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Academic Corruption in African Higher Institutions: The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract

The basic question of what explains corrupt behavior in our higher institutions has long plagued scholars and other professionals who are interested in corruption studies. Many disciplines such as political science, economics, business and organizational studies have carried out researches on the causes of corruption in our higher institutions, its effects and the ways, in which corrupt practices can be eliminated, yet, the menace keeps surging higher. This study aims at comprehensively investigating the causes, effects and implications of corrupt practices in our higher education. By discussing the grave effects of academic fraud in our higher schools and exploring specific examples across the globe, the paper sought to raise awareness of the deterioration in our educational sector occasioned by corruption. Basically, the study is qualitative, utilizing mostly secondary sources of data such as books, journals, newspaper articles, conference papers, internet publications, among others; all considered relevant in understanding the issue of academic corruption in our higher institutions. The findings of the study reveal that corruption has invaded all the sectors of higher education – the students, lecturers, non-teaching staff and the management administrators. The study, thus, concludes by recommending among other things that scholars and other stakeholders should support measures that improve information flow about the cost of corruption, and units of all the anti-corruption bodies in Nigeria should be set up in all our public higher institutions to monitor and detect early signs of corrupt tendencies in our higher education.

Keywords: Academic, Corruption, Higher Institution, Experience, Nigeria.

Introduction

According to Farlex (2003), higher educational institutions are tertiary establishments that train highly qualified specialists and scientific and pedagogical personnel for various branches of the economy, science, and culture; conduct theoretical and applied scientific research, which forms the basis for training specialists; and provide refresher courses for teachers in higher and secondary specialized schools and for specialists employed in diverse branches of industry, agriculture, and culture.

This definition summarizes the valid view why societies always look up to higher institutions for new knowledge and innovative thinking. Higher educational institutions include universities, polytechnics, industrial institutes, branch institutes of different specializations (for example, engineering, agriculture, medicine, pedagogy, the arts, and economics), and higher military educational institutions.

Higher institutions contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training. Those who acquire proper higher education promote and encourage scholarships which are key factors for the inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and the society at large. That is why Nelson Mandela authoritatively asserts that education helps people become better citizens, get a better-paid job, shows the difference between good and bad. Education shows us the importance of hard work, and at the same time, helps us grow and develop. Thus, countries or regions that maintain high standard in their higher education system are always seen as countries desirous of sustainable development because standard education provides the necessary tools for improved standard of living.

However, if the higher institutions are corrupted through fraudulent malpractices, the immediate effect will be deterioration in the educational quality, which in turn, increases the risk of unqualified personnel hiring. For instance, the UNDP (1997) observes that corruption lowers access to education in many ways. Most directly, it diverts resources to the rich people, who can afford to pay bribes, and away from poor people, who cannot. Corruption also weakens the government and lessens its ability to fight poverty. More generally, corruption eats away the fabric of public life leading to increased lawlessness and undermining social and political stability.

To be sure, corruption in higher institutions is a global issue that is not limited to any region or continent as we shall observe later in our analyses. Although, it is an acknowledged fact that academic corruption is a global phenomenon, however, its manifestations vary from region to region and from country to country. For instance, higher institutions in Europe and America have strong regulating institutions which have access to public information dedicated to fighting any reported cases of academic corruption to a logical end by bringing the offenders to account. But in Africa, most of the institutions responsible for fighting

corruption related matters are weak, lacking in openness and transparency. Thus, the lack of institutional transparency on the side of the regulators of crimes in Africa has resulted in a situation where even politicians, religious leaders and other senior officials in various African countries have purchased fake degrees as a result of academic corruption without any serious punishment to the offenders and their accomplices. In fact, corruption in higher institutions in Africa manifest in different forms and dimensions. It takes the form of cheating on entrance exams, paying bribe to facilitate the admissions process, bribing lecturers for better grade, unqualified promotions, falsification of age by members of staff, falsified research for publication in journals, late payment of money due to staff for examination invigilation, intimidation and victimization by superior officials, deliberate delay in the progress of PhD candidates because of departmental politics and contract inflation by university administrators. All these problems mentioned militate, lower and devalue higher education in Africa.

As we observed earlier, academic corruption is a global menace that affects all regions and continents, but Africa seems to be at the receiving end of this global malpractice. Just like the issue of the proliferations of small arms and light weapons which Africa produces none, yet, the bulk of the arms are smuggled into Africa through our porous borders; thereby, resulting as it were, in instability and separatist agitations in most African countries. Academic fraud too, did not originate in Africa; yet, its impact is more severe in Africa than any other continent. Corruptions in African higher institutions have adversely affected the governance and quality of education received by African students to the extent that most of them may not compete internationally with their foreign counterparts.

In the past, most African countries did not know what degree mills or “waterside certificates” mean, but with the revolution in the information and communication technology, the region joined the international fraudulent platforms operating in all the higher institutions in the world. Just like the case of Christianity which Europe brought to Africa in the 16th century, Africans have repackaged Christianity to the extent that Europeans now come to Africa for religious solutions to their problems. Similarly, academic fraud and corruption might have not originated in Africa, but some African academics and administrators have repackaged the unpleasant acts to the extent that the entire world is now focusing attention on Africa. A review of the academic fraud being committed in different regions and continents will lend credence to our assertion that academic fraud is a global phenomenon.

In Europe, Trines (2017) reports that in the United Kingdom (UK), the University of Wales, was abolished in 2011 because it ran degree validation programmes with dubious or downright illegal overseas partner institutions. Similarly, academic fraud and corruption appears to be rampant in Russia as well. For instance, Mohamed Bhai (2015) alleged that in September, 2014, a paper was published in the online journal, *International Education Studies*, describing the alarming situation of corruption in modern Russian higher education which takes the form of cheating on entrance exams, paying a bribe to facilitate the admissions process, bribing professors for better grades. Mohamed Bhai goes ahead to say that corruption component of the whole industry in Russia could be compared with the budget of a small country. He gave examples of the wide range of corrupt practices in higher education, mentioning the case of a dean who accepted a bribe of 30,000 pounds for a PhD admission, and the feedback from the Moscow Police that some 30-40 professors are caught each year for accepting bribes for good grades.

In the United States of America, corruption is also causing a reputational damage to so many higher institutions there. Osipian (2016) reports that in April 2016, following the widely publicized pepper-spraying of protesters by Campus police, the Chancellor of the University of California Davis, Linda Katehi, was criticized for spending \$175,000 on outside consultants for internet search optimization in order to diminish online references to the incident so that the public would see a more favorable image of the University of California. Similarly, Western Kentucky University according to Trines (2017) was in 2016 forced to suspend almost half of its international graduate students recruited by an India-based agent – an episode documented by the *New York Times*. After admission offers were made, it turned out that the students did not meet admission standards and were academically unfit, despite remedial assistance.

In Asia, the most shocking corruption scandal, known as the Vyapam scam, has just surfaced in India. Vyapam, according to Mohamed Bhai (2015) is a government body in the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh and is responsible for conducting entrance examinations for government jobs and admissions to higher education institutions, including the much sought-after medical colleges. There had been earlier reports of irregularities in Vyapam but until recently no one had imagined the scale of the admission and recruitment scam, involving politicians, businessmen, senior officials and some 2,500 impersonators taking exams in the name of weaker students. More than 2,000 people have been arrested. Worse, tens of people

directly involved in the scam have died; some suspected cases of murder and suicide. The matter has now been referred to India's Central Bureau of Investigation. Similarly, in China, Altbach (2015) reports that 2010-degree mills were exposed, and that American government announced that it is prosecuting 15 Chinese nationals accused of cheating the college entrance examination system in a scam that included false passports.

The African continent has its fair share of this monster that had invaded the whole system of higher learning. For instance, Mohamed Bhai (2015) claims that in May, 2015, South African authorities shut down 42 bogus colleges and universities that were offering fake and unaccredited programmes, including three supposedly US-based universities offering degrees in 15 days. Similarly, Trines (2017) claims that in Kenya, recent legislation required members of parliament to hold a university degree. The law was eventually scrapped, but that it sent panicked politicians rushing to obtain degrees. Some politicians simply submitted forged credentials. In other cases, corrupt university officials graduated prominent, often academically unqualified students from abbreviated or non-existent study programmes. When the scandal came out, a number of universities were in 2017 forced to revoke illegitimate degrees awarded to elected politicians. A Kenyan government audit charged universities with the suspect issuance of degree certificates and the award of degrees without appropriate coursework.

In Uganda, the government investigated Busoga University in 2016 for issuing more than 1,000 "premium-tuition" degrees to South Sudanese students, many of them military officers flocking to Uganda for easy degrees to secure government positions back home. The university allegedly admitted according to Trines (2017) students without adequate academic prerequisites and graduated them from "abbreviated" two-month degree programmes. Again, in 2017, Uganda arrested 88 staff members at Makerere University for corruption in connection with alteration of students' grades and the issuance of fraudulent degrees. In Nigeria, which is the focus of this study, corruption in the higher institutions include: bribery to get a position; NYSC (National Youth Service Scheme) mobilization before graduation; facilitating fake transcripts; short-recruitment employment procedures; auctioning university assets without authorization; politicized disciplinary action; inflated contracts, admission irregularities and racketeering, result falsification; nepotism; sexual harassment; examination question leakages, abetting examination malpractices; and deliberate poor invigilation of examinations.

Having examined some corruption cases in some continents and regions of the world, the study will focus attention and investigate how corruption is perpetrated in Nigerian higher institutions. To achieve this objective, the paper is structured into sections. With this introductory overview, the study proceeds by explaining the concept: “corruption” in order to clarify the conceptual ambiguities associated with it. Section three examines the various forms or categories of corruption in our higher institutions; section four discusses the causes of corruption in our higher education; section five evaluates the effects or impacts of corruption in our institutions and the way forward, while section six concludes with policy recommendations.

Defining Corruption

The word corruption according to Johnson (1996) comes from the Latin word *corruptio*, which in Medieval Latin expressed a moral decay, wicked behaviour, putridity, and rottenness. Just like many other concepts in humanities and social science that lack generally accepted definitions, corruption too, does not have generally agreed definition, because corruption takes many forms, and the perpetrators are skilled in developing new ways to be corrupt and cover their tracks. Thus, Waite and Allen (2003) point out that agreed upon definitions are rare, and definitions of corruption run the gamut of being too broad to be rendered relatively useless to being too narrow and thus, be applicable to only limited, rare, well-defined cases.

No matter the angle or perspective one views corruption, the general notion is that corruption according to Abraham, Suleeman and Takwin (2018) is unethical, unfair and unjust because: (1) it weakens the actualization of human potentials, (2) contrary to virtue ethics, corrupt behavior decreases the capacity of the perpetrator as a moral agent capable of considering the moral meaning in every fact of life, (3) it has inter-generational detrimental impacts from past to present, from present to future, creating erosion of trustworthiness norms, (4) it decreases confidence in political representation, (5) it lowers the dignity, pride and competitiveness of a nation and (6) it is institutionalized in the legislative, executive and judicial structures. Unfortunately, the development of corruption is more rapid than research on corruption.

Since Waite and Allen (2003) had postulated that there is no generally accepted definition of corruption, our approach of the discussion on corruption will be field-specific. For instance, the literature in political science focuses on corruption

field-specific. For instance, the literature in political science focuses on corruption in public policy, thus, the definition mostly cited in the political literature is that which given by Professor Nye. Nye (1967) asserts that corruption is a behavior which deviates from formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (family, close private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reasons of personal or primordial relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding use).

Just like political science, Economics has advanced significantly in modeling corruption. One of the leading economists Susan Rose-Ackerman defined corruption as an ‘allocative mechanism’ for scarce resources. The state monopolizes certain allocative functions, be it permissions and licenses, or access to public services. State officials’ profiteering is based on abuse of their discretionary powers and monopolistic positions.

Similarly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that corruption is the misuse of authority, power or trust for personal benefits and is a temptation indulged in not only by public officials, but also by others holding trusted position, by not-for-profit or private enterprises or organizations. The World Bank (2000) sees the term corruption as unjustly using public office for selfish gains; this is seen when officials receive, solicit or extort money or material things. If education is understood to be a public good, then, the World Bank’s conceptualization of corruption is applicable to both public and private higher education. Thus, it is also abuse when private agents actively connive to offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. This implies that when an individual in authority deviates from carrying out his duties which he swore by oaths of office and allegiance and engages in acts which solely benefits him, he said to be corrupt.

Also, Section 2 of the Nigerian Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) (2000) defines corruption to include vices like bribery, fraud and other offences that are related. Similarly, Andreski (1968) defines corruption as the practice of using the power of office for making private gains in breach of law and regulations nominally in force. For Obi and Obikeze (2006), corruption is seen as a situation whereby government officials and private econom-

ic agents allow personal interests to override considerations of public interest. In conceptualizing corruption in education, Hallak and Poisson (2002) defined corruption in education as the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and, as a consequence on access, quality or equity in education. The definition of education corruption according to Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996) includes abuse of authority for material gain, while Heyneman (2004) adds to this definition by arguing the following: “but because education is an important public good, its professional standards include more than just material goods; hence the definition of education corruption includes the abuse of authority for personal as well as material gain”.

The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (2002) defines corruption in education as a misuse of public office for private gain that influences access, quality, and equity in education. Based on this definition, we can argue that the notion of corrupt official or other role occupant exists only relative to some notion of what an uncorrupted occupant of that morally legitimate role consists of. Thus, Heyneman (1987) asserts that any institution that is free of corruption should be characterized with the following: Equality of access to education opportunity; fairness in the distribution of educational curricula and materials; fairness and transparency in the criteria for selection to higher and more specialized training; fairness in accreditation in which all institutions are judged by professional standards equally applied and open to public scrutiny; fairness in the acquisition of educational goods and services; balance and generosity in curricular treatment of cultural minorities and geographical neighbours; maintenance of professional standards of conduct by those who administer education institution and who teach in them, whether public or private.

Similarly, any academic that is corrupt-free must be an academic that has at its core the moral ideal, or at least, the morally legitimate role, of an independent truth-seeker who works in accordance with accepted principles of reason and evidence, who publishes in his or her own name only work that he or she has actually done, and so on. So an academic motivated by a desire for academic status who intentionally falsifies his or her experimental results or plagiarizes the work of others is corrupt relative to the ideal or morally legitimate role of an uncorrupted academic. On the other hand, a person occupying an academic position who paid no heed whatsoever to the truth or to principles of reasoning and evidence and who

made no pretense of so doing would at some point cease to be an academic of any sort, corrupt or otherwise (Miller et al, 2005 quoted by Osipian, 2008).

Categories of Corruption in Nigerian Higher Institutions

Corruption in higher institutions in Nigeria has permeated every aspect – students, lecturers, non-teaching staff and the administration of institutions to the extent that there is now a huge crisis of ethical standards of major proportions in our citadels of higher learning. A report by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) (2018) titled: *Stealing the Future: How Federal Universities in Nigeria have been Stripped Apart by Corruption*, revealed how most allegations of corruption in federal universities such as unfair allocation of grades, contract inflation, truncation of staff's salary on the pay roll, employment of unqualified staff, examination malpractices, sexual harassment, issuance of results for expelled students to graduate, and sales of university certificates for undeserving persons have neither been thoroughly investigated nor punished. The report further alleged that:

We also found several unresolved cases of diversion of university funds for personal use; embezzlement, mismanagement, unmerited allocation of hostel accommodation, discrimination in the allocation of staff quarters; certificate/transcript racketeering; improper use of university assets; inflation of cost of contracts; award of contracts to friends or relatives; and admission racketeering by non-staff.

The aim of this sub-topic is to discuss how all the different categories of actors in the higher institutions commit academic fraud and corrupt practices. 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 (Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu, 2017). It was as a result of this impurity in the higher

education in Nigeria that made Nkang (2012) to warn that students should desist from forming themselves into “lecturers’ boys” who act as agents to extort money from innocent students for lecturers’ use who eventually give them a percentage of the total collection. Further, she emphasized that this action is academic fraud and that when students learn and perfect in the trade, the cycles continues. She therefore suggested that class/course representatives should be those with impeccable character who can influence their mates positively.

Corruption amongst lecturers exist in several forms mostly fraud. There is research fraud which takes place in most universities and research institutes where generation of new knowledge is one of the major functions along with teaching and learning. Research fraud occurs when research procedures are adjusted or misused to meet the interest of involved parties and results are misreported to meet expectations. Other forms of corruption include: publishing in fake journals, obligating students to buy text books, extortion of money for handouts and marks, and sexual harassment.

Higher institutions’ corruption also manifest 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 act as fronts for lecturers to extort money from the learners after examination (Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu, 2017). There is healthcare fraud that takes place in university hospitals, medical centres, and other medical facilities that operate under the auspices of higher education institutions.

On the part of the management administrators of higher institutions, corruption manifests in cases of misappropriation and misapplication of money meant for capital projects. Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu (2017) assert that the Federal Government gives grants to all institutions of higher learning through their management agencies for capital projects – National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for polytechnics, and the 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. It was this scenario painted above that made Falana

(2018) to lament bitterly that ‘in 2017, over N200bn was disbursed by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (Tetfund) to our universities. Neither the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) nor any of the campus unions monitored the disbursement of the funds. Also, how many companies are paying 2% of its annual profit to support our university system? The bulk of the funds meant to improve the universities end up in the pocket of contractors. 3 Vice Chancellors are currently standing trials for looting funds allocated for running the universities’. Falana goes ahead to assert that:

The Executive Secretary of Tetfund announced in March, 2018 that they have commenced the activities to kick start the 2017 disbursement of the whopping sum of N213 billion to the nation’s tertiary institutions. If Tetfund can disburse N213 billion in one year, it is my view that if the education tax is well managed it will go a long way in addressing the crisis of underfunding of our tertiary institutions. Just recently, it was reported that the new management of the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) paid N5 billion to the TSA. The money was realized from the sale of admission forms to applicants seeking admission to the tertiary institutions in 2017. Meanwhile, university administrators have not accounted for the realized from the sale of post JAMB examination forms.

Factors that Cause Academic Corruption in Our Higher Institutions

There are a variety of causes of academic misconduct in Nigerian educational system. According to Hallak and Poisson (2007), the main factors that explain corruption in education are:

- i. **The High Rate of Return:** Because people hope to get a well-paid job through educational degrees, some people are willing to pay bribes or engage in other corrupt practices to improve their records on paper or gain a formal qualification.
- ii. **Weak Ethical Norms and Poor Rule of Law: The Influence of Peer Group:** In places where corruption is widely prevalent, the moral resistance to engaging in corruption is substantially reduced. Moreover, if law enforcement is known to be weak, then punishment and the possibility of detection are virtually absent, making it worthwhile to take part in corruption.
- iii. **Promotion Purposes:** Corruption or academic dishonesty among academic staff occurs as a result of inordinate quest of some academic staff to get quick

promotion. Based on that, many academics are involved in falsified research publication in journals that are mostly fake. Most lecturers engage in the act of plagiarism in order to be promoted and recognized. Plagiarism is defined as the use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work. In academia, this can range from borrowing without attribution a particular apt phrase, to paraphrasing someone else's original idea without citation, to wholesale contract cheating (Pennycook, 1996).

- iv. **Poor Salary or Fractured Salary:** Corruption in Nigerian higher institutions has been blamed on the poor remuneration in the system. It has been reported that most universities were paying their staff fractured or percentage salary due to shortfall in their monthly allocation. Such a scenario may likely breed or lead to corrupt practices where most staff will be looking for surviving strategy in order to cope with family expectations. Apart from fractured salary, inflation which was caused by recession also made things difficult for workers especially those in the junior cadre. So, most of them claim that they are forced to abuse their office in order to meet up daily and monthly challenges.
- v. **Fear of Financial Insecurity after Retirement:** Corruption in Nigerian higher institutions are mostly committed by management administrators and the senior members who are motivated to engage in corrupt practices in order to acquire illegal wealth before going on retirement or tenure expirations. Many Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts are facing different categories of corruption charges by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC).

Babatope (2008) further argued that the reasons why the fight against corruption in Nigeria has not been achieved include the following factors:

- a. Insincerity of the government;
- b. Pre bargaining and negotiation by highly placed officials caught in corrupt practices are made to part with some of their looted funds and are thereafter set free;
- c. Low deterrent – the punitive measures for corrupt practices need to be strengthened;
- d. Lack of virile political and social movements to tackle corruption. The mass of the people are yet to be mobilized in the fight against corruption;

- e. Lack of access to public information. A lot of secrecy still pervades government documents' and this underlies the need for the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill presently before Nigeria's National Assembly;
- f. Insecurity of informants. There is a need to enact laws to protect informants as well as reward them and
- g. Low public participation in governance.

Effects of Corruption on Higher Institutions in Nigeria

Corruption in our higher institutions has not only devalued our standard, it has also undermined the integrity of the academics and their contributions to knowledge. According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) Education for Justice Module (2020), corruption in education has immediate impacts, both economic and social. Economically, one direct result of obtaining degrees and other qualifications based on bribes, rather than on ability, is that unsuitable people are allocated to jobs and positions of authority. At best, talent is wasted and the potential for development is unrealized, and at worst, financial losses are incurred and lives and livelihoods are destroyed.

Socially, corruption in education has a wide range of consequences. Corruption acts as a barrier to education, either because it makes the cost of acquiring an education prohibitive, or because the act of education simply does not take place in the designated space. It follows that, where educators are absent, individuals are deprived of the fundamental right of education. When qualifications are obtained, not by merit but through favouritism or bribes, the implicit contract between education recipients and the institutions or educators is breached, leading to an erosion of trust in people and institutions. Another serious consequence is the lack of motivation that corruption causes among students. For example, students could start wondering what the point is studying for two weeks for a difficult exam when they can bribe the professor and pass away. Moreover, students develop the understanding that the system works in corrupt ways and that bribes are necessary to get things done – a *modus operandi* which students later transfer to their professional and daily activities (UNODC's Education for Justice Module, 2020).

It is a known fact that Nigerian government at all levels underfund education, it is also true that the mismanagement of the educational funds by the administrators worsen the situation. Based on this assertion, corruption affects all the stake hold-

ers in our higher institutions – the students, the academic staff, the non-teaching staff and the management staff. Amongst the students, corruption has seriously affected their performance, competence and capacity. Students bribe their lecturers to compromise the 70% attendance which is a prerequisite to writing examination. When students don't attend lectures and yet pass their exams, the effect will be a graduation of half-baked products that may not be able to compete internationally with their foreign counterparts. Such Nigerian graduates may suffer low self-esteem and the confidence required to contribute meaningfully in the fastly globalized world.

Ultimately, academic dishonesty is a threat that distorts and undermines the academic world. Accordingly, Osipian (2008) asserts that it interferes with the basic mission of education, which is the transfer of knowledge, by allowing students to get by without having to master the basic knowledge. Furthermore, academic fraud creates an atmosphere that is not conducive to the learning process, which affects honest students as well because, when honest students see cheaters escape detection, it can discourage student morale, as they see the rewards for their work cheapened

At the level of the academic staff, 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 because it affects objectivity in grading of students' scripts, leads to low self-esteem and morale because lecturers who collect money from students in order to award marks are hardly able to look at their students on the face. These lecturers also develop authoritarian relationship with students who do not give bribe. This type of relationship negates the mentored-mentor relationship that should exist between lecturers and students (Amini-Philip and Ogbuagwu, 2017). Academic corruption also creates problems to lecturers. In economic terms, cheating also causes under-production of knowledge, where the professor's job is to produce knowledge. Thus, academic corruption often causes emotional distress to faculty members, many considering it to be a personal slight against them or a violation of their trust.

Amongst the non-teaching staff of our institutions, corruption reigns supreme too. According to Amini-Philip and Ogbuagwu (2017), corruption affects the quality of service delivery in our tertiary institutions; and at the management level, corruption has serious implication for the execution of projects. Similarly, Ogbonaya (2009) observed that contractors handling major projects like administrative

naya (2009) observed that contractors handling major projects like administrative blocks and hostel buildings in universities are sometimes compelled by Ministry officials to offer bribes to them. Furthermore, he noted that the management of such institutions also receive bribes before contracts are awarded. Such acts result in unfinished projects. Other effects of corruption on our educational institutions include:

- i. Diversion, embezzlement and misappropriation of financial resources;
- ii. Wrong allocation of talents – hidden talents are killed, underdeveloped or misapplied;
- iii. Distorts values of young people – cynicism among young people. They feel it does not pay to be honest;
- iv. Blur lines between right and wrong, legal and illicit, good and evil;
- v. 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 (Amini-Philip and Ogbuagwu, 2017).

Having extensively discussed the effects of academic corruption in our higher institutions, we now turn our attention to the things that the government and other stake-holders in our educational sector should do in order to curb corrupt tendencies in the system.

Can Academic Fraud be Overcome? The Way Forward

Before academic corruption can be eliminated in our institutions in Nigeria, the system must be able to detect and uncover them. In its 2011 report on corruption in the education sector, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) observed that there are four main categories of tools used to combat corruption: Rule of law (control and sanction); Public administration and systems (corruption prevention); transparency and accountability (duty bearers and right holders, non-state actors, information awareness); and capacity development (individual, organizational and institutional capacity building).

Apart from the recommendations of the UNDP, if the Nigerian government and those in charge of our education sector can adopt the following recommendations and properly implement them as the study suggests, it will assist in overcoming the menace of corruption in our higher institutions.

1. Counselors in our universities and colleges should organize seminars/

symposia and workshops in enlightening the university community on good moral and ethical standards that help to prevent academic corruption especially based on examination ethics once in a semester, using orientation programmes. Invitation for such programmes should be extended to parents as well since they were identified as one of the people involved in academic corruption. Emphasis should be placed on cognitive restructuring of behaviour and inculcating good morals in terms of good lecture delivery qualities, course content quality and staff-student relationships by learning essential skills as well as ethical behavioural standard. Family values should be emphasized, which used to be the pride of the African people in time past, especially on the part of parents.

2. Government should also strictly apply anti-corruption measures in the universities such as the use of economic and legal means in addition to supplying lecture rooms and offices with surveillance cameras for monitoring activities of staff and students in the university.
3. In view of poor entry qualification of students as one of the causes of academic corruption, universities should ensure that only qualified students are admitted. This is a challenge for the Minister of Education to work closely with the Vice Chancellors of universities and for them to conduct more research on academic corruption. Counselors should organize lectures for students, giving them tips on how to improve on their study habits. This can be integrated into university orientation programmes or prior to the commencement of semester examinations.
4. Staff and students caught engaging in bribery and extortion should be sent to the counselors for group or individual counseling after facing disciplinary actions (Dimkpa, 2011).
5. Distinguished professors in different faculties and departments should be appointed as academic mentors to the younger academics, while excellent senior administrators should be assigned the role of mentoring the non-teaching staff. Such professors and administrators should not only be worthy in their academic fields, they should also be morally upright in all their dealings. Mentoring can be said to be the manifestation of the highest level of personal maturity, security and self-confidence, thus, an insecure and morally bankrupt person can never mentor others, rather, they will oppress them.

6. Unions in the universities such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) should play great role in fighting corruption in our universities. They should not only fight for university autonomy and academic freedom, they also observe and monitor how vice chancellors award contracts in their different universities.

Other measures to be used in halting the menace of corruption in our higher education include:

- Recruitment of lecturers and promotion should be based on merit.
- Information on annual funds allocation to schools should be made public and proper monitoring should be instituted to guide against the diversion of such funds, misappropriation and embezzlement.
- Admission into institutions of higher studies should be strictly on merit.
- Monitoring teams for capital project execution should be established in all institutions of higher education and where they exist, should be strengthened to avert project abandonment, diversion of funds or outright embezzlement (Amini-Philips and Ogbuagwu, 2017).

Conclusion

This study has examined the damaging effects of academic corruption in Africa with specific focus in Nigeria. The paper analyzed the meanings of corruption, and the different perspectives academics and other researchers view corruption, for easy understanding of the concept. The study also discussed the categories of corruption in Nigerian higher institutions in order to establish that corruption has attained an unimaginable height and the damages it has done to the education sector is massive. The factors that cause corruption in Nigerian higher institutions, the effects of corruption in the system and the ways academic frauds can be eliminated were also examined.

It is the position of this study that academic corruption can be minimized or outrightly eliminated in our higher institutions if all the recommendations we made above are faithfully implemented. Again, the anti-corruption agencies such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) should be well funded so as to enable them discharge their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Units of all these anti-corruption bodies should be set up in all our public higher institutions to monitor the activities of all the stakeholders in our institutions. Their

major emphasis should be on prevention by enlightening the people on the virtues of exemplary behavior and good attitudes to work. If proper campaign against academic corruption in our higher institutions are not carried out now, the next generation of Nigerian students may not know that academic fraud and malpractices lead to underdevelopment because it contributes majorly to poor governance and diverts resources away from people oriented programmes.

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