EDUCATIONAL CORRUPTION: A *DETERRENT* FACTOR TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The term "educational corruption"from my perspective refers to any unlawful, immoral, or fraudulent action that compromises the quality and integrity of the educational system. Educational corruption can take several forms. It encompasses a wide range of unethical behaviors. It is on this groundinvestigation came on the assessment impact of educational corruption on teaching and learning processes of agricultural science education in Nigeria tertiary institutions. The specific objectives included to:investigate how corruption has affected agricultural science education students in the tertiary institutions; identify the causes of educational corruption in the study area; analyze the effects of corruption on agricultural science education students' performance in study areas; and identify strategies to create an equitable, enabled environment for effective education system in Nigeria institutions. The study employed a descriptive research design; Study population consisted of total enumeration of 207 students in the Agricultural Science Education Units at Federal University Oye-Ekiti and Ekiti State University, Nigeria.To determine the instrument's dependability, the test-retest method was used. 34 respondents were used to test the reliability of the instrument which yielded aCronbach alpha value of 0.956.Descriptive statistic of mean, standard deviation and median with the use of statistical package for social science (SPSS).Study showed that corruption has negative impact on Nigeria's standard of education; educational corruption in Nigerian education system takes different forms of bribery to the use of influence to secure admission for unqualified students, falsification of documents for admission purposes, ghost students enrolled on the roster, cheating and plagiarism during exams and assignments, and payment to alter examination scores or passing grades; Causes of corruption traced to disparity transparency in resource allocation and decision-making processes, weak regulatory framework; ineffective enforcement of rules and regulations, inadequate funding leading to resource shortages and financial pressures, low salaries and insufficient incentives to commensurate educators and staff efforts, and instances of cronyism and nepotism in staff appointments and promotions. Effects of corruption linked withsevere students'limiting access to practical training and laboratory facilities, unfair grading practices that adversely affect students' performance and manifestation of corruption-related cheating and plagiarism which have significant consequences on the credibility of students'

achievements. The study recommends that season to season training and professional development programs should be staged for agricultural science lecturers so as to boost students' academic performance in the subject, and the causes of corruption in Nigeria's educational settings should be addressed promptly.

Keywords: Corruption; Education; Impact; Strategies; Agricultural Science.

Introduction

Corruption in Nigerian educational system is as significant issue to be considered and treated as urgent as possible just like the air we breathe in. The syndrome manifested as decline in academic performance and is bringing reasonable doubts in the educational system as a whole due to its derailing quality and its geometrical falling standard (Ifeanyi*et al.*, 2021). It was added that, "educational corruption" can be pictured as any unlawful, immoral, or fraudulent action that compromises the quality standard and integrity of the educational system, although it has substantive fractions in spite of its wide range of unethical properties.

Curruption in education is a worldwide phenomenon which has bedeviled many sectors and has permeated the private and public schools, policymakers, examination councils, teachers, lecturers, invigilators and supervisors and that corruption finds its ways into the social and moral lives of people through fraud, embezzlement and inflation of contracts, sexual harassment, bribery, examination malpractices and so on (Olayinka, Adeoye, & Ayanda, 2020).

The cases of corruption in Nigeria can be traced as far back as since the colonial period, with recorded cases of it dated back to the early 20th century. The educational system that was in place during the colonial period was intended to generate a limited elite class that would be of service to the colonial authority as documentary has instances of bribery and nepotism (Sârbu*et al.*, 2015). The period extended to the period country's declaration of independence in 1960, the government of Nigeria worked to improve educational opportunities while simultaneously fostering a culture of widespread corruption through bribery and favoritism issues that plagued the admissions process for colleges and other types of higher education institutions. From1966 to1993 when Nigeria was under military government, educational system was highly politicized, Universities were sometimes utilized as instruments for political patronage, and teachers were occasionally pressured to support administrators that were in office (Chimezie and Prince, 2016).

When democracy came in 1999 citizens expectations were dashed and hope betrayed and corruption was on the increase and remain endemic, as cases like cheating in the examination persisted, ‘examination machineries’, ‘orijos, area of concentrations: popularly known as A.O.C.’, "selling grades", plagiarism, and the fabrication of academic records were uncovered un-covered (Okolie, 2021). Students also faced with an uneven playing field due to unethical practices like admission bribery or favoritism in faculty hiring. Those who lack the resources to engage in such activities might be at a disadvantage (Awaah*et. al.*, 2021).

As a matter of fact, the menace came into Nigerian educational system due to an inefficient use of finances and ineffective use of educational resources because, money that is intended for educational initiatives was not judiciously used in an effective manner if supplied into educational system into its fullness, consequences of which might resulted into shortage of resources and facilities meant to deliver quality education to her wards. To this, corruption has potential to inspire bribery and other unethical actions among tertiary institution component members; this has as further negated education standard. Akanbi and Jekayinfa, (2016), in their study earlier remarked that corruption in the educational system in Nigeria had resulted in a deterioration in the morale of both instructors and pupils, reduced economic growth, poor graduate competency skills to do the needful in their respective fields: lacking the requisite skills for employment, lowered confidence in educational credentials; ‘erosion of faith’ in the educational system and generally slow-down economic growth among others (Lawan, 2020). Therefore, the insurgence require an urgent and worthy to proffer lasting solution in order to has a sound, fair and effective education system in Nigeria (Oyekanmi, 2020).

To curb these rampaging effects of educational corruption in Nigeria, Federal Government enacted a number of laws, established several anti-corruption organizations, such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Whistleblower Protection Act, and the Freedom of Information Act in order to promote transparency and accountability in the field of education, implementation of the Computer-Based Testing (CBT) method (Bolaji*et al.*, 2015; Awaah*et al.*, 2021; Zulqarnain*et al.*, 2022) and programs that are targeted at reducing instances of corruption and expanding educational opportunities. Despite these measures that have been taking to address this problem, none has been successful (Zulqarnain et al., 2022).

It is now essential for the three tiers governments, organizations, members of the public, educational stake holders in general and educational institutions to work hand in hand to bring corruption to book create an enabling environment, system of transparency and accountability in order to combat educational corruption imposed bottleneck. This can be accomplished by making certain that all finances pertaining to education are properly documented, implemented, monitored and 'evaluated' to guarantee that they were spent in a manner that is both efficient and ethical. In addition, University administrators should considered it necessary to establish a 'policy of absolute zero tolerance' to bribery, nepotism, and other forms of corruption of a similar nature. Also, Nigerian Government should make education mandate and mission known to students irrespective of their family backgrounds and financial situation, so as to have equal access to educational opportunities and that they do so regardless of the level of income they earn or their social standing (Zulqarnain*et al.,* 2022).

To successfully combat educational corruption, Nigerian government has to build institutional frameworks, improve the implementation of anti-corruption legislation, promote public awareness, and boost collaboration with relevant stakeholders (Idoniboye-Obu, 2015).

This study is however supported by two theories namely, Principal-Agent theory, an institutional theory of sociological school which describes the relationship between principals: the government, school management, and other regulatory bodies and agents: teachers, lecturers, and other educational officials and; it centered on how the principal can ensure that agents act in the best mandates of the system and vice-vasa. This theory is applicable in the senses that, it helps in detecting how corruption arises when there are no checks and balances (Jacob *et al.,* 2021) and ensures proper implementation, monitoring and accountability that will results in agents not participating in corrupt activities that degrade the quality of the system vis-a-vis education. Social Capital Theory on its own explained that, an individual's conduct may be significantly influenced by the social networks and connections that are parts which are beneficial to the system and prepared to get rid of unfair benefits which invariably bringing in an increase in both individual human capital and overall productivity.

The general objective of the study is to investigate how educational corruption has become a deterrent factor to tertiary agricultural science education students and their academic performance in Nigeria while the specific objectives included to: identify the causes of

educational corruption in the study area;investigate how corruption is affecting agricultural science education students in the tertiary institutions; analyze the effects of corruption on agricultural science education students' performance in study areas; and identify strategies to create an equitable, enabled environment for effective education system in Nigeria Institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Study population consisted of total enumeration of 207 students in the Department of Agricultural Science Education at both Federal University Oye-Ekiti and Ekiti State University, Nigeria. Data collected were analyzed using frequency tables, basic percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Result and Discussion

Impact of Corruption on the Standard of Education in Nigeria

Table 1 established negative impact of corruption on agricultural science education students' production and field performance standard in the labour market. This study result however agreed with Oyekanmi (2020) and Moja (2017) who submitted that, corruption negatively affects the education systems and standard in Nigeria.

Forms of Educational Corruption on Agricultural Science Education

Table 2 identified that different forms of bribery, undue influence to secure admission for unqualified students, falsification of documents for admission purposes, ghost students' enrollment, cheating and plagiarism during exams and assignments, and bartering or bargaining for exam scores alteration or passing grades among others. This result aligned with Milovanovic (2015) who asserted that, bribery constitute major form of corruption in Nigerian tertiary institution settings; this is also in compliance withNurudeen, Waldemar and Staniewski (2019) who stated that, unethical actions in the educational system, such as plagiarism and cheating in examinations among others were all forms of corruption surfacing in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions.

Causes of Educational Corruption in Nigeria's Higher Education System

As shown in Table 3, causes of educational corruption in Nigeria's higher education system linked with disparity-transparency in resource allocation and decision-making processes, weak regulatory framework and weak enforcement of rules and regulations, inadequate funding leading to resource shortages and financial pressures, poor remunerations coupled with low salaries and insufficient incentives to commensurate with educators and staff efforts, and instances of cronyism and nepotism in staff appointments and promotions. This result yielded to the opinion of Ogunode and Musa (2020) that reported same findings.

Impacts of Corruption on Students' Academic Performance

Table 4 show cased the impacts of corruption on students' academic performance to include severely students' limit access of agricultural science students to practical trainings and laboratory facilities, unfair grading practices and corruption in relation to cheating forms and plagiarism of different sorts, all have severe and significant impacts on the credibility of agricultural science education students' achievements and after school field performances. This finding worked in agreement with Suleiman and Othman (2017) who earlier stated that, academic work is undermined by plagiarism which also undermining academic achievement of students, effectually lowering overall quality of education as well as substandard graduates with deficient fundamental skills needed to perform workforce tasks brilliantly (Akanbi and Jekayinfa, 2016; Kanu, 2020).

Strategies for ensuring an Equitable and Enabled Education System

Table 5 expressed strategies against corruption in Nigerian tertiary institutions as, making adequate fund provision for educational institutions to provide, improve and maintain supportive infrastructure and resources, equal distribution of learning aided / digital resources to universities without biased and preferential treatments, organizing on the job training programs for lecturers to improve their teaching methods and pedagogy, implementing performance-based evaluations for lecturers to ensure quality among others. This study result agreed with Akanbi and Jekayinfa (2016) who reported similar findings.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings and discussions of the study, especially on the impacts, forms, causes, and effects of corruption on educational setting in Nigeria and its reflection on agricultural science

education in our tertiary institutions, the study concluded that there is hope for tertiary education systems in Nigeria if strategies highlighted in the study could be implemented towards lethal menace: corruption in the tertiary education and in Nigeria at large. Study however recommends that, Governments should timely organizetraining and professionally develop agricultural science teachers, so as to boost students' academic performance in the subject; that causes of corruption in Nigeria's educational settings should be addressed without prejudice.

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Figure 1*: Demographics of the Study's Respondents by Gender*

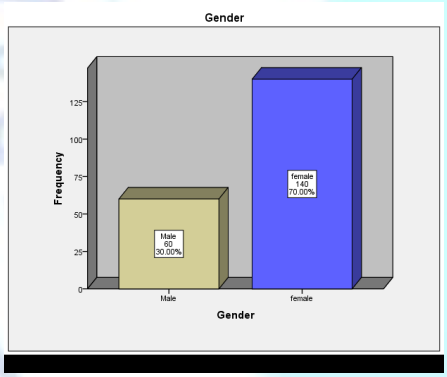

Gender
Frequency
125
100
75
50
25
0
Male
60
30.00%
female
140
70.00%
Male
female
Gender

Figure 2: *Demographics of the Study's Respondents by Academic Level*

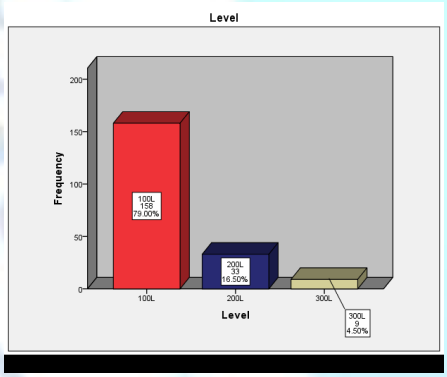


Figure 3: *Demographics of the Study's Respondents by Age*

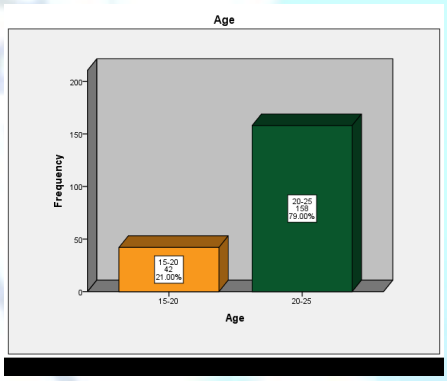


Table 1: Impact of corruption on the standard of education in Nigeria

S/N	Impact of corruption on the standard of education in Nigeria	Median	Remark
1	Corruption negatively affects the availability of quality study materials.	1.00	Negative
2	Corruption hampers the fair and unbiased grading of students.	1.00	Negative
3	Corruption leads to inadequate funds for practical demonstrations and experiments.	1.00	Negative
4	Corruption affects the credibility of academic certifications in the field of agricultural science.	2.00	Positive
5	Corruption diminishes motivation of students to excel academically.	1.00	Negative
6	Corruption hinders opportunities for research and innovation in agricultural science *etc.*	1.00	Negative

***Criterion Median = 2.00**

Table 2: Forms of educational corruption on agricultural science education

S/No	Forms of educational corruption on agricultural science education	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Bribery or influence to secure admission for unqualified students.	1.68	0.96
2	Falsification of documents for admission purposes.	2.06	1.21
3	Ghost students enrolled on the roster.	1.72	0.95
4	Cheating and plagiarism during exams and assignments.	1.55	0.72
5	Payment for altered exam scores or passing grades *etc.*	0.51	0.73
	Pooled Mean	**1.50**	

***Criterion Mean = 1.50**

Table 3: Causes of educational corruption in Nigerian Higher Education System

S/No	Causes of educational corruption	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Lack of transparency in resource allocation and decision-making processes.	1.68	0.96
2	Weak regulatory framework and ineffective enforcement of rules and regulations.	2.06	1.21
3	Inadequate funding leading to resource shortages and financial pressures.	1.72	0.95
4	Low salaries and insufficient incentives for educators and staff.	1.55	0.72
5	Instances of cronyism and nepotism in staff appointments and promotions *etc.*	0.51	0.73
	Pooled Mean	**1.50**	

***Criterion Mean = 1.50**

Table 4: Effects of Corruption on Students' Academic Performance

S/No	Effects of corruption on students' academic performance	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Corruption significantly hampers availability of necessary learning materials and resources for students.	1.34	0.48
2	It leads to decline in the quality of teaching and academic support.	1.34	0.47
3	It severely limits students' access to practical training and laboratory facilities.	1.64	0.81
4	Severity of corruption leads to unfair grading practices that adversely affect students' performance.	1.88	0.17
5	Corruption-related cheating and plagiarism have highly severe repercussions on the credibility of students' achievements *etc*.	1.67	0.85
	Pooled Mean	**1.57**	

***Criterion Mean = 1.50**

Table 5: Strategies for Ensuring an Equitable and Enabled Education System

S/No	Strategies for ensuring an Equitable and Enabled Education System	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Increasing funding for educational institutions to improve infrastructure and resources.	1.70	0.89
2	Ensuring equal distribution of resources among schools to reduce disparities.	1.82	0.84
3	Providing modern technology and digital resources to all schools.	1.90	0.77
4	Enhancing teacher training programs to improve teaching methods and pedagogy.	1.73	0.66
5	Implementing performance-based evaluations for teachers to ensure quality.	1.57	0.69
6	Encouraging continuous professional development for educators *etc.*	1.64	1.96
	Pooled Mean	**1.57**	

***Criterion Mean = 2.00**