

Corruption and Ethical Issues in Nigerian Educational System: Librarians' Perception

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Abstract

Purpose: The study was carried out to examine the issue of corruption and ethical challenges facing the Nigerian educational system especially tertiary institutions and the expected role of librarians as well as the scope and dynamics of corruption.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three objectives were set. Questionnaire and personal interaction were the major instruments used in collecting data for this study. The population comprises staff and students of the Obafemi Awolowo University from the following faculties: Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Environmental Design and Management, Science and Social Sciences. One hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to both staff and students with a return rate of 99%.

Findings: Results showed that majority of people in the university community including students are not fully aware of the scope and density of corruption in the educational system. It also revealed paucity of information on ethical issues.

Implication: The major implication points to the fact that there, diverse ethical challenges regarding teaching and teachers' conduct are rampant and there is a need to inform staff and students about the dynamics of corruption and other ethical issues affecting the peace and progress of the academic community.

Originality/Value: This study had originally been conducted by these authors. Incorporation of sufficient ethical information access and redesigning of educational curricula to take care of ethical and corruption issues and provision of well stock relevant books and other materials such as databases and online access should be available so that users could have unrestrained access to timely and relevant material as a way of educating and combating the menace of corruption in the educational system.

Keywords: Corruption, education, educational system, ethical issues, information, national development

Introduction

The maggot of corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of our societies to an alarming extent. It has remained a fundamental problem in every ramification. Every facet of the Nigerian life is under the attack of this menace, including the educational system. Okunlola & Oluwatula (2005) noted that corruption has become a global menace that weakens the moral fabrics of citizens in many nations and organizations including the academia. This implies that corruption is not peculiar to a particular place or region of the world although it may be said that it has wider popularity in some parts of the world. It is generally believed however that corruption is prevalent in underdeveloped nations of the world. Thus a World Bank report

noted that corruption is widespread in developing and transition economies, not because people in developing countries are different from others elsewhere but because conditions are rife for corruption in such places (World Bank Report, Number 4, May 1998).

Corruption is noticeable in Nigerian educational system where lots of vital information is not available to the ordinary people. Even vital administrative documents are deliberately concealed or kept out of the reach of people who need them. In the same vein, a lot of information on simple processes is fraught with needless bureaucracy which makes it difficult or absolutely impossible for ordinary people to access. This then results in bribery, nepotism, favouritism, unnecessary patronage and the from

the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private (regarding personal, close-family, private clique) wealth or status gains; or that which violates rules against the exercising of certain private influence. Many students seeking admission have to lobby to secure a place in the university and a lot of undergraduates indulge in corrupt practices to guarantee their stay in the university. Poverty and greed has eroded the dignity of many female students who seek for money by any means possible in our higher institutions.

Okunlola, & Oluwatula, (2005) argued that though corruption may be rampant in developing countries such as Nigeria because of the poor economic statuses, the problem is not peculiar to them. They simply represent a global phenomenon that no nation can justifiably claim to be free from. Even in more prosperous nations, corruption continues to corrode all the legal, political, moral, educational and global structures while national and international developments suffer. Amujiri, (2003) observed that corruption has subverted the rule of law, eroded confidence in judiciary, undermined the nations' ability for self development, discouraged the habit of industry, discipline, honesty, dedication and hard work and made nonsense of public accountability. Werner (1983) has categorized the definitions of corruption into three via: public office –centred, market-centred and public interest-centred.

The public office- centred definitions involve deviation from legal and public duty norms for private gains. Market-centred definitions refer to illegally maximizing pecuniary gains according to the supply and demand that exist in the market places of their official domains, while the public interest-centred definitions emphasize the betrayal of public interests by preference to personal interests. In all the categories of definitions, it is clear that lack of proper societal control such as lapses in legislative mechanism is responsible. Proper legislation with total enforcement will go a long way in redressing some of this societal vices and check corruption in the institutions.

Causes of corruption in the Nigerian educational system are numerous. Okunlola & Oluwatula (2005) observed that causes of corruption in the Nigerian university system includes dire economic situations in the country in which an

'man-know-man' syndrome. Nye, (1967) opined that corruption is any behaviour which deviates

average Nigerian appears to be living below the poverty line with less than one US Dollar per day, irregular payment of staff salaries and allowances, insufficient pay, lack of transparent regulations, improper funding of education among other factors. Obviously certain causes of corruption are difficult to explain. Janashia, (2004) asserted that corruption in higher education manifests itself at all levels and affects a wide array of institutional activities. According to him, major avenues for corruption include the system of admission, the professional conduct of teachers and administrators, procurement, and the licensing and accreditation of institutions. In a report by the committee on ethics and grievances of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, major ethical challenges regarding teaching and teachers' conduct were identified as follows: Integrity, Hard work, Astute Pedagogy, Academic and moral excellence, Honesty, Justice, Truth, Equity, Transparency and Accountability (ASUU 2005)

These and other values that aid social harmony, sound education, fair play, economic development are seriously being threatened in Nigerian society. The committee further discussed the following unethical behaviours which do not conform to professional standards of academics:

Teaching:

- Lectures (absenteeism, and time wasting on irrelevant stories)
- Levies (collection of unauthorized levies from students, sale handouts and irrelevant materials)
- Examinations (leakages of questions, improper invigilation)
- Harassment (sexual and physical harassment, use of abusive language)
- Poor grading and bad computation of results (direct or indirect demand for gratification, favouritism based on ethnicity, religion or sex, delayed or careless grading)

Research:

- Publications (forging of publications, research results and plagiarism)
- Research Funds (diversion, mismanagement)

- Low Productivity (laziness and unproductive scholarship over a long period of time)

Administration:

- Substance Abuse (use of hard drugs, alcohol during contact hours with students)
- Admission Racketeering (sale of admission slots)
- Colleagues (incitement of students and spreading of rumours against colleagues)
- Neglect of Responsibility (assigning teaching or grading to non-academics)
- Meetings (absenteeism from seminars, faculty and senate meetings) etc.

The above observations are not in any way exhaustive and can be expanded to include hoarding of information for selfish reasons, blackmail, patronage and misappropriation in the system. Financial impropriety is sometimes caused by information gap in the system, ambiguous policies and bureaucratic lapses caused by government officials or institutional administrators. All these ethical challenges in the educational system must be addressed for meaningful developments to begin.

Objectives

This study is set

- To determine the level of awareness of ethical issues among members of the Obafemi Awolowo University community.

Findings

Table A: The level of awareness of ethical issues among members of the Obafemi Awolowo University community

Level of Awareness	Percentage
Aware	15
Partially Aware	20
Not Aware	25
Undecided	40
Total	100

In table A above, It was revealed that few people (15%) are aware of corruption and ethical issues because there is inadequate awareness on the issue. Though, the issue might be on the priority

- To assess the availability of relevant information materials on ethical issues and challenges of corruption in the academic community.
- To evaluate librarians' awareness of the scope and extent of corruption in the academic community.

Justification of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the issue of corruption and ethical challenges confronting the Nigerian educational system particularly the university communities. There is need for members of the academic communities to be properly informed about issues involved in corruption and be conversant with the ethics of their profession. Authorities and administrators of each university must be sensitized to the need to provide timely and up-to-date information regarding ethics and corruption as it affects the teaching and learning activities as well as other statutory functions generally performed by civil servants in the academia.

Methodology

Questionnaire and personal interaction were the major instruments used in collecting data for this study. The population comprises staff and students of the Obafemi Awolowo University. Respondents were chosen randomly from four major faculties and the library. The faculties were Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Environmental Design and Management, Science and Social Sciences. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers who used the opportunity to interact with students and colleagues.

list of the institution, it has to be addressed properly. Both staff and students should be concerned and participate actively in its eradication since the issues affect them.

Table B. Materials/Books on Corruption and Ethical Issues: To assess the availability of relevant information materials on ethical issues and challenges of corruption in the academic community.

Materials/Books on Corruption and Ethical Issues:	Percentage
Available	20
Inadequate	30
Not relevant	30
Undecided	20
Total	100

In table B, the books and materials that are relevant for research in the library for adequacy of Information was considered to be inadequate. The issues being relatively new in library Parlance has not been seriously reflected in the acquisition pattern of libraries because users

have not been requesting for such materials hence the percentage of relevant books/materials is (20%) whereas, there are other books and materials in other fields that are in adequate qualities

Table C. Scope and Understanding of Corruption and Ethical Issues: To evaluate librarians' awareness of the scope and extent of corruption in the academic community

Scope and Understanding of Corruption and Ethical Issues	Percentage
Well Understood	04
Understood	09
Fairly Understood	07
Undecided	50
Not important	30
Total	100

In table C, the scope and understanding of corruption and ethical issues revealed that the issues are not well understood by the community. This is because they are not adequately informed coupled with the dearth of relevant books materials. Therefore, it is not surprising to discover that only (04%) of the sampled population adequately understood the concept while (09%) understood it and (07%) fairly understood it . The percentage of population that are undecided is (50%) and (.30%) found it to be unimportant.

and users in order to satisfy their needs at any time.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Corruption is a monster that has to be wiped out before any development can take place in higher institution of learning. Therefore, the following issues have to be considered:

Creation of Corruption Corner in the Library

The library as a resource centre must be dynamic in acquisitions, organization and access to its resources (Adewale, et al 2006). Users can have unhindered access to books and materials that are strategically shelved in a special corner in order to stimulate and educate them on the dynamics of corruption. There must be a desk officer who will liaise between the management

Use of Selective dissemination of information (SDI)

This approach will greatly assist users to get information on corruption in their different locations as desired. Librarians can take it upon themselves to have a catalogue of users and their areas of interest with a view to furnish them with latest information on issues relating to corruption. This approach will act as feedback mechanism between the users and the management.

Slide shows and talks on corruption

Staff common room and audio visual section can be effectively utilized for talks on corruption by renowned scholars periodically. The advantage library has is that users' spare time can be converted to library hour purposely for this task. The talk can be 15 minutes or more depending on the issue at hand. The fact is that if the programme is consistent it will have great impact on the users over a long time.

Use of Posters/Handbills/Stickers

Every user leaving the library can be given poster, handbills and stickers. The message on

these items must be catchy and informative. In addition, these posters can be passed in strategic locations in the library including stickers such that as they are reading they can have a glimpse of the message. This can change their attitude towards corruption and ethical issues.

Mobile Libraries

Mobile libraries provide materials and books to the disadvantaged. This approach can therefore be fortified by employing youths especially library officers from the polytechnics to disseminate information and provide books on strategic locations just like the way newspapers vendors operate at motor parks, market places, city centres and others places. The focus will be on corruption and ethical issues. Hence materials on these items will be made available to sensitize and inform the public on the evils of corruption.

Ethical and Corruption Studies on the School Curriculum

Since ethical issues and corruption are multifaceted and complex due to technological advancement, it is very important for the school authorities to include critical issues of corruption and indigenous education in the school curriculum as a way of widening its scope and allow more research into it. A committee can be constituted to organize training sessions in form of workshop, symposia to expose students, lecturers and the entire public to the intricacies involved and the panacea to the Hydra-headed monsters.

Nigerian authors and publishers should be encouraged to extensively commit themselves to the publications that involve ethics and corruption both in local and English languages in order to inform the public. Moreover, Radio and Television homes could be encouraged to promote it and use jingles periodically to remind them of the menace.

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