Emerging Ethical Issues in University Administration in Nigeria Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Educational institutions are knowledge factories where individuals are enriched with skills, knowledge and capacity to nurture and develop their potentials. University consists of teachers who are widely read with knowledge and skills with the onus of producing students worthy in character and learning. The study explores the emerging issues in university administration in Nigeria in educational institutions. Emerging issues in university administration are behavioral patterns that undermine the integrity of the educational system. Some of these ethical issues are examination malpractices, indecent dressing, cult-related activities, sexual harassment, extortion from students through the sale of textbooks and blatant disregard for schools ethos and code of conduct. As a way forward, the study suggests that educational institutions should, as a priority, establish dress codes for students and teachers and sensitize students on the core values of Nigerian culture and the likely consequence of unethical issues on the psychic of individuals and the university community.

Keywords: educational institutions, university administration, indecent dressing, sexual harassment

Introduction

Education is adjudged as a fulcrum for societal development, and economic empowerment of individuals and helps them acquire certain critical and innovative skills that help them to navigate the challenges of life. Individuals struggle to acquire the basic skills that will develop their potentials and make them not only live a worthy life, but contribute to the development of society. Education helps to provide the manpower need of society by training and inculcating skills and knowledge that will help drive society. This is actualized through the activities of lecturers who are widely read and knowledgeable in the skills of teaching and learning with the onus of producing students who are worthy in character and sound judgment. Tertiary education is education accrued after post-basic education in institutions like universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education and other inter-universities centers and specialized institutions (Federal Rpublic of Nigeria, 2014).

The essence of tertiary education as defined in the National Policy of Education is not only instilling the learners with skills and knowledge to be self-reliant but also providing the manpower needs that are relevant to the labour market. These tasks are the responsibility of the lecturers who are trained in the pedagogy and certificated as having expertise and knowledge on the art and science of teaching and learning. Lecturers are creams of intellectuals with different educational backgrounds and different world views, cultures, religions, ethnic, ages and gender diversities. Tertiary education has been defined as the community of scholars who are assembled for implementing educational goals. Thus, a community consists of various calibers of people in society whose values and ideals must be congruent with the rules and regulations governing the university.

University is recognized as consisting of different intellectuals and skills from different backgrounds and to ensure that the goals of educational institutions are achieved there are rules and regulations that all concerned must adhere to. These rules can be classified

as codes of conduct or ethics that enable the managers of the university to ensure the seamless achievement of educational goals. So, to achieve these, students must be professionally trained in behaviour and character in line with the teaching profession. Like every organized organization are guided by organizational ethics so also educational organizations are guided by educational ethics that enable the university community to be in harmony and work towards actualizing educational goals.

Ethics are guidelines, rules of conduct or a set of principles that connote what is good or bad, what is morally wrong or right and what is acceptable or unacceptable within given settings. (Ofojebe 2018: Kanu & Ursula, 2012). Ethics in an organization are those set of standards that refrain members from undesirable acts like rape, stealing, murder, assault, and slander among others. They serve as the consciences of society. (Velasquez et al, 2012). They also stated that ethical standards include honesty, compassion, loyalty and other positive values that are cherished by society. Educational ethics are behavioural conducts that every individual in the university community is expected to adhere to. It is the guiding principles that bind the lecturers and students in the process of teaching and learning. It is a set of standards that the lecturers and students must always uphold in educational settings. It is those set of standards that inhibit students, lecturers and the entire university community from doing wrong and adhering to the norms of educational institutions. Ethics in education are very important for the effective administration of the system since the concept is based on the doctrine of what is morally right and wrong. Ethics in education not only helps in the protection of the interest of teachers and students but helps individuals to make the right decisions.

Despite the importance of ethics in the attainment of educational goals, there are various ethical issues as a result of the divergence of views and opinions of members of the academic environment that the administrators are to contend with. Some of these ethical issues relate to indiscipline, dishonesty, intimidation, sexual harassment and other infringement that dent the integrity of the university community. (Velasquez et al, 2012). Indiscipline has been the bane for the failure of the attainment of educational goals. Indiscipline connotes the violation of schools' moral values that are capable of obstructing the smooth and orderly functioning of the school system (Jekayinfa, 2013). Indiscipline breeds other negative values that are also inimical to the development of society. Some of these negative values are indecent dressing, sexual harassment, intimidation and molestation related to abuse of office. It is against this background the paper tends to explore the emerging ethical issues in university administration in Nigerian educational institutions with an emphasis on indecent dressing and sexual harassment in university education in Nigeria.

Educational Institutions
Educational institutions are knowledge factories where individuals come to enrich their minds and acquire skills and experiences for the betterment and development of individuals and society. According to UNESCO, the main purpose of educational institutions is to provide education such as schools, colleges, universities or training centers. Educational institutions are crucial to the development of individuals because it is the fountain of knowledge that helps people to access education and promote equal opportunities among citizens. It also provides for the needs of society through teaching, research and innovations. Educational institutions act as agents of socialization through which the norms, traditions and culture are transmitted from one generation to another. Educational institutions can be classified into three cohorts basic-education, post-basic education and tertiary education. Tertiary education is education given after post-basic education and it consists of universities, inter-universities, colleges of education, and schools of health among others (FRN, 2014).

University is the zenith of academic pursuit and where professionals are identified, nurtured and developed for the good of individuals and society.

University Administration
University education is the highest echelon in academic pursuit and where individuals' talents are developed and nurtured. University education does not only provide liberal education to the recipients but also provides leadership to society by instilling positive values, skills and knowledge that make individuals responsible and responsive citizens (Wordu, 2021). University education through teaching and research generates knowledge and technological innovations that enable it to solve not only educational problems but societal problems.

In the same vein, Ogunruku (2016), stated that universities are educational institutions of higher learning that run academic programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate courses for the development of individuals and society. The benefits of university education are enormous and it is achieved through knowledge generation, dissemination and application. For university education to achieve these laudable goals there is the need for the provision of the legal framework through which human and non-human resources are harnessed for the attainment of the educational goals. The legal framework is the administrative architecture through which the managers of educational institutions enforce and implement educational policies and programmes.

The coordination of these resources in such a manner that enhance the seamless attainment of educational goals is referred to as administration. According to Gulick and Urwick (1937), administration has to do with getting things done with the accomplishment of the defined objectives. Educational administrators are saddled with the responsibilities of implementing educational policies and programmes and in the process administrators engage in planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling, or leading and evaluating (Peretomode, 2013). It is enlightening to note that administrators are also responsible for the implementation of educational policies as soon as they are formulated.

It is also pertinent to note that the universities are the creation of law and more interesting is the fact that the law that establishes a university is also the law that establishes a committee system of administration. Nwafor (1998: 143), averred that committee are usually "prescribed by the legislature that establishes the university so, they are a *sine quo non* of university administration". The enabling law defines the administrative structures of the university, their responsibilities, and the hierarchy of authority and their limitations. According to section 2, sub-section 1 of Decree No 84, of 28th September 1979 which established the University of Port Harcourt, the university shall consist of; Chancellor, a Pro-Chancellor, a Vice Chancellor a body called Congregation, Convocation, and the campus and colleges of university, the faculties, schools, institutions of teaching and research units of the universities (Okai & Wordu, 2019).

The university governance revolves around two major pillars namely the Governing Council and the Senate. The council is the highest policy-making body in the university and it is saddled with the responsibility of general management, supervision, funding, policy and public relations of the university (Okai & Wordu, 2019). The visitor of the university- the governor of a state university and the president of a federal university appoint the chancellor who is the chairman of the Governing Council. The Senate is chaired by the vice-chancellor while the registrar acts as the secretary. Senate is the highest academic authority in the university. It is saddled with the responsibility of regulating the activities of the university in line with the National Universities Commission, (NUC). It is within the purview of the senate to implement academic programmes, moderate examinations and direct teaching and learning in the university. Other members of the senate are the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Dean of

Faculties and Provost, the Heads of Department, the Director of Institutes and centres, the Librarian, the Bursar as the financial adviser and all professors and nominated members from the congregation.

Committees system of administration becomes a vital ingredient for effective administrative techniques used to facilitate management activities at the university and provide opportunities for academics to deal with complex educational issues as a group (Nwafor, 1998: Obayan, 2002). It is imperative to emphasize that all committees emanate from the council or the senate. Council committees are committees with a representative from the council. Examples of such committees are the Finance and General Purpose Committee, Appointment and Promotion Committee (Academies), Appointment and Promotion Committee for Senior Professionals, Administrative and Technical Staff, among others. The Senate committee is usually a core committee on academics and it emanates from the senate. Consequently, they are responsible to the senate. Such committees are the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Assessment and Graduate Senate Business Committee, Committee of Deans, Admission and Committee among others. The committee system of administration becomes an indispensable tool in university governance. The committee becomes a platform where different experts meet to provide information and knowledge to solve a given problem and in the process promote coordination and planning among the various segments of the university (Nwachukwu, 1998; Okai, 2021; Wordu, 2021).

The importance of committee is enormous in university administration and many have observed that university governance connote a committee system of administration. It is in recognition of the benefits of committees that the University of Ibadan, UI enshrined the Committee of Ethics as the university policy statement. Using the University of Ibadan as a reference case, the university established a committee on ethics in the University Ethics Policy. The committee is further divided into six different ethics committees namely the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee, (SSHREC) Animal Care and Use Research Ethics Committee, (ACUREC) Plant Use and Conversation Research Ethics Committee, (PUCREC) Science and Technology Ethics Research Committee, (STREC) Ethics in Teaching and learning, (ETL) and Ethics for Professional Conduct (EPC) (UI Ethics Policy). Despite the various ethics policies in universities, there are various infractions or unethical behaviours among the students and teachers in educational institutions. Consequently, it becomes necessary to enumerate some of these unwholesome practices that managers of educational institutions must curb if universities must remain relevant as the intellectual power house where individuals come and are fed with wisdom and knowledge.

Ethics in University Education

The upturn of digital technology and globalization has caused the diffusion of cultures and belief systems among the citadel of learners. This has created a high level of awareness, knowledge and exposure among students and lecturers thus influencing their behaviour within the school system.

The 21st-century rapid development epoch with a seemingly borderless world with an upturn of the digital revolution desires an educational system with a well-defined behavioural pattern that will enhance the attainment of educational goals. University education as the fountain of knowledge consists of different individuals with various capacities and intellectual skills that work towards the attainment of educational goals. In so doing, lecturers and students have adopted certain decisions that enable individuals or educational institutions to make certain decisions that enable them to gain at the expense of the larger society (Ofejebe, 2018). These behavioural patterns that help individuals to gain an undesired advantage are unethical and therefore need to be curtailed if not eradicated for the

development of individuals and society. Conversely, ethics in university education is achieved when employees in the university community carry out their responsibilities in consonance with university ideals, visions and missions. Ethical behaviour is when an individual acts noble, just, unbiased and respect others and when actions are guided by the norms of society.

This brings to the fore the importance of ethics in educational institutions. It is acknowledged that ethics in education is a discipline of dealing with what is educationally accepted, wrong or right, good or bad with commitment and moral duty. (Ecole Globale). Ethics becomes a yardstick in determining behaviours and actions that are accepted within educational institutions. Consequently, ethics not only helps individuals to make the right choice, develop an accepted standard for teaching and learning, protect the interest of teachers and students, but also helps in the effective management of educational institutions. Filani (2003) averred that ethics is pivotal for the sustenance of a university. This is true because ethics as a regulating device helps to encourage positive values that will boost academic excellence, and regulate professional conduct among the teachers and students. It is also within the realm of ethics to provide social norms and ensure accountability in educational institutions.

Ethical Issues in Nigerian Educational Institutions
Generally, when tertiary institutions graduate students they affirm that the students have been found worthy in character and learning. Unfortunately, educational institutions are challenged with numerous ethical issues that the managers of educational institutions must address to remain relevant in a global economy. Ethical issues in university education are centered on indiscipline. Indiscipline in educational institutions connotes the inability of the students and teachers to adhere to a legal framework that guides the attainment of educational goals. It is a life not in conformity with educational rules that hamper the smooth and orderly functioning of educational institutions (Jekayinfa, 2013). The author affirmed that indiscipline breeds corruption and other related social vices. Should this be the case of an institution that produce students who have been found worthy in character and learning?

According to Ngonso (2022), averred that ethical issues in Nigerian higher education are indiscriminate absence from class and non-availability of project supervisors, late commencement of lectures and non-completion of course outlines, the setting of difficult tests and examinations, campus prostitution, cultism, drug/substance abuse, monetization of intellectual propriety/lecturers' involvement in the writing of students' projects, examination malpractices, falsifying research data and plagiarism. Others are sexual harassment and molestation related to abuse of office, corruption and embezzlement (Ogunleye, 2000). The list of ethical issues as it relates to university education is inexhaustible but suffice it to say that the study is interested in indecent dressing and sexual harassment.

Indecent Dressing
Indecent dressing is one of the ethical issues that has ravaged educational institutions and most scholars are agitated that if no appropriate action is taken will likely destroy the serenity and ambience of university education. The public university education in Nigeria is faced with this nauseating problem that is gradually becoming a norm rather than an exception. The highest citadel of learning is becoming brothels where females wear seductive dresses or nudity in the name of fashion. Immoral and seductive dressing in university education is morally offensive and sexually provocative that onlookers hardly differentiate between male and female students and street thugs and prostitutes respectively (Ekwukoma & Osamiro 2021). Indecent dressing is dressing that shocks or offends others; appears sensuous,

provocative or stimulating and unveils the sensitive parts of the body to attract the attention of the opposite sex (Ekwukoma & Osamiro, 2021; Omede, 2011). It is enlightening to note that the University of Ibadan on Ethics Policy opined that one of the responsibilities of students to an educational institution is that the students must "dress appropriately or following the school dressing code in such a way that protects the respect for persons within a learning environment".

Indecent dressing at times called immodest dressing comes in various forms and shapes. They are sleeveless tops, body hugs, short knickers, transparent clothing, bogus fashion, spaghetti tops, off shoulders, wicket straps, low neck blouses, mono straps, hot pants, low slug snacks, backless, miniskirts, dresses, attires printed with offensive or obscene words, and skirts with slits above the knees (Omede, 2011; Okafor & Uwalaka, 2020; Sola, 2018).

The cause of indecent dressing in educational institutions is a manifestation of what is happening in society. It gradually encroached into tertiary education as a result of environmental influence as a result of modernization and globalization. It is pertinent to note that the first point of emphasis related to indecent dressing is the parent who by all standards should be a role model and the first agent of socialization. Poor parenting plays a significant role in the upbringing of the children. It is argued that the first nine years of a child is very vital in the modelling of the child. It is either won or lost within this age bracket. The parent's decisions in the life of a child either makes the child or mars the child; children live or die depending on the decision of their parents (Egbule, 2013).

Another significant factor that influences students in educational institutions to be indulged in this unpalatable attitude is peer group influence. The fear of being isolated and the desire to belong and be like their mates have caused them to join the bandwagon of immodest dressing. This is more aggravating if the child lacks good parenting. The influence of modernization and globalization are contributing factors to why students in educational institutions copied other ways of life. The up turn of digital technology has contributed to the dissemination of content that is vulgar, repulsive and alien to Nigerian culture. Through digital technology, students exchange obscure pictures that promote indecent and immoral practices that are inimical to the development of educational institutions. The effect of Western civilization have eroded the cherished core values of Nigerian tradition and children desired to be associated with Western values like smoking, drug abuse, immodest dressing and prostitution among other vices.

It is important to mention that there are consequences associated with indecent dressing in educational institutions. Some of the consequences are sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancy, ritual killing, stealing and poor academic performance. Indecent dressing is a prelude to sexual harassment, sexual harassment will necessitate disturbance which will lead to poor academic performance. Oli (2018) averred that it will lead to students' frustration and they may become deviants in society. There is the likelihood that ladies who dress indecently or provocatively could be prone to sexual harassment or rape (Okafor & Uwalaka, 2020).

The Way Forward
There is no denying the fact that indecent dressing has permeated educational institutions and the menace is becoming fashionable among youths and are been cheered by adults whose cravings are to take advantage of them.
1. The first strategy in curbing this monster starts with the family. The family must ensure that children are nurtured to cherish African core values and jettison internet-induced negative values that are not in consonant with Nigerian culture and traditions.

2. Parents should also be role models in every facet of human endeavour because children learn faster from what they see than what they learn from schools.
3. Educational institutions' the managers must as a priority establish a comprehensive dress code that will be reviewed from time to time and ensure adequate compliance by students and lecturers.
4. The school security must be well equipped with necessary resources that aid effective monitoring and ensure that students comply. The managers of educational institutions must integrate dress codes as part of the pedagogical content and student orientation for both the new and returning students at least once a year.
5. Sensitization and enlightenment by school authorities through conferences, seminars and workshops highlighting the dignity of womanhood and the consequences of indecent dressing to society.
6. Religious and non-governmental organizations should sensitize the public to the need for modest dressing and the preservation of Nigeria's core values.
7. The government at all levels must legislate on dressing culture especially, among teenagers.
8. Finally, educational institutions should establish robust counselling units with all the necessary devices that will aid effective counselling.

Conclusion

The university is an intellectual powerhouse where men and women are groomed to enjoy a richer and more meaningful life. Where individuals' potentials are identified, developed and nurtured to stardom. University consists of individuals who are widely read with various skills and capabilities to transmit, transform and extend knowledge with the onus of producing students who are worthy in character and sound judgment. Unfortunately, modernization and globalization have caused the inflow and diffusion of cultures and eroded the core values and ethics of Nigerian society. The effect of globalization has led Nigerian youths to jettison the value system and copied the unwholesome practices of immodest behaviour and lifestyle. It is unarguable that students in tertiary education dressing are very provocative and offensive that some of the female students barely cover sensitive areas in the name of fashion.

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