

Students' Activism: Intersection of Challenges and Opportunities for Good Governance in

South West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Good governance forms the fulcrum of state legitimacy which is dependent on the cooperation of all segments of the society. Thus, students' movements by their numerical capacity and status as young political elites in training are integral part of political spectrum globally. Through, their advocacy, activism and engagement, they have not only shaped and influenced educational policies in higher institutions of learning; they have become influential in changing the narratives and dynamics of public policies. The Nigerian students are not exempted from the foregoing. Their documented cases of holding governments accountable before the Fourth Republic have promoted good governance. However, the capacity and quality of the Nigerian students' leadership is on a decline due to lack of internal cohesion, material inclination, loss of public legitimacy and disoriented leadership. This has created disconnection between students' activism expected roles to interrogate public policy to the advantage of Nigerians. The study is qualitatively designed with primary and secondary data. The primary data was sourced through 10 key informant interviews conducted while published journals, textbooks, magazines and other textual materials were used as secondary data. It used students' socio-political role theory as framework of analysis. The findings revealed that students' activism failed to impact on good governance in Southwest due to pervasive hegemonic political antics of the state governors, unnecessary political ambitions of the students' leaders and depleted leftist ideology in the students' constituency. The study recommends for paradigm shift in the mode of recruiting students' leadership and integration of students' leadership in the policymaking circles of government among others, to strengthen students' capacity to improve good governance in Southwest Nigeria.

Keywords: Development, politics, students' activism, good governance, Southwest

Introduction

Globally, students are reputed as integral part of higher institutions of learning and have become instrumental to the policy formulation and implementation in ivory towers. There have been documented cases of how students' engagements changed public policy and tertiary institutions rule, given their numerical strength and sense of intellectual engagement. As argued by Luescher, *et al* (2006) and corroborated by Akinboye and Eesuola (2015) the various curriculums of studies and activities in higher institutions exposes them to sense of civic responsibility, leadership and values needed for socio- political and economic advocacy. In Africa, students have continued to engage and confront management of higher institutions of learning on issues bothering on poor welfare, increased tuition fee, decayed infrastructure and Machiavellian leadership. The development crisis in Africa has seen students beaming their demand for transparency and accountability on elected political authority. This phase of students' activities is accentuated by the argument that majority of the implemented policies and programmes in tertiary institutions are the end product of political decisions within the realm of the states' political spectrum (Oyekanmi, 2024).

It is noteworthy to situate that students' activism in its various strands, revolves around organized collective action and advocacy directed towards protecting students' educational interests, welfare as well as the general happiness of the members of the public. In the conclusion of Chiamogu (2018) oftentimes, the curated cases of students call for dialogue and demonstration on aggregated and articulated interests are driven by elected or appointed leadership who are responsible for mobilization of human and material resources to press home their demands. However, because political activism is an improvement on students' activism since many challenges in tertiary institutions is a reflection of government inadequacy and institutional weaknesses, it become necessary for students to develop new model through which political authorities would be held accountable on governance issue.

The foray of students' activism and engagement with political authority in Nigeria was an offshoot of the West African Students' Unions which was formed in 1925 by the Nigeria's duo of Herbert Bankole Bright and Ladipo Solanke as an advocacy union for African foreign students against racial discrimination, inequality and rights violation. Given the success of WASU, National Union

of Nigerian Students, NUNS, National Organization of Nigerian Students, NONS were formed in 1956 at the establishment of the then University College in Ibadan (Odeyemi *et al*,2020).

However, the organization transformed into National Association of Nigerian Students, NANS in 1983, a national students body in Nigeria till today. The NANS has engaged in many protests against tertiary institutions managements and government across Nigeria on issue of students' welfare and on general governance issue. The infamous *Ali Must Go* demonstration of 1978, the *Ango Abdullahi Must Go protest* of 1986 in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Anti SAP and the protest against the annulment of Presidential result of June 12 in 1993 were issues that brought students' activism to public reckoning in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Expectedly, citizens are to enjoy the metrics of good governance through security, social welfare, sustainable economy and people oriented policy. However, Nigeria has remained increasingly threatened by banditry, farmers-herders crisis, political corruption, food crisis, poverty and unimaginable inflationary trends. Rosenje (2022) and Mimiko (2010) have both asserted that Nigeria's crisis of governance has defiled all solutions. As noted by Wonah (2019) while students' activism is on a decline in developed countries due to better performance of the government in the area of fiscal discipline, democratic values and citizens-centric approach to public policy, it has remained an ever-growing issue of concern in Nigeria and other African countries(*Punch*, 2023).

To the dismay of Oyekanmi *et al.* (2023) the Nigerian students' activists who are supposed to interrogate public policy to the advantage of the people remained intractable challenged by self-inflicted challenges of leadership rivalry and lack of cohesion.

Thus, the study is an interrogation of the influence of students' activism in the promotion of good governance in the South West Nigeria, to identify challenges and provide pragmatic solutions for South West development.

Methodology

The study is empirically designed through the use of primary and secondary data. Published journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers and other online publications were used as secondary data, while key informants interview was used as primary data. Ten key participants cutting across students' leadership in the Southwest and state government functionaries were carefully selected to participate in the interview session. Among the participants were the six JCC Chairmen in

Southwest who represented the students' constituency while two Commissioners and two special advisers as political functionaries represented Southwest government. The interviews were transcribed and the contents were analysed within the thematic governance issues and the opinions that were expressed were used to corroborate or disagree with perceptions expressed through other cited sources.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted students' socio-political role theory. The theory emerged from the need to examine students' role in the promotion of national growth and development of their countries. The theory was developed and popularised by Feuer (1969) from his classic work 'conflict of generations'. The theory has also been adopted by Olugbade (1990) in his work titled 'Nigerian students and political mobilisation' which was directed to examine students' role in politics and other affairs of public life. The theory in its treatise gave birth to two schools of thought; positivism and negativism. In the submission of the positivists, students are integral major forces and elements in all social development, with greater values to help in the task of nation-building. This school of thought argued further that students have the required capacity and competence needed to engineer economic prosperity, democratic maturity and stability in higher institutions. The advocate of students' positive social roles concluded that students should be assigned specific and important role in nation-building.

Feuer (1969) and Survey (1988) led the line in the negative school. They accused students of immaturity and irrational in actions with undefined emotions whose youthful exuberance must be put in check. While leading this line of thought, Feuer devalued students' movements and activism as uncoordinated, vague and less informed in their interest articulations and socio-political engagements. He submitted that students' unrest is caused by their overgrown emotions, self-aggression and resentments towards elders or higher authorities. He attributed these students' nature to the permissive nature of some universities who reinforces students' activism with excessive freedom and sense of entitlement that censored protest and violence as perfect answers in all agitation. Putting all these intricacies together, Feuer argued that all student movements in society are an indication of generational disequilibrium.

However, within the context of students' activism in Nigeria, particularly in the South-western region, Feuer's position is dysfunctional, repressive and a clear ideological disposition of

the prevailing ruling classes in all societies. How can one in good conscience equate students' protest to astronomical tuition increments, radicalism against autocratic leadership and frustration on good governance deficit as mere expression of hostility, aggression, resentment and jealousy against political class and older generation? It suffices to conclude that students' activism in the form of protest, demonstration and threats are products of prolonged grievances, frustration and neglect arising from bad governance and poor commitment to public welfare, including students' interests.

Another criticism of is the naivety and irrationality they associate students with. It has shown in Nigeria that when students are integrated into key decision-making circles and given the worthwhile responsibility to show initiative and ideas, they perform creditably well. There have been many cases of students' activism in the Southwest Nigeria where students' leadership intellectually engaged government and higher institutions' authorities on matters of education funding and demand for governance within the public realm. These were done successfully with envisioned results achieved without recourse to violence and civil unrest. For instance, in 2012, the students' union of Tai Solarin University of Education engaged and opposed the Government of Ogun State on the pronounced scrapping of TASUED. Senator Ibikunle Amosun, the State Governor at the time had announced the scrapping of the university and her students were profiled to be merged with students of the Faculty of Education in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. Instead of violent protest and vandalism of public property, the students engaged the government through media war of facts and civil gathering of her members through the *modus operandi* of 'Operation Occupy TASUED'. Through such media and peaceful engagements of government and members of the public, their cause won more public admirers, embarrassed the government's decision as unpopular and thus, the government had to rescind the scrapping decision.

Conceptual Clarification on Good Governance and Students' Activism

Good Governance

In the submission of Adegbami and Adepoju (2017) good governance describes the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in a way that public resources are effectively managed. This perspective on good governance is rooted in the public expectations from politically established institutions of the state. It is equally established that good governance indicates public oriented policy responses from legally established authorities directed to the needs and wishes of

the people (Khabar, 2019). In other words, good governance involves a situation whereby political process translates the will of the people to public policies with a view to ensuring efficient service delivery. This was what Coker and George-Genyi (2014, p. 1121), referred to as “quality aspect of governance in all societies.”

Good governance negates all sorts of discrimination, prejudices, corruption and exploitation of the masses. Owwoeye and Bissersser (2012) posited that good governance is the end result of political authorities’ response to public happiness and citizens’ satisfaction on economic, social and security programmes. This is a positive measure of the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness, public service efficiency and effectiveness, accountability, consultation and participation in the conduct of public affairs. This is understood from the perspective of how government is able to meet the collective aspirations of majority of the people in manners that access to important information, unhindered participation of the people and contribution in the decision-making process and fiscal openness of the government are guaranteed. It involves the provision of social amenities, critical infrastructure and policy directives which creates an enabling environment for collective and individual growth of the citizens residing in Southwest Nigeria.

Students’ Activism

Existing studies have established that students’ activism has been a crucial force for social change, political representation, and democratic quality (Sheppart, 1989; Fletcher, 2005; Gyampo, 2013; Martelli & Garalyte, 2019), decolonisation (Hodgkinson & Melchiorre, 2019), political mobilisation (Olugbade, 1990; Wonah, 2019), diversity and the struggle for a just society (Rhoads, 2016; Rhoads, 1998). Historically, campus organisation, democratic and civic engagement, leadership development, and community engagement have all manifested through students’ activism (Farago, Swadener, Richter, Eversman & Roca-Servat, 2018; Barnhardt, 2012; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee, 2000). Students’ activism fosters students’ capacities for engaging in socially responsible collective action both on campus and outside it (Barnhardt, 2012). It thus means that it extends beyond students’ unionism and activities of elected representatives on campuses; it includes the activities of all affiliated students’ leadership structures on students’ welfare and advocacy for public good in the society. In sum, students’ activism is not restricted to campus affairs; it involved consistent engagement with the drivers of political spectrums in the state and federal level. A new perspective to student’s activism imply intense advocacy, agitation

and engagements directed to government and non- states hierarchical structures to achieve none hidden goals.

Oyekanmi (2014) asserted that students' activism in Africa is not limited to decolonisation from aged vestiges. It involves continued protestations and ideological advocacy for the protection of students' interests from the post-colonial university administrators and unpopular government policies. Students' activism is an integral part of the society, which encompasses activities pertaining to seeking solutions to myriad issues affecting the individual students, lecturers and immediate community, through their campus unions established at various institutions of higher learning and replicated at the state, zonal and federal levels. Students' activism is commonly associated with left-wing politics and socio-political engagements, although right-wing student movement is also common. Students' union is formed to promote and defend the welfare needs of the students' community in Nigerian tertiary educational system. Union leaders engage government through dialogue on certain policies and the authorities of institutions to provide certain minimum services that will promote a sustained environment for academic interactions (Peter & Ebimobwei, 2015).

It is deducible from the foregoing that students' activism is an institutionalised and organised engagement by students' unions or associations with the management of their respective institutions of higher learning, state government or even federal government, on issues relating to students' welfare and society at large. It involves using the methods of political demonstration, protests, lobby, letter-writing or petition to support legitimate course or oppose it. It is essentially regulated and guided by relevant constitution of such union or association.

An Overview of South west Nigeria in the Context of Students' Activism

Students' activism is deeply entrenched in Nigeria's historical epochs, spanning throughout the era of military interregnum and civil rule. For instance, the first birth of any recognised student body with national spread was in the University of Ibadan in 1956. In the paradigms of the operational structures of students' activism, there are many structures of NANS in each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Thus, the South West, Nigeria is the Zone D of the NANS structure. This structure is headed by an elected chairman, who is equally elected alongside other zonal officers. Students' leadership in the South west covers six States, viz: Ogun, Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo State.

Oyekanmi and Adebajo (2023) while recalling the impactful performance of students' leadership of Southwest extraction in holding government and management of higher institutions of learning accountable before the Fourth Republic, noted that Southwest was the hotbed of students' activism and the most virile and ideological zone in the entire NANS structures. Aside from the fact that the region produced the first NANS president in 1980, some of the most vibrant NANS officers and senior cadres are from the zone. For instance, Yinka Aiyefele Gbadebo from Southwest was the NANS president between 2013/2014, while Oyedeji Salam was the Senate Arm of the NANS. As a confirmation of the level of students' activism in the Southwest, Comrade Olusegun Clement from Ogun State was elected the Public Relations Officer of NANS all within 2013-2015, and in 2021, Comrade Sunday Asefon from Ekiti State.

More importantly, Southwest has produced many prominent student activists, such as Segun Okeowo and others, whose contributions to the task of nation-building cannot be overemphasised.

Governance Crisis and the Efficacy of Students' Activism in the Southwest Nigeria's

Fourth Republic

The Southwest is not exempted from many challenges confronting the nation at large. These challenges stem from the weak capacity of the region to provide satisfactory social security and enabling environment for public prosperity and happiness. This was corroborated by Yagboyaju (2019) that, Nigerian states have not demonstrated the required capacity to deal with challenges of security, food crisis and ethno-religious crisis. It should be noted that these problems are not national in outlook alone; they have remained feasible in the Southwest. Mimiko (2010) encapsulated that many states have become vulnerable to crisis without result oriented policy to get out of the quagmire in sight. Relatively within the last 10 years, the South-West appeared to be the most peaceful region when compared to the daily bombings and menace of Boko Haram in the Northern parts, kidnapping and attacks on oil facilities in the Niger- Delta region. Conversely, the marauding farmer-herders' clashes and kidnapping that have made in-road to the South-West Nigeria within the last five years have created new dimension of governance crisis. However, comparatively, majority of the opinions from the study show that Southwest have performed fairly better in the area of security when compared with happenings in the other regions. For instance, W. I. Adebawale (Personal Communication, 2024) argued that *"the Amotekun Security Network that was launched by the Governors of Southwest was a timely response to curtail the rapidly growing menace of banditry, kidnapping and farmers-herders clashes in the region. In many of its*

success story, many of the Southwest ungoverned spaces have been better policed and thus, the people have better sense of security”.

Although, few reported cases of insecurity in Ibarapa area and Oke-Ogun of Oyo State; the Fulani and kidnapers’ invasion of some towns in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State and the ENDSARS movements in Lagos State have created distrust between the people of the region and the political leadership. Among the consequences of these crises is the birth of separatist agitation for Oduduwa Nation led by Chief Adeyemo Sunday aka Sunday Igboho. A further confirmation of the power contestation in the region is the relentless attack of Afenifere leadership on the political leadership of the region on matter of security and alleged political marginalisation of Southwest from national politics and Fulani political hegemons. The depth of the governance crisis in the Southwest was strengthened through the interview session thus:

“One would have expected that the Southwest being the cradle of western education in Nigeria would continue to produce political leadership with democratic character and empathetic policies. However, it appears that most Southwest governors are not genuinely concerned about the issues of development such as employment opportunity, massive agricultural production and infrastructural development that can make life better for the people. Fiscal commitment to education, healthcare enabling business environment in the Southwest has remained in the doldrums” (A. O. Mustapha Personal Communication, 2024).

According to E. G (Personal Communication, 2024) *“in the area of economy, barring the economy of Lagos and fairly Ogun State, others are below expectations”.* There is increasing poverty, unemployment and food deficit due to flooding and farmer-herders clashes affecting the region in recent years. This is against the backdrop of the inherent human and material resources available in the region. The Southwest political leadership and people are cosmopolitan, well read and exposed to the nuances around best practices in global governance and economic dynamics. However, there seems to be disconnection between potentials and what play out in reality on economic, infrastructure and security (Caleb & Akinmade, 2021).

Given the curated crisis of governance in the Southwest, the students’ leadership by their statutory role as young political elites and the conscience of the nation is expected to integrate

itself into the conversations on how to address the inherent challenges and promote good governance. As noted by Oyekanmi (2024), the students' politics of the early post-independence in Nigeria was not limited to demilitarisation struggle. The governing elites also have a sense of obligation to consider the interests of the students' constituency in the policy formulation circle. There have been paradigm shift from such students' activism of 1970's and early 1980's where students' ideology and orientations were directed at strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions and consolidate her ethos from military interregnum and autocratic political leadership. This fact on early students' activism in democratic engagement was supported by (Eesuola, 2013).

“In recent years in Southwest in specific, student's democratic engagements have shifted to needless praise-singing of autocratic political leadership and unpopular public policies by the various leaders in students' constituency. The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) remains docile, less informed and apathetic from engaging government on the need for free elections and obedience to rule of law” (M. I. Personal Communication, 2024).

Students' movements have remained inactive from many democracy coalition groups, civil societies and good governance advocates in Nigeria. A case worthy of mention was the endorsement of President Muhammadu Buhari's second term bid by the then NANS president, Danielson Akpan, along other students' leaders in Aso Rock at the period Nigerian universities were in strike. The then NANS president had the leadership of Southwest in his delegations. The highlight of such endorsement was the promise of 20 million votes by Nigerian students to Buhari. Thus, in this regard, students' activism performed woefully even in its own affairs. Convention and election venues of students became theatres of gun barrels and violence. This has led to many factional students' leadership, even in NANS election. It is rather an irony to expect people who cannot respect democratic process in their own election to assume the crusader of good governance and electoral credibility in the region. Furthermore, students' activists are expected to be the social conscience in the drive for responsive, efficient and good service delivery. In furtherance to this claim, students' activities are to be revolved around the need to stimulate political leadership to harken to the needs, aspirations and peoples' welfare through governance.

However, some available studies and participants expressed divergent assessment from the negative notion on students' activism in relations to good governance in Southwest. The Nigerian

students' body through her affiliated leadership of JCC has mounted rostrum of protests and condemnation against various attempts of former President Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari to remove fuel subsidy. The students' leadership granted interview and issued many communiques to disassociate themselves from what they branded as 'attempt to further impoverish' Nigerians. Similarly in Ogun State, the students of Tai Solarin University of Education under the umbrella of NANS Southwest shut down commercial activities in the state in protest against the poor funding of tertiary education by the governor. The students demanded for reduction in the astronomical acceptance fee and the tax clearance fee they were forced to pay by the school management (*Vanguard, 2017*).

The students' eggheads in Southwest were known voices against removal of fuel subsidy and most specifically, the candidature of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida who signaled his intention to contest presidential election in the Fourth Republic. I recall with nostalgia, how students mobilized themselves with placards in various condemnation of IBB's candidacy because of his record as former military dictator and the tragic annulment of June 12 Presidential election that was reported to have been won by Chief MKO. (W.K. Personal Communication, 2024).

There were also curated moves and engagements of NANS with government to end protracted strike in higher institutions. However, opined by Oyekanmi (2024), the larger part of the Southwest students' leadership conversation and engagement with government with regards to ensure good public service delivery are merely cosmetic acts for the attention of the media. He noted that many of the terse issued communiques were not followed with action and many ultimatums issued proved inconsequential. This is due in part, to their inability win the respect of the governing elites and the legitimacy of the members of the public.

Challenges of Students' Activism towards the Promotion of Good Governance in the Southwest Nigeria

Eesuola (2013) described the students' activists of pre and early post-independence era in Nigeria as firebrand intellectuals with ideological leaning of Karl Marx which allowed them to call governments and their policies to questioning if they ran contrary to public expectations. However, Oyekanmi and Adebajo (2023) have expressed great worry for the fact that students' activism has

become a shadow of its former self from 1990s, failing to command the usual recognition from policy makers and members of the public. The various cadres in students' movements appear to have been disarticulated with lack of interests on national issues while only being occupied with mundane activities.

“Many students’ activists have become social media enthusiasts, without taking advantages of the media space to actively engage policy makers and articulate popular interests of the people into the decision-making process to engender good governance” (M. O. Personal Communication, 2024). In instances where students' movements are not docile, their activities portray them endorsing bad government policies which are against the very values of progressive country, typical of young analytical minds. Very regrettably, NANS which is the epicentre of students' activism has now become the mouthpiece of government. This has led to pervasive politics of endorsement of political parties' candidates during national and state elections, instead of engaging in robust policy discussions on the manifestoes and pragmatic plans for national development (Oyekanmi, 2014).

Students' activists have abdicated their statutory roles of putting government to check in order to be responsible and responsive as part of the advocacy for good governance which is now at the disequilibrium level. Jackson and Salako (2019) argued that the get rich-syndrome and overblown materialistic inclinations of the student activists encourage their perpetual silence on government misdemeanours. This was aptly captured by Kenneth (2007, cited in Abegunde, 2019), that students' leaders of today are driven by the pressure to survive economically, hence they use their positions to build contact for self-interest and assured post activism prosperity. The poor economy of Nigeria has not helped, leaving unemployment at geometric rate. A whole lot of activists have switched support base to government side in order to secure jobs, political and economic patronage; they have become supporters of policies they should have rejected. Many are also compromising students' mandates, while some also demand for kickbacks from tuition increment.

Oyekanmi (2014) posited that it is disappointing that students' activities with their virile ideology and progressive political activism have been taken over by material profiteers, political opportunists and marauding conformists, masquerading as students' leaders who have held ideological students' movements to self-whims and caprices on Nigeria's universities and other higher institutions campuses. Cultism, violent rascality, prostitution, cyberpunk and examination

malpractices have replaced the extant virtues of students' unionism and political activism which were the core foundational ethos of students' contribution to a secured, economically viable and globally respected Nigeria. Mabogunje (2020) corroborated this that the Nigerian students' leaders across all cadres covet the opulence of power as demonstrated by the political class and sort to follow in the same trajectory. In this manner, advocacy for good governance, patriotism, strong economy and national values have become debased and denigrated.

The inability of government and the Academic Staff Unions of Universities (ASUU) across Nigerian campuses to find alternative dispute resolution from the usual strike actions has negative impacts on the activities of the students and their affiliated unions. There is no hidden fact to the negative effects of strike action on the intellectual training of the young minds. This creates negative diversions to illicit behaviour for personal survival. (O.S. Personal Communication, 2024).

Arogundade (2002, cited in Eesuola, 2012) submitted that cultism and decayed infrastructure have dominated Nigerian campuses and relegated ideas that needed to advance the cause of nation building in Southwest, which is often regaled as the bastion of Nigeria's education. The intermittent strike from the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and other none academic staff unions have crippled academic stability in such that students wallow their time away in social vices, by spending more valuable time outside the classroom. The academic and non-academic unions in the Southwest have not also done well in mentoring the emerging students' leadership in the region in their area of scientific and pragmatic activism for the common man. The leadership of ASUU seemed to be obsessed by their status as lecturers of the student leaders on campus, thus the expected open hands relationship and collaborative efforts needed to attend to the issue of development on campus suffers thereof. While many other staff unions on campuses have some level of relationship among themselves, which allows them to reach some consensus on mutual interests and subsequently form the basis of their demands from government or university authorities, the students' unions are alienated from this symbiotic relationship.

Gboyega (2005) argued that youth restiveness, cultism and violence have become permanent features in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. This is a serious worry for members of the civil society, university administrators and government. The ivory towers in Nigeria have been

turned into war zones by misguided students and criminal elements masquerading as learners. It is becoming difficult to distinguish between students' activism and cult related activities on various campuses. The atrocious behaviours of cultists on Nigerian campuses have continued to destroy the lives of the young generation, affect learning and disruptive to the possibility of recruiting new responsible and forward thinking young generational leadership from the ivory towers.

Enah, (2008) opined that cultism is a blockade to sound academic engagements, responsible and responsive students' representations. Campaigns and convention of NANS and students' unions elections are now ridden with violence and tensions with casualties visited on the perceived opponents, factional groups and their supporters. Notoriously, the NANS conventions where students elect their state, zonal and national representatives have become collegiate of cultists with the usual display of weapons and nefarious conducts to wreak havoc on public peace. Students' unions elections and related activities have become popular hubs where the sound of gun shots takes the centre stage.

Ogunlana (2002) expressed shock that people now go to NANS' Conventions with guns and all sorts of weapons instead of strong activism and debated ideas on national development and democratic ethos. It becomes difficult to expect those who cannot peacefully organise students' elections without violence to advocate for free and fair elections in Nigeria. Institutions of higher learning have become vantage of violence and horror. This is a serious threat to genuine students' activism, the call for good governance and the overarching economic development of Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that responsible political leadership and national growth through good governance index would continue to be a response to efficiency of higher institutions of learning. This is given the responsibility reposed in ivory towers, to produce graduates who would be sufficient in learning, character and values for nation-building. Within the context of research area, it became obvious that Southwest political leadership is pervasively disarticulated from students movements, inputs and concerns in the region, leaving the government with no sense of responsibility, accountability and transparency in their management of the common patrimony. It also concludes that students' activism failed to impact on governance paradigm due to the loss of its ascendant glory and reputation in advocacy for national values, growth and general happiness for all. Thus, improvement of governance in Southwest is contingent on the overall improvement

on the JCC leadership ideology and reconfiguration of students' leadership programmes across all higher institutions of learning in the Southwest, Nigeria.

The study recommends for sincere integration of Southwest students leadership in the policy formulation and implementation agenda of their states. This would allow for deeper and enriched conversations on public policy and by extension, improve governance. The higher institutions of learning in the region must also re-evaluate engagement strategies with students' unions and associations with regards to leadership responsibilities and internal operations. When this is done, it has the propensity to improve the quality of elected students' leaders and in furtherance, equip them to positively interrogate and contribute to public policy and governance of the country. Lastly, students' leadership across all cadres must reinvent a new NANS ideology with priority on selfless leadership, public legitimacy and partnership with credible leftists and civil society coalition groups on good governance. This will help to hold government accountable in Southwest, to the advantages of members of the public.

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