The Role of Language in Curbing Deviant Acts in Schools

By

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Abstract

Language is an entire complex of phenomena associated with human vocal and auditory communication of emotions and ideas. It is endowed with multiple functions as the chief means of communication. It is defined as a symbolic system composed of sounds, hand gestures and written letters created to facilitate human expressions. Language aids greatly in human communication, imaginative and emotional expressions. It is a fathomless and intangible asset for communication for humanity right from the time of creation. As a matter of fact, without language, human life would have been so boring and uninteresting. On the other hand, deviant acts simply means the attitude or character of an individual or group that is contrary to the normative consensus in the society. When an individual's character, act or behaviour is in variance with accepted norms in the society, it is regarded as deviant act or behaviour. The continuous complaints and reports about the high rate of crime and youth restiveness which has led to anarchy and wanton vandalization of properties in the schools and the society at large is what has propelled the motive for this paper. Therefore, this paper examines deviant acts or behaviour in schools, types of deviant acts in schools, causes and its effects. The further examines the roles language plays in curbing this societal menace. Conclusively, the paper made recommendations on how this societal menace could be avoided.

Key Word: Role, Language, Curbing, Deviant, Acts, Schools.

Introduction

Language functions optimally with the nexus of the society and just as language cannot also function optimally without the enabling environment provided by the society and also the society cannot function without language. It is based on this that language is seen to be central to human development and also the development of the language in no doubt a pivotal instrument of human development. Language is an essential molding and sharpening ingredient of human perception and ideas, emotions, imagination and actions. It is the enabling condition for human development. The choice of language and its application aids in defining and refining of people's life in the society. Language as we know is very vital to the civilization of the people in the society. Language serves as a means of communications and self-expression. It performs a lot of functions such as curbing social unrest especially among the youths in the society. This therefore reveals that language controls human existence and mutual interaction and resolution of misunderstanding. Language is the institution where humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory symbols.

The constant reports on the high rate of crime, criminality and youth restiveness that has been characterized by anarchy and the destruction of properties and other valuables in our schools and the society at large propelled for this paper. The Nigerian society is embarrassed on daily basis of shameful actions of the youths especially the students and this has tended putting all the blames on teachers within the school system. Every organization or institution of the society such as the schools, churches and even the family and the village settings have rules and regulations (written or unwritten) guiding the behaviour of its individuals. These rules are there to proscribe the behavioural traits by members. In the case of educational institutions, there are sanctions or punishments on deviant acts like drug abuse or offences, extortions, sex offences, riotous behaviours, bullying, cultism, examination malpractices, indecent dressings, stealing etc.

Deviance simply means a deviation from what is regarded as normal. It has to with non-conformity to the rules and regulation of a prescribed and accepted norms of a given society or group. Any individual who exhibits behavioural patterns that are in variance with the accepted norms is guilty of deviance and can

be referred to as a deviate or deviant. Any act or behaviour that is not in accordance with the proscribed norms implies deviance. Deviant act or behaviuor in addition, is the situation where an individual or group behaves contrary to the normative consensus. It is also an act or behaviour that is at variance with the accepted norm in the society. Norms pattern the act or behaviour of people in any institution of the society. Every member of the society is expected to conform to this norms and failure to conform is regarded as deviant act or behaviour. Deviant act or behaviour often attracts punishments or sanctions from the society. Any act that offends the custom and pollute practices is viewed as deviance even though there is no obvious immorality occurred. When an act negates the expectation of the society, it is regarded as deviant act or behaviour. In the light of the above, this paper sees how language helps curb these deviant acts and behaviours in our schools and the society in general.

Forms of Deviant Acts in schools

Deviant acts or behaviours has been defined as any act that goes contrary to the accepted norms of any society and such behaviour or act attracts negative reactions. There are various forms of these deviant acts and behaviours common among students in various schools.

Psycho-Social Deviance

This form of deviant act include all the dimensions of anti-social act. The negation of all the norm established for the promotion of peace and harmonious existence in schools earned it the nomenclature. Deviant acts and behaviours like lying, jealousy, envy, disobedience, gossiping, rudeness, arrogance, pomposity and truancy are very common features of deviant acts among students in schools and outside the school.

Criminal Deviance

This criminal form of deviant acts or behaviuors are very common and features among students within the schools and outside the school system. The gravity of these acts has earned it its criminal label. Some of these form of acts include burglary, examination malpractices, forgery of documents, fraud, stealing, assault, abortion etc. There are definitely repercussions and punishments for these acts whenever they are committed.

Moral Deviance

These are acts or behaviours that negate the moral norms of the schools. Some of these acts that are of great concern are of great concern among the students are alcoholism, drug abuse and misuse, rape, smoking etc.

Personal Deviance

This type of deviance act or behaviour comes from individuals. This is because, the act exhibited undermines the norms of normal and healthy personality. This act or behaviour includes hatred, inferiority complex etc.

Some common types of deviant acts and behaviours in Nigerian school system

Cultism

Cultism is one of the notorious types of deviant acts at the secondary school level and the higher institutions. The activities of cultism ranges from practicing occultism, killing, maiming, arm robbery, intimidating and terrorizing the entire society. Cultism acts are unbailable offence and life imprisonment is its punishment or penalty in some states of Nigeria.

Drug offences and Smoking

Students of all levels of learning indulge in smoking cigarettes and Indian hemp. Some boil it and drink while others especially the children of the rich take cocaine and inject heroine. Things like Chinese capsules, madras that distort reality are used all in the name of feeling high. Alcoholic abuse is a common sight among secondary school students. The effect of all these is that more deadly crimes are committed without remorse or regretted.

Extortion and Stealing

Stealing has become a common thing among the students. They steal from one another, ranging from money to property such as clothes, shoes, phones, wrist watches, books etc. stealing of school properties and spending school fees are not left out of their acts.

Sex offences

This is a deviant that involves having sexual intercourse within and outside the hostels by the students. Cases of homo-sexualism, lesbianism, receiving of

opposite sex in the hostels are not left out. Occurrences of possessions of pornographic films and magazines are very common. The repercussions of these sexual offences include health problems like illegal and septic incomplete abortions, premature death, barrenness, dumping of new born in the gutters etc.

Truancy and Loitering

This constitutes a serious offence in Nigerian schools. In this case, students stay away from school without the knowledge of their parents. Some leave home for school and end up diverting to hotels and homes of fellow truants. For the secondary school students, some change their uniforms and wear ordinary clothes to avoid being noticed. Some when in school loiter around and refuses to involve or engage themselves in any useful activity.

Possession of Dangerous Weapons and Charms

These days, in the possession of students are dangerous weapons such as guns, (pistols), daggers, knives, axes etc. These weapons are used to fight their fellow students, teachers, law enforcement agents who stand on their ways as impediments to their notorious activities. Also in their possession are charms like amulets, concoctions, traditional and occult materials used to manipulate their ways.

Causes of Deviant Acts in Schools

A lot of factors are responsible for the involvement of the students into deviant acts. Some of the factors include

The Economic Status of a family

Some deviant acts usually spring up from the status of family wealth or poverty, especially among the students. Families that are not well to do financially breeds deficient satisfaction of basic needs among the growing ones. This at times lead to the delinquent tendencies. Some of the deviant acts among the students of the rich sometimes is sequel to their inability to get the type of recognition, security, independence and affection leads them to manifest in anti-social acts.

Broken and Instability of the Home

The nature of the home children are brought up can also be responsible for cases of deviant acts. There more cases of deviant acts in broken homes where parents are divorced or estranged. There are likely more deviant acts and delinquents among the children in homes experiencing death of one parent or both or absence of parents, cases of single parenthood and incessant fighting.

Peer Group Influence

Another fountain of deviant acts is the influence of peer group. The spoilt children within a peer group exert much control and influence on other members of the group. These groups are hardly ever supervised by knowledgeable adults. The result is that members of the peer groups follow interests and activities that catch their fancy. They may form goals and objectives that are contrary to the existing norms in the home and school.

Over Protection and Parental Rejection of Children

When children are over protected by parents, there is the tendency that the end result will be negative rather than positive. The same thing happens when the children are rejected by parents. These two situations encourages the formation of deviant acts by the children. When children are over pampered and are not allowed to freely participate in activities of their age mates, they become dependent on their parents and house helps at home, and at school display unpredictable attitude among peers.

Roles of Language in Curbing Deviant Acts in Schools

Language is one of the few things in life that is used in various ways for various things. Therefore identifying the roles of language is an over simplification and would broaden our understanding and the complexity of language. However, the functions or roles of language would give us insight into nothing but the purpose of language, what it does and its uses. Definitely, this would be a familiar ground to any reader because language is a part of who and what we are. Below are some of the roles of language in curbing deviant acts.

Language as a means of communication: This is of course the major means by which humans communicate. Language in this case is used to pass messages on

the consequences of deviant acts. For instance, every deviant act has a punishment in the constitution in bylaws of any society and institution. These punishments as enshrined are either written or spoken in a language, being indigenous language or English Language. With the aid of the language used to express or communicate the punishment or the implication of the deviant acts, the populace would clearly hear, read and understand that there is a consequence to that deviant act committed. By so doing, the students and the youths who are still in their young learning stage would understand and possibly deviate from deviant acts or behaviours and as this is achieved, language has played the role of curbing deviant acts and behaviours among these students.

Transmission of Culture: The major vehicle or tool for transmission of culture is the language and that is why it is said that language is part of culture. The culture of any society is transmitted from one generation to another through the use of language. The language could be a native language or foreign language. Some cultures forbid some of the deviant languages while other cultures forbid other deviant acts. Some of these deviant acts that are forbidden are stealing, rape, false accusation, abortion etc. These deviant acts are imbedded in the culture and language being the chief means of transmitting automatically transmit these deviant acts as a taboo or abominations to the students who may be having the intent to commit these acts. For the students to have had the knowledge of these acts as a taboo or abomination in their culture, would have a rethink and desist from acting so. In this case, language has justified its role or function of curbing deviant acts or behaviours among these students.

Infusion of Knowledge: It is through language that knowledge is passed. Language enables us to express our ideas, feelings and desires in such a way that is easily understood by others. The characteristics of human language make it possible for it to serve this purpose for whatever feelings, desires or ideas that are to be communicated from one person or party to another. It is through language that the knowledge one has about what deviant acts are, the causes, effects and possible remedies are passed on to the students and the society at large. Every pieces of advice on how deviant acts could be curbed is rendered or passed is through a language either in written or spoken forms. For instance, the popular advice or warning that says "smokers are liable to die young'', "drug abuse causes

insanity and untimely death", "do not drink and drive" and "abortion leads to untimely death and barrenness" are all passed to the students both in writing and orally in English Language. By so doing, knowledge about deviant acts and its implications have been successfully been infused into the students through the chief means of communication, which is language thereby helping to curb the deviant acts among the students.

Conclusion

Deviant acts among the students who are seen as the future leaders of tomorrow have become a huge problem to the government, parents and the society at large. It has become an embarrassment to both the government and the parents in as much as it is inimical to the students who are seen to be the future leaders of tomorrow. In other to curb this menace and embarrassment, language should not be undermined or looked since every measure that would be used to arrest the situation must be communicated through a language, being it an indigenous language or foreign language.

Recommendation

Haven had the knowledge of deviant acts, forms and common types, causes and the roles language plays towards curbing it, it is recommended that the parents should implore a soul torching language, being it a native language or any other language that the children would understand and also enable them know the implication of indulging in deviant acts at the early stage of their education. It is also advised that a stringent language or words should be used by the government when crusading against deviant acts its implication and punishments as it will instil fear on the students especially at primary level.

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