types of education was for Plato the hallmark of the solution to crime	4.11	4.22	4.165	SA
2	Withholding some of the offenders fundamental human right like restricting movement	3.86	3.79	3.825	SA
3	Punishment is preventive as well as reformative	2.11	1.79	1.95	D
4	Punishment should neither be serve nor minimal when inflicted to individual	3.68	3.15	3.415	SA
5	Punishment that is corrective is beneficial to the recipient and the society	3.78	3.86	3.82	SA
6	Moral and religious instruction commencing and persuasion are necessary	3.55	3.02	3.285	A
	Total	3.81	3.70	3.755	SA

From Table 1, it is obvious that the respondents rated the items on the measures Plato advanced to address crime, high i.e. above the stipulated criterion of mean 2.5 except item 3 which was rated 1.95 which is below 2.5. The table revealed that all the items 1, 2, 5, and 6 are measures advanced by Plato and are tenable in Nigeria Secondary Schools of today.

Table 2: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent of the measures advanced by Plato to address crime could be applied in Nigeria schools situation.

S / N	Item description	Item mean of teachers			Decision
		Male (\bar{x}_1)	Female (\bar{x}_2)	Total (\bar{x}_3)	
7	Intensify teaching of moral education in schools	3.52	3.75	3.635	VGE
8	Administer punishment with the view of reforming the child	3.11	3.51	3.31	GE
9	Administer punishment with the view to prevent future occurrence	3.30	3.11	3.205	GE
10	Formulate the proper philosophy of education for teachers education	3.81	3.28	3.545	VGE
11	Employ persuasion and counseling in the formation and correction of an individual	2.78	3.30	3.04	GE
12	Student should be taught to accept the responsibility of their offence	3.91	3.55	3.73	VGE
13	Teachers should make their lessons interesting to the students	3.81	2.55	3.18	GE
14	Any teacher that fails to carry out his duty should be punished	3.56	2.60	3.08	GE
15	Punishment should be moderate so that the student will not learn in fears and tears	3.61	3.42	3.09	GE
	Total	3.53	2.88	3.205	GE

Based on Table 2 above, it is clear that all the items have means that are above the stipulated criterion of 2.5 as positive measures. The table shows that all the items can be used as the application of Plato's measures of addressing crime to the Nigerian Secondary Schools situation.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean response of male and female teachers on the measures Plato advanced to address crime which are tenable in Nigeria schools

Respondents	N	\bar{x}_1	SD	df	Cal. t-value	t-critical value	Decision
Male	120	3.81	2.02	498	0.6540	1.96	S
Female	380	3.70	2.73	498			

The t-calculated value (0.6540) is less than t-critical value (1.96). We therefore accepted the null hypothesis that there is no statistical significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the measures Plato advanced to address crime which are tenable in Nigerian schools

Research question two and hypothesis two were answered using tables 3 and 4 respectively, below.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean opinion scores of male and female teachers on the extent the measures advanced by Plato to address crime could be applied to the Nigeria Secondary School Situation.

Respondents	N	\bar{x}_1	S.D.	df	t-cal. value	t-critical value	Decision
Male (\bar{x}_1)	120	3.53	1.9	498	3.41	1.96	NS
Female (\bar{x}_1)	380	2.88	2.34	498			

NS = significant

Since t-calculated value (3.41) is greater than t-critical value (1.96), the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. That means there are statistically significant differences between the responses of male and female teachers on the extent the measures could be applied to the Nigeria Secondary Schools situation of today.

Discussion of Results

Based on the findings of the study, it is obvious that the measures Plato advanced to address crime are consistent with the present situation in Nigeria secondary schools. Plato believed that acquisition of the right type of education as the hallmark of the solution to crime. Plato believed that the right type of education has to be that education which aims at making a person virtuous and devious of

being an ideal citizen. This finding is consistent with Krishnamarti (1978) who earlier noted that to curb crime, education should aim at the development of moral qualities. Moreso, the study revealed that there is no statically significant difference between the mean responses of both male and female teachers on the measures Plato advanced to address crime.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that actions geared towards the intensification of the teaching of moral education, proper philosophy of education for teacher education, the ability of the teachers to make their lessons interesting to the students, students should be taught to accept the responsibility of their offences, among others, were some of the measures

advanced by Plato to address crime that could be applied to the Nigerian secondary school situation. This finding is quite consistent with the views of Jeffery (1963) in Nwobodo (2008) who asserted that measures like administering punishment to prevent further occurrence, a good philosophy of education for the teacher and teacher's basic competencies in teaching and a good classroom organization are all positive ways of addressing crime among students.

However, Nwobodo (2008) believed that whatever measures to be adopted in Nigerian secondary school system should be moderately and positively applied. In line with Akubue, (1991) who remarked that the teacher should help students develop an acceptable self-image and understanding of their relationships with their teacher and within themselves in order to acquire set values. Moreso, the findings revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the respondents on the measure applied by Plato to address crime and the extent it could be applied to Nigerian secondary school situation. This implies that the male and female teachers have varying opinions regarding the extent of the measures advanced by Plato to address crime could be applied in the Nigeria secondary school situation.

The measures applied by Plato in

addressing crime during his own days should be applied in Nigerian secondary schools. This will help to curb the incessant increase in criminal activities among secondary school students in Nigeria.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made. The findings provided empirical evidence that measures Plato advanced to address crime in his own time are tenable in Nigerian Secondary Schools of today. Moreso, the findings provided empirical evidence that the extent the measures advanced by Plato to address crime could be applied to the Nigerian Secondary School situation to a very great extent.

Recommendations

Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study as follows:

1. Plato's measures of addressing crime should be integrated into Nigerian Secondary School education system.
2. Workshops, seminar and conferences should be organized often for secondary school teachers by government and professional bodies so as to create awareness for teachers to take cognizance of the moderate handling of student who commit crime.

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