

Moulding for Excellence at Federal College of Education (FCE) Abeokuta, Nigeria

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Abstract

Moulding for excellence as the motto of the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Nigeria is a reflection of the College emphasis on academics with character education. As the college has zero tolerance for undesirable behaviour, however, the society continues to raise doubt on the quality of its teachers as a result of a big gap between the town-gown principle of education due to a lot of moral decadence being witnessed in the country. These social ills include armed robbery, corruption, kidnapping, pipeline-vandalization, hostage-taking, prostitution, ethno-religious insurgencies etc. This paper therefore attempted to investigate what the students perceived as the concept of 'moulding for excellence', its defects and prospects in the college. Chi-square (X^2) statistics were used to analyze a sampled opinion of 218 students representing 8.4 percent of the total students' population. Three null hypotheses based on Male-Female, Degree-Non Degree, and Science-Humanities contingencies were tested to investigate the students' perceptions. It was discovered that significant differences existed in the perceptions of the students based on various contingencies specified at $P < 0.05$. Even though, the perception of the NCE and degree students in the college were in tandem with the motto of the college, however; most percentages opinion of the degree students were a bit lower to that of their NCE counterparts. Appropriate recommendations were therefore made to strengthen the compliance of the students' and the college authorities to the motto of 'moulding for excellence' and forging synergy between the college and the family system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Moulding, Excellence, Behaviour, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)

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Introduction

Moulding for excellence is a coinage to promote human dignity in education. It is from the belief that “cognitive knowledge is respected only when it serves the moral aim” (Shea, 2003 quoting Cheng, 1998). It also emanates from the philosophy that “great learning and superior ability are of little value unless honour, truth and integrity are added to them” (Sweeney, 2008:8).

Indeed, it is a clarion call for moral and academic excellence in institutions of learning. According to Mezieboi, Fubara, Izuagba, Nkwocha and Okobia (2008), the alarming dimensions of moral decadence in Nigeria has thrown enormous challenges on the school system. The menace of examination malpractices, drug abuse, rape, theft, disobedience, indecent dressing, cultism, armed robbery, forgery, kidnapping etc are common in Nigerian schools, homes and society at large (Abdulkareem, 1992; Mezieobi, Nok and Nwosu, 2009, Onyimadu, 2010; Adetoro 2012). Even, the recurring poor academic performance of students in the college is worrisome (Research and Publication Committee 2007).

This is why Reasoner (2000) discovered a close relationship between low self-esteem, problems of violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, drop-outs and poor academic achievement while Rosenberg and Owens (2001) submitted that adolescents with low self-esteem have difficulty making appropriate moral decisions. Equally, Akindutire (2004) found a relationship between a college vision and the achievement of students. Consequently, the school is called upon as an intervention agency for both academic and moral rectitude and it is along this thought that the motto coinage of “moulding for excellence” emanated at Federal College of Education, Abeokuta a college that has been in existence since 1976.

Studies by Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1964) acknowledged that the child is initially amoral and that moral conscience developed in stages. While Piaget submitted that the child develops from egocentric morality to morality of constraint and morality of cooperation, Kohlberg believed that it is from pre – conventional orientation to conventional stage and post-conventional morality. However, while Skinner (1971) agreed to the significance of reinforcement in moral standards, Freud (1957) and Bandura (1973) acknowledged the role of imitation in behaviour modification. Nevertheless, Bruner (1973) submitted that behaviour modification is a function of mental reconstruction.

Moulding for excellence is also in the purview of character and value education. While character education is to help people become ‘good’, understand core values, adopt them and act upon them (Shea, 2003); value education is to help an individual appreciate the worth or merit which people place on various aspects of their life (Adetoro, 2012). This is why in a review of character education literature, McDaniel (1978) submitted that the school is expected to train students to behave responsibly within the ethics of the community. Such training is to produce “a psychologically person” who is “a problem solver, allocentric and empathic”, who will be able to act on “democratic values” with “autonomous and self – directed health” (McDaniel 1998:5 citing Sprinthall, 1997).

This is based on the assumption that “an educational environment in which virtuous conduct is consistently nurtured, valued, and reinforced is presumed to have an impact on the formulation of one’s values and moral reasoning” (Scott, 2004:17 citing Sparks, 1991). This is equally to state that the aim of “moulding for excellence” at FCE, Abeokuta is to produce students who possess valuable knowledge, worthy character and are mostly preferred in the teaching profession.

Purpose of the Study

As part of the normal evaluation processes of a conceptualized project, this study therefore attempted to answer the following questions.

1. How do the students at FCE, Abeokuta conceptualize the term “moulding for excellence”?
2. Do the students perceive the concept of “moulding for excellence” as improving academic performance at FCE, Abeokuta?
3. Do the students perceive the concept of “moulding for excellence” as improving morality of students at FCE, Abeokuta?
4. Do the students perceive the staff doing enough to achieve “moulding for excellence” at FCE, Abeokuta?
5. What suggestions are necessary to enhance “moulding for excellence” at FCE, Abeokuta.

Research Hypotheses

In addition to answering the questions raised, the study equally attempted to test the following hypotheses.

- (i) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) students compared to their degree counterparts on the concept of ‘moulding for excellence’ at FCE, Abeokuta.
- (ii) The perceptions of Science and Humanities students on the concept of ‘moulding for excellence’ will not significantly differ at FCE, Abeokuta.
- (iii) The perceptions of male and female students at FCE Abeokuta will not significantly differ on the concept of ‘moulding for excellence’.

Methodology

This survey study used 20-item, close-ended questionnaire administered on three hundred sampled students out of a target population of two thousand and six hundred students. The questionnaire items were validated by three social studies educators at Federal College of Education, Abeokuta using Pearson test-retest method (for 50 students outside the sampled students). A reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained. However, during the actual questionnaire administration, only 218 of the questionnaires could be retrieved from the students because of NCE students’ teaching practice engagement outside the college. The data collated from the study were analyzed with percentages and chi-square (χ^2) statistic.

Results and Interpretations

The results revealed that 89.9 percent of the (109) degree students and 95.4 percent of their NCE counterparts (109) are quite aware of the existence of moulding for excellence as the motor of FCE, Osiele, Abeokuta. Equally, 86.2 and 87.2 percents of the NCE and degree students respectively in the college knew that the coinage 'moulding for excellence' is to inculcate worthy learning and character into the students in the college. These high level of awareness and perception corroborates Bruner's (1973) submission that behaviour modification is a function of mental reconstruction. It equally supports McDaniel's (1978) view that the school is expected to train students to behave responsibly within the ethics of the community.

On the second research question, while 77.0 percent of the NCE students agreed that the motor 'moulding for excellence' has actually improved their academic performances at FCE, Osiele, Abeokuta; only 66.9 percent of their degree counterparts agreed to this assertion probably because degree programmes are just three-years old in the college. However, these high perceptions of the two categories of students justifies the finding of Reasoner (2000) on close relationship between behaviour and academic achievement.

The finding of this study on research question three also revealed that while 71.5 percent of the NCE students submitted that the concept 'moulding for excellence' has positively improved morals of the students at FCE, Osiele; only 47.7 percent of their degree counterparts agreed with this submission. This is probably because majority of the degree students are yet to taste the wraght of the college authorities on zero tolerance for indiscipline. Nevertheless, the high perception of the NCE students on this issue supports Scott's (2004) view that an educational environment is to support the formation of one's values and moral reasoning.

On research question 4, majority of the students (71.6 percent for NCE and 59.7 percent for degree) agreed that the lecturers were presently doing enough to achieve moulding for excellence in the college. Furthermore, 51.4 percent of the degree students and 59.7 percent of their NCE counterparts agreed that the non – academic staff were also trying their best to achieve the college motto. Majority of the students (67 percent for the degree and 70.7 percent for NCE) equally submitted that the College Management were also doing enough to achieve 'moulding for excellence' in the college. The current staff efforts presumably were being carried out to avert what Rosenberg and Owens (2001) perceived as 'adolescents with low self-esteem' that may have difficulty in making appropriate moral decisions.

On research question 5, majority of the students (59.6 percent for degree students and 58.7 percent for NCE students) would want the college authorities to do more to reduce sexual harassment in the college. 55.9 percent of the degree students and 60.5 percent of the NCE students would also want more actions to reduce cultism in the college. These requests are in line with the need to promote more 'virtuous conduct' as submitted by Scott (2004) for the formation of better values and moral reasoning.

Analysis and Interpretation of Hypotheses Results

Table 1: Chisquare (X^2) Test on Differences in Degree and NCE Students' Perceptions on Moulding for Excellence

Deg vs NCE	
Chi-square	42.284
df	33
Asymp.sig	.129

- a. 34 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 3.2

As can be seen in table 1, the calculated chisquare value of 42.284 is significant at 0.05 P-value indicating that there is a significant difference between the perception of the degree and NCE students as regards the motto 'moulding for excellence' at FCE, Osiele, Abeokuta. As earlier submitted under the descriptive interpretation, this significant difference may be as a result of the relative newness of the degree programmes in the college.

Table 2: Chisquare (X^2) Test on Differences in Science and Humanities Students' Perceptions on Moulding for Excellence.

Science vs Humanities	
Chi-square	49.945
df	34
Asymp.sig	.038

- a. 35 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 3.1.

As can be seen in table 2, the calculated 49.945 chisquare value is significant at 0.05 P-value. This result shows that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of Science and Humanities students as regards the concept of 'moulding for excellence' in the college. This finding corroborates the findings of Adetoro and Oniyide (2013) who discovered that there was a significant difference between the perception of Humanities-based and Science-based students on the value of Nigeria Certificate in Education in the College.

Table 3: Chisquare (X^2) Test on Differences in Male and Female Students' Perceptions on Moulding for Excellence

Male vs Female	
Chi-square	31.200
df	31
Asymp.sig	.456

- a. 32 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 3.1.

As can be seen from table 3, the calculated chisquare value of 31.200 is significant at 0.05 P-value indicating that the perceptions of both male and female students on the

motto 'moulding for excellence' differ significantly in the college. This result is in line with the findings of Oladiti (2009) who found a significant sex difference in the perceived factors of family conflict. However, it is contrary to the findings of Amdii and Akinola (2009) who discovered no significant difference in the opinions of male and female adolescents on the influence of school on their social adjustment as well as Oderinde and Yusuf (2012) on the desirability of traditional values in the proposed national values curriculum in Nigeria. Furthermore, the finding negates that of Adetoro and Oniyide (2013) on the no significant result of male and female students as regards their value for Nigeria Certificate in Education.

Recommendations

- Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the students' appreciation and attainment of 'moulding for excellence' in the college.
- The current zero tolerance for indiscipline in the college should be stepped – up on the issues of sexual harassment and cultism. Indecent dressings that can provoke sexual harassment should attract stiffer penalties of warning and if continued, suspension from the college. Cultists should not only be expelled from the college but also prosecuted in the court and if found guilty, sent to jail for not less than three years with hard labour. These would serve as serious deterrents to others in the system.
- The family system should be more supportive to the school by ensuring that basic necessities for schooling are given to children. Parents also have to be role models in terms of morality and monitoring of their wards in the school.
- There is need to forge a collaborative synergy between the college and the parents of the students. This is to enhance excellence in performance and ethical behaviour (Davidson, Lickona and Khmelkov, 2007). This can be done by the College Management conducting Parents and Guardians Forum once in a semester where the academic performance and moral behaviour of each student can be reported. Exemplary character and academic performance of distinguished students can also be rewarded and lecturers' behaviour appraised in the forum. Excellent performance among lecturers should be rewarded and poorly-behaved lecturers rebuked in the forum.
- Students' rating of workers performance (both academic and non-academic) is very necessary to serve as feedback mechanism in the college. This should be part of the objective assessment report card on all workers to be read during the parents/guardians forum.
- The College of Education entrants need to be well-motivated with bursaries and scholarship to energize the students towards better academic performance and good morality.
- A replication of this study to assess the college workers perception of the college motto (moulding for excellence) and a comparative study of the same with that of the students is necessary for a balanced – evaluation of the

concept. Moreso, that Akomolafe and Ibijola (2012) had observed decline productivity in college system as output (students) are kept static while inputs (human and material resources) are increasing.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that every institution of learning should strive to achieve excellence in their product (students). This is necessary if education is to produce a total personality devoid of greed, corruption, and incompetence. The various social vices and poor academic performance being witnessed in the school system can be partly blamed on lack of needs assessment as regards the motto of the various institutions. Suffice is to state that a regular assessment of institutional motto from all stakeholders perspectives will serve as a feedback to the society and invariably serve as warning signals to all and sundry.

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