

INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ON EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

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Emmanuel Onyebueke
Primary Education Department
Federal College of Education Kano

Abstract

The aim of this research is to discuss the influence of integrity on educational system and Nation building in Nigeria. In other to have quality education in the country integrity and honesty is crucial. Academic integrity is necessary in the pursuit of academic knowledge in learning institutions in Nigeria educational system. In recent times there has been report on cases of academic breaches in Nigeria making the goal of achieving academic integrity a major challenge. The paper examines the influence of academic integrity on educational system and nation building. This can be done through the identification of what is academic integrity, different perspectives of academic integrity in Nigeria, influence of academic integrity on education, academic integrity and nation building in Nigeria; challenges associated with academic integrity in Nigeria. The paper offers some suggestions such as creating awareness on the need for academic integrity at all levels of learning (primary, secondary and higher institution) in the country.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Academic Dishonest, Education, Nation Building.

Introduction:

Education is said to be the bedrock of every nation. The development of the nation largely depends on the quality of education of the country. Any nation that want to progress in human resources, unity and peace, even in democracy and economic development must get its citizen well equipped with education. Integrity or honesty is crucial to the pursuit of academic knowledge in learning institutions. The Nigerian educational system has been reported with cases of academic integrity breaches, making the goal of achieving academic integrity a major challenge. The difficulty in achieving a culture of integrity in Nigerian academic institutions could be due to diverse views and perspectives of what constitutes academic integrity(Olajuwon 2008). There is a need for a unified view and holistic approach to achieving integrity in Nigerian academic arena. The term academic integrity encompasses the honesty involved in academic conduct from teaching learning and assessment to the management of the educational process.(Anulika, 2014)

When academic integrity is perceived in the Nigerian educational system it is viewed based on the parties included in the required honest practices. It is usually held in relation to students and their academic conduct with less emphasis on teachers, lectures, or other staff members integrity. This view is widely held in all sectors of learning primary, secondary and higher institutions.

Academic integrity is viewed in connection with assessment and particularly as a

1. Form of dishonesty in examination such as cheating,

2. Collusion, impersonation, bribery etc. this view is not complete as it focused only the students and a particular form of assessment. The prevalent behavioural forms of academic conduct in Nigerian universities in relation to examination as identified by (Olajuwon, 2008) as follows;

1. insulting/assaulting examination officials,
2. irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall,
3. smuggling answers,
4. contracting someone else to sit the exam(paying someone to sit in),
5. refusing to submit the answer script at the end of the examination,
6. impersonating ,
7. networking,
8. dubbing (copying another written exam paper)
9. taking in microchips(taking in notes/scribbles),
10. leaking examination,
11. mass cheating,
12. collusion,
13. taking in hi-tech microcomputer,
14. super-print, bullet or missiles(taking in notes/scribbles) and
15. exposure (having access to the question ahead of the examinations).

Apart from examination issues, there is discussion around integrity in relation to other aspect of academic misconduct. The National Policy on Education (NPE 2014) states that education is an instrument for national development and to this end the formulation of ideas their integration for nation development and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education. Education as a socialization process implies or process of passing knowledge, values norms, skills, attitudes and habits of the society from one generation to another through standardized procedure (Nwagwu, 2007). This implies that education does a lot of work in the life of an individual that is education prepares on individual to develop skills that will contribute to national development.

Different Perspective of Academic Integrity in Nigeria

A number of factors have been identified as being responsible for these variations in view of what constitute academic integrity. These factors include the education system, predominant student learning style, and predominant assessment style. Other factors which could impact Nigerians views of academic integrity include economic and socio-cultural environment, technological infrastructure institutional policies, management system and staff immunity (Vardi, 2012).

Economic, Socio Cultural Environment and Academic Integrity on Educational System

The environment is driven by the desire for financial success due to the need to be able to “make-it-in-life| (be successful in life). The society is basically result driven and motivated by a “good certificate”, without much consideration of how the result was achieved or how the knowledge or skill was achieved. (Animasahun 2011). Oyebamiji (2011) is of the view that students parents, teachers school administrators, and the Nigerian society compound the problem of academic misconduct with this type of perception.

Technological Infrastructure and Academic Integrity on Educational System

The available infrastructure caters for examination as the major assessment type. In quite a number of the Nigerian institutions, the insufficient exposure to information and communication technologies in teaching and learning and the related forms of assessment has limited the student view of what constitutes integrity in the academic arena. There are insufficient and ineffective policies and management system in a number of Nigerian institutions of learning. The focus of the existing policies is on examination malpractice. This has led to a situation where students are more aware of its of exam malpractice (cheating) as opposed to academic integrity as a whole (Animasahun, 2014).

Staff Immunity and Academic Integrity on Educational System

In most Nigerian institutions of learning the focus of academic integrity is in relation to the student and rarely in relation to the teachers, lecturers and administrators. This is not good as there are issues in relation to the teachers, lecturers and administrators involvement in dishonest academic practices. Some of these are in relation to bribery and corruption, sexual harassment of students and continuous assessment malpractices (Animasahun, 2014).

Influence of Academic Integrity on Education:

Although there has been little research carried out in Nigeria on academic integrity. Also most of the research is not strictly empirical in nature but base on perceptions of occurrences of various types of academic integrity issues. In some cases when researchers have investigated the issues of examination malpractices, but they failed to empirically state the occurrences of it in the different forms. According to (Orim, 2013) student are more likely to get involved with academic dishonesty particularly when it is not related to examination cheating. This disposition was mostly due to lack of awareness that a number of these acts constitute academic dishonesty such as plagiarism and impersonation etc. According to Obinna (2012) most primary and secondary institutions do not have adequate tools or framework for detecting some of these other type of academic misconduct (for example plagiarism).

This gives rise to the question on how police could stop the occurrence of academic dishonesty in staff and students in our institution of learning. Despite the emphasis on quality education by the National Policy on Education (2014) it appears that academic misconduct has not been properly addressed, particularly with respect to those that are not related to examination. According Aluede, 2012, There is academic misconduct in Nigeria universities, but there is less emphasis on issues which are not related to examinations. This present the need for institutions to keep their lecturers informed and promote a consistent approach to academic misconduct or reorientation of the stakeholders.

Academic Integrity and National Building in Nigeria

It appears that there are several areas such as academic dishonesty where integrity is lacking in the Nigerian educational system. Education is the bedrock of Nation building, quality

and affordable education is a variable tool to the attainment of national development. (Emiloju 2012) have gone ahead into examine ethical issues in relation to the challenges of maintaining integrity of public examinations in Nigeria. While (Anulika 2014) have designed and proposed a test and examination result processing system for public secondary in Nigeria that can be used for student record keeping and data processing in both public and private secondary schools. This scholars like others do not focus on academic integrity as a whole but on examinations as the predominant form of academic dishonesty. Little work has been done on dishonesty in written papers such as term paper, (course work), essay and dissertations. Scholars like (Adeniyi & Taiwo 2011) have already mentioned them as academic dishonest G23 while (Babalola, 2012) referred to them as plagiarism. However, there are so many other forms which have not been investigated this include collaborating on an assignment which should be carried out by an individual, receiving significant unauthorized help on an assignment, allowing someone copy your work, falsifying laboratory data, writing a laboratory report, removing items from a reserved reading file so that others cannot use them. Signing attendance sheet and not attending the class and signing attendance sheet for an absent student etc. these areas should be investigated and given attention like examination related issues. There should be a strong emphasis on academic integrity at these early stages of education in life, so that students should be aware of what to expect in higher institution of learning. In some primary and secondary schools teachers assist some students as invigilators during examination given them undue advantage over others. Animasahun (2014) observed that institutional stakeholders are responsible for examination misconduct in Nigeria.

These stakeholders are the students, parents teachers, school administrators, school, government, law enforcement agencies, society and religious agencies. Oyebamiji (2011) claims that students are academically incompetent, lazy, with poor study habits, poor time management skill, truant, suffering from peer group influence, not ready to learn, influence of alcohol and drugs, over ambitious in desiring good grades and desiring to succeed at all cost. These identified situations were not only in relation to examination issues, it also affect the students over all academic integrity competence. This has contributed to a fall in standard of education in the country. The task of nation building cannot be overemphasized. Education plays a vital role in building a strong nation. One of the problem facing quality education in Nigeria is high ratio of students to lecturers. In Nigeria, the population of the students is on the increase compared to the lecturers, couple with inadequate infrastructural facilities and unqualified teachers facing the schools. These affect the development of the country, the issue of academic integrity should be taken serious in other to have quality education in Nigeria.

Challenges Associated with Academic Integrity in Nigeria

There are challenges facing academic integrity and education in general in Nigeria. Some of these challenges are student attitude towards examination and education as a whole. Oyebamiji (2011) states that parents contributes to students problems in school. He explained that some parents lack parental skills, they lack love and time for their children. They abuse them and misuse their power and wealth and opportunities. The parents have misplace priorities and mount undue pressure on the children. Teachers are stakeholders in academic integrity in the

society. Some teachers do not have interest to teaching as a profession. Some teachers are incompetence, intellectual lazy, bribery and corruption, they seek for favour from the students and their parents. The school as a stakeholder the factors identified were irregularities in admission of unqualified candidate, illegal registration of candidate for school certificate examination etc.

Government as a stakeholders this has to do with how government support affect institutions management this include poor funding and monitoring poor admission policies, automatic promotion, politically motivated recruitment of teachers. (Oyebamiji 2011) Another challenge is that the students do not have in-depth knowledge about academic integrity. This cut across the schools from primary, secondary and higher institutions. Academic research in high institution is carried out with the use of outdated tools which will affect the outcome of their result. According Babalola 2012; Orim et al, 2013) in their research state that there are various form of plagiarism affecting our educational system such as coping from sources (including the internet) without citations fabricating or falsifying a bibliography, falsifying quotations, coping from sources and presenting it as one's own, and submitting someone else's work as one's own.

Conclusion

Education help a nation to develop and progress in all sectors of life, academic integrity in education is necessary in educational system of any nation. The prevalent type of assessment (examination) appears to be what forms the perception of academic integrity in most Nigerian institutions. It will be good if further research on academic integrity will focus on other areas other than examination issues. Education help in nation building, it help nations in recomposing their educational institutions so that it can reflect the wishes, needs and aspiration of the wider society. Every nation need quality and stability in their educational system so that meaningful economic, and political development can take place.

Suggestions

Economically: In a situation whereby the environment is economically driven by the desire for financial success due to the need to be able to "make it in life". The quest for knowledge is forgotten. People do not want to acquire knowledge but to acquire wealth. This is not god for the society. Government should try to persuade people to go for knowledge.

Socio Cultural Environment: Where the socio cultural environment is basically result driven and motivated by a "good certificate" without much consideration of how the result was acquired. This is not appropriate. The society is after good result but not how it is acquired. Government should discourage this by ensuring that people work for the certificate they acquired.

Technological Infrastructure: The insufficient infrastructural facilities and inadequate information and communication technologies has exposed the problem in teaching and learning in Nigerian institutions. Student view of what constitute integrity in academic arena have changed. Students are more aware of the ills of exams malpractices as oppose to academic integrity. Government should try to ensure that academic integrity is maintained in our educational institutions.

Staff Immunity: In Nigerian institutions of learning, academic integrity is in relation to the students not teachers or lecturers. This is not appropriate as academic integrity involve both parties. Some lecturers are involve in dishonest academic practice such as bribery and corruption etc. Educational authorities should try to ensure that staff immunity is not tolerated in our educational institution.

Suggestions

In other to institute a culture of academic integrity we have to create awareness of what academic integrity is and what it constitutes. We have to create enabling structures and establish skills support initiatives across all levels of learning.

From the fore discussion s, the following suggestions were made.

1. Focus on attitudinal reorientation as suggested.
2. Federal and state governments should create awareness of the need for academic integrity at all level of learning (primary, secondary and higher institutions).
3. Federal and State governments should evaluate academic institutional policies and framework.
4. School authority should update their teaching and learning materials to reflect current practices.

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