

**QUALITY EDUCATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC HIGHER
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: THE MENACE OF CORRUPTION**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the effects of corruption on the quality of education and service delivery in public higher educational institutions in Nigeria. It discusses quality of education, indicators of quality education and barriers to quality education. It also examines corrupt practices among principal officers, Deans, Head of Departments, others academic and non-teaching staff, students and parents. Such practices include, among others, admission racketeering, misappropriation of fund, sexual harassment, examination malpractices and falsification of records. In addition, the paper takes a look at the probable and possible causes of corruption and then delves into the effects of corruption on higher education. The paper makes some recommendations through which corruption could be ameliorated in public higher educational institutions in Nigeria thereby ensuring and assuring quality education and service delivery in the institutions. One of such recommendations is periodic and regular financial and staff audit.

Keywords: Quality Education; Service Delivery; Corruption; Corrupt Practices;Public Higher Educational Institutions

Introduction

Education is important to life as oxygen is to survival. Education gives knowledge and skills that enables one to be responsible and independent in any society. Students require knowledge in order to gain valuable information regarding their courses or programmes being studied as well as their life and life styles. Education sharpens and modifies life to live almost flawlessly. According to Parankimaili (2012), education is a systematic process through which a child or adult acquires knowledge, experience and relevant skills from one generation to another. Scott and Marshall (2005), known as pioneers of Dictionary of Sociology, see education as a philosophical and sociological concept, denoting ideologists' curricula, techniques for the inculcation, management and social reproduction of knowledge as well as the personalities and culture in any environment/society.

Education therefore, is not only beneficial to the individual but to others around the individual and hence to society at large. The role of education is meant to develop something new rather than relying on old innovations. According to Akintayo (2008), education in capital theory has always been seen to have an important role in furthering economic and social development. It is a strong catalyst of equity and advancement. The education system particularly university education needs constant review and reform for sustainable human capital formation.

Since there is the need for education in all facets of human life, good and quality education is desired and deserved, it is one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihood, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies as well as enhance individual well-being.

However, all these significance and benefits of education seem threatened by corruption which seems to have dug deep into the fabrics of education and thereby affecting its quality and service delivery in public higher institutions. Meier and Griffin in Kuranchie, Twene, Mensah and Arthur (2014) contend that corruption occurs at the tertiary educational institutions where its consequences are particularly damaging since future economic and political leaders are trained there. According to Kuranchie *et al*, (2014), Heyneman, Anderson and Nuralyeva (2007) in whose study corruption was investigated to find the relationship between corruption and educational outcomes in 50 countries. The investigation revealed that corruption is negatively associated with educational outcomes.

Rumyantseva (2005) also added that corruption in education negatively affects the welfare of a society by bringing up distorted values in the youth (Kuranchie *et al*, 2014). The question that now arises is as to the occurrence of corruption in Nigerian higher educational institutions and its negative consequences on quality education and service delivery. What then is quality education; what is quality service delivery and what also is corruption? Furthermore, in what way or ways have corruption and its practices hampered quality education and quality service delivery in public higher educational institutions in Nigeria?

Quality Education in Perspective

According to the presentation of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund(2000) at the meeting of the International Working Group on Education, Florence in Italy, UNICEF presented the meaning of quality education to include the following:

1. Learners who are healthy, well-nourished, ready to participate, learn and supported in learning by their families and communities.
2. Environments that are healthy, safe, protective, gender-sensitive, provide adequate resources and facilities.
3. Content that is reflected in relevant curricula, materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy, skills for life and acknowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace.
4. Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms, schools, and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduction of disparities.
5. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (AbdulAzeez, 2015).

Quality education provides the outcome needed for individuals, communities and societies to prosper. A good quality education is one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful, democratic societies and enhance individual well-being (VVOB, 2018). Quality education allows schools to align and access a range of service across sectors designed to support the educational development

of learners. Indeed, quality education is a potent tool for the socioeconomic and national development of any nation (AbdulAzeez and Abari, 2016).

Quality education is supported by three pillars as enumerated by Ali and Saleen (n.d):

1. Ensuring access to quality teachers: The teachers, as one of the input resources, are part of the determinants of quality in education, they constitute a major drive in the production process and in the determination of educational output. A nation where teachers are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, lazy, unmotivated, immoral, and antisocial, such a nation is doomed (Akinyemi, 2018).
2. Providing use of quality learning tools and professional environment: Quality education is a function of the availability and utilization of input resources. The quality of education could be measured in terms of quality input, quality content, quality process and quality output (Oladipo, Adeosun and Ori, 2008). Quality learning environment includes physical elements, psychosocial elements and service delivery.
3. Establishing safe and supportive quality learning environments: For quality learning outcomes, environment must be safe and secured. A safe environment is one where risks or injury or property damage are low and manageable (Agranpe, 2018).

Indicators of Quality Education include:

- a) Instructional Leadership: It encompasses those actions that an educational leader takes or delegates to others to promote growth in student learning. Instructional leadership components are, according to Wildy and Dimmock 1993 in Chell, (n.d); defining the purpose of schooling
 - b) setting school-wide goals
 - c) providing resources needed for learning to occur
 - d) supervising and evaluating teachers
 - e) coordinating staff development programmes
 - f) creating collegial relationships with and among teachers
1. Teachers' Quality: Teachers' Quality determines the kind of education given to students. It encompasses teachers' knowledge of subject matter, understanding curriculum and teacher styles and relationship with students and professional competences.

2. Parent and community involvement: This also strengthens schools. Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect students learning. Parents' and community involvement in schools fosters students learning.
3. Instructional Programmes: It refers to replicable instructional activities that are designed and implemented to achieve instructional goals. Every instructional programme combines a curriculum component (what we teach) and a teaching procedure (how we teach).
4. Orderly Learning Environment: Learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, context and culture in which students learn (Ali and Saleen, n.d).

Conceptualizing Service Delivery

Service delivery is a component of business that defines the interaction between providers and clients where the provider offers a service, whether that information, or task finds value or loses as a result. Good service delivery provides clients with an increase in value. Service is a product or activity that meets the needs of a user or can be applied by a user. For service to be effective, it should possess the following attributes:

1. Available and timely: at time and space scales that the user needs;
2. Dependable and reliable: delivered on time to the required user specification;
3. Usable: presented in user specific formats so that the client can fully understand;
4. Useful: to respond appropriately to user needs;
5. Credible: for the user to confidently apply to decision making;
6. Authentic: entitled to be accepted by stakeholders in the given decision contexts;
7. Responsive and flexible: to the evolving user needs;
8. Sustainable: affordable and consistent over time; and,
9. Expandable: to be applicable to different kinds of services.

Service delivery, then, is a continuous, cyclic process for developing and delivering user focused services. It is further defined in four stages:

1. User Engagement: identifying users and understanding their needs, as well as understating the role of weather, climate and water related information in different sectors;
2. Service Design and Development: process between users, providers, suppliers, and partners of creating, designing, and developing services, ensuring user needs are met;

3. Delivery producing, disseminating, and communicating data, products and information (that is, services) that are fit for purpose and relevant to user needs; and
4. Evaluation and Improvement: process to collect user feedback and performance metrics to continuously evaluate and improve upon products and services(World Meteorological Organization, 2018).

Service delivery process is the set of activities that take place to perform a service. Performance involves the coordinated actions of both the providers and users of the service. In industrial setting, there may be many types of users as the number of performers increase.

Corruption and Perceived Corrupt Practices in Higher Education

Corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal activity undertaken by anyone entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire an illicit benefit.Fasokun,in Kuranchie *et al*, (2014),sees corruption as a behaviour which exploits the human person, disdainfully uses men and women for selfish interests. The person who exhibits such a behaviour gains at the detriment of the other party. Corruption is a problem of routine deviation from established standards and norms of public officials and parties they interact with (Ruzindana in Kuranchie *et al*, 2014). Kassahun (2011) posited that any favour, gift or reward including price received with intent to obstruct or pervert the rules of law is corruption.Kassahu stated further that it includes all actions done that is against public interest or violate the rule of engagement in an organizationwhich is detrimental to the society at large (Aniodoh, Ebouh and Nweke, 2017).

Corruption generally is the abuse of authorities for material gains. UNDP (2004)defined corruption as “the misuse of public power, office or authority for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence, peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money or embezzlement. Transparency International (2010) used a simple definition to broadly cover its overall work as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gains”. The World Bank (2000) settled on a straight forward definition of corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains. This definition is not new rather, it is concise and broad enough to include most form of public corrupt practices encountered and it is widely used in the literature of other researchers (Ghukasyan, 2003; Bajracharya, 2003; Altinyelken, 2004; Anderson, 2005 and Aluko, 2008) and in secondary school textbooks.

To be more inclusive in definition, corruption is any systematic vice perpetuated by individuals, society or state in general, where not-too-good concept for equality, social harmony and harmonious living such as favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, undue enrichment, abuse of office and so on become norms upon which the people and the state operate (Ojiade, 2000). But, because education is an important public goods, professional standards include more than just materials gain.

Corrupt practices, therefore, are human behaviours or acts that deviate from the norms and values of the society or which tend to break certain moral or social codes and administrative rules and procedures (Lawal, 2006). These acts are not in consonance with the acceptable practices of societies, institutions and groups. Thus, corruption manifests itself in various ways, manners, acts, actions, activities, events and hence practices. In higher education, these practices could transcend all levels and stakeholders in the system in one form or the other, from the top to the bottom and across as well as from within and around the system. Some identifiable corrupt practices in higher education in Nigeria include the following, though the list is inexhaustive.

Corrupt Practices among Principal Officers in Higher Education Institutions:

- a) Misappropriation of funds
- b) Admission racketeering
- c) Embezzlement of funds and fraud,
- d) Exerting influence on decisions for personal interest, and nepotism
- e) Falsification of data to Government
- f) Admitting unqualified students
- g) Forging of certificates

Corrupt Practices among Lecturers are:

- a) Examination malpractices
- b) Forging of certificates
- c) Extortion based on purchase of textbooks and handouts,
- d) Grades for money, sex and other material gifts,
- e) Unnecessary favouritism in the award of marks due to various reasons,
- f) Allowing Plagiarism both in their work and that of the students
- g) Misappropriation of funds

- h) Sexual harassment
- i) Engagement in other full time job

Corrupt Practices among Non-Teaching Staff

- a) Misappropriation of funds
- b) Admission racketeering
- c) Embezzlement of funds and fraud,
- d) Falsification of records
- e) Forging of certificates
- f) Aiding and abetting examination malpractices
- g) Sex for grades

Corrupt Practices among Students

- a) Plagiarism
- b) Examination malpractices
- c) Internet hacking
- d) Falsification of data
- e) Forging of results and certificates
- f) Stealing school property or student property
- g) Cultism
- h) Drug abuse
- i) Sexual harassment

Corrupt Practices among Parents

- a) Bribing teachers to achieve underserved academic result for their children
- b) Aiding examination malpractice
- c) bribery for admission in schools

Corrupt Practices among Educational Agencies

- a) Non-detailed inspection report to the Ministry of Education or Government
- b) Collection of bribe to approve non-deserved programmes

The Impetus to Corruption in Nigeria's Higher Education Institutions

The followings are considered to serve as impetus for corruption and corrupt practices to thrive in higher education institutions in Nigeria.

1. Greed: Selfish or excessive desire for more than is needed or deserved, especially for money, wealth and possessions has contributed to corruption in higher institutions.
2. Lack of Contentment: The act of not being satisfied and happy with what one has, has made many involved in corrupt practices.
3. Poor Remuneration: Remuneration by the government in terms of monetary and non-monetary rewards among civil servants including teachers is claimed not to be satisfactory among workers. This has made them source for secondary means of income (during school hours), attending to other businesses at the expense of their primary assignment and thereby causing dereliction of duty.
4. Irregular Inspection and monitoring: This had led to different misconduct in the school system, the inspectors who are intermediary between schools and government have failed to checkmate and visit schools promptly.
5. Acceptance of Corruption by the populace: The general public has seen corruption as a way to get things done in time mostly through bribery. Therefore everyone sees it as a normal way of life and concedes to it.

Menace of Corruption in Higher Institutions

Quality education and service delivery look attainable and achievable not only when needed and necessary resources are available but when these resources are judiciously utilized without any reservation or clog in the will of progress. In other words, beyond provision and availability of resources the comma of misuse and abuse to illicit benefit of individuals form the comma of corruption. For example, the embezzlement and misappropriation of funds meant for facilities could mean the provision of inadequate facilities and hence overcrowded classes which may make the teaching-learning process difficult. In the same vein, admission racketeering could lead to the admission of less qualified students who are not readily cut-out for academics.

The result of low quality input is most likely to lead to low quality output. The same goes for trading marks for money, favour and sex whereby undeserving grades are awarded to students who could

then graduate in high honors without necessarily imbibing the quality that such academic rigor requires. Needless to mention, examination malpractices lead to low quality education. According to Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu (2017), “inadequate learning leads to examination malpractices and other ‘sharp’ practices like bribery/sorting of lecturers. Inadequate learning also has serious implication 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”. Furthermore, having to grease the palm of non-teaching staff before files could be moved from one table to other or before document can be typed could impinge upon quality service delivery especially where some are not ready to dance to their tune. The require service could then be delayed and/or even be denied.

Meanwhile, corruption in education affects more people than corruption in other sectors in both rural and urban areas basically because schools are breeding grounds for future generations (Economic and Financial Crime Commission, EFCC, 2009). Effects of corruption on higher education could then be low efficiency among teachers; wastage of skills, time and other resources, low quality teaching, inadequate assessment of students during examinations, non-challant attitude of the school authority towards teachers’ laxity, ignoring the misconduct of colleagues, killing initiative, rewarding lazy people, and hence low quality education and service delivery.

Implications for Stakeholders

Having theoretically examined corruption in Nigeria higher educational institutions and how this can impinge upon quality education and service delivery, it behoves on all and sundry to do a critical examination of themselves and the roles each plays in the education system. By implication then, those in authorities who serve as leaders to others, who serve to be exemplary and who also serve to check others must be above board and not be found wanting. They must be alive to their responsibility of monitoring and evaluating their subordinates to ensure that the latter do not shirk their responsibilities and lend themselves to corrupt practices. This is applicable to everyone in the leadership position in the higher institutions including the vice-chancellor/rector/provost, the deputies, deans, head of departments, lecturers, students union and students representatives. Moreover, everyone should be a watchdog of the other providing for checks and balances in the system. More so, the government should ensure the provision of adequate facilities and welfare services for students and staff alike so as not to give a room for corrupt practices. Furthermore,

parents should not be a party to the corruption in higher institutions; they too should be aboveboard as corrupt parents tend to breed corrupt teachers and officers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

At the entrance gate of a university in South Africa the following message was posted for contemplation:

*“Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations by the students.
Patients die at the hands of such doctors.
Buildings collapse at the hands of such engineers.
Money is lost at the hands of such economists & accountants.
Humanity dies at the hands of such religious scholars.
Justice is lost at the hands of such judges...
The collapse of education is the collapse of the nation”
(PPSC Lecturers Recruitment Guidance, 2017).*

The conclusion can be drawn from the various observations made in this paper that for quality education and service delivery in higher educational institutions in Nigeria, corruption must be reduced to the barest minimum. Corruption in all dimensions and ramifications especially at the tertiary level, is a threat and, indeed, an evil that must not be allowed to rear its ugly head let alone thrive in an educational system else the whole society is crumbled and destroyed. In this respect, all hands must be put on deck to wipe out corruption in schools and it is along this line that the following recommendations are made:

1. The EFCC should extend its tentacles to higher educational institutions in Nigeria.
2. The higher educational institutions should undertake periodic and regular financial and staff audit.
3. Government should periodically set up a visitation panel for the higher educational institutions
4. There should be promotion of consultancy and information for parents and students regarding their rights and obligations.
5. There should be adequate remuneration for all categories of staff as well as welfare services for both staff and students.

6. The quality assurance bodies should be strengthened the more while they themselves should be under scrutiny of a higher corruption commission.
7. Aside from the evaluation based on the extent to which they perform their duties, teaching and non-teaching staff should also be subjected to evaluation in terms of the honesty and integrity with which they carry out the duties.
8. Rules, regulations and policies should be strictly upheld and followed by students and staff, any deviation should be immediately sanction to serve as deterrent to others.

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