



ETHICS AND VALUES IN EDUCATION: RE-ENGINEERING LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS



¹Caroline Onyinyechi Nweke (Ph.D)

²Emeka Ifeoma Ejeh (Ph.D)

³Onovo Jecinta Amaka

⁴Busari-Yusuff Rukayat Adebimpe

&

⁵Ogar Joseph (Ph.D)

¹⁻⁵ Department of Educational Management and Foundational Studies,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Email: carolineonyinyechi3@gmail.com

²Department of Educational Management,
Peaceland University Enugu.
amakajessy2075@gmail.com.

Abstract

Education they say is light. It is also said that if you say education is expensive or costly, then try illiteracy. On the basis of these, many experts or professionals in various disciplines in education profession and even the common man conceive this importance of education and the massive quest for academic knowledge have been discovered to exploit others in need of the academic knowledge and the accruing certificates negatively, in negligence to the ethical order and values in education which is one of the basic lessons in Education expertise. The problem that bothers this paper is the unbecoming increase in the negligence of ethical values in education especially amongst stakeholder in Higher Education cadre. The study finds out that this problem keeps growing at alarming heights on daily basis. It is on this background, that the paper aims at addressing the unethical actions of stakeholders in education mostly in institutions of higher learning. It hence, recommends among other things that formidable and disciplinary leadership of the old, should be re-engineered in Nigeria's higher education system for a global competitiveness. The study employs historical and phenomenological research methodologies or approaches on embarking on this research. Data are generated from secondary materials, for examples, dictionary, textbooks, chapters in books, journal, internet, etc. Materials collected are analyzed with descriptive style of data analysis.

Keywords: Ethics and Values, Higher Education, Leadership, Education and Global Competitiveness.

Introduction

It has been known amongst humans and organizational managers that it is the art of promulgating rules and ethics that adds values to the organizational framework. Education sector is never an exception. Education itself is light. Those who are traditionally and informally well-educated still show some levels of light above others at their various educational and knowledge acquisition. Today, Western civilization has come with a higher level of education than what was obtainable in most African nations. Now, to have an organized educational atmosphere, education has trended to assume an academic form. It is on this platform that education has gone highly sophisticated. This is because people have begun to professionalize themselves with the corresponding certificates and not the

academic knowledge by some people in a negative and illegal ways without any or less attention to the ethical codes or orders and values in education has raised the problem which this research has sought to address, because the negligence on the ethical values in education especially in the midst of the major stakeholders and even the leaders in high education heights is becoming increasingly unbecoming.

This paper, therefore, is aimed at addressing issues necessary for re-engineering leadership in Nigeria higher education for global competitiveness with special attention to unethical actions of stakeholders/leaders in higher institution. Ali et al (2020:79) assert that “a walk through the line of history of education, has informed most educators that before the advent of western education, there was a traditional form of education ...” In this traditional form of education, the learners and educators have a reasonable level of ethical order and value observances. In fact, it has been found in this paper that the increase in the negligence of ethical values in higher education keeps growing at its alarming rates consistently. The research recommends in the midst of other things that a stronger disciplinary leadership or leaders greater that the old should be utilized to re-engineer the Nigeria higher education system for a competitive global standard. The study adopts historical and phenomenological research methods. Materials for the research are got from secondary sources, principally from textbooks, journals, etc. Data sourced are analyzed with descriptive style of data analysis.

Conceptualization of Terms

The terms or concepts planned to explain or define here include: ethics, values, education and leadership. Ethics has been explained by Okwueze (2003:1 – 2) thus: Ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos* which means wisdom, conduct, culture or way of life. Many regard ethics as a branch of philosophy concerned with what is morally good or bad, right or wrong... The word ethics and ethical are often used as synonyms for the words moral and morals especially in contexts which make references to the ethics or to the morality of a person or group. This synonym has a clear etymological basis and justification because the Greek word *ethos* from which Ethics derived, and the Latin word *mores* from which morals is derived both mean habits and customs.

In the assertion of Okwueze, ethics has to do with the good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, approved or disapproved and so on. Agha (2003: 1) on the other hand has asserted ethics thus:

Ethics is a branch of general wisdom called Moral Philosophy. This is the study which led to an examination of all human conduct, and this type of philosophical study is known as Ethics. Ethics is a normative science, which sees man as a moral agent, and considers his actions, habits, and character with a view to their rightness or wrongness.

In fact, ethics is highly concerned with the actions of human beings with special interest on their rightness or wrongness. Agha (2004:15) in another text has emphasized on ethics of responsibility when he associates ethics with other words like duty, obligation, law, goodness, and morality thus:

Responsibility is the quality or state of being answerable for all acts of thought and conduct. It is a state of being responsible as a moral, legal or mental accountability. It means reliability and trustworthiness. Christian responsibility is answerable to the teachings of Jesus while civil responsibility is being answerable to the civil or state laws.

It is at this state of being answerable to the civil or state laws that ethics stands to judge our level of responsibility to duties assigned to us at different levels of stewardships. Ethics looks at how well or bad and how far we are able to discharge our duties, obligations, assignments and responsibilities in the sight of the ethics, rules, regulations, ordinances or laws. In this paper, it is concerned with how good or bad the leadership of the Nigeria Education System at higher levels has been able to project the education system to a global scope where the system can sluggishly or comfortably compete with other states of the modern world.

Values has been asserted by Akulue (2013: 55) thus:

“Value” as a more concrete noun for example, when we speak of “a value” is often used to refer to what is valued, judged to have value, thought to be good or desired. The expressions “his values” “her value system” etc, refer to what a man, a woman etc, values or thinks to be good. The term value is also used to mean what has value or is valuable, or good as opposed to what is regarded as good or valuable.



Then, “values” mean, “things that are good or goods and some users, also regard it to mean things that are right, obligatory, beautiful or even true...”

This shows that at any point things are responsibly and ethically done, a lot of admirable value are attained. Therefore, a good attention to ethics in discharging one’s duties and responsibilities attracts acceptable values to the output or product. Hence, sound ethical observations in Nigerian higher education leadership will re-engineer Nigerian higher education system to global competitiveness.

Education as part of the concepts to be conceptualized is said to be both formal and informal or non-formal. In this context, the interest of this paper is on formal education. Ani (1997:160) responses thus: “To be educated in this view means that both staff and students recognize the worth of each other in the communal search for reasonableness. On a similar realm, Okafor (2016:78) points that: “A blended learning approach to instruction combines face to face classroom methods with computer based/mediated activities, resulting in an integrated learning experience for physics students”. These authors are cited in explaining education here to emphasize that education meant in this study is principally, formal education where students and their teacher formally meet with the purpose of teaching and learning on a base of professional areas of specializations. In this present time, the face-to-face contact has gone beyond physical contacts to a more or less a computer/online face to face contact. These processes are completely formal form of education which carries the basic idea of the theme of this paper with special interest on higher education.

Leadership in Summer (2001:800) is defined as “the position being the leader of a team, organization, etc: quality of being good at leading a team, organization, country etc; someone with vision and leadership; all the people that lead who lead a group, organization, etc”. It is on this background, that the need to refer to Nigeria leadership becomes relevant. Ijeoma (1988:149) buttresses thus:

In a nation where sycophants praise leaders to their graves, even when the leaders have nothing to offer, and when their brains are as frozen as corpses in the mortuary, it is obvious that unnecessarily gratuitous adulations add nothing to the moral or intellectual quality of such leaders. In fact, they become blinded, quite oblivious of their negligible poor backgrounds, and indulge in premature gratification in which their sycophants aid and abet them in syphoning money out of the nation.

This leadership problem in Nigeria is lamented on by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in West African Pilot in Ijeomah (1988:149) thus: “It would seem as if our real need today is leadership... with character”. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe made script in 1939. So, we have seen the definition of leadership in the dictionary, but relating it to Nigeria, seems Nigeria has serious leadership challenges which also affects leadership at higher education. Areas of Challenges on Ethics and Values on Nigeria Higher Education Leadership Systems exit till Today

In Nigerian higher institutions, there are some ethical codes of conduct, rules, regulations, ordinances, etc that guide the operations and activities of both students and staff (teaching and non-teaching). These ethical codes guide people in the communities or environment of higher learning especially those in the leadership hierarchies. There are rules guiding people against immoral and irreligious activities, social vices, health and other academic malpractices, and on the political and administrative processes. Today, it has been obvious that their rules seem not to be accorded obedience. The areas where Nigerian higher education faces challenges due to leadership ethical weaknesses include: admission irregularities in higher institutions (from university authorities and educational administrators’ different institutions of higher learning, and Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Sexual Immorality, Cultism, Drug Abuse, Examination Malpractices, Deposit of new born babies at waste dumps, hostels, etc. Misappropriation of fund, punitive transfer or posting, abandonment of files or sitting on files, nepotism, tribalism or favoritism, vandalization and wanton on institutions’ property by members of staff and authorities, frivolous and unprecedented claims, killings and reports against senior staff due to interest on higher offices, bribery for employment and services. At this point, we still need to stress on leadership again, then proceed to education leadership. Ekwunife (2004:260) has viewed leadership as: “a science in the sense that effective leadership involves clear systematic practice grounded on a solid conviction and knowledge of what makes a good leader, a good leader plus the courage and skill to put this into successful action”. This explanation of leadership

appears to be conceived at a general social context. It goes with special skill of the scientific knowledge of systematic practice that ends in a successful action. Okoh (1985:29) specifies education leadership thus: “the process of influencing the activities of educational personnel towards goal setting and achievement. This exact nature of what educational leadership should be. But in Nigeria higher educational system and leadership or personnel have been influenced negatively, thereby failing to set the goal and achieve the expected success.

In Nigeria, we hear on daily basis acts of examination malpractices in the higher institutions which is turning to a culture. Some of these examination malpractices are encouraged by staff, parents and students. The school authorities in most cases have failed to pursue the vices with drastic actions. The admission process is not something to write home about. University of Nigeria Alumni Association (1999/2000:28) emphasizes on JAMB loose of its admittance ethical values for admission of candidates into institutions of higher education thus:

JAMB’s reliability as a reliable measure of qualification into universities, is now suspect, widespread, rampant malpractices as bizarre as the open hiring of mercenary undergraduates to sit the examination have seriously undermined the institution’s credibility as the sole medium for university intake...

Though, today, JAMB has improved, but leaving CBT centres with most of the responsibilities in conducting the entrance examination. More so, the year 2025 UTME has been viewed a partial failure due to sectional result output which later called for re-sit by affected candidates.

In higher institutions, some students (male and female) have turned to sex workers and sex slaves to some staff in the institutions of higher learning. Some female students have engaged in giving birth to babies, dump them at hostel or other corners or waste dumps to the mercy of the general public. Some of these girls or ladies are impregnated either by the co-students, sex worker patronage or staff, opposite sex partners etc. Some of these staff that engage female students in immoral sexual relationship are staff in positions of authorities. Secret cultism in the higher institutions has been rumored to be standby machineries used by authorities of the institutions for killings, vandalization and other related illegalities to achieve their selfish interest. There are also highly suspected levels embezzlement of funds and misappropriation by leadership of higher education in Nigeria. Some persons in positions of leadership in Nigerian higher institutions have been suspected to encourage drug abuse by themselves and student allies. All these acts are against the ethical order, and expected values needed in our institutions of higher learning, but the problems or challenges have remained adamant because the leadership crew appears to be guilty of this ethical disobedience because most of them lack the conscience for general academic growth and development which pose a challenge to the global world competitiveness.

Effects and Remedy to these Ethical Value Challenges in Nigeria Higher Education

It is very difficult to feel that issues associated with weaknesses or degeneration of ethical values in higher education in Nigeria do not accrue some effects which automatically call for a process of re-engineering of the leadership incompetencies and inefficiencies for global competitiveness. Okoye, Uche Patrick, et al (2024:4) point thus:

Examination malpractices are gradually becoming thorn in the flesh of the educational sector of this country, especially in tertiary level. This is a very unethical practice that covers the broad range of actions from cheating in impersonation and bribery to use of unauthorized materials at any form of examination. Despite several attempts by the examination authorities to check this scourge, the trends in examination malpractice have been on the increase giving concern to the validity of academic qualifications obtained from institutions in Nigeria...

For the fact that examination malpractices have resisted measures to control or abort it means the authorities in charge of the examination processes and institutional leadership are failing. Therefore, in the next sub-heading light will be thrown on panacea to the problem in order to re-engineer leadership excesses in Nigeria higher education to empower Nigeria higher education toward challenging the modern world higher educational competitions. consequently, in this sub heading, our interest is on the effects of the scourge. After pointed out above by Okoye Uche Patrick and others



above, one of the menaces is that examination malpractices have thrown concern to the validity of academic qualifications obtained or attained from Nigerian higher institutions.

The quest for admission into the higher educational institutions has encouraged the admission of people of questionable character. Nzeakor (2002:286) observes that: “drug abuse leads to various criminal and deviant acts amongst students. It leads violence, wanton destruction of lives and properties and arson”. A similar issue is associated with some staff, even amongst those in leadership positions in the higher education being addicted to hard drugs or alcoholism. These acts among staff and student disrupt labour input and output in the higher institutions. In some cases, it leads to suicide, depression and other mental related problems. These acts have seemed to encourage the institutions of higher education to appear commonly unethical.

These low ethical and value consciousness in the higher institutions, irrespective of the health-related issues they cause, they also endanger the economic and human resources’ growth and development in the entire society. Since people in leadership positions in higher institution cannot maintain order from the admission processes, where any person is admitted, lives and property are destroyed, authorities’ sit on lower staff files, pension, allowances and other entitlements are withheld, funds for salaries, infrastructural developments are embezzled respectively, affected people and those related to them in financial engagements or otherwise suffer the evil actions economically. These acts lower such people’s standard of living. It diminishes social interaction of individual and families since every interaction demands for capital no, no matter how little it could be. These unethical acts reduce the value of some individuals in the society and higher educational institutions. It also creates enmities between the leaders and the led, amongst other effects.

The Panacea and Re-engineering Leadership in Nigerian Higher Education for Global Competitiveness

In order to re-engineer the leadership of higher Institution’s education for global competitiveness, the following facts are put down in this paper as solution:

1. Stronger disciplinary leadership or leaders greater than the old or the present ones to re-engineer the Nigerian higher education system for a competitive global standard.
2. As it has been suggested by Nzeakor (2002:294), “the sinful nature of man controlling the staff and students of higher institutions in Nigeria persists, Nigerians should make a more serious and radical effort to enforce a positive spiritual change as a solution to this problem. Okwor (2000:6) has pointed that only spiritual or divine intervention can out-run and arrest corruption in Nigeria. So, will divine intervention do to unethical actions in higher educational institutions.
3. Nigerians have to work on their value system for a re-order in the higher institutions of learning. Unnecessary values should not be attached to money, wealth, cheap popularity and pleasure as against character and excellence.
4. Salaries and allowances are poor in some higher institutions and even paid inconsistently. These payments should be made in commensurate to the economic situation in Nigeria and should be paid consistently as at when due.
5. Secret cultism has taken the day in the higher institutions. It should be stamped out by the government and other related stakeholders.
6. Government should fund and monitor the use of the funds adequately, provide textbooks at subsidized rates to make teaching and learning very productive and effective.

Conclusion

Lack of attention to ethical values has caused Nigeria a big harm in her education, especially at higher institutions. This has created several injuries in social, economic, cultural, health, religious, and political problems to Nigeria. Therefore, every hand, associations, groups, government, educational and other institutions should come together to push Nigeria higher education to a world class standard.



References

- Agha, U.A(2003), Religious ethics in a permissive society. Enugu: SAPS(Nig).
- Agha, U.A(2004), Ethics of responsible self. Enugu: Magnet Business Enterprises.
- Akulue, P. (2013), Nigeria: Peoples & Culture. Enugu: God's Will Prints Enter.
- Ali, M. et. al (2020). "Re – Positioning the adult education and non – formal education sector for human resources development and sustainable national development" (E.d) C.OEle.Sapientia Foundation Journal of Education, Sciences and Gender. (E.d) Studies (SFJESGS) Vol.2 No.3. Abakiliki: Platinum Link Communication Services.
- Anih, S. (1999), Authentic education for the third millennium in Nigeria (An empowerment of students in critical, creative and reasonable higher (order thinking in our classroom). Enugu: Snaap Press Limited.
- Ekwunife, A.N.O (2004), "Values in traditional and modern Nigerian society: A study in leadership" (E.d) M.I Okwueze, Religion and Societal Development: Contemporary Nigeria Perspectives. Lagos: Merit International Publications.
- Ijeomah, B.I.C (1988), Afrocracy: Basis for national stability: Parless democracy. Benin city: Idodo Umeh Publishers Limited.
- Nzeakor, H.O (2002), "Corruption in institutions of higher education (E.d) C.O.T Ugwu, Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspective. Nsukka:Chuks Educational Publishers.
- Okafor, P.U(2016), "Benefits and challenges of blended learning, teaching approach for teaching Physics in Nigeria secondary schools" (E.d). Charles E. Nnolim, Journal of the Literati Philosophia. Vol 3. No.2, literatiphilosophia.com.
- Okoh, Frank M. (1985), New national policy on education in Nigeria and its leadership. Agboxi: David Printing and Publishing Company.
- Okoye, U.P, Ighodaro, H.F., Obainoke, Eronmosele F, and Ugege, Erumosele, J., (2024) Rise in Examination malpractices and the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. IJRISS Research & Scientific Innovation Society. rsisinternational.org.
- Okwor, S.O (2000), "Identification of forms of corruptions in Nigeria and suggestions on how to stop corruption in our society" (E.d) Onah C.O. Millennium Hope for the Afflicted in Nsukka Dioceses. Nsukka: SODEJUPE Publication.
- Okwueze, M.I (2003), Ethics, religion & society: Biblical, traditional & contemporary perspectives. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.
- Summers, D. (2001), Longman dictionary of contemporary English. England: Parson Education Ltd.
- University of Nigeria Alumni Association (1999/2000), "The future of higher education in Nigeria" 10(1).