A Search for Solution to Corruption in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State of Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study was undertaken to extract from staff and students in tertiary institutions strategies that they considered important in providing solution to corruption in their institutions; they had in an earlier study revealed several corrupt practices and their adverse effects on higher education in Delta State of Nigeria.*
A validated open-ended questionnaire which was used at the secondary school level with success was adopted in this investigation. It was administered on the randomly chosen respondent (staff and students) from the University and all the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Delta State.
Available information indicated that good exemplary leadership tops their opinions. It was also opined that good leadership and a display of excellent behaviour and hard work should be adequately rewarded. Enlightenment of staff and students on the evils of corruption, through monitoring and supervision processes by auditors and anti-corruption committees were also suggested. Severe punishment, possibly by imprisonment, dismissal and forfeiture of acquired assets to Government, were also proposed.

I.   Introduction

Background to the Problem

It has been revealed by staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria that corrupt practices which adversely affect the quality of academic work exist in the institutions. The need to check this situation has led to this investigation. This is coming up in an era in when citizens are poised to expose and attack corruption to savage the image of the country which was adjudged as the 90th of the most corrupt 91 corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International (2001)

.The solution to the problem of corruption in tertiary institutions can best be synthesized from the key players in them- the staff and students. In a developing country like Nigeria, citizens readily accept as norms, most actions that take place in tertiary institutions. Consequently, they represent where behaviours and ways of life are perfected. It is heart-warming that members of these institutions of higher education are bothered about the rising cases of corruption being reported about them by citizens.

The Problem

The time to obtain actualisable suggestions to provide solution to the problem of corruption in tertiary institutions has come. This is crucial in improving the character of learners that pass through the education industry at the apex level. Thus, the problem of this study is to synthesize implementable suggestions aimed at preventing corrupt practices in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

Q_1: What strategies can be adopted to ensure a corruption-free tertiary education?
Q_2: In what ways can fraud be tackled in tertiary institutions?
Q_3 : How can transparency and accountability be instituted in tertiary education?

Related Literature

In proposing solution to corruption problem in education, Moldova (2004) suggested holding an Anti-Corruption Day where people would be enlightened on the evils of corruption in the school system; discussions and properly researched papers should be presented at such a forum. In a similar vein, Lipsett (2007) remarked that when it was discovered that only 13% of budgetary allocation got to schools in Uganda, a national campaign was staged to inform the local communities to know where the funds were going. In consequence, the part that get to schools, increased to 85%.

Vittal (2001) favoured that war be waged against "financial terrorism". He opined that the judiciary, established agencies against corruption like Anti-Corruption Bureau Commission and the Vigilance Commissioners be involved in the crusade. An anti-corruption campaign using the print and electronic media to publicize cases of corruption was also proposed by him. As a way of proffering solution to the problem of corruption, Mindphiles (2006) raised four questions. They are:
1.   Is every Government service properly executed?

2. Did the final government service executors get their full pay?
3. Did government customers not pat too much?
4. Did all government customers' money reach the treasury?

Certainly, these are pertinent questions that suggest "leakages" in the usage of public fund; this is the major segment of corruption in developing countries lie Nigeria.

Transparency International is unequivocally committed to achieving a corruption-free society. In discussing how to curb corruption in public procurement, she (2015) affirmed that the huge amounts often devoted by governments for the procurement of goods and services which sometimes range between 15 and 30 per cent of GDP, are beset by the temptation to corruptly use them. This eventually reduces the quality of what is provided. The organisation therefore suggested that the process of contracting should be both participatory and transparent. This will particularly prove very helpful in the running of activities in the education industry to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. The Anti-Corruption Helpdesk of Transparency International (2015) must be given credit for providing platformsfor research that are meant to address the menace of corruption. She however noted that since the knowledge about corruption spreads across different disciplines the world over, strategies designed to fight it are often scattered and disjointed. The openness to addressing questions on corruption sent to her must be commended as a step in assisting people who are desirous to conduct investigations aimed at curbing corruption.

The World Bank (2014) is equally determined to the eradication of corruption. In this regard, this body lays emphasis on anti-corruption measures that would support poverty reduction in the society. Just like the views of Transparency International, the World Bank is interested in advancing strategies for reduction in corruption in the procurement processes in many countries. The presentation of Osewa (2015) actually pointed out a typical case of corruption in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The demand of money from prima-facie qualified candidates to offer them admissions into universities in Nigeria, which he pointed out, is difficult to refute. And in some cases, the charges which students are constrained to pay for the development of institutions on admission, are not often paid to the school authority. Osewa advised those who want to avoid these evils to either go to private universities in Nigeria or "head abroad".

II. Methodology

This is a follow-up survey investigation on staff and students in tertiary institutions who had identified several corrupt practices and their consequences in their institutions. In the current study, they are required to enumerate strategies on how corrupt practices could be arrested.

The seven (7) tertiary institutions in Delta State – a University, three (3) Polytechnics and three (3) Colleges of Education, were used. A total of 210 staff and 140 students were randomly chosen from the institutions as respondents. Nine (9) research assistants helped in the administration of the open-ended questionnaire.

The returned questionnaires of 198 or 94.29% of the 210 staff and 122 or 87.14% of the students were encouraging except that some did not respond to all the items.

Presentation of Data

The information gathered are presented in tables showing the cumulative frequency (c.f) of similar responses and are expressed in percentages. They are presented in increasing order of frequencies. All responses, irrespective of their frequencies, are shown because they are considered important.

Q₁: What strategies can be adopted to ensure a corruption-free tertiary education?

Table 1a:Suggested Strategies By Staff On Achieving Corruption-Free Tertiary Education

S/No.	Suggested Strategies	c.f	%
1.	Adequate remuneration/welfare packages for staff	36	17.14
2.	Campaign/seminar on danger of corruption	31	14.76
3.	Punish offenders and publicize it widely	20	9.52
4.	Leadership by good example	20	9.52
5.	Employ only competent staff	14	6.67
6.	Proper screening of students before admission	13	6.19
7.	Good moral and religious education in primary and secondary schools	12	5.71
8.	Acknowledge honest/hardworking people for commendation	9	4.29
9.	Counselling in schools	8	3.81
10.	Close supervision of staff and students	6	2.86
11.	Allocate courses based on specialization	4	1.90
12.	Abolition of handouts (except approved by working committee)	3	1.43
13.	Wage war against cultism	3	1.43
14.	De-politicization of the education sector	2	0.95
15.	Establish examination ethics committee	2	0.95
16.	Parents should pay attention to the education of their children	2	0.95

17.	Uphold tenets of good work habits	2	0.95
18.	Uphold the vision and mission for which the schools were founded	2	0.95
19.	Adequate protection of people who report corrupt practices	1	0.48
20.	Checkmate corruption in the entire society	1	0.48
21.	Use security agents	1	0.48
22.	Abolish Governing Councils in the institutions	1	0.48
	TOTAL	**193**	**100.00**

Table 1b: Suggested Strategies By Students On Achieving Corruption-Free Tertiary Education

S/No.	Suggested Strategies	C.f	%
1.	Proper orientation of staff and students	26	22.03
2.	Punish offenders	24	20.34
3.	Good government/administration	12	10.17
4.	Appoint only genuine Christians for leadership positions	10	8.47
5.	Stop cultism	9	7.63
6.	Stop extortion of money from students	6	5.08
7.	Expel culprits –staff and students	5	4.24
8.	Good pay for staff/motivate them	4	3.39
9.	Enforce rules and regulations	4	3.39
10.	Set up a good anti-corruption committee	3	2.54
11.	Put in place a monitoring team on staff and students	3	2.54
12.	Employ only qualified staff	3	2.54
13.	Government should revive standard of education	3	2.54
14.	Bury tribalism and nepotism	2	1.70
15.	Introduce sharia law	2	1.70
16.	Public execution of corrupt key leaders	2	1.70
17.	Enforce seriousness on the job	1	0.85
18.	Fight examination malpractice	1	0.85
19.	Release examination results on time	1	0.85
20.	Thoroughly vet scripts marked by lecturers	1	0.85
	TOTAL	**118**	**100.00**

In Table 1a, the staff are strongly convinced that adequate pay to staff, enlightenment of people on the danger of corruption, published punishment for offenders and exemplary behaviour of leaders are antidotes to corruption in tertiary institutions. Employment of competent staff, admission of qualified students and their close supervision are among suggested strategies by them.

Proper orientation campaign and punishment of offenders top the suggestions of students in Table 1b. Good administration that can combat cultism and extortion of money from students by staff and the expulsion of culprits (staff and students) are also suggested by students. Like their lecturers, they also favour the employment of only qualified staff. In addition to fighting examination malpractice, they stress that examination results be released on time.

Q_2: In what ways can fraud be tackled in tertiary education?

Tablle 2a: Ways Suggested By Staff On How To Tackle Fraud In Tertiary Institutions

S/No.	Suggested Ways	C.f	%
1.	Monitor/supervise lecturers very well	28	20.00
2.	Punish all past and present offenders	26	18.57
3.	Good remuneration/incentives to staff	18	12.86
4.	Enforce laws on corruption	12	8.57
5.	Orientation/seminars for all stakeholders	12	8.57
6.	Regular promotion and proper placement for all staff	8	5.71
7.	Investigate all substantial allegations	6	4.29
8.	Punish corrupt top government officials first	4	2.86
9.	Regular auditing of school accounts	4	2.86
10.	Protect whistle blowers of corruption	3	2.14
11.	Acquisition of wealth should not be celebrated	3	2.14
12.	Encourage practical examinations	2	1.43
13.	Evolve high standard of accountability	2	1.43
14.	Proper funding of education by government	2	1.43
15.	Employment should be based on merit	2	1.43
16.	Reward people who fight corruption in the society	2	1.43
17.	Compel lecturers to go to classes/teach their courses	2	1.43
18.	Reward staff with outstanding character	1	0.71
19.	Education on disciplined living within one's income	1	0.71
20.	Create staff fora where suggestions can be offered	1	0.71
21.	Establish anti-corruption agencies	1	0.71
	TOTAL	**140**	**100.00**

Table 2b: Ways Suggested By Students On How To Tackle Fraud In Tertiary Institutions

S/No.	Suggested Ways	C.f	%
1.	Prosecute and punish offenders	18	23.38
2.	Encourage/establish good leadership	15	19.48
3.	Enlighten students on evils of corruption	9	11.69
4.	Imprisonment for those found guilty	8	10.39
5.	Provide enough learning materials	6	7.79
6.	Pay teachers promptly	6	7.79
7.	Good audit/monitoring committee	4	5.19
8.	Confiscate properties of proven corrupt persons	3	3.40
9.	Screen students properly before admission	2	3.40
10.	Improve reward for good leadership	2	2.60
11.	Expel fraudulent staff	2	2.60
12.	Install closed circuit cameras to monitor staff and students	1	1.30
	TOTAL	**77**	**100.00**

Fraud is a major component of corruption; it has led to mass misappropriation of public money in great magnitude in Nigeria. Both the staff (in Table 2a) and students (in Table 2b) strongly opine that an effective supervision of staff and institutions, using audit committee, should be intensified and offenders prosecuted and punished, possibly by imprisonment. The need to pay staff well and on time are again re-echoed. While the acquisition of wealth should not be celebrated, they argue that the properties of those caught should be confiscated by government. Proper funding of education to make materials available is also emphasized.

The staff in particular opined that only qualified staff should be employed and regularly promoted. Staff who help in fighting corruption should be protected and rewarded. The students stressed that they should be enlightened on the evils of corruption and that they should be properly screened before admission. They also stressed the need to install closed circuit cameras to monitor the activities of staff and students.

Q₃: How can transparency and accountability be instituted in tertiary education?

Table 3a: Opinions Of Staff On How To Institute Trasparency Ane Accountability In Higher Education

S/No.	Suggested Strategies	C.f	%
1.	Leadership by good examples of top officers	29	17.37
2.	Reward hardwork and good deeds	25	14.97
3.	Proper auditing and supervision	17	10.18
4.	Proper monitoring	12	7.19
5.	Adhere to existing laws; follow due process	12	7.19
6.	Orientation for all staff and administrators	10	5.99
7.	Employ only responsible staff	9	5.39
8.	Avoid favouritism	8	4.49
9.	Eradicate cultism	7	4.19
10.	Only people with credible past record should head tertiary institutions	7	4.19
11.	Provide full boarding facilities for all students	7	4.19
12.	Reduce influence of politics on education	6	3.59
13.	Deans, HODs, Directors and Principal Officers to declare assets yearly	5	2.99
14.	Severe punishment on erring persons to be made public	4	2.40
15.	Operate cash-lite economy; make all payments in banks	4	2.40
16.	Creation of voluntary anti-corruption group	2	1.20
17.	Consultants should handle examinations	2	1.20
18.	Strictly follow monthly budgets	1	0.06
	TOTAL	**167**	**100.00**

Table 3b: Opinions Of Students On How To Institute Transparency And Accountability In Higher Education

S/No	Suggested Strategies	C.f	%
1.	Management and staff should show good examples	18	24.32
2.	Monitoring team should check staff regularly	12	16.23
3.	Applicants for employment should be thoroughly screened	9	12.16
4.	Severe punishment on corrupt persons	8	10.81
5.	Get Continuous Assessment scores from lecturers before examination	5	6.67
6.	Give staff freedom of speech	4	5.41
7.	Lecturers should show good behaviour	4	5.41
8.	Rules and regulations should be made effective	4	5.41
9.	Staff orientation at regular intervals	3	4.01
10.	A sound audit system in tertiary institutions	3	4.01
11.	Encourage people to fear God	2	2.70
12.	Do not force students to buy textbooks	1	1.35
13.	Employ staff/admit students based on merit	1	1.35
	TOTAL	**74**	**100.00**

The strongest opinion of both staff and students on how to ensure transparency and accountability in higher education is leadership by good examples. This is certainly infectious on subordinates. Effective monitoring and supervision of both staff and students are rated as good antidotes to corruption, especially if a good audit system is put in place. Adherence to laws and their implementation without favouritism, reduction of political influence of academic activities and mandatory annual asset declaration by staff in leadership positions are also suggested by staff. The students want Continuous Assessment scores retrieved from lecturers before course examinations and that they should not force students to buy textbooks.

III. Summary of Findings

The presentation of information supplied by the respondents indicated the underlistedstrategies for providing solutions to corrupt practices in tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria.
1. All leaders, teaching and support staff and students must show good examples.
2. Good leadership, hardwork and good behaviour should be adequately rewarded.
3. Enlightenment campaign and seminars to let staff and students know the evils of corruption should be sustained.
4. Effective monitoring/supervision of staff and students is crucial.
5. Proven cases of corruption to be severely punished by imprisonment, dismissal and confiscation of properties of the culprits.
6. Members of anti-corruption committee to fight cultism, examination malpractice and individuals who expose corrupt practices should be protected.
7. Rules and regulations /laws against corruption should be implemented without fear or favour.
8. Only competent lecturers should be employed.
9. Educational materials should be sufficiently provided in the institutions.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the findings from the presentation of data, the conclusion itemized below is made.
1. Both staff and students in tertiary institutions are sincerely concerned about the menace of corruption in the institutions.
2. Corruption in the institutions can be checked by faithfully implementing agreed strategies andutilising the tool of effective supervision.
3. Anti-corruption committees can be constituted to curb the menace by enlightening people; emphasis on exemplary behaviour and good attitude to work are crucial in the crusade.
4. Implementable rules and regulations to check corruption should be synthesized and enforced without fear or favour.

Implications for Educational Planning
1. Only qualified and competent staff who are worthy in character should be employed in tertiary institutions.
2. Leaders in the institutions should be those with proven integrity.
3. Rewards to staff should be based on productivity.
4. A core course on effects of transparency, accountability as well as corruption on the quality on the national economy and individual lives should be included in General Studies Education (GSE) division in all tertiary institutions.
5.

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Daniel Duwovwiji Whawo studied at the University of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria, where he obtained B. Ed. (Hons.) Chemistry, 1979; and M. Ed. (1984) and Ph. D. (1987) in Educational Planning. He has taught in Primary and Secondary Schools and in the College of Education system.

He has published several articles in academic journals in Nigeria and foreign countries and chapters in University textbooks. He also has six textbooks in use in tertiary institutions.

Daniel Whawo was promoted to the position of a Reader (Associate Professor), the present highest rank in Colleges of Education in Nigeria, in 1998. He was appointed Provost (Chief Executive) of the Delta State College of Physical Education, Mosogar, Nigeria in 2010; he is currently the pioneer Provost, MICHAEL and CECILIA FOUNDATION College of Education, Agbarha-Otor.