Common Ethical Issues in Delta State Schools: An Empirical Analysis

Oghuvbu Enamiroro Patrick   Okpilike, Felix E.M[*]
Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies Delta State University, Abraka-Nigeria
*E-mail of the corresponding author: femokpilike@yahoo.com,enamiroro2001@yahoo.com

Abstract
The study identified/analyzed unethical conducts and possible ways to reduce them in Delta State schools. A twenty items questionnaire on 3000 participants was used in this study with two research questions and two hypotheses raised and administered. The study revealed school closing due to strike action, unconstitutional methods of admission of students, inaccuracy of books and records, misleading advertising for admission, and misuse of school properties are unethical conducts in schools. Use of whistle-blowing preparation and utilization of formal codes of ethics in schools and provision of ethics training lesson as possible ways to reduce unethical conducts in schools.
Keywords: Ethics, Issues, School, Whistle-blowing

Introduction

Ethics is concerned with the study of morals that deals with the distinction between right and wrong based on the tradition and culture of a people, religion, profession and so on. It consists of instrumental terminal values concerned with enduring belief in a certain way of behaving and in the attainment of a certain end state. Every individual, country, or continent has ethical values based on their way of life. This is the designed for the positive control of the people in line with their acceptable standards.

Ethical principles are equated with morals which were developed when human beings started to question the motive behind their actions and the result of ability to judge and find the difference between good and evil (Oke, 2009). Schools contain teachers who are workers that are controlledwith codes of ethics, codes of conduct and ethics committees, policies and processes to resolve ethical dilemmas (Oke, 2009).

In the school, academic ethics are in practice. According to Kuna (2003) in Oke (2009:10):

> "There are three major components of the academic ethics. These are commitment, criticism and responsibility. All are critical preconditions for the production and reproduction of knowledge. All are crucial for the passionate, methodical and painstaking pursuit of truth. And all are indispensable for developing the courage, fearlessness and dedication to accept and defend truth whatever it may be, no matter the consequences. Finally, all are indispensable for producing socially relevant knowledge by which I refer to knowledge in the service of the multitude of humanity, rather than in the service of individual interests"

In Nigerian higher education institutions, an academic as a research supervisor has the following ethical responsibilities:

i)   Providing students with constructive and supportive environment
ii) Attending to students' research and other related needs in timely fashion
iii) Reading and commenting on the students' progress reports promptly
iv) Holding students to high academic and ethical standards
v)   Facilitating students understanding of research ethics and professional developments
vi) Positive supervision of students research projects to ensure that results are not cooked-up
     (Badiru,1996) in Oke(2009:104)

On common unethical conduct in schools, Alhassan (1993) identified truancy, lateness to school, cheating at examination, improper dressing, drug abuse, lying and lateness to school and lessons. At tertiary level, lecturers extortion of money from students, conduct of armchair research, sexual harassment by both lecturers and students, plagiarism, delaying unduly the marking and release of examination results, and leaking examination questions among others. These unethical conducts disturb the minds of teachers and students, which interfere with the learning of both the students and their peers (Yaduma and Auwal, 2007). The quality of education by parents depends on what effects their children, that is the school climate based on character molding of the learners. Practice of learning and work ethics is a good determinant of qualitative education. Schools where unethical practice is highly in operation cannot produce disciplined and quality graduates. This reduces the

value of our school products, based on the standard by which we judge human behavior. In other words, moral rules, promoting those things thought of as good and minimizing or avoiding those things thought as bad learnt at early age at home and school.

Ethical theories represent the grand ideas on which guiding principlesare based. Virtue theory asks what a "good person" would do in specific real-life situations. This study is based on utilitarianism theory, sometimes called consequentialism or teleogy, promotes good or valued ends, rather than using the right means. This theory instructs adherents to work for those outcomes that will give the most advantage to the majority of those affected in the impartial way possible. It advocates achieving the greatest number of people, often advocated as the basis for broad social policies (Bebeau, RestadNarvez, 1999).

School ethics are designed to provide equal teaching and learning opportunities for all students and teachers for the positive achievement of school goals and objectives in particular and the national education goals in general. The Nigerian National Policy on Education goals is designed to promote the broad societal policies for national growth and development. Any unethical practice could negatively affect the national objectives of education, through the application of ethical principles in decision-making.

Ethical decision-making arises from intuitive and critical evaluation levels of moral reasoning. Intuitive level consisting of one's personal feelings and ideas as to the 'right' and 'wrong' of a particular situation feelings derived from beliefs formulated out of personal knowledge and experiences. Critical evaluation level for a decision we arrive at by applying ethical theory, moral principles and professional rules, standards, codes and laws to the specific situation which must be decided, it is seasoned thought (Wynne,1995).

On moral and ethical issues in Teacher Education, a teacher's first moral obligation is to provide excellent instruction. Teachers with a high level of moral professionalism have a deep obligation to help students learn (Benniga, 2003). According to Wynne (1995), teachers with that sense of obligation demonstrate their moral professionalism by coming to work regularly and on time, being well informed about their student matter, planning and conducting classes with care, regularly reviewing and updating instructional practices, co-operating with colleagues and observing school policies. Therefore, the whole institution works effectively and tactfully, but firmly criticizing unsatisfactory school proposing constructive improvement (Benninga, 2003).

Rest and Narvaez (1994) developed the four components Model of Moral Maturity for ethical training programme. The components of the model are:

1) Moral sensitivity, the awareness of how our actions affect other people
2) Moral judgment involved intuitions about what is fair and moral. It requires adults to make moral judgment about complex human activities.
3) Moral character requires individuals to act on their moral convictions.
4) Moral motivation requires a prioritization of moral values over personal values, particularly in professional settings (Bebeau, Rest and Narvez, 1999).

On ethical issues in relation to leadership, Steinberg (1996) opined the involvement of non-professionals in education policy making and administration at the highest level, increasing and seemingly intractable social problems such as unemployment, youth suicide and violence problems that vary in their effects on different school communities but have deeply penetrating effects on many schools. These changes reduced principal's' ability and time for constructive educational planning because crisis management studies revealed that educational leadership is values driven, hence leaders should be cognizant of and act appropriately towards the many ethical problems and issues presented by schooling.

Statement of the Problem

The influence of unethical conduct on school administration, school climate, quality of school graduates and societal perception on the educational system is well known. This has negative effect on the societal value of our schools, locally, nationally and internationally. These are some of the reasons for perceived fall in the quality of instruction by teachers and academic achievement by students. The increasing rate of dropout, inert-school movement within local government, state and countries are also perceived to be because of unethical conducts at all levels of our educational system in Nigeria.

In addition, the effects of wastage in education resulting from corruption due to unethical conduct, after huge financial, human, material investment in a developing country are known by scholars (Oghuvbu, 2008). What are the unethical conducts in today's schools? What ways could these conducts be reduced or eliminated from our schools in Delta State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

The study specifically sought to identify and analyze ethical conducts in today's schools in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Two research questions were raised and answered

1) What are the unethical conducts in Secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria schools?
2) What are the possible ways to reduce or eliminate the unethical conducts in schools?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested

1) There is no significant difference among the participants mean perception scores on identified unethical conducts in today's schools.
2) There is no significant difference among the mean perception scores of participants on the possible ways to reduce or eliminate unethical conducts in Delta State Nigeria schools.

Methods and Procedures

The proportional and stratified sampling techniques were used to select ten (10) Local Government Areas from twenty-five (25) Local Government Areas in the three Senatorial District. From the 10 Local Government Areas, 30 Secondary schools, 40 Primary schools, 2 Colleges of Education, 2 Polytechnics and 1 university were selected and used for this study. From these institutions, 3,000 participants were randomly selected i.e.1, 000secondary school teachers, 1,000 teachers from the primary schools, 120 lecturers from Colleges of Education, 60 lecturers from polytechnics and 30 lecturers from the University. Students sampled 500 secondary, 100 college of Education, 100 Polytechnics and 180 university students.

Instrument

An instrument titled Ethical Issues in today's Schools Questionnaire (EITSQ)patterned after a four-point scale was developed and used by the researchers. The instrument is made up of 14 items, 10 on common ethical problems and 4 on possible ways to encourage positive ethical conduct in today's schools. The instrument was first administered on a set of 70 respondents who are used for the study and the result of the split-half reliability test was 0.82. The split-half reliability test is a measure of internal consistency of the instrument hence the coefficient of 0.82-revealed strong item consistency of the instrument and psychometrically it is an indication of the validity of the instrument.

Descriptive statistics percentage and mean were used to identify unethical conducts and possible ways to encourage ethical conducts in Delta State schools. The inferential statistics ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Collection of Data

Each subject was scored on the bases of his/her response to the statement in the questionnaire. Scoring was done in order of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagreed (D) 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1.

Results

The results of the data analyzed are presented according to research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: what are the unethical conducts in Secondary Schools in Delta State, Nigeria schools?

Table 1: Unethical Conducts in Schools

S/N	Items	Score	Mean	Percentage
1.	School closing due to strike action	9,840	3.3	82
2.	Unconstitutional methods of admission of students	9,240	3.1	77
3.	Inaccuracy of books and records	2,220	3.0	74
4.	Misleading advertisement for admission	2,210	3.0	74
5.	Misuse of school property	3,360	2.8	69
6.	Falsification of data	3,120	2.6	64
7.	Drug and alcohol abuse	3,000	2.5	63
8.	Kick backs	2,880	2.4	60
9.	Misuse of proprietary information	2,874	2.4	60
10.	Insider trading with scores	2,760	2.3	58

Source: Computed from fieldwork

From table 1, identified unethical conducts are school closing due to strike action (82%), unconstitutional methods of admission of students (77%), inaccuracy of books and records (74%) and false misleading advertising for admission (74%) are major ethical problems in Delta State schools.

Research Question 2: What are the possible ways to reduce or eliminate the unethical conducts in schools?

Table 2: Possible Ways to reduce Unethical Conducts in Schools

S/N	Items	Score	Mean	Percentage
1.	Provision of ethics training programmes	3,720	3.1	77
2.	Appointment of ethics specialist who plays a role in top management decision making in all schools	3,624	3.02	76
3.	Preparation and utilization of formal codes of ethics in schools, which staff and students must satisfy and must be firmly supported.	3,480	2.9	73
4.	Whistle-blowing i.e. Reporting perceived unethical school practices to outside authorities	2,120	2.6	64

Source: Computed from fieldwork.

From table 2, provision of ethics training, appointment of specialist in ethic in top management decision making in schools and preparation and utilization of formal codes of ethics in schools which staff and students must satisfy and must be firmly supported are ways to reduce unethical conducts in schools.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference among the participants mean perception scores on identified unethical conduct in schools in Delta State.

Table 3: ANOVA Summary on Unethical Conduct in Schools

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Df	MS	f-cal	F-tab
Among	40,726,003.0	8	90,750.38		
Within	46,462,226.1	2,991	15,534.0	5.842	1.96
Total	47,188,229.1	2,999	15,734.7		

Source: Computed from fieldwork

Since F-calculated (5.842) is greater than F-critical value 1.9, result is significant. It showed that there were statistically significant differences in the mean perceived unethical conducts in schools according to the status of participants (F: [8, 10, 3011] =5.842,P<0.05). this implies that participants identified at different degrees showed that this significant difference was due to the difference between the mean scores of secondary school participants (X=1.45, SD=0.81) and that of primary schools (X=3.01,SD=0.74) and tertiary institutions (X=3.75,SD=1.02).

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference among the mean perception scores of participants on the possible ways to reduce unethical conducts in Delta State, Nigeria schools.

Table 4: ANOVA Summary on Possible Ways to reduce Unethical Conducts in today's Schools.

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Df	MS	f-cal	F-tab
Among	38,480.8	8	4,810.1		
Within	45,446,713.12	2,991	15,194.5	0.3166	1.96
Total	45,485,193.9	2,999	15,166.8		

Source: Computed from fieldwork

The result of hypothesis two revealed that there were no statistical difference in the possible ways to reduce unethical conducts perceived by participants according to their status (F[9,15,200] =0.3166, P <0.05). This means that participants provided similar ways to reduce unethical conducts in today's schools.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that participants i.e. lecturers in Colleges of Education, Polytechnic, University with their students, primary and secondary school teachers and students respectively identified school closing due to strike action, unconstitutional method of admission of students, inaccuracy of books and false misleading advertising for admission as major ethical issues in schools. These findings are consistent with (Bebeau, Rest and Narvaez, 1999), (Wynne, 1995). School closing due to strike action could lead to dropout, decline in academic standard and increase in indiscipline among students (Oghuvbu, 2008). Unconstitutional methods of admission could also increase inter school movement rate at all levels, increase rate of 419 practices among staff and students. Inaccuracy of books leads to wrong information and mis-education of students. This also influences negatively planning and further research.

School heads and teachers need empirical evidence to be good at work. Amoral school heads that are either moral or immoral, but ethically lazy, must be supported by action. This study identified provision of ethic training lessons for both staff and students, appointment of ethic specialists as school managers, preparation and

utilization of formal code of ethic in schools for staff and student, and whistle blowing that is reporting unethical school practices to outside authorities.

Although, codes of ethics is not a "cure-all" but experience has revealed that it is a positive step towards reduction of unethical conducts in schools. It serves as baseline for measurement for effective ethical decision making, especially when committee system of administration is in practice. Whistle blowing is the practice of reporting perceived unethical practices in schools to outsiders such as the press, government agencies, or public interest groups (Marcia and Janet, 1984). In developing countries like Nigeria, whistle blowers may be motivated by revenge, since it involved putting ones job on the line. The challenge for today's school administrators is to create a school climate in which the need to blow the whistle is reduced. School heads could reduce whistle blowing in the following ways: encourage the free expression of controversial and dissenting viewpoints, follow school code of conduct, identify teachers' perception about schools social responsibility policies, make appropriate changes, and recognize that this harsh treatment of whistle blower will probably lead to adverse public opinion. It should be noted that individual behavior (staff or student) makes schools ethical or unethical. Effective school administration can help bring out the best in staff and students by clearly identifying and rewarding ethical conduct.

Conclusion and Recommendations

School closings due to strike action, unconstitutional methods of admission of students, inaccuracy of books and records, false advertising for admission, misuse of school property, falsification of data, drug and alcohol abuse are unethical conducts in schools. The result of parametric analysis showed a significant difference in the mean perception scores among the participants. The difference was due to the mean difference between secondary school participants and primary school and tertiary institutions.

Identified possible ways to reduce the unethical conducts in schools are provision of ethics training lesson, appointment of ethics specialist who pays a role in top management decision making in schools, preparation and utilization of formal codes of ethics in schools, which staff and students must satisfy and must be firmly supported. There is no statistically difference in the possible ways to reduce unethical conducts perceived by participants according to their status.

Government should enforce the teaching of moral instruction in schools. Teaching of civics as a subject in primary and secondary schools should be enforced in both private and public schools. Seminars and conferences should be organized for those involved in providing services at all levels of government. The present EFCC (Economic and Financial Crime Commission) services should be enforced to cover all aspects of management in Nigeria to reduce corruption.

References

Aduma, P.S. and Auwal, A. (2007).A Survey of Behavioral Problems and Management Strategy in Secondary Schools in Akwanga Local Government Area.Lapai Journal of Arts and Education, 1(2):117-127

Badiru, A.B. (1996). Project Management for Research: A Guide for Engineering and Science.London : Chapman and Hall Publishers.

Bebeau, M.J, Rest, J.R. and Narvaez, D. (1990). Beyond the Promise: A Perspective on Research in Moral Education. Educational Researchers, 28(4):18-26.

Benninga, J.S., Berkowitz, M.W, Kuehn, P. and Smith, K. (2003).The Relationships of Character Education and Academic Achievement in Elementary Schools.Journal of Research in Character Education, 1(1):17-30.

Kreituer, R. (1995). Management (Sixth Edition).HoughtomMiffkin Company, New Jersey.

Kuna, M.J. (2005). The Academic Ethics and the Spirit of Opportunism Commitment, Criticism and Responsibility in University Education in the Nigerian Social Scientist.Social Science Academy of Nigeria, 8(1).

Leke, Oke (2009). Ethics and Conflict Management in Nigerian Universities.International Journal of Social and Policy Issues.6(1&2):98-110.

Marcia,P.M. and Near, J.P. (1984). The relationships among beliefs, organizational Position and Whistle-blowing Status: A discriminant analysis.Academy of management Journal,27(1):687-705.

Rest, J.R. amd Narvaez, D. (1994.)Moral Development in the Professions.Hillsdale: N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum Associate.

Steinberg, L. (1996). Ethnicity and Adolescent Achievement.American Educator, 20(2):28-35

Wynae, E.A. (1995). The Moral Dimension of Teaching.In A.C. Orustein (Ed.).teaching Theory into Practice (190-202).Boston: Alyn and Bacon.