

**EDUCATIONAL CORRUPTION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA:
IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL PEACE, DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS IN THE 21ST
CENTURY**

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Abstract

This paper is focused on educational corruption in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, and its implications for peace, development and progress in the 21st century. It attempts to explain the types of corruption which takes place within the tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the resultant effects, not only on the Nigerian educational system, but on the world as a whole. For its methodology and guideline the paper adopts the elite theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. The discussion gives insights into the following areas: (i) why the country continues to spend money on running the tertiary institutions instead of genuinely investing in the development of these institutions; (ii) why our tertiary institutions, stunted by corruption, are almost doomed; (iii) why there is fall in standards and why our academic certificates are becoming worthless before the international community. In order to prevent, control and possibly eradicate this cancerous evil, the paper lists some vital factors which when effectively implemented will not only solve the problems but will enhance global peace, development and progress.

Keywords: educational corruption, tertiary institution, global peace, development, progress

Introduction

Today, our tertiary institutions which include Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Schools of Nursing and Health Technologies, Nigerian Defence Academy, and Colleges of Education appear not to be functioning effectively. There are cases of students being exploited by staff; recruitment and promotion of staff being based on political patronage instead of merit. There are cases of abuse of office by those in authority. Other vices include: admission racketeering, hostel profiteering, sorting, examination malpractice, sexual harassment, etc. All these social vices are signs of a big rot in our tertiary institutions and portend danger for the entire Nigerian nation. It shows absolute lack of credibility in our tertiary institutions' service delivery (Okobi, 1997). This is worrisome and it is only when credibility is restored in the tertiary education sector that the tertiary institutions will stop turning out clever devils who are corrupt and move about in society as educated elites (Ezeani, 2005).

Corrupt practices in our tertiary institutions have far-reaching consequences. For one, it jeopardizes the provision of qualitative education for the citizenry. This is

because unqualified personnel and quacks would find their way into the system. Again, it leads to fall in tertiary education standard. This is because illiterates are daily being produced while our certificates are received with contempt by the international community.

Meaning of Educational Corruption

For a better understanding of educational corruption, an understanding of the term corruption is necessary. The word corruption is derived from the Latin word 'corruptio', which means 'to decay', 'to rot', or 'to degenerate'. It also means breaking of certain codes of conducts for the personal benefit of the perpetrators. Odoaba and Elijah (2007) define it as a deliberate and conscious deviation and violation of rules, norms, and cherished values of society by someone or group of persons occupying position(s) of trust because of inordinate desire for power, wealth and recognition. Garner (2013) however defines corruption in two different ways: First, corruption means depravity, perversion or taint, an impairment of integrity, virtue, or moral principle, especially the impairment of a public official's duties by bribery. Secondly, corruption is defined as the act of doing something with an intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the right of others; a fiduciary or official's use of station or office to produce some benefit either personally or for someone else, contrary to the right of others.

Educational corruption is an aspect of corruption that is perpetrated within the educational institutions. Ezeani (2005) defines it simply "as abuse or perversion within the educational system". To Osipian (2012), it is "the abuse of authority for material gain". In this paper, however, the concept can be defined as the abandonment of expected standards of behaviour by staff and students' personnel as well as other educational authorities in and outside our tertiary institutions with the aim of getting undeserved advantages in the form of personal or material gains. The abandonment of expected standards of behaviour, to a large extent, indicates absence of moral behaviour, poor ethical orientations, degradation of an individual's ethical sense, or what Ajanaku (2006) referred to as integrity deficit or failure among the personnel at the helm of affairs in our tertiary institutions as well as some students' personnel. It shows the extent the academic elites, the staff personnel and students get involved in illegal and immoral practices all of which contravenes the rules and regulations governing the institutions.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

For a thorough understanding of this topic there is need for a theoretical framework of analysis that will guide the writing of the paper. Here, the elite theory formulated by Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto Scott and Marshall (2005) will be useful. Central to the underlying assumptions of the elite theorists are:

- (i) That the composition and circulation of the ruling elites will at all times reflect the balance of power as well as the changing balance of social forces.

- (ii) That every organization would in practice be controlled by a small elite who take decisions. (Scott and Marshall, 2005)
- (iii) That what we have in practice is government by a minority known as rulers or oligarchs, protecting the selfish interest of that group.
- (iv) That there are different types of elites viz: bureaucratic elites, religious elites, business elites, military elites, academic elites, etc.
- (v) That the seizure of state power, its consolidation and use are at times circulated among the different elites but in some other cases a consensus is reached on how to make use of state power.

Robert Michels in Rosenbaum (1989) corroborates the above assumptions when he formulated the 'iron law of oligarchy', which is to the effect that political parties and other organizations tend to elitist rules even in democracy. According to him even an organization that profess internal democracy would in practice be controlled by a small number of elites who rule in their own interests that are counter to those of the rank and file (Dowse and Hughes, 2014).

Nigeria adopted the capitalist mode of production. This was possible because Nigeria was integrated into the world capitalist system via western colonialism and imperialism. This produced two groups (classes) of people. One monopolizes the means of production while the rest of the people (second group) have no means of production (Ake, 2008). Those who monopolized the means of production had their historical origin from the colonial establishment which eventually shaped its overall development strategies as well as the nature of class formation that shaped the class character of the Nigerian state. For instance, both the petty bourgeois and an allied comprador bourgeois had already been formed toward the tail end of colonialism in Nigeria. The two classes of elites were the two major local beneficiaries of the colonial system of production and distribution, as well as the political concessions granted by the colonialists. They succeeded the colonial masters and as a result inherited the colonial economy which was characterized by exploitation, domination, alienation, extortion, etc. The aim of the new Nigerian elite that emerged was to exploit the masses (proletariat) so as to promote and sustain its own private ends. Consequently, emphasis was on distribution (circulation) of what was produced and not how to produce and what to produce. Thus, political patronages had more premium than merit and competence.

A review of the political history of Nigeria from Independence to date shows that the Nigerian elite is not only very corrupt but heartless. To typical Nigerian elite, due process and constitutional provisions are only for the led and not for the leaders. Consequently, he abuses his office, disrespects the rule of law, loots public treasury with impunity and recklessly violates laid down rules, policies, procedures. The Nigerian elite like the proverbial dog usually eats the bone hung on its neck and which he keeps in custody for the citizens (Osakwe, 2012).

Causes of Educational Corruption

From experience and research, see for instance Chuta (2004), corruption in the educational sector cannot be given a mono-causal explanation. This is because it is caused by many factors. These factors include:

i) Bureaucratic Factors

The administrative procedures and practices in most Nigerian establishments (of which the tertiary institutions are included) are cumbersome and dilating. The administrative operations move very slowly. Bureaucracy is thus characterized by red tapism (passing the buck), as a result files move endlessly from one desk to another because every officer wants to avoid the responsibility of taking critical decisions. Consequently, there is delay in taking administrative decisions which now make the people perceive every administrative set-up negatively. The truth, therefore, is that it is the anxiety to avoid delay that in most cases encourages the growth of dishonesty and other corrupt practices. It gives room for palm greasing (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2012) or what Sapru (2008) referred to as “speed money”.

ii) Undue Emphasis on Certificates

Too much emphasis that is attached to certificates in Nigeria is one of the causes of educational corruption in our tertiary institutions. It is the class of certificate you have that will give you position, power, honour, title, etc. Emphasis is hardly placed on what you can do with your hand, head or heart. The question usually is; do you have the required educational qualifications? Nobody wants to know whether you obtained these certificates corruptly or otherwise. The guiding principle is that the end justifies the means. Consequently, people now pursue the acquisition of certificates by all means. For instance, in 2017, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) arrested twenty-one-year-old Abubaka Liman, candidate for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) at Nasarawa Polytechnic centre, for being in possession of a gun and two rounds of live ammunition (Abanobi and Oota, 2017).

iii) Non-Payment of Staff Salaries Promptly

In a capitalist state like Nigeria, it would be suicidal for governments at any level not to pay workers their salaries and allowances promptly. This is because such action or inaction on the part of the government may be seen as indirectly exposing workers to unethical means of sustenance. They become highly susceptible to indecent ways of survival or meeting their basic needs (Edoga, 2016).

iv) Environmental Factors

When we talk of environmental factors, we are simply referring to the surroundings or conditions within which an educational institution exists as well as the physical facilities therein; we are also referring to the school plant which is the equipment and other material resources provided for effective teaching and learning operations (Mgbodile, 2004).

The inability to provide enough physical facilities in any of our tertiary institutions may give rise to educational corruption (e.g. examination malpractice). For

instance, students will communicate easily with each other, copy from each other, in a crowded classroom environment with many desks and chairs (Okobi, 1997).

v) Moral Decadence

Today in our tertiary institutions, there is high rate of immoral behaviours. The moral decadence in the Nigerian party politics has entered the tertiary institutions. The result is that many people in these tertiary institutions do not have good moral principles. This gives rise to such social vices like bribery, extortion, sexual harassment, padding of result, forgery, sorting, etc (Idike, 1997).

vi) Failure of Leadership

The leaders of some of our tertiary institutions as well as the supervisory agencies are corrupt. They do not lead by example. They say one thing and do a different thing. They exploit and alienate both staff and students' personnel under them. Achebe (1983) acknowledges this fact and notes that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership".

vii) Materialism

There is the belief that possession of money and physical comfort are more important than spiritual values. The society becomes acquisitive because the greatness of an individual is judged by what he possesses and not his personality. The acquisition of wealth becomes a sine-qua-non of life. The result is that people now indulge in acquiring wealth without caring for the means they adopt to achieve their goals (Bhugwan and Bhushan, 2012). To these people, the end justifies the means of their desire to get rich quick.

viii) Deviation from Ethical Principles and Values

Corruption seems to have come to stay in our educational institutions because people deviate from the beliefs and principles about what is right and wrong; because ethics is now disregarded. The codes of conducts in these institutions are no more being followed; the values, norms or standard behaviour are being downplayed. This cannot help in the achievement of institutional goals in view of the close relationship between ethics and education. They are complementary to each other. In fact, some philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas believe that education cannot be said to have been achieved without high moral or ethical standards (Onuoha, 1986).

Forms of Educational Corruption

When most Nigerians talk of corruption what they usually have in mind is monetary inducement. This is not right since corruption can be associated with meanings other than the taking or giving of bribes, in terms of monetary demands and rewards. The term is far wider than what we imagine it to be (Muktar, 2016). Corruption can be in many forms and the guiding principles are: (i) whether there is an element of depravity, perversion, taint or impairment of integrity in the action of the doer; or (ii) whether the act was done with the intent to give some advantages inconsistent with the official's use of a station or office to procure some benefit that is personal or for someone else, contrary to the right of others.

Specifically, the following forms of corruption are common in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria: examination malpractice, admission racketeering, hostel profiteering, extortion of the students, abuse of office, sorting, forgery of certificates and statements of results, sexual harassment and immorality, embezzlement of funds, godfatherism, corruption in recruitment and promotion of staff, placing government's or management's machinery at the disposal of a particular student to win election during students' politics in the campus (Okobi, 1997). Others include: writing a good remark (confidential report) for a student (or a staff) that does not deserve it, contracts inflation and variation, lobbying to be posted to juicy departments, lobbying to be put in juicy committees, lobbying to be given more courses and larger classes, sycophancy, favouritism, bribery, absenteeism, truancy, poor attitude to work, padding of salaries, making "gifts" to persons in authority so as to take some personal advantages, violation of rules and policies for personal gains; kickbacks, nepotism (giving unfair advantages to your relatives, friends, political benefactors if you are in a position of authority or power), etc.

Effects of Educational Corruption in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

The cancerous spread of corruption in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has far reaching consequences on these institutions as well as the nation.

Corruption is capable of sapping the development potentials of not only the institutions but the entire nation. Specifically, corruption in the education sector has the potential of eclipsing any meaningful educational policies and programmes. Again, it stunts pertinent variables necessary for educational development, including multiplier effects, by rendering impotent the very structures, institutions and human resources that are designed to facilitate growth (Acho, 2017).

Institutionalized educational corruption increases administrative costs, losses in the revenue of these institutions, results in goal displacement as the institutions' goals are replaced with the personal benefits of some persons.

Educational corruption in tertiary institutions in Nigeria affects standard of education. For instance, examination malpractice, sorting, sale of marks for cash or kind, etc., have adverse effects on the manner in which educational practices are run and practiced; it reduces standards and quality of education in the society as illiterate graduates are produced.

Implication for Global Peace, Development and Progress in the 21st Century

According to Best (2012), peace "is the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful coexistence". Peace can also be seen as a situation characterized by the absence of war or threat of war, violence, conflict, phobia; freedom from civil or any other type of disturbance, rebellion, insurrection, etc. Its aim is to create and maintain a just order in society and also to resolve conflict by non-violent means.

The implication of educational corruption to global peace, development and progress can be explained using the structural conflict theory advanced by Karl Marx, F. Engels and V. L. Lenin (Best, 2012). The basic assumptions of this theory are as follows:

- i) That conflicts occur because of the exploitation and unjust nature of human societies whereby one class dominates the other at any material time.
- ii) That capitalism is an exploitative system that is based on its relations of production and the division of the society into the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.
- iii) That the continued exploitation of the proletariat and other lower classes under capitalism creates conflict and there is bound to be contradictions as the proletariats will one day revolt and challenge their exploitation and alienation.
- iv) That the contradictions occasioned by the capitalist exploitation and domination will end in revolution, civil war or some form of violence leading to the overthrow of the capitalist exploitative system.

The relevance of this theory to the subject under discussion can be summarized here. The frequent strike actions by tertiary institution workers as well as the incessant students' riots in our campuses occur because they revolt against exploitation, alienation and marginalization by tertiary institution authorities. All these conflicts, violence, rioting, cult wars in one way or the other affect global peace, development and progress. This could be seen from the fact that almost all terrorist organizations, insurgency or rebellious groups had their foundation laid on harsh and negative ideologies, structural violence, widening inequality occasioned by exploitation and domination.

For global peace, development and progress to be achieved, it is imperative that our leaders at different levels should evolve a new attitude to life devoid of exploitation of one vulnerable group by another dominant group. This is necessary because international conflicts are in most cases derived from neglecting human needs elements and the spill-over of domestic problems (Madu, 2015). Again, it is natural that once there is conflict (e.g. civil war) both sides of the divide start getting support from allied countries thus endangering global peace, development and progress. The case of the civil war in Nigeria from 1967 – 1970 is a good example. Here the Nigerian government was then supported by Britain while the secessionist Biafra was supported somehow by countries such as France, Gabon, Tanzania, Ivory Coast (Aneke, 2007). It should be noted that corruption in high places was one of the factors that gave rise to the first Military coup d'état led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu on 15th January, 1966. This coup d'état was one of the remote causes of the Nigerian Civil War (Achebe, 2012).

The Way Forward: Recommendations

To prevent, control and eradicate corruption in our tertiary institutions, the researcher recommends as follows:

- i) Enforcement of all constitutional provisions on corruption.
- ii) Making anti-corruption agencies to be result-oriented by ensuring that suspects are prosecuted, timely, according to the provisions of the law.
- iii) Enforcement of work ethics among tertiary institution employees and authorities.
- iv) Inculcation and sustenance of integrity among staff and leaders of our tertiary institutions.
- v) Ensuring that workers are not only paid living wage as salaries but that they are paid as and when due.
- vi) Ensuring that our tertiary institution administrators and other stakeholders lead by example. They should provide good leadership that would drive the needed technological advancement of the country.
- vii) Establishment of quality assurance units (anti-corruption and transparency units) in all our tertiary institutions. This, no doubt, will supplement the efforts of the anti-graft agencies.
- viii) Ensuring that students involved in examination misconduct are sanctioned, as appropriate, if found culpable.
- ix) Ensuring that staff and students involved in any educational corruption which is criminal in nature are handed over to police for prosecution.
- x) To ensure that due process is complied with while investigating all alleged cases of educational corruption, and that staff found guilty of corrupt practices are dealt with according to the provisions of conditions of service as well as other relevant legislations.
- xi) Effort should be made to get rid of nepotism. This is because the principle of nepotism puts personal, family or sectional interests above that of the nation. Equally, it is a huge monster that lays the eggs which hatch into so many types of corruption (Ochereome, 2017).

Conclusion

Corruption among our academic elites (lecturers and administrators), students personnel and other staff personnel in our tertiary institutions is a wide spread problem. To a large extent it is caused or supported by the academic elites in these institutions as well as others in the educational supervisory agencies. This is because they benefit from the problem. The effects of corruption on the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, as well as the larger society, are not devastating. It is absolutely dysfunctional to the achievement of both educational and other societal goals.

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