

Corruption and Its Effect on the Standard of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focused on corruption and its effect on the standard of vocational Business Education in Nigeria. Corruption as reviewed in this paper is any act/practice that violates lay down rules and regulations or ethics in academic environment with the aim of circumventing due process and favoring an individual or group of individuals (student) for personal monetary or material benefits. Corruption in Business Education is totally condemned in this paper. Different forms of corruptions in Business Education were identified to include bribery/sorting (money), sexual harassment, falsification of records, and admission malpractice among others. There was an established relationship between corruption and the poor state of academic standard in Nigeria. Besides, different causes of corruption were identified to include; poverty, unemployment, low wage, weak government institutions, poor entry qualification by student and lecturer, poor study habits and students' home background factors. The effects of corruptions on Business Education standard were as well identified and recommendations were made to tackle the menace as well curbing or minimizing its recurrence in order to restore sanity in the programme and raise the standard.

Keywords: Corruption and Vocational Business Education

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Introduction

The prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian society which has left virtually all sectors untouched has become worrisome to stakeholders in all sectors especially in the educational sector. In recent times, this malady has become a household word in our nation and its prevalence is disturbing. It has assumed a high profile and epidemic proportion so pronounced and contagious that its seals and impressions can be felt by individuals and states globally without respect to level of sophistication (Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu, 2017).

Generally, education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits (Collin, 2014). Education develops in the body and soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of. Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty specially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty. Vocational education is also an embodiment of the general education wherein business education is an important area. Meanwhile, Chukwuemeka and Igbinedion (2016), asserted that Business education is an aspect of Vocational and Technical education involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and life. Clark cited in Ubulom and Dambo (2016) defined business education as "an all-encompassing programme, which equips its recipient with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable him succeed in whatever business endeavor he may engage in". Business education is education 'for business' and 'about businesses'. Vocational Business education focuses majorly on the holistic development of the 3H (i.e. Head, Heart and Hand). There has been an observed decline in the standard of business education programmes in Nigeria which resultantly affect the business education graduates during and after the completion of their programme. In view of this, the concern of this paper is on "Corruption and Its Effect on the Standard of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria".

Corruption in Vocational Business Education in Nigeria

The existence of corruption in the countries of the world over is indisputable. In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, there is no major sector that is free from corruption. That the education sector in Africa is corrupt is well-known (Paul, 2004). In Nigeria, corruption in the education sector has reached an alarming level that it is now attracting a lot of attention from both the private and the public sectors (ICPC, 2013 cited by Okon 2013). Charles and Osah (2015) opined that corruption in the education sector is a universal phenomenon. No country is immune from corrupt teachers and administrators in all of its school system. Corruption desecrates and finally destroys any education system with reckless abandon (Osundare, 2007). The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) defines corruption in education as a "misuse of public office for private gain that influences access, quality, and equity in education" (Stephen, 2004). According to David (2015), despite all the attention corruption has

attracted, the search for a common and all-embracing definition of corruption has remained elusive. There are at least two explanations for this paradox. Firstly, corruption is expressive of a multitude of deviant behaviors. Consequently, attempts to offer a precise definition have tended to confuse corruption with other related offenses. On the other hand, attempts to produce a more simplified definition have produced the opposite effects: definitions that exclude several important corrupt practices. Secondly, the meaning or understanding of corruption does often vary from one culture to another, and even within the same culture over time. Khan cited in David (2015), corruption means any act which deviates from the rules of conduct, including normative values, governing the actions of an individual in a position of authority or trust, whether in the private or public domain, because of private- regarding motives, (that is non- public or general) such as wealth, power, status etc. The definition is useful for analyzing corruption in Nigeria for many reasons. It captures the most important, if not all, the dimensions of corruption in the country. Most importantly, it is devoid of value judgment, having been constructed on three (3) empirically verifiable and measurable criteria.

An act will be corrupt only if it involves all of the following conditions:

- i. It is done by or involves an individual holding a position of authority, trust or responsibility, whatever may be the domain or sector of activity (public or private)
- ii. The act committed contravenes any rule, law or regulation, including existing norms and values of a community or an institution
- iii. The act or behavior is done intentionally to advance narrow private interests and or objectives, whether they are material or not.

The wide spread or prevalence of corruption in Nigeria means that there is hardly any sector of the Nigerian society that can be exempted as not being corrupt. Be this as it may, there are sectors in which the prevalence of corruption in them can terribly and disastrously destroy a state and her people and one sector where this is real is education. This position is taken because corruption in the education industry is terribly detrimental to the moral and general health of the Nigerian state (Douglas and Magdalene, 2017). Corruption according to Brunnelle-Quraishi (2011) is derived from the Latin word ‘corruptus’ which translates as “to break”. The World Bank (1998) defines corruption as the use of public office for private gain and in the views of Lawal and Tobi (2006), “corruption is any conscious attempt or deliberate diversion of resources from the satisfaction of the general interests to that of the selfish (personal or particular interest). Ojiade (2000) is more inclusive in his definition of corruption when he writes that corruption is any systematic vice perpetuated by individuals, society or a state in general, where not-too-good concepts for equality, social harmony and harmonious living e.g. favoritism, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, undue enrichment, amassing of wealth, abuse of office, power, position etc. become norms upon which the people and the state operate.

In the same vein Iyanda (2012) citing Ngwakwe (2009) reports that Nigeria’s anti-corruption agency - Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) defines corruption from economic perspectives as “the non-violent criminal and illicit activity committed with objectives of earning wealth illegally either individually or in a group or organized manner thereby violating existing legislation governing the economic activities of government and its administration” In virtually all these definitions, a flash-point that unites all the definitions is the inclination of someone or an entity to use his position or its entity to amass wealth and other advantages for himself or itself at the detriment of the masses, the institution where he works and in total contravention to the oath or other regulatory means he had promised and sworn to. In fact a single thread that runs through is that corruption is abuse of office, privilege and hence an unethical behavior whereby one who is entrusted with a position either in public or private institution capitalizes on that trust to grab, divert and appropriate the resources of the public or private institution for his personal benefit, gain or personal advantage (Douglas and Magdalene, 2017).

Corruption in education is the pervasion of the expected standard of behavior by those in authority in the educational system for their own personal gain to the detriments of others and the system in its pursuit of quality manpower and national development. Corruption in the system has made it easy for some scholars to describe schools are no longer institutions of learning but instead as a money exchange department to help students pass examinations and gain admission into higher institutions. The educational sector has tremendous capacity to set in motion an uncontrollable reproductive process of corruption in the larger society and thereby mar the development structures and standard.

One major type of corruption in the Nigerian education system that is now attracting a lot of attention is teacher-student corruption that is particularly occasioned by teachers in the education system. Teacher-student’s corruption involves malpractices that are perpetuated by teachers to specifically favor students from whom such teachers expect some types of rewards. These malpractices may be committed by the teachers with either the active connivance of the students or not. There are different types of corruption that are now permanent features in the Nigerian higher institutions and other aspects of the education system. Most of these crimes are perpetuated by lecturers. The table below summarizes the major types of lecturer-student corruptions in Nigeria as reported by (Charles and Osah, 2015).

Types of Corruption	Frequency of Corruption in Colleges of education	Frequency of Corruption in Polytechnics	Frequency of Corruption in the Universities
Money for assessments and exams scores	70% (High)	88% (Very High)	83% (Very High)
Sexual harassment without any favour attached	69% (Very High)	81% (Very High)	94% (Exceptionally High)
Sex for assessments and exams scores	61% (High)	59% (High)	88% (Very High)
Awarding of high exams and other assessments scores due to secret cult affiliations	52% (Medium)	66% (High)	77% (Very High)
Exams and assessments scores because of ethnic affiliations	37% (Low)	49% (Medium)	72% (Very High)
Supervisors helping students to write final projects and theses for money or sex	56% (High)	32% (Low)	81% (Very High)
Lecturers helping students to violate well-known school regulations such as class attendance record falsification and drug abuse sanctions	58% (High)	60% (High)	76% (Very High)
Admission malpractice	66% (Very High)	69% (Very High)	95% (Very High)

Source: Charles and Osah (2015).

Forms of Corruption in Business Education in Nigeria

Business education is an integral part of the general education, thus many corruption related factors affecting the general education are also affecting Business education programme and its standard. On this note, the assertions of Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu (2017) will be adopted for this paper. They narrated that, in recent times, corruption in higher education institutions in Nigeria has permeated every aspect – students, lecturers, non-teaching staff and the administration of the institutions. Corroborating the above assertion, Iyayi cited in Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu (2017) observed that “there is now a crisis of ethical standards of major proportions in our citadels of higher learning”.

At the students’ level, the evil called cultism is another aspect of corruption, although on a low scale as a result of the stringent punitive measures adopted against cultists.

The widespread academic dishonesty among students (undergraduates and graduates) is another form of corruption which has assumed a worrisome dimension.

There have been several reports of lecturers who have been physically attacked while some have been assassinated. Many lecturers have lost properties like laptops, money, or other personal effects. These crimes have been traced to students who perpetuate these crimes on unsuspecting lecturers for stopping them from cheating in examinations. Another aspect or form of corruption displayed by students is bribery – this is the act of giving money or material things to a lecturer to influence him/her to award unmerited scores. This form of corruption is also known as sorting.

For lecturers, corruption exists in several forms: lecturers who handle students’ charts compel students to pay money and change scores awarded by course lecturers for the students to graduate with better grades.

Another aspect of corruption among lecturers is that course lecturers award unmerited marks to students for money. Yet another case of corruption among lecturers which is prevalent among male lecturers is sex for high grades: male lecturers harass the female students with demands for sex in return for high grades while the male students pay their way through.

Higher institutions’ corruption also manifests among the non-teaching staff, when they demand that students should pay money before they can check their results. Many non-teaching staff in tertiary institutions extort money from students before they can allow students to check their results. Some even go to the extent of requesting students to give them money before they can give them lecturers’ phone numbers.

Some unsuspecting parents are made to pay money in the guise that they are lecturers and promise to secure admission for their children/wards.

Some non-teaching staff also acts as fronts for lecturers to extort money from the learners after examination.

On the part of administrators, corruption manifests in cases of misappropriation and misapplication of money meant for capital projects. Annually, the Federal Government gives grants to all institutions of higher studies through their management agencies for capital projects – National Universities Commission (NUC) for

Universities, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for Polytechnics, and National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for Colleges of Education. Unfortunately, sometimes such funds are stolen or diverted to other projects or completely misappropriated. The result of this is the declining quality of Nigerian higher education.

Corruption also manifests in the recruitment of both academic and non-academic staff. Many staff are employed in institutions of higher studies based on who they know and not on merit, some pay fabulous amounts of money before they are employed.

There is also corruption in accreditation of programmes by accrediting bodies. When members of accrediting panels are bribed, criteria are by-passed and reports are written to favor the department or institution.

Corruption is also seen in procurement of materials. Often the prices of materials are slugged and the surplus goes into the pocket of the staff.

Another aspect of corruption among administrators is that some rich men bribe Admission officers and Head of Departments to secure admission. Those who are supposed to be admitted are by-passed.

The aftermath of all the above forms of corruption explained will in the long run affect the product of the school program (Business Education) as the required standard at all quarters have been compromised.

The relationship between corruption and the poor state of academic standards

In a study conducted by Torulagha (2013), it was established that, today, Nigerian schools are mere shadows of their past, in terms of academic standards. Quality has been sacrificed due to the insatiable desire by politicians, some educational bureaucrats, school administrators and teachers/instructors/lecturers/professors to find the easiest means to accumulate wealth. Thus, academic performance is not taken seriously anymore. The following attest to the retrogressive trend in academic orientation:

- a. It is an open secret that students are occasionally compelled to pay for grades in many institutions by some professors/lecturers/instructors/teachers. Students who have money do not have to even attend classes to get passing grades. They pay according to the grades they want. On the other hand, students who cannot afford to pay are sometimes penalized by teachers/instructors/professors and school officials for failing to pay.
- b. On many campuses, some lecturers, registrars, and record keepers sometimes intentionally withhold students' grades until they pay a certain amount of money
- c. In particular, in the universities, some instructors/lecturers/professors sell makeshift copies of textbook extracts. Students are expected to buy the copies or are forced to fail the classes for failure to buy. It is speculated that many academia accumulate wealth through this way to build houses and establish other businesses. Selling copies of book extracts is considered to be a very lucrative business for unscrupulous faculty members.
- d. Due to insufficient funding sometimes corruption in education has become a major business. As a result, unscrupulous educational administrators and teachers/instructors/lecturers earn a tremendous amount of money on the side by extorting students to cough out money to them through various ways. This means that the inculcation of knowledge is no longer the primary reason for being an educator anymore.

Causes of corruption in Business Education

Several factors have been identified and linked to the causes of corruption in education by different scholars, among which are factors identified by Oyinloha in Nwankwo and Nweke (2016), it includes the followings:

Poverty: This can take effect especially when teachers/lecturers are poorly paid too assertive promotion or be motivated.

Unemployment: This may take effect in a situation whereby the applicant may find it difficult to secure a job in his profession and finally find himself in a teaching field which may not be his basic profession as a result of unemployment in the labor market.

Low wage workers: when teachers'/lecturers' salaries are low, staff may be compelled to use official positions to collect bribes as a way of making ends meet.

Other causes of corruption as highlighted by Babatope in Nwankwo and Nweke (2016) includes: Weak government institutions; Poor remuneration and pay incentives; Lack of openness and transparency in public and private service; Absence of key anti-corruption tools; Culture and acceptance of corruption by the populace; Absence of effective political financing, Poverty; Ethnic and religious difference; and Resource scramble.

Similarly, Daisy (2011) identified the following causes;

- Poor entry qualification by students
- Compromising attitude of lecturers
- Poverty due to low salaries of lecturers
- Poor study habits of students
- Poor home background of students.

Daisy established in his study that; poor study habits of students and poor entry qualification by students are the major causes of corruption in education.

Effect of Corruption on the Standard of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria

Corruption in Business Education negatively affects all aspects; students, lecturers, non-academic staff and the administration. The following effects are identified by Daisy (2011);

Poor quality of university graduates

Low morals of students

Inability of university graduates to perform tasks

Delayed absorption of graduates into labour market

Inability of graduates to communicate effectively

Meanwhile, Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu (2017), among students, corruption among higher institution stakeholders has negative implications for learning. Many learners in higher institution do not attend lectures because the 70% attendance to lectures to qualify to write examination policy is hardly implemented because students are prepared to bribe to pass. Inadequate learning leads to examination malpractices and other 'sharp' practices like bribery/sorting of lecturers. Inadequate learning also has serious implications for the performance of students and often leads to the production of 'half-baked or unbaked' graduates. Such graduates have low self-esteem as they lack the intellectual competitiveness required to thrive in the 21st century job-market and workplace. At the level of the lecturers, corruption is inimical to the essence of their calling and runs contrary to the oath to uphold the truth. Effects of corruption on teaching is grave, it also affects objectivity in grading students' scripts, leading to low self-esteem and morale because lecturers who collect money from students in order to award marks are hardly able to look their students in the face. These lecturers also develop authoritarian relationships with students who do not give bribes. This type of relationship negates the mentor-mentee relationship that should exist between lecturers and students. Among the non-academic staff, the effects of corruption are also damaging. It affects the quality of service delivery in tertiary institutions. At the management level in higher education institutions, corruption has serious implications for the execution of projects.

Other effects of corruption on in education identified by Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu (2017) include:

Diversion, embezzlement and misappropriation of financial resources

Wrong allocation of talents – hidden talents are killed, underdeveloped or misapplied

Distorts values of young people – cynicism among young people. They feel it does not pay to be honest

Blur lines between right and wrong, legal and illicit, good and evil

Foreigners see graduates of Nigerian universities as very poor and second rate. This factor is responsible for many rich parents sending their children overseas to study at the detriment of the Nigerian economy as billions of Naira is lost as foreign exchange.

Conclusion

Corruption in Business Education has really caused a serious damaging effects on the standard of Business Education in Nigeria which can obviously be observed on Business education students and graduate as their moral value/standard is deteriorating day-in-day-out including academic prowess in term of their knowledge as well as reduced psychomotor compositions in their manual dexterity and skill acquisition and display. In a nutshell, corruption in Business education has adversely affected the three domains (i.e. cognitive, affective and psychomotor) of both the Business education student and graduate upon which the basis for measuring its standard can be justified. This situation is a bad pointer towards the achievement of the goal of Business education for self-reliance and calls for urgent attention towards restoring sanity and raising the standard of Business education in Nigeria.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made based on the review of relevant literatures on the issue under discourse and it is believed to be helpful in combating the effect of corruption and curbing or minimizing its future occurrence if properly implemented;

- Parents should ensure they inculcate the right values and norms into their children and wards earlier before they have contact with the school system because it is easier to cash them young.
- Parents should also ensure unscheduled/unannounced visitation to their children's department to know how they are faring academically and otherwise.
- Orientation and re-orientation of newly admitted and stale students should be taken more seriously as well as their sensitization.
- Only qualified candidates should be admitted into the Business Education programme without any bias.
- Government should ensure prompt payment of staff salaries and entitlements as well as ensuring the

wages/salaries and meaningful.

- Government should ensure adequate funding of the Business Education programme.
- Only qualified lecturers should be employed without considering connection, nepotism and political influence.
- Government and Institution administrators should take collaborative measures in checking the occurrence of the corrupt practices among staffs and student, and anyone found guilty of the any corrupt practice should face a disciplinary measure.
- Anyone found guilty of academic corrupt practices should be referred for counseling.

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