

Gradual Drifting in the Proper Organization of Secondary School Send-Off Parties in Event Places and Hotels: Critical Consequences

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Abstract

Graduation day is a day to commemorate students who have just concluded secondary school which is often organised by the school authority. From the scheme of things, there is a gradual drift in the organizing of this graduation parties in hotels and event places and this ugly trend has become an epidemic in our nation's educational system. Using critical appreciation the researcher finds out that this paradigm shift in using event places and hotels as venue for graduation party has degenerated into social problems like teenage pregnancy, rape, underage drinking, drug abuse death, etc. The researcher therefore recommends the need for a clarion call for the attention of government at all levels to chart penalties for schools and students who host their graduation party in hotels and event places. The ministry of education should also enforce the wearing of school uniforms and graduation gowns for graduation party in other to curb this menace.

Keywords: Graduation, Send-off, Hotels, Event centres, Organizing, Drifting

Introduction

We believe graduation is a time mapped out in the school calendar where families come to see their kids walk across the stage, and step into another academic phase (Make Graduation day special). It is also a day to celebrate the students; family members, friends and well-wishers are also invited to celebrate this special day. Graduation is being organized by school authorities, with assistance from students, parents, local business persons, and members of the media.

These students are given opportunities to deliver speeches, present drama, songs, power point presentation, etc. Prize giving day is always a major highlight of graduation as students who had extra ordinary performers are duly rewarded with cash prizes and gift items. Send-off Day, Valedictory service, Recognition Day, or Step-Up Day is among the names given this special and memorable event by students and school authorities.

Despite the names this day is called its main aim is to celebrate the students who have graduated from secondary school. Graduation days are always so memorable so in the ensuing weeks, secondary school students are always very excited about this day. Usually these festive events are unforgettable as the optimistic denouement of secondary school and exciting harbinger of future potential. Yet the normally idyllic gatherings can also be unforgettable for a far more sombre reason: the tragic consequences of underage drinking, most notably fatal crashes and violent crimes (Hinkston, 2015).

In recent times, there has been a gradual drifting in organizing secondary school sendoff parties in event places and hotels among our Nigerian secondary schools. Send off parties which were previously been organised in other to celebrate academic excellence, inspire young school leavers to embrace higher education, foster good relationship and induct this grandaunts into Old boys and girls association among others have been reduced to a place of jamboree where all kinds of social vices take place. The idea of Prom night which we are currently copying from the westerners has negative impacts on our secondary schools. Our graduation parties in schools formerly celebrated in the presence of parents, guardians and well wishers are now seen as old fashioned, students are allowed to organise send off parties without supervision of the parents and school authorities. Most schools now organize their send off parties in hotels and event centres where these students have access to alcohol, hard drugs, weapons, and even come along with their dates. The female students were revealing dresses and expose themselves to the risk of being harassed sexually by their class mates in their send off parties. Teenagers get drunk with different types of alcohol; commit all kinds of atrocities on their graduation day.

It is no longer news that most of our teenagers who were virgins become sexually active on the day of their graduation. Graduation parties which are supposed to chart the way forward into a brighter future for this student end up becoming a day where most of them ruin their lives. Some get pregnant and never continue the pursuit of their education while most of the guys form gangsters and become heavy drug users. This drift of organizing graduation parties in event centres and hotels where these students are allowed to come on casual clothes and act the way they want is causing more harm than good in our school system.

Concept of graduation

Graduation is getting a diploma or academic degree or the ceremony that is sometimes associated with it, in which students become graduates.

Before the graduation, candidates are referred to as grandaunts. The date of graduation is often called graduation day (Wikipedia).

Collins English dictionary defines graduation as being graduated from a school or college. The ceremony connected with this; commencement is known as valedictory service or graduation day. The researcher adopts this definition in the context of this research paper. Graduation day is always a red letter day for students who graduated from secondary school as it ushers them into the real world. They see themselves as been free from the shackles of secondary school and have the liberty to do what they like (What is graduation).

Misconception of Graduation

Graduation Day which is a day mapped out to celebrate young secondary school leavers have become a platform for teenagers to engage in all kinds of socially unacceptable behaviour. The approach of prom and graduation celebrations and the possibility of tragedy anytime there is underage drinking, warrants the need for a rethink of what graduation is all about.

The organization of send off parties in ungodly places by students has made graduation day lose its essence. Truly, when the purpose of a thing is not known abuse is inevitable. This misconception of what graduation day is all about has affected the setting and purpose of graduation; students seem to outdo themselves on that day in other to prove they are matured enough to take on their journey into adulthood by organizing graduation parties in hotels and event places. Some even borrow clothes, drink alcohol, take hard drugs, and join gangsters in other to gain acceptance from their peer groups. The concept has always been graduation day and school uniforms and graduation gowns has always been the dress code from the onset, but our teenagers have turned it into night parties where anything goes. It is no longer a day where academic performance is celebrated but a time to explore the good and the bad.

Causes of the Gradual Drifting in Organizing Secondary School Graduation Parties in Event Places and Hotels

The following are causes of the gradual drifting in organizing secondary school graduation parties in event places and hotels:

- i. Total neglect by school authority- It is worrisome to state that school authorities approach the idea of graduation with so much negligence. Most school Principals especially those in the private sector even

encourage the students by fixing this send off parties in event places and hotels and allow them to run their activities without the supervision of school personnel, parents and guardians.

- ii. Lack of understanding of the importance of school uniform- School uniform is a pre-requisite for a functional education system; and the benefits of school uniform in our schools cannot be over-emphasized. School uniforms and badges customize the student as the property of the school. Wearing a school uniform is a badge of pride, creates an identity for a school and is an important part of being a school student. A shirt, tie and blazer may not be the ingredients for a student favourite outfit, but the idea of school uniform shouldn't be thrown away in a bid to embrace modernization. School uniforms show that you are part of the school. Wearing it says we're all in this together. Wearing your uniform with pride simply says that you are half way there to being respectful, and buying into what the school is all about (Guardian, 2013).

School uniforms give students a sense of belonging to a particular school and create an identity for the school in the community. It makes it very easy for one to identify the child or teenager as a member of the school. A school uniform teaches students to dress smartly and take pride in their appearance. Most importantly, wearing school uniforms on graduation day means the students don't have to worry about peer pressure when it comes to their clothes. When everyone is dressed the same, worrying about what you look like isn't so important. There is no competition about being dressed in the latest trend, which would put a great deal of financial pressure on students and parents. Potential bullies have one less target for their insults; it's hard to make fun of what someone is wearing when you're dressed exactly the same.

In a scenario where students are advised to wear school uniforms for their graduation party it will definitely eliminate the idea of wearing ostentatious dresses in order to put others down or elevate your status. This will be forced to behave well because they are wearing uniforms which gives them an identity as a minor and student of a school.

- iii. The negative influence of old students association - Old Students Associations are former students of institution's who graduated and

have come together to form a network for mutual benefit. In other words these are ex-students who pull resources together in order to support their alma-mata (Banka & Terhile, 2015). Some Old student association has encouraged this gradual drifting of school graduation parties in event places, most of this old students encourage this act by helping this students secure venue outside the school. They also render financial assistance to these students in other to make the party a success, they also bring alcohol and drugs to the party influencing their younger students negatively.

- iv. Western Influence- It is obvious that we Nigerians have not only copied the way of life of our colonial masters we have also embraced their education system and have thrown away our indigenous form of education. This gradual drift from graduation day to graduation night in hotels and event places can be traced to Prom night. We are trying so hard to emulate our foreign counterparts who throw their graduation party in hotels without inviting their parents or school management. Our students are obviously turning their graduation parties into Prom nights which encourage sexual harassment and promiscuity.
- v. Social media- The introduction of mass media has turned the world into a global village. We now have access to communicate with our friends on social media. It keeps our student updated with trends, so social media platforms like facebook, twitter handle, instagram, imo, snapchat among others also contribute to the widespread of organizing graduation parties in event places and hotels. Teenagers join the bandwagon to organize these parties outside the school premises in other to have a sense of belonging after they have read articles and seen pictures and videos of how fun and interesting graduation parties held outside school environment.

Consequences of Organizing Graduation Parties in Event Places and Hotels

It is expedient to state that organizing graduation parties in event places and hotels has so many disadvantages on the students, school, parents, and the society at large. Some of these consequences are listed below:

Teenage pregnancy- Most teenagers lose their virginity on their graduation and get pregnant. Most teenagers wear very seductive dresses to graduation parties held in event places and end up sleeping with their classmates after

or during the party which can never occur if the party was held in the school environment under the supervision of their parents and guardians. The thought of been free from high school makes teenagers very vulnerable and makes them take irrational decisions without thinking of the consequences.

Alcohol and drug use- Most students take alcohol and hard drugs on their graduation nights just to feel accepted among their circle of friends. These graduation parties are often turned into a smoking and drinking party and some of them become addicted after this act.

Death- This gradual drift of organizing graduation parties in event places and hotels can lead to the death of these young adults/teenagers who drive drunk. Some of them have lost control on stirring and even stabbed their friends with knife under the influence of alcohol.

Rape- Rape has remained a part of graduation parties held outside the school environment. Most students use this avenue to sexually harass the opposite sex or punish their offenders by raping. This is prone to happen as the event centres where this parties are held encourages it

Decline in moral and education standard- Organizing parties in event centres and hotels does not only affect our moral values but also our education system. Most of them post pornographic pictures and tag the junior students their by urging them to also continue in the act. When something goes wrong in the party it lives a bad legacy for the school.

The Need for Introduction of Project Graduation

Project graduation is an alcohol and drug free celebration held the night of graduation for all graduating senior students (Wikipedia).

According to Samuels (2004) Project graduation is a program offered by many high schools, in which organized, adult-supervised and alcohol-free activities are offered as part of a post-graduation party, as an alternative to student-run events involving alcoholic beverage or drugs. Events often last through the night and are held in hotels or community centres. Students are checked for illicit substances before entry and are carefully monitored.

History of Project Graduation

Project Graduation emerged in 1980, the result of community energies empowered through a state initiative. It has long since been recognized as a prototype for the nation, helping to protect the lives of graduating seniors in all states. Oxford Hills and five other communities sent teams of school and community leaders through intensive training sponsored by the division. One of these teams, the Drug and Alcohol Team of Oxford Hills (DATOH), aimed to prevent recurring tragedies as Oxford Hills had experienced the previous year (1979), when seven alcohol and other drug related teen deaths occurred during the commencement season. The seniors were offered an alternative to the "traditional" graduation-night drinking event that drew hundreds of people to the local fair grounds. They called this chemical-free party "Project Graduation." The entire process, a huge success, was covered by the news media and was adopted as a major program initiative of the Division of Alcohol and Drug Education Services.

The aim of Project graduation activities are to increase awareness of the dangers of drinking, drugging and driving and to reduce the number of youth involved in alcohol and other drug-related highway crashes. Across the country, Project Graduation and the chemical-free celebrations are the new tradition for graduating seniors. It is a communitywide planning process that strives to create a caring, supportive environment and more open communication between youths and adults."

All school-related functions are supposed to be chemical-free, but what makes Project Graduation different is the attitude of the students. They have made a conscious decision to enjoy their graduation night without alcohol or other drugs. And no other group, including parents and school personnel, can make that decision for students (High school student's parents' project). There is need for school authorities to adopt this concept in order to end this gradual drifting of organizing graduation parties in event places and hotels.

Conclusion

The high rate of tragedy that occurs anytime graduation parties are taking outside the school environment is really worrisome. The issue of underage drinking, use of hard drugs, sexual activities, cultism activities among other violent activities that goes on in this parties organized by students. One can safely presume that the vast majority of these unacceptable behaviours cannot be done with parental accompaniment or supervision of the school management. However there is need for us to go

Okafor and Nwabueze Improving the Curriculum Content of Electrical/Electronics Technology... back to the drawing board and rediscover the purpose of organizing graduation parties.

Recommendation

The trend of organizing graduation parties in event places and hotels is a menace stirring us in the face and daring us to take drastic measures towards its eradication. Therefore the researcher recommends the following measure as a way of addressing this problem:

1. There is need for the Ministry of education to fine any school caught organizing graduation parties in hotels.
2. School management should make it compulsory for students to wear school uniforms and graduation gowns on their sent forth day to curb the flamboyant attitude of some students.
3. All Alumni activities should be organised within the school environment except on official notice.
4. The school authority should also involve the students in the planning of the graduation so they would not feel left out and decide to have their own after party. Graduation party should be more focused on celebrating student and not a fundraising avenue for the school.
5. Parents on their own part should become watchdogs of their children upon graduation from high school.

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