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CORRUPTION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Globally, corruption has been identified as one of the major problems that have negative consequences on the socio-economic and educational development of many nations. In Nigeria, corruption is visible in all sectors of the economy including higher education. This paper examined the causes and effects of corruption on effective service delivery in higher education in Nigeria. Corruption has negatively affected the ability of government to provide essential services in education such as health, water, electricity transportation, hostels, workshops, instructional materials and other educational facilities. The paper presumed that corruption in higher education is a major impediment to effective service delivery. The privileged position of the stakeholders in higher education to public resources and information made them to abuse these privileges to the detriments of the citizens.

Abstract

Globally, corruption has been identified as one of the major problems that have negative consequences on the socio-economic development of many nations. In Nigeria, corruption is visible in all sectors of the economy, higher education inclusive. This study examined the effects of corruption on effective service delivery in higher education to the citizenry. Corruption has negatively affected the ability of government to provide essential services in education, health, water, electricity and other infrastructural facilities. Observation and in-depth interview were used for data collection, which were analyzed qualitatively. The findings from the study showed that corruption in higher education is a major impediment to effective service delivery in Nigeria. The paper posited that due to the privileged position of the

Stakeholders in higher education to public resources and information, many of them abuse these privileges to the detriments of the citizens. The study recommended the spirit of contentment, good leadership, adequate funding, provision of employment and establishment of anti-corruption institutions in higher education institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, Higher education, Service delivery, Nigeria.

Corruption is a phenomenon that has threatened the developmental efforts in higher education. It has become a major concern of successive government to eradicate corruption in Nigeria because of its negative impact on effective education service delivery. According to Adamu (2007), corruption exists in one form or the other in all societies. The major difference in the case of Nigeria is the extent of its pervasiveness and its implications for good educational service. Adamu, (2007) further avers that an average Nigerian has accepted corruption as inevitable and uncontrollable, believing that the society as a whole is corrupt beyond remedy. Corruption has indeed become an integral part of the administrative, political, socio-economic cultural and educational system as well as a way of life of the citizenry. The situation in the educational sector has reached such a level where stakeholders had become progressively indifferent to propriety of conduct and show little or no commitment to promoting the general achievement of educational goals as stated in National Policy on Education (NPE).

Statement of the Problem

Corruption seems to be visible in all sectors of the Nigerian society including higher education. It has great negative effects on service delivery to an extent that something has to be done to address the causes and effects of corruption in higher education in Nigeria. What is corruption and its causes? What is service delivery? What are effects of corruption on service delivery? What is the relationship between corruption and service delivery? This study examined how the causes and effects of corruption in higher education can be combated and be minimized to allow for effective service delivery in higher education in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study is justified by the extent to which it identified the causes and effects of corruption in higher education and minimized it in Nigeria. It also discovered and exposed the practices plaguing the development of higher education in the country and recommended their removal from the system. The report of this study would therefore benefit students, graduates, parents, government and other stakeholders.

Literature Review

Corruption

The concept of corruption can be seen from various perspectives depending on how it is being perpetuated or practiced. According to Adisa (2003) corruption or corrupt practices has to do with fraudulent activities especially siphoning of funds that are meant for the general populace for one's aggrandizement only. In line with this, Osoba (1996) defines corruption as an anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms and which undermines the authority's ability to improve the living condition of the people. A concise definition by Ausaid (2003) asserts that corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption manifests in moral decadence, wicked behaviour, putridity, rottenness and bribery (Johnson, 1996). According to Nye (1967) corruption is a deviation from normal duties of a public role for private gain, violation of laid down rules for private benefits, perversion of judgment, nepotism and misappropriation of public resources. From these definitions, we see that corruption is a selfish and dishonest act that deprives the citizenry the desire benefits of the social, economic, political, and other legitimate benefits.

The above definitions of corruption emphasized on personal interest as against the public interest and good. The perpetration of this selfish interest affects the ability of the stakeholders in providing the necessary services to the citizens in an effective and efficient manner, in the right quantity and quality, in the right place and as at when necessary.

Academic Corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria

For Nigeria to achieve academic excellence, things have to change drastically in higher education across the country. President Muhammadu Buhari's

trenchant denunciation of academic corruption has brought to the fore one of the leading causes of the fall in the standard of education in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. Lecturers have been neck-deep in academic corruption without anybody challenging them as they take advantage of young undergraduates that look up to them for academic direction and impartation of knowledge. It was in this situation that helpless students and their parents found themselves until recently when President Buhari became the voice of the voiceless by raising the red flag against corrupt lecturers, warning them to desist from such unwholesome activities on campuses.

Forced sexual acts and harassment of female students by male lecturers is the oldest form of academic corruption almost accepted as a norm because of its prevalence on campuses. Lecturers old enough to be fathers of the female undergraduates throw everything to the dogs in order to lure the students to bed in exchange for marks. While some upright students work hard for academic excellence, the lazy and immoral female students who spend all their time on campus socializing and engaging in endless self-advertisement with morally corrupt men off campus in exchange for cash to pay their fees and fend for themselves. It is also a common thing to see female students inducing lecturers and even other men off campus for sexual games and in return, they get the marks they do not deserve as they do not burn the proverbial oil like their other hardworking course mates. This category of students ends up not being able to defend their degrees in the larger society after graduation. Only exceptionally brilliant and moral female students escape such victimization from lecturers who try to use marks in exchange for sex to victimize them since such brilliant students do not depend on such undeserved marks to get good grades.

Another form of corruption in higher education is what is generally called "sorting". This is a slang on campus which refers to a situation whereby students are compelled to pay lecturers so that they could be awarded marks they did not score during examinations. It is so bad that indigent but brilliant students who could not afford the money demanded by lecturers are made to fail the courses and sometimes have to carry-over the courses or even prevent graduation in the case of final year students. Recently, some distraught parents who were not able to pay their children's tuition fees in a state-owned university expressed their disgust when their children informed them that

lecturers in the university were demanding money in order to award them good grades in the examination they had just written.

Failing students who do not buy handouts or textbooks written by lecturers is another form of academic corruption that is prevalent in the nation's so-called ivory towers. Some lecturers use their textbooks in exchange for marks as a form of continuous assessment for students who buy the textbooks. This form of victimization is endemic in the academic environment. The policy in many universities now disallows lecturers from selling their books to students directly, they rather take the books to the bookshops where students interested can buy.

Outright embezzlement of public fund by public officials in their place of assignments including higher education is another form of corruption manifesting in misappropriation of fund meant for essential project execution in schools. According to Dike (2010), in Nigeria, the embezzlement of public funds is one of the most common ways of accumulating wealth, perhaps due to lack of strict regulatory systems. In their study of the effects of corruption to service delivery in the higher education in Nigerian, Kayode et al (2013) portrays the abuse of existing privileges by stakeholders in education sector. In the course of their inquiry, concerns were raised about the overarching self-interest of government officials leading to non-achievement of higher education goals in Nigeria.

Vice chancellors of universities and other principal officers are supposed to know about the prevalence of academic corruption on campuses and those caught in the act should be brought to book. However, there are few lecturers who are above board, especially the elderly and morally good ones. As President Buhari now leads the charge against academic corruption, state governors who are visitors to the state-owned institutions should also toe the same path and restore higher education to that noble era of moral rectitude and academic excellence. The era of impunity whereby lecturers operated like law unto themselves and took advantage of innocent students by exploiting them under various guises must stop.

Concept of Service Delivery in Higher Education in Nigeria

Service in higher education implies tangible and intangible intellectual or academic impartation provided by the government and other stakeholders in the tertiary institutions in order to improve the educational wellbeing of their

products and the society at large. Carlson et al. (2005) conceptualized service delivery as the relationship between policymakers, service providers and populace. According to them, it encompasses services and their supporting systems that are typically regarded as state responsibility including social services, infrastructure such as electricity, water, sanitation, roads and transport, and services that promotes academic excellence. In Nigeria, government constitutes the major service provider to all organizations that exist as part of government machinery for implementing policy decisions and delivering services that are of value to the citizens. It is a mandatory responsibility of the state under the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria to directly or through established agencies promote the proper and adequate delivery of such services. Regulatory agencies, educational institutions, research institutes, social services and commercially oriented agencies, etc are part of government's responsibility toward the promotion of societal wellbeing.

Mensah (2015) asserts that higher education should be considered a part of service industry since the primary focus of tertiary institutions is to provide quality learning experiences to students. Facilities in tertiary institutions are inadequate and cannot meet the increasing demand of the growing students. The facilities in the universities have not expanded for decades. Service quality in formal education is receiving greater attention in strategic plans of African governments in their quest to achieve global economic integration. The problems include curriculum, teaching faculties and facilities, among others, which push against their efforts in their attempt to deliver quality educational services to their customers

The concept of service unlike tangible products is a complex phenomenon and many fragmented definitions have emerged. (Hirvonen, 2007) defined a service as a simultaneous process, a social interaction, a relationship and an intangible result. Zeithaml et al (2006), describes services as deeds, processes and performances. According to Kotler and Keller (2006), a service is an act or performance that one party can offer another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. However, the various definitions recognize that services are intangible, interactive, experiential and do not involve the transfer of ownership (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006).

Research Methodology

This paper used secondary data collected from official documents of the federal government, journals, magazine, reports and other publications of local and international non-governmental agencies. Observation and in-depth interview were also used.

Findings of the Study

Causes of Corruption in Service Delivery in Higher Education

The causes of corruption in higher education include greed, poverty, unemployment, inadequate funding of education, low remuneration to workers, admission pressure, inadequate infrastructure, lack of transparent regulation, inadequate organizational structure and lack of home training.

Greed

Greed has caused a lot of crises in the world, including Nigerian higher education institutions. It is because of greed that political leaders and principal officers in tertiary institutions embezzle from the funds they are supposed to use for national and educational development for their own selfish needs.

Poverty

According to international standards of poverty, a person is said to be poor when he lives under \$1.25 or ₦210 per day. There are many poor people in Nigeria, and poverty pushes them into corruption. According to World Bank Group, in 2004, 63.1% of Nigerians were poor. The poverty level increased in 2010 to 68%. A person can take bribes to commit crime because he is poor. It is one of the reasons why some poor students of higher education institutions collect bribes to work as thugs for Nigerian politicians and also get involved in other criminal activities.

Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the major challenges in Nigeria. Students are pushed into corrupt practices because of anticipated high rate of unemployment after graduation. An unemployed citizen can indulge in corruption to make money.

Forms of corruption in Higher Education

Corruption in higher education takes different forms, the most common forms of corruption in educational institutions include corruption in the recruitment and promotion of staff which is not based on competence or merits, corrupt admission and students' enrolment, academic dishonesty, sexual harassment, political interference by policymakers, lack of integrity and faulty financial management, lack of transparency, lack of equity and fairness, plagiarism, absenteeism from duty, fake research results, cultism, accreditation falsification and sorting as in marks and grades for sex or sales.

Effects of Corruption in Higher Education in Nigeria

The consequences of corruption are reduction in the quality of graduates, rise in poverty, poor national development, erosion of educational values and distortion of civic culture.

Reduction in the quality of Graduates

Corruption in higher education often leads to reduction in the quality of graduates which in turn render them unemployable in the labour market. Graduates who may have engaged in sorting or sex for marks may not be able to secure employment or justify their certificates when employed. This will lead them to engage in social vices.

Rise in Poverty

When public policy makers, and heads of higher education institutions are engaged in financial corruption or are busy laundering the money that is supposed to be used to invest in such institutions for the common good of the masses, poverty generally rises as a result.

Poor National Development

Any country with high corruption is likely to experience developmental bankruptcy. A situation where corrupt graduates from higher institutions man the economy, the consequence will be poor national development.

Erosion of educational values

Corruption erodes the core values of educational process, undermines and distorts human capital formation. This weakens social cohesion by engendering distrust in interpersonal and intergroup relations in Nigeria.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that corruption in higher education has great implications for effective service delivery. This is because the higher education is the major implementer of high manpower development and their products end up to execute government policies and programs geared towards providing essential services that have impacts on the well-being of the general citizenry. It is however unfortunate that the citizens that are supposed to enjoy the benefits of these services are rather subjected to all forms of frustration. Thus, there is an inverse relationship between corruption in the higher education and effective service delivery.

Recommendations

Corruption in service delivery in higher education can be minimized by the following adequate provision of essential services, contentment, establishment of effective anti-corruption institutions, employment generation, adequate funding of higher education, good leadership, monitoring and supervision and strict sanctions on corrupt practices.

Adequate provision of essential services

The adequate provision of essential services and its accessibility by the citizens will certainly reduce corruption in higher education. Educational facilities such as electricity, accommodation, food, bursary and scholarship, health, internet connection etc will minimize or totally eradicate corruption in higher education.

Contentment

Contentment implies being content with what one has. When the leaders of Nigeria are satisfied with the salary they are paid and use them in the right way, the issue of embezzlement and money laundering will become history. Lecturers who are satisfied with what they are paid will not have time to indulge in corruption to make more money.

Establishment of effective Anti-Corruption Institutions

Creating strong anti-corruption institutions is another arsenal to win the fight against corruption. This group is to work independently of the management of higher education institutions to ensure transparency. Anyone who is

caught in corrupt practice by such institutions should experience the consequences decided by the anti-corruption agency without any political immunity.

Employment Creation

Many of the unemployed people in Nigeria find themselves involved in corruption mainly because they want to make money to meet their basic needs of life. Governments, individuals and philanthropists should endeavour to create more jobs for citizens and especially the unemployed graduates. More entrepreneurs in Nigeria should join Aliko Dangote to invest in employment creation. A busy mind may find it difficult to indulge in corruption because he is being paid adequately but the idle hand is the devil's workshop.

Adequate funding of Higher Education

Understanding the importance of skills acquisition will go a long way to propel the government to develop all the schools in Nigeria. When more attention is paid to the tertiary institutions in the country, it will produce graduates who are employable. Installation of the necessary machines needed in higher education will make Nigerian graduates acquire skills and use them to generate income, even if no company employs them after graduation. Self-employment will make graduates more determined in the work they do and will prevent them from corruption like internet scams, kidnapping and the rest.

Good leadership, monitoring and supervision

Good leadership and a display of excellent behaviour and hard work should be adequately rewarded. Enlightenment of staff and students of higher education institutions on the evils of corruption, through monitoring and supervision processes by auditors and anti-corruption committees should be enacted and thoroughly implemented.

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