



Identifying and stamping corruption as a means of revamping the university education sector in Nigerian

Nathaniel M Kamoh¹, Dauda G Gyemang²

¹ Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa, Nigeria

² Department of Mathematics/Statistics, Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi, Nigeria

Abstract

Education is and will continue to be the only currency all nations will use and no central Bank can print, but the culpable upsurge of corrupt practices that keeps wrecking this sector in Nigerian is becoming more devastating and alarming that if care is not taken, it may become widespread to other sectors since education encompasses all as the backbone to which every other social and economic activities relied upon. Currently, what is obtainable in Nigerian Universities is corruption in all its ramifications this is not cheering news for the country, some factors which are major causes of corruption are identified and x-rayed and suggestions proffered. More worrisome, it has been observed that huge resources that are meant to be used in developing the nation University sector have left and are still leaving the shores of this country to neighboring countries and government seems to have no political will to address this critical and disturbing monster.

Keywords: corruption, malpractice, cultism, sexual harassment, social media, UNESCO, education

Introduction

Corruption is the major cause of poverty; it is associated with lower levels of economic development, slower economic growth, poverty and conflicts. From political circles to business boardrooms, educational institutions, the health and judicial sectors, and even the "holiest" places, our religious institutions, the list is endless. Corruption is viewed as any abuse of a position of trust in order to gain an undue advantage. This involves the conduct of both sides: that of the person who abuses his position of trust as well as that of the person who seeks to gain an undue advantage by this abuse. Corruption can occur in relation to officials as well as between private persons. It is particularly prevalent in certain kinds of transactions in certain countries. Corrupt practices can range from small favors in anticipation of immediate or future advantage.

The sage, Nelson Mandela, once mentioned that "Education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world." The role of education in a nation's development is well understood and is the reason many developed countries make it compulsory for all to be in full-time education up to the age of 16. Studies have shown that a good education attainment is strongly correlated with fast economic growth and the development of a nation. On an individual level, education has been shown to be helpful in reducing illegal behaviour, increasing civic responsibility and improving social cohesion. One could relate this to corruption, as more educated people may value the long-term societal good, a less corrupt state, over immediate personal gratification which could be gained through bribe paying. On a societal level, education impacts social cohesion, which is the acceptance of and support or social norms and behaviors. By promoting social cohesion, education fosters adherence to a social contract. Social contract can include components such as a

willingness to pay taxes and fulfill other public obligation, the willingness to participate in public affairs, maintain cleanliness of one's property, act responsibly, or be a good citizen. If good citizenship is associated with non-corrupt behavior, then education could reduce corruption participation at the societal level through improved social cohesion. All of these outcomes suggest that education attainment should lead to less corrupt individuals and nations. This outcome is not assured, however, and the effect that education has on corruption and other social vices would largely depend on the content of the curriculum and the prevailing environment in which education is being given. Annan (2000) ^[1] observed that "Universities provide the logical extension to basic education for all. The university is equally a development tool for Africa; it holds the key to something we all want and need; African answers to African problems; the capacity to address the most pressing issues both at the theoretical and practical levels. We look to universities to develop African expertise; to enhance the analysis of African problems; to strengthen domestic institutions; to serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights; and to enable African academics to play an active role in the global community of scholars".

He further maintained that education is a more important weapon in a nation's arsenal than any missile or mine. It ought not to be left to pure market forces and should not be handed over to even good friends who want to strengthen it. If African and Nigerian tertiary institutions and educational systems are to be strengthened to meet the demands of the present and future the efforts to re-focus them must be spear headed by indigenes at home and in the Diaspora. Among these indigenes, intellectuals are particularly able to understand the terrain and propose solutions.

Global-Post (2012) corruption watchdog group Transparency International, ranks Nigeria the world's 40th most corrupt country out of 183. The group says Nigeria's education system is perceived to be one of the most corrupt in the public sector, after police, political parties and the legislature

It is sad that our universities today are mere centers of corruption in all its ramifications, these among others include racketeering in admission processes, examination malpractices, sexual harassment and manipulations of examination records and non-compliance with the public procurement act in the award and execution of contracts.

Wockner (2012) opined that when you live in Nigeria it is a fact of life you do not need to look too hard to find corruption. She maintained that Nigerian Universities are known to be notoriously corrupt places where money will ensure a good (but unjustified) examination grade and where plagiarism is rampant.

These vices which have dominated the University system and have not only affected the standard of education but have also driven youths into serious crimes such as reape, rubbery, prostitution, cultism, kip napping and misused of the social media.

The corrupt tendency of lecturers in a bid to leave exuberant and flamboyant life style in academic activities, parents aid and abet their children in all negative ways to obtain certificates and universities administrators do not encourage research and morale standards help their institutions in a stretch of decay and morale decadence.

This-Day and The Sun News (2012) viewed the recent misused of the social media by two undergraduate students who robbed and murdered Miss Cynthia-Udoka-Osokogu and an Abuja based lawyer who recently led a robbery gang is an

indication of the morale decadence in our nation's Universities.

Many Nigerians now send their children to Ghana and other countries of the world for higher education despite the huge amount involve they however prefer it rather than schooling in Nigeria, this alone has attested the fact that corruption is flourishing in our nation's universities; this is not cheering news for the country.

National mirror (2012) the chairman committee of pro-chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Dr. Wale Babalakin observed that over 75,000 Nigerian students currently studying in the three Ghanaian Universities spend over 160 billion naira annually. According to him the student's expenditure was more than the Federal Government allocation budgeted in 2011 for all the public Universities in the country. This amount does not include the hundreds of billions of naira Nigerians spend in other foreign countries like America, Malaysia, UK and many others.

(Olatoye, 2010) observed that the problem of underfunding brings about so many other challenges facing the education sector most especially our University system; He noted that if education is properly funded, incessant strike will be absent in the system if teachers and professors are well taken care of the problem of brain drain will not be there. The facilities in our institutions are too poor to be compared with other societies of the world. Low esteem of teachers bedeviled their contribution psychologically they are not giving what is required in the classroom. These entire problems are tied around underfunding. It is totally disheartening that for the past ten or so years the Federal Government fiscal budget allocation to education has never exceeded 13% as against the UNESCO standard/threshold of 26% (see table I).

Table 1: Showing Nigeria's Budgetary Allocation to the Education Sector from 1999 – 2010

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Billion(#)	23.0	44.2	39.9	100.2	64.8	72.2	92.6	166.6	137.5	210.0	183.4	249.1
(%)GDP	11.2	8.3	7.0	5.1	11.8	7.8	8.3	8.7	6.1	13.0	7.2	6.4

Source: Federal office of statistics, Abuja

With this unserious attitude by government education and our Universities still has a long way to go if anything good will eventually happen.

While some African countries with less resources are busy devoting most of their resources funding education and universities, Nigeria seems to be paying lip services year in

year out without any corresponding changes as revealed from its over ten years budgetary allocation to education.

Dike (2005) ^[5] noted that if Nigeria's budget allocation to education is compared with that of other less affluent societies in Africa the picture becomes more discouraging and pathetic (see table II).

Table 2: GDP of some African Countries

Country	Angola	Cote D'ivoria	Ghana	Kenya	Malawi	Mozambique	Nigeria	South Africa	Tanzania	Uganda
%GDP	4.90	5.00	4.40	6.50	5.40	4.10	0.76	7.90	3.40	2.60

Source: extract from, The African Dept; Reported by Jubilee 2000; Alifa Daniel: Intrigues in FG-ASSU face- off; see The Guardian on line, June 17, 2001.

The other problem with funding is that it may not be in the large amount of funds involved, but the judicious usage of the funds. Transparency and accountability must be part of our education. Education will improve and the individual and the nation will be better and great too.

Some factors responsible for corruption in Nigerian Universities

There are many factors responsible for the high wave of corruption in Nigerian Universities whether it public or private University. These include among others,

1. Racketeering in admission processes
2. Emphasis on paper qualification
3. Examination malpractices, Prostitution and cultism
4. manipulations of examination records
5. Non-compliance with the public procurement act in the award and execution of contracts.

Admission racketeering in Nigerian universities

Angya (2012) observed that admission racketeering are not new to Nigerian universities and other higher institutions she noted that admission is a hot cake in all Nigerian higher institutions and Universities; she maintained that since the Universities do not have the capacity to accommodate all the students seeking admission at any particular year. She observed that everybody is now seeking admission into one University or the other at all cost. Also, this pressure from prospective students has made school authorities to go against the directive of the National Universities Commission (NUC) on the number of students to admit. She cited the case of Benue State University that the caring capacity of the university for new students is only 3,500 but students that normally apply for admissions every year were over 40,000. Little wonder they would do anything to go in “through the narrow gate”, she maintained.

Although most Universities reserved for Staff members a slot or two each for admission of their candidates they use the privilege to take advantage of unsuspecting candidates. Those with only a slot reserved for them sell the slot to many candidates with only one of them later succeeding while others leak their wounds. The losers not only miss the chance to get admission that year but also lose their money to the members of staff of the affected University.

Worse still some of the candidates are given fake admission and end up ‘graduating’ with no certificate. It is not yet ascertained how many such fake students have ‘graduated’ from most universities only time can tell because of the culprits involved. It is unfortunate that this kind of racket would be going on unchecked in most universities for some years now.

Emphasis on paper qualification

While other countries of the World are busy building their feature generations by given them sound education which is all about the positive ways to train the mind and character of an individual in order to enable them fit well into the society and its challenges, Nigeria University system seems to be simply limiting itself to the production of literate people.

Angya (2012) also observed the fact that admission racket flourishing in the country underscores the undue emphasis that we place on paper qualification. This is also responsible for the desperation of many people to gain admission into the university, at all cost. Nothing else could have justified the readiness of applicants to pay as much #100,000.00 or more to get admission into most of these Universities. Illegally some in that desperation use fake certificates and forged Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) results. Unfortunately, many of them gain admission after parting with a huge sum of money which is sooner or later discovered.

She argued further that for a nation that places so much emphasis on paper qualification, it would also be expected

that it would give qualified applicants equal opportunity to realize their dreams. This racket of admission has hindered equal opportunities for everyone to be educated because those who are intelligent and ought to gain admission are delayed or denied admission because those who have the financial muscles would have bought their places for admission and leave them with no option than to waste their brains at home. Those given admission through financial means end up being incompetent and irrelevant to the society.

Olatoye (2010) also noted that Nigeria as a country produces thousands of poor quality graduates every year and the problem of producing poor graduates every year is evident in the Nigerian education sector. It is usually ugly and shameful at times when you see graduates that cannot prove to the world that they have been to the citadel of learning in Nigeria. This he maintained is because the system is operating a meal ticket syndrome. “Meal ticket syndrome is a problem where society emphasizes too much on certification”. He further pointed out that there is too much emphasis on certification rather than what one can really offer. According to him, the major cause of this pathetic condition is the poor welfare package of the teachers and lecturers and because they are hungry, “they are ready to water down principles”. If they water down principles, if the water down teaching ethics, what good can we see if not checked we will continue to spell doom for the educational sector.

In Nigeria we have diverted, in the recent past to limit education to getting or acquiring some forms of certification or paper qualification even without having the requisite knowledge application or experience.

Examination malpractices, prostitution and cultism

Discipline is one of the outstanding attributes of sound and qualitative education when it is rightly observed. Maheshwari (2011) [8] viewed examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of before, during or after any examination fraudulently secure any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued. He further maintained that examination malpractice is any irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination that contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination.

Teachers out of desperation have decided to turn the profession lucrative by introducing all forms of fraudulent tendencies. The lecturers in a bid to leave exuberant and flamboyant life style on campus go an extra mile of recruiting students in their classes who serve as middlemen between them and the students, the middle men move round after every examination to inform their course mate that sorting of a particular course is in progress the interested members will then give their registration number and the specified amount for the grade they want.

Jimoh (2009) [6] maintained the social vices bedeviling the society has permeated the entire segments of the education sector. The manifestations are moral decadence, loss of family values, cultism and examination malpractice that has become

endemic in the education system of the country. The societal emphasis on success-goals irrespective of the means employed in achieving these goals has pressurized some participants in the education industry to strain toward anomie. Such participants have resorted to the use of illegitimate procedures in achieving success in examinations. The disjunction between culturally acclaimed goals and the institutionalized means of achieving these goals coupled with the cultural context of great emphasis on success-goals without equivalent emphasis upon institutional means of attaining these goals have created an environment that predisposes some students, teachers, parents and others to examination malpractice. Students are involved because they want to achieve success; parents are involved because they want good grades for their wards; teachers and others are involved because of the financial, material and other intangible gains derivable from involvement in examination malpractice.

Dike (2005) ^[5] lamented that if Nigeria cannot give adequate and quality education to students at the elementary and secondary levels the tertiary institutions would continue to be populated by those who are least prepared to face the rigors of university education. And “cultism,” “intimidation of professors and other categories of lecturers into better grades” and other vices will continue to blossom on the campuses across the nation.

Aminu (2006) ^[4] was of the view that capitalism has eroded the moral values of the Nigerian society. Social, economic, political, religious and educational vices are celebrated and rewarded in the country while virtue is punished. How can students, teachers and others shun examination malpractice when they “see criminals being set free through legalisms and court room gymnastics or worse through wretched and criminal influence peddling?”

Closely related to the moral decadence in the society is the greed for money. The monetary reward accruing to participants of all forms of educational malpractice is enormous and unimaginable. If the police can openly accept bribe on the highways why would those involved in the conduct of examinations, heads of section and heads of schools not accept monetary incentives to subvert their integrity? Parents and guardians are ready to give encouragement and pay any amount because they desperately want their children and wards to acquire certificates.

The era when students are graded on the basis of their intellectual abilities has been committed to the trash bin of history as lecturers now charge between two thousand naira and ten thousand naira depending on the grade one chooses.

Some lecturers equally turn attractive female students in their classes to sex partners with threat to fail anyone who proves stubborn to their advances. Female students are also known to offer themselves freely to the lecturers in order to get good grade during exams with the notion that they are using what they have to get what they want.

Another cankerworm is cultism. It is contributing immensely to lower the standard of education in the country Universities, members of this group usually relegate academic activities as secondary as they primarily attend to their group activities first which is the more reason why some of them spend ten to eleven years in school for a course of four or five years.

They take delight in drinking, killing and maiming instead of

developing their moral skills and intellectual abilities which is the primary aim of education.

Manipulations of examination records

Most of these manipulations start during admissions and continue till graduations. This can be attested to (To see corruption at its highest peak, many state own university’s admission list must first be taken to government house or government representative to check whether or not their children or children of their political allied have been short listed or not, whether qualified or not.

Cindy Wockner, (2012) also noted that Nigeria’s anti-corruption body the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission is trying hard. It recently launched an investigation into what it describes as “corruptive tendencies include racketeering with admission process, examination malpractices, sexual harassments on the part of students and lecturers and acts of plagiarism, falsification and manipulation of examination records and bastardization of accreditation process” in the country Universities.

Non-compliance with the public procurement act in the award and execution of contracts

Independent and Corrupt Practices and Related Offences (ICPC) and National Universities Commission (NUC) recently agreed that the delay and non-payment of gratuities non-adherence to contract bidding and award process and bastardization of accreditation process are parts of the vices to be fought and exterminated from Nigerian Universities

Adebanjo (2012) ^[3] noted that falling educational standards as a result of mass corruption in our universities will continue as long as corrupt officers and administrators who misused institutions funds go unpunished.

Embezzlement of university funds and mismanagement has become the order of the day among the nation’s tertiary institutions. The fund being released to the Universities to cater for their activities is always being diverted into somewhere else. The University has now deviated from an agent of providing quality education into a conduit of self-enrichment.

Money released to the institutions for contracts and infrastructural developments are usually turned into personal properties by some unscrupulous elements. Contracts are usually inflated making it to run into billions enable them get their own share when the fund is released, or even not carried out at all and without any genuine reason of the whereabouts of the money.

A University under investigation, claiming to have a total workforce of 7793 but only 6408 staff were discovered by the panel with the rest suspecting to be ghost workers. This is only a little out of the scandal that exists in the Universities of this country.

Also, it is corruption that causes lack of infrastructural development, modernization and rehabilitation of Nigerian University education. It is because of the corrupt nature of the University administrators that leads to lack of concern for students’ welfare services. Since 1960’s to date, the University environments are characterized by poor academic standards, unorganized extra-curricular activities and wretched infrastructures facilities. The Nigeria’s school

lecture halls and campuses are characterized by abject state of dilapidated environments, with students having not enough lecture hall or sits and the hostels too are inhabitable for their wellbeing. This coupled with other factors makes learning difficult to them.

Recommendation

- Every applicant should be given equal opportunity to realize his dreams, by expanding existing universities to accommodate all applicants or increasing Federal and State universities and private bodies should be encouraged to open more Universities
- Regrettably, facilities in many universities are shrinking while the numbers of prospective undergraduates are swelling every year. This undoubtedly makes academic conditions very uncomfortable even though these applicants pay through their noses to secure admission into these universities. Government and spirited individuals should intervene by providing more facilities in the Universities.
- Government and spirited individuals have to seek ways to expand universities and fund it adequately, so that people seeking admission into tertiary institutions of learning don't get to pay huge sums of money or make it a do or die affair.
- The phenomenon of examination malpractice is influenced by many factors, lack of confidence as a result of inadequate preparation, peer influence, societal influence, parental support and poor facilities in schools are some of the factors responsible for examination malpractices. Government and spirited individuals can come in to address some of these problems
- Government should also revive vocational schools and other institutes, like polytechnics and colleges of education worth attending, so that the graduates will not feel inferior to their counterparts who attended universities.
- Emphasis on paper qualification by Government and Organizations should be discouraged. Hence, cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains are supposed to be measured in the field. Today, we have people who because of such disjointed or narrow thinking think that if someone is not a medical personnel, an engineer, a science student or one of such highly-stereotyped and comparatively overvalued field, he is not intellectual enough or not employed after graduating from school. Even governments and their agencies promote such flawed thinking by giving special attention and consideration to certain field which is not a good orientation and should be discouraged henceforth.
- Corruption in our educational system should be reduced if not eliminated to the barest minimum by all stakeholders while government should as a matter of urgency increase the budgetary allocation to education and sincerely implement it to improve on the current standard of education in the country

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