School Administrators Strategies for Combating Corruption in Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine corruption in universities with the aim of finding out the types/forms, causes, effects and measures for combating the menace. Four research questions guided the investigation. The study is a survey research, ex-post facto in nature. A sample of 780 comprising of students, academic staff and administrative staff was selected through random sampling technique from six public universities in Nigeria. Data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that the types of corruption prevalent in universities are examination related, admission related, finance related, accreditation related and sexual related. Each of these types of corruption has different forms of manifestations. The causes of corruption in universities included greed, lack of fear of God, and the desire to get rich quick. The effects of corruption and measures for combating it were identified. The study concluded by recommending among others that all stake holders in university education should have a moral reorientation and begin to reverence God by fearing him to help sanitize the universities and create a corruption free learning environment in the university system.

Keywords: combating, corruption, measures, universities, types, causes, effects

1. Introduction

Countries all over the world have long recognized education as a driver of growth and national development. Education can help to attain the desired growth and development if it is of a good quality. A sound system of education is critical to the transformation of a country's economy. Universities in Nigeria are centers of excellence in teaching, research, innovations and community service. The pursuit of these goals is clearly articulated as the vision statement in all Nigerian universities as to become a centre of excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, innovation, community service, and dissemination of knowledge. Hence the universities are committed to the promotion of quality education, character and meeting the challenges of our time through exemplary scholarship and professionalism.

An issue that seems to be threatening the attainment of quality education in Nigerian universities is corruption. Corruption tends to be dragging the university education system in the country to public ridicule. Corruption is destructive; it reduces interpersonal trust and reduces economic growth (Seligson, 2002; Olin, 2013). Corruption in university education distorts the efficiency and quality output of the system. Worried over the increasing rate of corruption in Nigerian universities, Okojie (2012) called on the management of Nigerian universities to uphold the sanity of the education system by ensuring a corruption-free environment in all institutions. In addition, Okojie maintained that corruption had assumed a worrisome level in Nigerian university system being an integral part of the society could not be insulated from the menace. Corruption kills innovation, creativity, compromises public morality, contaminates individual and collective dignity and distorts the dignity of labour (Obasanjo, 2005; cited in Yomere, 2010). Corruption is the worst evil that is standing on Nigeria's path to grandiose national development (Mezieobi, 2010; Edinyang & Usang, 2012). Ma'azu (2001) noted that the funds allocated for funding primary education in Kano State are systematically stolen by a highly organized education "mafia" to the point that the schools are grounded.

According to the World Bank (2006), about 25% of procurement cost in Africa and other under developing countries is wasted on corruption, while the figure could be less than 10% in developed countries. Even, the

document of the 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Review Summit identified corruption as the major hindrance for achieving the MDGs and called for decisive steps to be taken to combat corruption in all its manifestation. Core moral values such as hard work, excellence, merit, honesty, responsibility, respect, justice and fairness appears jettisoned for corrupt practices in the Nigerian university system and academic standards in teaching, research and other related activities have been short chained.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The cancer of corruption has been spreading wide and has contaminated the education system in Nigeria especially the universities. Several newspaper reports indicted the education sector especially the universities of corrupt practices. The effect of corruption in education is too alarming that instead of education being an agent of purifying the minds of children to become useful members of the society, it is rather diverting the mind of children away from what education is intended for (Ikechukwu, 2014). Corruption in Nigerian universities is dangerous because students in the system are future leaders of the country. These unethical practices associated with corruption could lead to the production of half-baked graduates who may not be able to help the nation build a knowledge-based economy. Allowing corruption to continue in the universities without check implies destroying the minds of our future leaders and truncating the core moral values of the society. Although literature is replete on corruption, most of these literatures are newspaper reports covering corruption in the general Nigerian society. As regards the education industry especially the universities, there are limited studies on corruption. This study attempts to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence of corruption in Nigerian universities.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study is focused on corruption in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study intend to:

1) Find out the common types/forms of manifestations of corruption in Nigerian universities.

2) Find out the causes of corruption in Nigerian universities.

3) Ascertain the effects of corruption.

4) Identify measures that can be adopted by university administrators to combat the menace of corruption.

1.3 Research Questions

The study provides answers to five questions:

1) What are the common types and forms of manifestations of corruption in Nigerian universities?

2) What are the causes of corruption in Nigeria?

3) What are the effects of corruption on Nigerian university system?

4) What measures can be adopted by university administrators to successfully combat the menace of corruption in the university system?

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is hinged on the system theory. According to Katz and Khan (1966), the system theory is basically concerned with the problem of relationship, of structure and of interdependence rather than the constant attributes of objects and individuals. The world and all that it is contains is an assembly of small and distinct parts, fit largely for analysis and study in isolation (Laszlo & Kripper, 1997). The system approach focuses attention on the whole and also on the complex interrelationships among its constituent parts. The system theory emphasizes the relationship between parts and interaction with each other. This theory views the organization as a unified whole and purposeful system composed of interrelated parts (Stonner, Freeman, & Gilbert, 2009).

The whole is greater than its component parts. A change in any component of a part may affect the entire system functionally or adversely. Systems are composed of key major elements such as input, process and output (Lucey, 2002). Egwunyenga (2010) indicated that the input into educational systems could be categorized into three types namely: money, supplies, curriculum, and facilities/equipment, personnel such as students, lecturers, administration staff, management staff and non-academic staff. The inputs are subjected to various processing activities such as teaching, lectures, assignments, seminars, workshops, researches, publications, studies, discussion and counseling. As a result, they come out as outputs capable of satisfying the systems aspirations and expectations.

The outputs comprised of individuals who are rich in positive values, more learned, well skilled, highly knowledgeable, well cultured, disciplined, employable and productive. But when the inputs are subjected to

unethical practices, then we have products that are unethical or corrupt. Corruption thus could be contagious and once it creeps into the education system due to corrupt practices exhibited by its' members, it spreads like wild fire and contaminates the entire system like a malignant disease.

3. Methodology

The study is a survey research; ex-post facto in nature. The population of the study comprised all public universities in southern Nigeria during the 2012/2013 academic section. A sample of 800 respondents was selected through random sampling technique from four universities in southern geopolitical zones. Students were, n=400, senior administrators were, n=200 and academic staff were, n=200.

The questionnaire was the only instrument for data collection. It was sub divided into five sections. The first part focused on demographic variables of respondents. The second part contained items in answer to research question one. The third part contained items which focused on causes of corruption. The fourth part contained items which bothered on the effects of corruption while the last part contained items which focused on measures that can be adopted by school administrators to combat the menace of corruption. The questionnaire was structured on a four point scoring scale of strongly agree, agree, disagreed and strongly disagree.

Two experts in faculty of education of Delta state university read through the items and made useful suggestions which helped in ensuring the face validity of the instrument. The instrument was administered to thirty staff of another universities not included in the study through split half reliability. Chronbach alpha formula was adopted in the computation of the reliability index of 0.76, thus establishing the internal consistency of the instrument.

Eight hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered but 776 were returned valid and used for analysis of data. Data collected from administered questionnaire were analyzed using percent to answer the research questions.

4. Findings

The result of the study is shown in tables below:

Research Question 1: what are the common types of corruption prevalent in universities in Nigeria?

Table 1. Common types of corruption prevalent in Nigerian universities

S/N	Examination Related Corruption	Score	Mean	%	Remark
1	Alteration of scores by some lecturers	1990	2.56	64.1	Agreed
2	Examination malpractices e.g collusion, impersonation	2370	3.00	78.2	Agreed
3	Bribing lecturers with money and gifts for mark	2332	2.76	75.1	Agreed
4	Students writing examination outside the hall	1220	1.70	36.2	Disagreed
5	Leakage of examination questions	1300	1.67	41.8	Disagreed
	Admission Related Corruption				
6	Admitting students with lower post university matriculation examination cut-off marks based on quota	2014	2.59	64.88	Agreed
7	Admitting candidates with deficiencies in Mathematics and English Language	1530	1.97	42.29	Disagreed
8	Not admitting all candidates who scored above university post UME cut-off mark	2118	2.73	68.23	Agreed
9	Collecting money from candidates before admission	1558	2.00	50.19	Disagreed
	Financial Corruption				
10	Keeping file of ghost workers	1776	2.30	52.53	Disagreed
11	Asking students to pay late registration fees due to budget deficit	2210	2.84	71.19	Agreed
12	Mismanagement of fund	2115	2.70	68.18	Agreed
13	Embezzlement of university fund by some staff	2431	3.13	78.31	Agreed
14	Printing of fake school fees receipts	2230	2.90	70.0	Agreed
15	**Accreditation Related Corruption**				
	Siphoning money meant for accreditation	1235	1.59	39.78	Disagreed
16	Non decentralization of purchase of accreditation	1766	2.36	48.24	Disagreed

	materials				
17	Borrowing resources for accreditation	2278	2.93	73.38	Agreed
	Sexual Corruption				
	Sexual harassment by female lecturers	403	0..51	12.98	Disagreed
18	Sexual harassment by male lecturers	2540	3.27	81.8	Agreed
19	Indecent dressing among students	2430	3.13	78.28	Agreed
	Teaching, Learning/Research Related Corruption				
21	Irregular attendance at lectures by lecturers	1666	2.14	53.67	Disagreed
22	Students non attendance at lectures	2334	3.00	75.19	Agreed
23	Plagiarizing researches of others	1980	2.55	63.7	Agreed
24	Conducting research for others	1580	2.00	45.12	Disagreed

Any item with mean score above 2.50 and percentage score above 60 is accepted as agreed while items with mean score below 2.50 and percentage score below 60 is disagreed. Therefore, for table 1, the types of examination related corruption prevalent in the universities are alteration of scores by some lecturer (X=2.56, 64.1%), examination malpractices in the form of bringing written scribes into the hall, copying and impersonation (X=3.00, 78.2%) and students bribing lecturers with money and gifts for marks (X=2.76, 75.1%). Admission related forms of corruption in universities are admitting candidates with lower cut-off marks based on quota system (X=2.59, 64.88%) and not admitting all the candidates who scored above university cut-off mark (X=2.73, 68.23%). The forms of manifestation of financial corruption are asking students to pay late registration fee (X=2.84, 71.19%), mismanagement of fund (x=3.27, 68.18%) embezzlement of fund (X=3.13, 78.31%), misappropriation of fund (X=2.87, 71.84%) and printing of fake school fees receipt (X=3.02, 70.00%). Accreditation related forms of corruption is borrowing accreditation resources (X=2.93, 73.38%). Sexual corruption are sexual harassment by male lecturers (X=3.27, 81.8%) and indecent dressing among students (X=3.13, 78.28%). Teaching, learning and research related forms of corruption prevalent in universities are students non attendance at lectures (X=3.00, 75.19%) and plagiarizing researches of others by students and some lecturers (X=2.93, 73.32%).

Table 2. Causes of corruption in Nigerian universities

S/N	Causes of Corruption	Score	Mean	%	Remark
1	Greed	2215	2.85	71.35	Agreed
2	Society moral decadence	2433	3.13	78.38	Agreed
3	Pressure from colleagues	1436	1.85	46.26	Disagreed
4	Get rich quick syndrome	2008	2.58	64.69	Agreed
5	Lack of fear of God	2219	2.85	71.48	Agreed
6	Poor management	2116	2.72	68.17	Agreed
7	Desire to pass exam without working hard	2288	2.94	73.71	Agreed

From Table 2, all the items except item 3have mean and percentage values above the cu-off mark. This implies that all the items except item 3 represent the causes of corruption in Nigerian universities. They are moral decadence of the Nigerian society, get rich quick syndrome, lack of fear of God, poor management and the desire to pass exam at all cost without working hard for it.

Table 3. Effects of corruption in Nigerian universities

S/N	Effects of Corruption	Score	Mean	%	Remark
1	Loss of good moral values	2300	2.96	74.09	Agreed
2	Production of poor future leaders	2108	2.71	67.91	Agreed
3	Poor image of Nigerian certificate at international scene	2235	2.88	72.00	Agreed
4	Poor infrastructural development	2315	2.98	74.58	Agreed
5	It can lower the academic standard of universities	2180	2.80	70.23	Agreed
6	It can lead to poor modernization of university facilities	2205	2.84	71.03	Agreed

| 7 | It can breed insecurity in campuses | 2222 | 2.86 | 71.5 | Agreed |
| 8 | Corruption in education could hinder the supply of educational services | | | | |

Data in Table 3 shows that the mean and percentage value for all the items exceeded the cut-off point in each case. Therefore, all the items in Table 4 represent the effects of corruption. They are loss of good moral values, production of poor graduates who may be future leaders of the country, poor image of the country at international scene, poor infrastructural development, poor academic standard, poor modernization of universities and insecurity in university campuses.

Table 4. School administrator's measures for combating corruption in the universities

S/N	Measures for Combating Corruption	Score	Mean	%	Remark
1	Emphasis on moral education	2355	3.03	75.86	Agreed
2	Education for good character development	2346	3.02	75.57	Agreed
3	Stricter penalty for offenders	1800	2.31	57.98	Disagreed
4	Establish unit to check corruption in universities	2411	3.10	77.67	Agreed
6	Constant monitoring of universities by accreditation agency	2298	2.96	74.03	Agreed
7	Regular auditing of account	2166	2.79	69.78	Agreed

From Table 4, it is clear that all the items except item 3, are the measures that can be adopted by school administrators for combating the menace of corruption in the universities, since the mean and percentage scores .exceeded the cut-off points. Such measures are emphasis on moral education, (X=3.03, 75.86%), education for good character development (X=3.02, 75.57%), setting up anti=corruption units in universities (X=3.10, 77.67%), constant monitoring of universities by accreditation bodies (X=2.96, 74.03%), and regular auditing of accounts (X=2.79, 69.78%).

5. Discussion of Findings

The result of the study for research question one indicates that the types and forms of manifestation of examination related corruption in universities are alteration of scores, bribing of lecturers with money and gifts for marks by students. Admission related forms of corruption are admitting candidates with lower post UME cut-off due to quota system and not admitting all the candidates who scored above university cut-off mark. The forms of manifestation of financial corruption are asking students to pay for late registration, mismanagement of fund, embezzlement of fund and misappropriation of fund. Accreditation related corruption manifests in forms of borrowing of accreditation materials by institutions. The forms of sexual corruption prevalent in universities are sexual harassment by male lecturers and indecent dressing among students. Teaching and research related forms of corruption manifests in form of students' non attendance at lectures and plagiarizing researches of others by students and some lecturers.

When fund meant for the smooth and effective management of universities are mismanaged, misappropriated and embezzled, the entire universities suffer. Infrastructural facilities within the system are not reactivated, instructional facilities are not procured and maintenance of facilities is stalled. Consequently, infrastructural facilities continue to decay while the laboratories are empty, lacking the equipments for effective teaching and learning. Student's welfare service is forgotten and the entire university environment is characterized by sub-standard facilities that have not been reactivated for so many years. A comment in February 2012 indicted a university in Northern Nigeria of financial mismanagement to the tune of fifty billion fund meant for the running of the university for five years. A panel investigation into the matter queried the university for running a foreign account contrary to the law and for having additional 97 bank accounts within Nigeria, with eight investment companies and for claiming to have a workforce of 7,793 but only 6,608 staff were discovered by the panel.

In terms of accreditation, the finding indicated that borrowing accreditation is a common form of corruption in universities. Borrowing human and material resources for the purpose of accreditation has far implication for quality education. When human resources are borrowed, accreditation agencies that are in the right position to advice government of the staff strength of universities so that staff can be recruited are made to believe that the universities are well staffed only for the students to suffer at the long run. The available lecturers are over loaded with academic responsibilities. They work under pressure and this situation has far reaching effects on their

health and quality delivery of academic tasks. This issue has been a biting problem to some Nigerian universities.

The findings for research question two showed that the causes of corruption in universities are moral decadence of the Nigerian society get rich quick syndrome, lack of fear of God, poor management and the desire to pass examination without working hard for it. The Nigerian society worship for money and material wealth resulted in neglect for education for good character development. People who made it through dubious means are celebrated. This tends to increase the rate of corruption which spread like wild fire into the universities. The finding of this study lend credence with Nduilor cited in Olagunju (2012) who noted that obsession with materialism, compulsion for a short cut to affluence and approbation of ill gotten wealth by the general public were among the reasons for the persistence corruption in Nigeria. In addition, the finding is in agreement with Abogunrin (2003) and Oladunjoye (2004) who were of the view that one of the parameter of good life in Nigeria is ostentatious living and affluence, stressing that the quest for wealth is on the increase. Another identified cause of corruption is greed. The Bible holds that covetousness and greed leads to corruption (Luke 12:16-23).

For research question three, the finding indicated that the effect of corruption are lack of good moral values, production of poor graduates, poor image of Nigeria at the international scene, poor infrastructural development, poor academic standards and poor modernization of university facilities. This finding is supported by Tanzi and Davoodi (1997) they noted that corruption reduces productivity since it is associated with lower expenses and maintenance which will have negative impact on economic growth. In addition the findings are supported by Bliss and Di Tella (1997) and Mauro (1998). They agreed that corruption in public sector hinders economic growth. Mauro (1998) noted that corruption alters the composition of government expenditure specifically by reducing government spending on education. In addition, Anderson and Tverdova (2003) noted that corruption systematically hurts the poor, by reducing the efficiency of the provision of public goods to citizens. Corruption hinders efforts to achieve education goals by reducing access to services and diverting resources away from investment in infrastructure, instructional facilities, research, innovation, community and social services. Corruption has damaging consequences for students and teachers. When resources do not reach the universities or when universities levy late registration due to budget deficits, it is the less privileged segment of the society like the poor students who are less able to pay and eventually drop out from school, thus denying them access to higher education. Furthermore the findings agreed with Ikechukwu (2014) whose findings indicates that corruption had enormity of negative effects on the output from the system in the area of productivity and acceptance of degrees awarded by the institutions in the labour market. In the absence of good governance, parents and community face education provisions that are unresponsive to their needs and ineffective in raising learning outcomes. Corruption leaves communities and regions with students sitting in classrooms, lecture theatres and laboratories lacking basic teaching and learning materials and supervised by de-motivated teachers. The findings of this study is also supported by Mauro (1998) and Fraj and Lachhab (2015) they upheld that the most corrupt countries have less public expenditure on education. In addition, when money meant for the smooth running of the university is mismanaged, security gadgets are not purchased and housing accommodation are not put in place for staff, insecurity sets in. This is a major problem with many Nigerian universities. Even for fear of being kidnapped many university staff leave far away from the university campuses since there are no accommodation for them within the university.

For research question four the findings indicates that the measures that can be used by school administrators for combating the menace of corruption in Nigerian universities are emphasis on moral education, education for good character development, setting up anti-corruption units in institutions, constant monitoring of universities by accreditation bodies and regular auditing of university account. The entire Nigerian universities need moral reorientation. Through moral education values that can help to transform students and university staff can be emphasized. Such values necessary for good citizenship and law abiding society can be inculcated and internalized by individuals within the universities. With moral education which emphasize core ethical values such as respect for self and others, tolerance, honesty, integrity, self discipline, merit and responsibility, it is hoped that the universities can provide long-term solutions to moral, ethical and academic issues and thus be able to survive and grow for full human capital development. Agreeing with the findings of this study, Lickona (2004) posited that through good character and moral education the society would help the young develop good judgment, integrity, trustworthiness and other essential virtues. Education of the minds and hearts of the younger ones at the primary and secondary levels of education could help to make them develop good judgment, integrity, trustworthiness, honesty and other essential virtues and disabuse their minds of corrupt practices while at the university.

The absence of good moral character could be the cause of greed, selfishness and corruption. No other thing can be more relevant to education and national development than good character and value. According to Lewis (1991), values define moral character and create justification for a person's beliefs, decisions and actions including getting involved in corrupt practices. As rightly noted by Wrait and Simpkins (1988), corruption is a moral problem and it is incompatible with ethical values of good citizens.

Other measures that can be used to combat financial corruption is regular auditing of university accounts by external bodies to scrutinize university finances and increase transparency and accountability. This could help to reduce misuse and abuse of university funds. The external body can also be empowered to direct concerned departments to explain financial irregularities and also to pursue the clearance of arrears.

5.1 Conclusion

Corruption impacts the commitment of teachers and the earnestness of students. This study have identified the various types and forms of manifestation of corruption in Nigerian universities, the causes of corruption, the effects of corruption and measures for combating corruption. Combating and preventing corruption in universities require the participation of the university education stakeholders including students, lecturers, non-academic staff, staff unions, management staff and administrators.

5.2 Recommendations

To effectively combat and prevent corruption in universities, the following policy suggestions are recommended:

1) Universities in Nigeria should establish anti-corruption units to help check mate corrupt practices among students and staff.

2) Regular auditing of university account twice in a semester could help check financial corruption within the system.

3) Accreditation bodies should regularly monitor the activities of the universities.

4) University administrators should establish units charged with supervision of teaching and on the spot inspection of institution activities.

5) Moral education should be a curriculum component in all disciplines in the universities.

6) Education for good character development should be intensified.

7) The fundamental values of the Nigerian society should be emphasized in daily teaching in schools.

8) University administrators and staff unions should prevail on government to release enough fund to the system and stop charging late registration fees.

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