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ACADEMIC CORRUPTION AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study is on academic corruption and students' achievement in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. The study sought to identify the most prevalent form of academic corruption in tertiary institutions in Enugu State, its influence on the educational achievement of students and how effective are the strategies put in place by these institutions in tackling corruption. Three research questions guided the study. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the sample and data collected via a questionnaire structured on a 4 point scale. Data analysis was done using percentages and mean rating. Findings show that sorting or paying for marks is most prevalent followed by extortion via textbooks and assignments, then sex-for-marks and the least is plagiarism. It revealed also that these has negative effect on the academic achievements of the students via bad study habit, lack of inspiration and motivation to work hard in and wrong perception of values in life among others. The study also shows that the strategies adopted to curb corruption in the institutions are grossly inadequate. Some of the recommendations made are that both the public and private establishments should pay much attention to corrupt practises in the institution by introducing the whistle

blowing strategy. This will greatly assist in exposing corrupt and incompetent staff as well as unserious students. The government should properly fund the education sector. Lack of essential educational infrastructures and facilities encourage the cutting of corners in academic processes.

Keywords: Corruption, Achievement, Purposive, Sampling, Sorting, Plagiarism.

Corruption has variously been defined and can be seen as all acts done for personal benefit that compromises the objectives or goals of an organization or an institution. According to Fasokun (2010), corruption is any behaviour that exploits and disdainfully uses men and women for selfish interests. Kassahu (2011) posited that any favour, gift or reward including price received with intent to obstruct or pervert the rules of law is corruption. He stated further that it include all actions done that is against public interest or violate the rule of engagement in an organization which is detrimental to the society at large. It can be easily seen that corruption involves any wrong doing by those in special position of trust for personal benefit. It applies mainly to those in public service (Microsoft Encarta, 2009). Some of the corrupt practises in public service include but not limited to extortion, bribery, embezzlement of funds and fraud, exerting influence on decisions for personal interest, and nepotism. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of all institutions in the country. No sector of the Nigerian economy is spared or can be exonerated from its corrosive impact. Development is low, the economy is in recession and most of the organizations and institutions are wobbling and there appear to be no end to the devastating impact of corruption in the country. The greatest of the impact is on the high level of incompetence within human capital in the nation especially among graduates. Nigerian graduates are increasingly becoming unemployable. This goes to show that corrupt has not spared the educational sector and impacts negatively on the availability and quality of educational services. The current government war on corruption will not be a success if there is no determined conscious effort to save the education sector from all manner of corrupt practices.

Statement of the Problem

Corruption in the education sector in the country is one social problem that has lowered the quality and standard of education in Nigerian and requires immediate solution. Today, none of the tertiary institutions are ranked among the first twenty (20) universities worldwide and it is very obvious that the quality of graduates is extremely low. They are mostly deficient in competence or capacity and are unemployable. Presently, there are graduates who cannot fill out or complete a simple form, cannot write a simple essay or explain simple concepts in their area of study. According to Mitsga (2010), National youth corpsers sent to teach in secondary

schools were withdrawn due to their inability to communicate in simple correct English. One begins to wonder how they managed to graduate if not that the system was compromised. The Nation Newspaper (2010:41) reported that six First Class graduates of Nigerian universities admitted to the African University of Science and Technology, Abuja for postgraduate studies abandoned their scholarships because they could not cope with the academic rigours of the university. The issue of incompetence percolates through all fields of study in Nigerian Universities. Specialized area seen as exclusive like medicine, engineering and law now produce many non practicing professionals who veer off their field to other things while some remain and bungle the whole system due to incompetence.

The standards of our curricula are very high but the basic question is, how did we get to this level? The answer is obvious; it is due to the various corrupt practises besetting the educational system in the country. The problem of this study therefore is to find out the most prevalent form of corrupt practices, effect on students achievement and how effective the strategies adopted in combating them are in tertiary institutions in Enugu state. The focus is mainly on academic corruption perpetuated by lecturers in our tertiary institutions because they have constant interaction with the students and leave a lasting impression on their psych.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the most prevalent forms of academic corruption and its effects on academic achievement of students in tertiary institutions in Enugu State. The study specifically sought:

1. To identify the most prevalent form of academic corruption in tertiary institutions in Enugu State.
2. To examine its influence on educational achievement of students in tertiary institutions in Enugu State.
3. To examine how effective strategies put in place by these institutions in tackling corruption are.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be relevant to students, lecturers, parents, Administrators of educational institutions, major stake holders in education sector and the government. The study will reveal the most prevalent form of academic corruption in the tertiary institutions thereby alerting the concerned authorities on channeling most of their resources and strategies on how best to tackle it. The administrations of educational institutions, major stakeholders and the government will also be abreast of the effect on educational achievements of students and come up with better strategies on managing the menace and hence reduce it to the barest minimum. With this knowledge and good strategies, academics will be greatly

improved on within this level and will percolate down the line towards improving education at all other levels in the state.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the academic corruption and student's achievement in tertiary institution in Enugu State. The variables understudy was to identify the most prevalent form of academic corruption, effects on student's academic achievement and effectiveness of strategies put in place by concerned authorities to combat it.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study,

1. What is the most prevalent form of academic corruption in tertiary institutions in Enugu State?
2. To what extent does academic corruption influence the educational achievement of students in tertiary institutions in Enugu state?
3. How effective are measures put in place by the institutions to abate/tackle it?

Review of Literature

Conceptual Framework

Academic Corruption

Corruption as earlier explained are all acts done for personal benefit that compromises the objectives or goals of an organization or an institution. These acts of course, are also harmful to the society at large. Defined in the context of our educational system or sector, all acts perpetuated by individuals placed in position of trust for personal gain or interest that negates the educational goals and objectives are termed academic corruption. Academic corruptions are of various forms and at different stages involving major stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector. Major stakeholders are government and government agencies, the Management of the tertiary institutions, the lecturers, the administrative staff, the parents and the students. This study focused mainly on academic corruption perpetuated by lecturers in our tertiary institutions. The lecturers make the most contact with the students among all the stakeholders apart from the parents; they serve as role models for the students and leave a lasting impression on their psych.

Academic Corruption by Lecturers

Major academic corruption perpetuated by the lecturers in tertiary institutions in the country includes but not limited to: Irregular attendance at lectures, extortion based on purchase of textbooks and handouts, grades for money, sex and other material gifts, unnecessary favouritism in the award of marks due to various reasons, leakage of examination questions/answers, rewriting of examinations in the offices or homes and allowing Plagiarism both in their work and that of the students etc.

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According to Obule, (2016), "Corruption has wormed itself in every aspect of life in Nigeria. For Nigeria to achieve academic excellence, things have to change drastically in schools, colleges and universities across the country. Lecturers have been neck-deep in academic corruption without anybody challenging them. They act like the lords of the manor as they take advantage of young undergraduates that look up to them for academic direction and imparting knowledge to them".

He further stated that "academic corruption comes in various dimensions and the most prominent ones are sexual harassment and what is generally called "sorting" which is a slang on campus that refers to a situation whereby students are compelled to pay lecturers so that they could be awarded marks they did not score during examinations". According to him, "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 fail to graduate in the case of final year students. 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 victimisation is endemic in the academic environment".

Theoretical Framework

The Social learning theory forms the theoretical base for this study. The social learning theory assumes that a person's environment greatly affects his or her behaviour and that weak mechanism of social control enables corruption, criminal and other deviant behaviour in the society. The Nigerian educational sector is an integral part of the whole Nigerian society and having been overwhelmed by corruption, the individuals in this case lecturers are not isolated from their corrupt environment and therefore will assimilate negative tendencies.

Empirical Studies

Adebisi, Adebisi & Arogundade, (2015) in their paper on academic corruption showed that academic corruption contribute greatly to unemployable graduates, which induce low entrepreneurial ability and low economic growth. They concluded that competent and skilled graduates are needed as a catalyst for economic growth and the only way to achieve that is for corruption to stop in our nation higher institutions. This work is very relevant and in line with the objective of this study, to establish how academic corruption affect student's academic performance via study habit, discipline, focus and achievements.

Nwankwo & Nweke, (2016) in their study on effects of corruption on educational System revealed that corruption is common among private school proprietors, policymakers, examination councils, teachers, supervisors and invigilators, and contribute greatly to the low image of teaching as a profession in

Nigeria. The findings of this work are relevant and facilitated in defining our scope of study and identification of our target population for study.

Kuranchie, Twene, Mensa & Arthur, (2014) in their study in Ghana on The Perceived academic corruption and conditions that promote them revealed that favouritism, nepotism and examination malpractices are the major forms of academic corruption and mainly initiated by the staff. They also showed that fear of victimization, fear of school authority and bureaucracy in dealing with such issues are some conditions that promote them. This work is relevant to our study in that it revealed the conditions that promote and initiate academic corruption in tertiary institutions hence aiding in the formulation of research questions and questionnaire items. It affords also a comparative analysis on what obtains in different West African countries.

Priye, (2015) in his study on the corrosive effect of corruption on Nigerian educational system showed that there is a relationship between corruption and lack of infrastructural development, the poor state of academic standards, the mushrooming of private educational institutions in Nigeria and amorality in the sociopolitical system. This study is relevant to our study in that it revealed some of the major negative effects of academic corruption in tertiary institutions. It is worthy to note that our tertiary institutions are littered with numerous uncompleted projects and lack adequate facilities to accommodate its normal academic activities.

According to Adedimeji (2015), the backlashes of academic corruption are very clear in our society now. Our educational institutions “are filled with incompetent teachers who had been pushed through higher institutions of learning. Our hospitals have become mortuaries because doctors were not well trained as medical students appear more interested in the title than a career of saving lives. Our buildings collapse and fatalities occur because poor teaching and poor learning resulted in theoretical engineers that are bereft of quality. Mediocre professionals and amateur experts dominate national horizons running and ruining the nation”. This work is relevant and related to this study in establishing the negative effect of academic corruption on student’s academic achievements, standard of education and the society at large.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive study uses the sample information to document, describe, and explain the subject of investigation for an entire population of interest. Sample information or data are usually collected, analyzed and used for answering research question. The design is therefore appropriate for this study.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in higher institutions in Enugu State. There are six Universities (two government owned), four polytechnics (two government owned and one college of education (government owned) in the state. Purposive sampling was adopted and three institutions of higher learning within Enugu Urban, namely Enugu State College of Education, Institute of Management and Technology and Enugu campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka were studied.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises of all the undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Enugu State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Five percent (5%) of the students were randomly sampled. The population of the school are as shown:

Schools	Population	Percentage
College of Education	2376	118
Institute of Management and Technology	5674	283
UNN, Enugu Campus	4213	210
Total	17263	611

Source: Fieldwork

Percentages sampled from each school were with proportionate to size.

Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire designed by the researcher and based on the research questions posed was used to obtain information from the students. It is made up of two sections A and B. Section A is for identification while the rest of the section B has three clusters 1, 2 and 3 which addressed the three research questions respectively. It contained twelve test items.

The Instrument was structured on a four point scale of Very Great Extent (4), Great Extent (3), Low Extent (2), Very Low Extent (1). The respondents were urged to provide answers as honestly as possible to the questionnaires, so that valid data will be obtained.

Validation of Instrument

The draft of the questionnaire was given to three experts, one expert in measurement and evaluation and the remaining two experts in education management

department from Enugu State college of Education who made some necessary amendments on the questionnaire.

Reliability of Instrument

Test retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A random sample of fifty respondents was studied given a two week gap and the computed reliability coefficient stood at .83 indicating high reliability.

Method of Data Collection

Direct administration of questionnaires to the respondents was done. The researcher, with trained assistants distributed copies of the questionnaire and then, retrieved them immediately to reduce the non response rate. Six hundred and twenty (620) questionnaires were distributed while six hundred and eleven (611) were retrieved.

Method of Data Analysis

Two methods of analysis were adopted. The percentage and mean rating were used to answer the research questions. The percentage method was adopted in the first research question that involved identification while the mean rating was used for the rest of the research questions.

The decision rule for the mean rating is: 1.00 – 1.99 = Very low extent, 2.00 – 2.99 = Low extent, 3.00 – 3.99 = Great extent and 4.00 – 4.99 = Very great extent.

Presentation of Results

The presentations of findings are done in order of the research questions.

Research Question 1:

What is the most prevalent form of academic corruption in tertiary institutions in Enugu State?

Table 1: Responses on Most Prevalent Form of Academic Corruption in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Items	YES	%	NO	%
1	Sorting or paying for marks.	540	88.40	71	11.60
2	Extortion via textbooks and Assignments.	483	79.05	128	20.95
3	Sex-for-marks.	462	75.61	149	24.39
4	Plagiarisms.	432	70.70	179	29.30

In table 1 above, 88.40% of the respondents affirmed that sorting or paying for marks were the most prevalent followed by 79.05% for extortion via textbooks and

assignment, sex for marks had 75.61% while plagiarism had 70.70%. From item analysis above, the most prevalent form of academic corruption is money for grades or marks (sorting) followed by Extortion via textbooks and assignments, then sex for marks and the least is Plagiarism.

Research Question 2:

To what extent does academic corruption influence the educational achievement of students in tertiary institutions in Enugu state?

Table 2: Responses on Effect on Educational Achievement of Students

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
		4	3	2	1				
5	Induces ill motivation for studies and bad study habits.	1220 305	342 114	284 142	50 50	1896	3.10	1.03	GE
6	Breeds unruly or indiscipline among students.	1256 314	336 112	324 162	23 23	1939	3.17	0.95	GE
7	Encourage examination malpractices and cheating.	1280 320	402 134	242 121	36 36	1960	3.21	0.96	GE
8	Encourage students to seek success via all means possible.	1272 318	387 129	272 136	28 28	1959	3.21	0.94	GE
N = 611						Grand mean: 3.17			

In table 2, Item 5 on ill motivation for studies and bad study habits indicated a great extent with a mean of 3.10 and standard deviation of 1.03 indicating a wide variation in the responses. Item 6 on unruly or indiscipline among students also indicated a great extent with a mean of 3.17 and standard deviation of 0.95 indicating a wide variation in the responses. Item 7 on encouraging examination malpractices and cheating indicated a great extent with a mean of 3.21 and standard deviation of

0.96 indicating a wide variation in the responses while Item 8 on ill motivation for studies and bad study habits indicated a great extent with a mean of 3.21 and standard deviation of 0.94 indicating a wide variation in the responses. Item analysis done had a grand mean of 3.17 hence; academic corruption to a great extent has negative effect on students' academic achievements not minding the high grades.

Research Question 3:

How effective are measures put in place by the institutions to abate/tackle it?

Table 3: Responses on Effectiveness of Measures Put in Place by the Institutions

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
	Disciplinary measures put in place by the school authority as a check for the following are effectively implemented.	4	3	2	1				
9	Money for grades or sorting	560 140	180 60	708 354	57 57	1505	2.46	0.89	LE
10	Extortion via textbooks and Assignments.	484 121	234 78	740 370	42 42	1500	2.45	0.78	LE
11	Sex-for-marks	112 28	198 66	604 302	215 215	1129	1.85	0.62	VLE
12	Plagiarisms	448 112	237 79	640 320	100 100	1425	2.33	0.92	LE
		N = 611				Grand mean: 2.77			

In table 3 above, Item 9 on Money for grades or sorting indicated a low extent with a mean of 2.46 and standard deviation of 0.89 indicating a wide variation in the responses. Item 10 on extortion via textbooks and assignments also indicated a low extent with a mean of 2.45 and standard deviation of 0.78 indicating a wide variation in the responses. Item 11 on sex-for-marks indicated a very low extent with a mean of 1.85 and standard deviation of 0.62 indicating a wide variation in the responses while Item 12 on plagiarism indicated a great extent with a mean of 2.33 and standard deviation of 0.92 indicating a wide variation in the responses. Item analysis done had

a grand mean of 2.27 hence, the strategies and disciplinary actions put in place by the authorities to check academic corruption are to a low extent effective.

Summary of Result

A summary of the results obtained are as follows:

1. The most prevalent form of academic corruption is money for grades or marks (sorting) followed by Extortion via textbooks and assignments, then sex for marks and the least is Plagiarism.
2. Academic corruption to a great extent induce in students ill motivation for studies, bad study habits, indiscipline, cheating and motivation for achieving success by any means possible. To a great extent, it has negative effect on students' academic achievements not minding their high grades.
3. Strategies and disciplinary actions put in place by the authorities to check academic corruption are to a low extent effective. Items analysis indicates a very low extent for sex for marks by the lecturers while the rest are to a low extent.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding revealed that academic corruption in tertiary institutions in Enugu state can be ranked from the most prevalent to the least as follows: money for grades or marks (sorting) followed by extortion via textbooks and assignments, then sex for marks and the least is Plagiarism. This finding is not surprising as it is in line with the findings of Adebisi et al (2015), Priye, (2015) and Obule (2016). In as much as they did not rank them in their work, they identified these as major forms of corruption in tertiary institutions. It can easily be deduced that most of the high grades in examinations does not translate to knowledge or hard work on the part of the students.

The second finding indicated that academic corruption to a great extent has negative effect on students' academic achievements not minding their high grades. This finding is in line with the findings of Nwankwo & Nweke, (2016) and Kuranchie, et al (2014). Academic corruption induces disinterest on the students to hard work and bad study habits. It also makes them seek to cut corners in all they do to achieve success. It lowers the standard and quality of education and has a big negative impact on the society, as most of the would be future leaders lack the required competences and moral foundation to lead or earn a decent living. This is obviously why the rate of corruption and moral decadence is heightening rapidly without restrain in the country.

The third finding revealed that the strategies and disciplinary actions put in place by the authorities to check academic corruption are not very effective. These findings are in line with the works of other studies like Adebisi et al (2015), Nwankwo & Nweke, (2016), Kuranchie, et al (2014), Priye, (2015) and Obule (2016). The authorities in these institutions need to step up on their strategies and measures to

curb this problem. So far, the efforts put in place have been found not to be very effective. On this, we contend that reports are not actually made to the authorities concerned due to fear especially on sex for marks.

Conclusion

Academic corruption in tertiary institutions is as bad as what obtains in the public and private sectors. The war on corruption can only be successful if determined and conscious efforts are made to savage the educational sector. Since the tertiary institutions groom the future leaders of the nation, all stakeholders in the education sector should strive to stabilize the tertiary education and restore its glory. If not done, our nation is doomed as the next generation will lack the requisite competences and moral standing to lead. The current situation is reversible, only if all concerned will do what is right.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Institutions of higher learning should encourage students and staff to open up and report the corrupt lecturers in the institution destroying the profession and the educational system.
2. Whistle blowing strategy should also be adopted as done by the federal government in the fight against corruption. Once confidentiality and financial reward is guaranteed, reports will start coming in.
3. All textbooks by lecturers should be sold through the school bookshop.
4. All academic papers, textbook, projects etc by the lecturers and students should be subjected to plagiarism check before acceptance for use or sale within the institution.
5. Institution should moderate the price and evaluate all textbooks to ensure that it is relevant to the area of study or covers the course content before use.
6. Introduction of assessment of lecturers by students.

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