

JOURNAL
OF THE
**INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION**

Printed & Design by
SEYI VENTURES



**LAGOS STATE
UNIVERSITY,
OJO.**

JOURNAL
of the
INSTITUTE of
EDUCATION

VOL. 2

2001

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY
LAGOS, NIGERIA

3

GRAFFITI : A Medium of Communication by Learners in Tertiary Institutions: A case study of Lagos State University And Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Lagos

By

PEMEDE, OLUWATOBI

Faculty of Education, Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses why Graffiti is common in educational settings, particularly tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study designed to highlight that; perhaps educators often neglected the covert curriculum for evaluation except the overt curriculum. However, graffiti, an aspect of hidden curriculum serves multifarious purposes that can be used as an instrument to educators as well as school authority.

ional

This paper focuses on two tertiary institutions in Lagos State. These are the Lagos State University, Ojo, and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otu/Ijanikin.

The graffiti writings in this paper are copied out unedited from toilets, walls, on the desks, on the doors, classrooms, offices as well as Cafeterias.

INTRODUCTION

Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1977:456) gives an account of mankind's past and present development based on first, language and later of writing. Historically, from perspective of time, man's biological evolution illuminates into prehistory when man becomes a language-using animal, and man then adds writing since then history becomes unchallengeable. Jack and Watt (1977) explain further that man as animal is studied by Zoologist, man as talking animal to an anthropologist and man as talking and writing is studied by the sociologist.

The above mankind's history introduces us to the recent phenomenon of writing otherwise known as "Graffiti".

Graffiti is as old as man in the history of mankind, Archaeologists are interested in digging the ground for the purpose of history while write-ups on buildings serve a significant function to those who are interested to read. Nevertheless, write-ups on the walls, tombs, toilets etc have become significant aspects of the hidden curriculum in educational practices.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995: 516) defines graffiti as scratching, a drawing or writing on a wall or other surfaces as at Pompeii and Rome. Furthermore, it is a method of decoration by scratches through a superficial layer of plaster, glazing etc on a ground of different colour.

The Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (1992) defines Graffiti as an ancient drawing or writing, scratched on a wall or other surface. Graffiti means words or phrases written on public side walks, on the walls of buildings, public rest rooms etc.

Historically, in Pompeii and Rome drawing, and writing scratched on a wall, tomb as well as other surfaces are commonly found. (The shorter Oxford English Dictionary 1995:877).

The term graffiti in Latin spells as "graphi(um)", Greeks "graph(ein)" while Italian, it is spelled as "graffio".

The question most scholars will raise is that what is the essence of graffiti in relation to what is taught in the University? Others may conclude that graffiti has no significant effect on students, educators and the school authority.

The answer to these questions is very simple. The answer is "information". Eziaghighala (1999) explains that graffiti poses sociological, political, educational, religious as well as psychological challenges in the society.

The use of graffiti in educational settings is a mode of communication which is clearly appropriate to create cordial or mutual relationship between student to student, student to lecturer and student to school authority. In other words, graffiti in tertiary institutions serves as written records available to the learners, educators and the school authority.

The oral communication in terms of information to educators or school authority by the student has considerable effect on the learner. (Jack and Ian 1977:457). This effect may lead to intimidation or harassment by the educators - as a result the only way students can call for redress, warning, passing vital information, pleading is a way of using graffiti because it is a "priceless instrument" of thought (Emile Durkheim 1838 - 1917 cited by Jack and Ian 1977:457).

However, in ancient times, graffiti appeared on pyramids and other structures. Today it appears in public toilets, bathrooms, classrooms, desks, lockers, back of trees, churches, mosques, private buildings, posters, handbills, bodies of packed cars and so on.

Today, the use of graffiti in different places rests on challenges. It is commonly used by the learner to give information or warning. There is need for educators to pay attention to it in the school environment. Some students or learners use graffiti to express their feelings - this may be as a result of ill-treatment by school mates or lecturers etc.

Interactionist perspective sees behaviour largely directed by the norms and values of the social system (Haralambos 1980: 5). In other words, when norms and values of a social system are becoming "priceless" and insignificant, graffiti could be used to modify such behaviour in order to avoid anomie in the tertiary institutions.

Haralambos (1980:16) explains that meanings are not fixed entities. In other words, the interactionist perspective claims that meanings (information or message of graffiti on the walls) can be used to create, modify, develop and change the acute process of interaction among the stu-

dents, educators and the school authority. For example, a young boy or girl entering into College of Education or University may define the situation in the campus as hostile and threatening. He/she therefore uses graffiti to define situations - such situations could be modified or changed. The interactionist perspective of graffiti is that, graffiti as a medium of communication and a priceless instrument of thought could change a hostile situation thereby the students may come to perceive their lecturers and their fellow students as friendly and understanding (Haralambos 1980).

However, from interactionist perspective, graffiti could be seen as an assessment of situation because the way in which an actor (graffiti writer) defines a situation has important consequences (Haralambos 1980). It is pertinent to note that when a student in tertiary institutions, through the use of graffiti defines situation as threatening and even hostile, he/she may keep to himself and speak when only spoken to. On the other hand, if such a hostile situation defined by the learner could be changed, there would also be a change in the student actions. The interactionist view point is that of emphasis on the 'Idea of the self' because an individual develops a 'self-concept', 'picture of himself' and this has a significant influence on his actions. However, the actor (graffiti writer) interprets manner or behaviour of others through the use of graffiti.

In the same vein, Percy Cohen (1968:95) explains that an action is social when one or more of these three conditions are met: One, the situation of the actor includes other actors whose presence is taken into account when the action is performed; two, the situation is such that these others possess characteristics which enable them in some way to influence the conduct of the actor and third, the actor shares with the others certain sets of expectations and possibly certain values, beliefs and symbols. From Percy Cohen point of view, we can conclude that the above three conditions are in line with the learners using graffiti as a medium of communication. Furthermore, the 'actor' is the graffiti writer, taken into account other actors (could be students, lecturers or school authority) actions. Also the conduct of other actors (lecturers, students etc) could influence the behaviour of other actor to use graffiti to express himself. Finally, the use of graffiti could come up if the graffiti writer did not share the same expectations, values as well as beliefs with others in the educational settings.

From all indications, graffiti is commonly seen in the schools-written on the walls, on the lecturer's door, hidden place such as toilets and bathroom. Graffiti is significantly used to express personal views, political, educational (Examination malpractices) religion, fear, warning and the host of others. It is interesting to note that whenever crisis wants to loom buildings in the tertiary institutions do not escape being decorated and such information may serve the purpose of warning to those who are concerned.

Omokhodion (1998:6) explains that the value of graffiti to social scientists is to provide insight into the thought pattern of the society and the dynamics that act and react upon inter-personal and communal relationship.

Graffiti as a medium of Communication enables individual to learn something about the non-vocal, non-identifiable element denied access to free self expression by the larger society.

It is significant to Comprehend that graffiti on ancient buildings to archeologists serves as learning about life in the past. To linguists its essence lies in learning language pattern of other civilizations and peoples. It therefore serves as an instrument and enhances better understanding of patterns of life and communication of earlier human societies (Omokhodion 1998).

METHODOLOGY

The Graffiti expressions in this study were copied unedited from walls, toilets, desks, tables, fences chairs, and lecturer's doors from the Lagos State University, Ojo and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos State. The data collected were unedited in order to avoid any interference with the original meanings.

The analysis was done by explanations, inferences and discussions of the issues addressed in the graffiti.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are various forms of graffiti. The ancient form could be found in pyramids, Catacombs especially in Italy, Rome while the modern form in Nigeria could be seen on the walls, bridges, handbills on the buildings, toilets etc.

The following graffiti expressions were collected from the two tertiary institutions, mentioned above:

POLITICAL STATEMENT

- * Babatunde Balogun 400 level for Secretary
- * Remember the boy Rotimi: For President
- * On June 12 we stand

RELIGION

- * Only Jesus can save
- * Jesus loves you come back to Him
- * Do you know about Jesus?
- * He loves you and He is calling on you to come to Him and receive your salvation.

WARNING

Sex is dangerous, contact AIDS for information. Thanks N.A.B.S.

Don't sit

AIDS is real. For more information contact AIDS

Please stop speaking Yoruba in this school.

INFORMATION

Electric switch: Disrepair (Don't trouble yourself)

Rilwan weds Afusat Watch out!!!

SLANG Vs SOS (m) Friday 4.00 p.m.

Baba I don't think the test would take place since we have not collected our books. Students.

AIDS is not real. It is American ideas of discouraging sex.

No justice, No peace: Say Eiye.

Tayo weds Togbe.

PHILOSOPHICAL

If you think you cannot think, then think of how to think.

Fuck with the best. DIE live the rest.

BULLYING

You want sex? Please contact me at L.H. 12.00 noon.

Baba (Father)

Oga e ma sun (Master you always sleep) Always stay around.

Ye mo gbe, Mo ti je gbese. Two poster (I'm ruined. I'm heavily in debt especially poster money).

INFORMATION ABOUT A PERSON

I'm a killer

I'm a maniac, psychadelic, schizophrenic, pyromaniac.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Test upon test

Academic incompetence 1.88

Not too late to pass

Easy to pass and easy to fail. By order POLYJAMB.

SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

- Moist air is less dense.

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

$$\frac{dv}{x} = \ln v$$

- A topic sentence is the core sentence in a paragraph that summarises the ideas in the paragraph.

SOCIOLOGICAL TERMS

- Proletariat
- Bourgeoisie.

CHEMICAL FORMULA

- Hexagonal



Butyl - Butanonic Acid

DISCUSSION

The graffiti expressions written above have been categorized into various headings according to the tone of such graffiti/graffiti.

The graffiti on the walls, buildings, toilets, on the desk etc shows the result of different motives of the student in tertiary institutions.

It is pertinent to note that Christian brothers and sisters indulge in graffiti thereby preaching the word of God, salvation of souls and stresses warning that one should escape hell.

Interestingly, graffiti serves as an instrument for warning. The mass media helps in socialization process and dissemination of information to the entire world. Graffiti, however, performs the same function disseminating information is then cut across every society of human endeavour.

Politically, graffiti is of no exception. It serves as a medium of communication for student politicians, to pass the political intention to the people they want to serve. For example a political write up copied from the Lagos State University reads thus:

On June 12 we stand". This graffiti expresses political institution that June 12 must be materialized. This is to conclude that the writer of the above graffiti is in support of June 12 in Nigerian society. In the same vein, our student politicians who cannot afford to print handbills use the school buildings to express their feelings. For example, "Babatunde Balogun 400 Level: For Secretary" "Remember the boy Rotimi: For President".

The sociological question pertinent to ask is, of what importance is graffiti in the field of education? As far as sociologists of education are concerned, they test both the overt and Covert Curriculum. For example, bullying is an aspect of Covert Curriculum. Students use it to pass information to their friends. For instance in the Lagos State University, this graffiti was copied: "Jesus loves you! H.O.D." From this write-up, the above graffiti is completely bullying the H.O.D. and we cannot say what the H.O.D. has done to such a student. All the same, it has served a source of information to the H.O.D. in order to check himself/herself very well.

A graffiti "Baba" (meaning father) was collected from the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. The lecturer pasted the cover of his textbook on the door, with his photograph. Candid enough, the lecturer is 'Old' and the student wrote on the face of the photograph "Baba". The lecturer didn't know the student but the essence of the information is that of bullying and perhaps the student is not one of the favourites of the lecturer.

Graffiti plays prominent role in the field of education. The following graffiti items were collected from the Lagos State University

"Test upon test"

"Academic Incompetence 1.88"

It is interesting to see on the wall that some students wrote "Test upon test". This is also an information to some lecturers who turn every lecture to test given day. Secondly, "Academic Incompetence 1.88". This is the most important information to all students whose GPA is in the category of 1.88. So, such information is highlighting to students that G.P.A. of 1.88 is not a good standing in the University community.

Examination malpractice is another problem in schools - from primary to tertiary institutions. Only those who are caught with prepared answers from home are either rusticated or dismissed for good. The following graffiti items were copied on the desks from the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education.

$$\frac{dv}{x} = \ln v$$

"A topic sentence is the core sentence in a paragraph that summarises the ideas in the paragraph".

In other words, not only prepared written materials caught with students should be treated as examination malpractice but anything written on the desks in the name of graffiti serves the purpose of cheating in the examination hall but hardly an examiner or invigilator glances on the desks. Pertinent enough, some sociological terms were written on the desks by some students. The terms are "proletariat" and "bourgeoisie". Typically, the student who wrote these two terms may not be able to spell these terms and perhaps needs them during the examination. So the best thing he/she thought is to copy this on the table but this is an assault on examination.

CONCLUSION

The main thrust of the paper is to direct attention that over years, educators and school authority neglected the Covert Curriculum only to test the overt curriculum. Graffiti, aspect of hidden curriculum though it is superimposed with motives within the range of criticism and condemnation of bad conduct but it serves as an assessment of situation in the educational settings.

We can also infer that Graffiti could be used to modify behaviour in order to avoid anomie. However, interactionist perspective viewed that an individual develops self-concept, a picture of himself which has important influence on his actions. This could be termed as 'looking glass self' coined by Charles Cooley (1864 - 1929).

However, in the history of mankind past and present, language and writing are vital tools in the society and today scratches on the walls, bridges, handbills on the buildings will no doubt improve human understanding on societal issues.

It has also been explained that to the historians, Archaeologists, Zoologists, Sociologists as well as Anthropologists, graffiti proved insight into human behaviour, thought, social structures, social systems etc graffiti could provide behaviour modification.

However, Graffiti calls for an examination of attention in our tertiary institutions. It is a 'thing' of attention - gone are those days that we do overlook graffiti written on the school buildings. It therefore means that without communication there can be no culture, no society, no science, no technology, no shared experience of the world of reality.

REFERENCES

- A. S. Hornby (1995) Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English: New York Oxford University Press
- Haralambos M. with Heald R.M. (1980) Sociology: Themes and Perspectives London: Bell and Hyman
- Jack Goody and Ian Watt, 'The Consequences of Literacy', in Karabel J. and Halsey A.H. (1977) Power and Ideology in Education New York Oxford University Press.
- Omokhodion, J.O. "Graffiti: The Silent voice of the Learner" A paper presented at the 6th Annual Conference of the Faculty of Education LASU, 27 - 30 July, 1998.
- Percy, Cohen, S. (1968) Modern Social Theory London and Edinburgh: Heinemann Educational Books Limited.
- Webster (1962) Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language. (2nd Edition). Vol. 1 Cleveland and New York: The World Public Company.