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FROM THE DESK OF LEAD EDITOR

The Centre for General Nigerian Studies had the second summit held from 4th – 7th December, 2024. The theme of the summit was aptly coined, Fostering Integrity and Peace: Tackling Corruption and Promoting Ethical Leadership in African Education. The summit attracted participants drawn from universities within and outside Nigeria. The summit was declared open by the management team of Lagos State University, ably led by the Vice Chancellor, Prof Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji Bello mni NPOM GCGNS inside the main bowl of the Makanjuola Lecture Theatre, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria. It was a 4 day of academic and cutting-edge activities. Scholarly papers were presented, and thereafter, the papers were subjected to peer review. In all, more than 52 presentations were made, but only 20 articles scaled through the hurdles. Ladies and gentlemen, the volume 4 of the journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy (JCINE) is highly recommended to scholars, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders in the field of education.

Prof. M.O.B Mohammed FNAEAP
Lead Editor

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LEADERSHIP STYLE, CORRUPT PRACTICES, AND INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

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Abstract

The role of leadership in shaping the academic environment is very crucial. The pervasive corrupt practices among academic staff in educational institutions pose a significant threat to the quality of education, research and the future of the nation. However, this paper explored the relationship between leadership style and corrupt practices among academic staff in all Nigerian institutions, with a focus on identifying a way forward for mitigating corruption and reinstating Institutional integrity. This qualitative study discussed the concepts of corruption, its manifestation among academic staff, causes of corruption and its effects on the achievement of educational goals. Moreso, Leadership styles and its importance in elimination of corrupt practices and restoring of University Integrity were also discussed. The study identified some ineffective leadership styles that encourage corrupt practices, as well as other effective leadership styles that have the potentials to drastically reduce corrupt practices and unethical behavior among academic staff. The Implications of the study highlighted the need for a paradigm shift in leadership approaches to address the insidious corrupt practices in all Nigerian Institutions. The study therefore recommends amongst others; the adoption of Servant Leadership style by University administrators, the provision of training and development opportunities for academic staff, and adequate and timely remuneration of staff salaries and incentives, so as to eliminate corrupt practices, regain University integrity, reclaim Nigeria's reputation, and reshape the future of the Nation.

Keywords: Servant Leadership Style, Corrupt Practices, Academic Staff, Institutional Integrity, Nigeria

Introduction

The issue of corruption and people's involvement in corrupt practices has become an endemic and cancerous menace that has plagued and interfered with all facets of development and levels of human existence for centuries. Moreover, it is one of the social vices that have eaten deep into all the sectors in Nigeria. Corruption involves the abuse of power or position for personal gain, often at the expense of public interest. It can take many forms which include bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and fraud. The recent report released by the Transparency International rated Nigeria as the 146th least corrupt nation out of 180 countries, according to 2019 Corruption Perception Index. In fact, more than a

decade before this report, Eze (2006) lamented, that it is no longer news that Nigeria is one of the most corrupt countries of the world. The consequences of corruption are far-reaching and devastating that it undermines trust in institutions, distorts markets, and perpetuates inequality. Corruption also hinders economic development, diverts resources away from essential public services, and erodes the rule of law. In Nigeria, corruption is a significant challenge that affects all aspects of society, including education. Nigeria as a country has struggled with corruption for decades, and it has had a profound impact on the quality of education and research. Therefore, Corruption is the abuse of power or position for personal gain, through unethical or illegal means, involving a deviation from the norms, values, and principles of an organization, institution, or society, which takes many forms such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, fraud, and extortion among others.

Academic Corruption or Corrupt practices among academic staff in universities refer to unethical or illegal behaviors exhibited by faculty members, researchers, or administrators for personal gain or to achieve a desired outcome. Lawal (2006) asserts that corrupt practices refer to those human behavioral practices that deviate (significantly) from the norms and values of society or breaks certain moral codes of conducts or administrative rules. Okogie (2012) opines that corrupt practices in education refer to all forms of actions that reflect the perversion of established standards or norms by those in authority in the educational system for their personal gains, to the detriment of others and the system. Therefore, academic corruption refers to those unethical behavior exhibited in an academic setting that compromises educational values, teaching and learning, and destroys the overall integrity of academic institutions.

Leadership Style on the other hand, refers to the approach, behavior, and attitude that a leader exhibits when guiding, motivating, and directing their team or organization. It encompasses various traits, skills, and philosophies that influence how leaders interact with their followers, make decisions, and achieve goals. Some of the Leadership styles include; autocratic, transactional, laissez-faire, democratic, transformational, ethical, servant leadership style and many others.

Servant Leadership Style is a leadership approach adopted by servant leaders to foster a culture of trust, and open communication by prioritizing the needs of their staff, empowering them to make decisions and create an environment where whistle-blowing is encouraged and protected. Kenton (2023), asserts that Servant Leadership is a philosophy that emphasizes serving and prioritizing the needs of citizens, rather than the leaders own interests. Hence, Servant Leadership Style is a philosophy that prioritizes the needs of their staff and builds a culture of trust, empathy, stewardship and open communication, which ultimately mitigate academic corrupt practices and foster transparency, accountability and university integrity.

University Integrity encompasses ethical standards, values and principles guiding higher education institutions, students, faculty and staff. According to Alutu and Aluede (2005) university integrity are the laid down guidelines, principles, code of conduct, rules and regulations or standards that guide the behavior of a group, body, association or organization. Martin (2013) is of the view that university integrity requires exposing and addressing corruption, not covering it up. Therefore, University integrity refers to ethical

principles that guide educational institutions to avoid plagiarism and cheating among other misconduct behaviors.

It has been observed that the pervasive corrupt practices among academic staff in all Nigerian universities have become a persistent challenge, undermining the integrity of higher education. Despite efforts to address this issue, corrupt practices continue to thrive, fueled by the adoption of ineffective leadership styles by university administrators which result to poor management and ineffective policies and procedures, as well as lack of motivation due to poor remuneration and late payment of academic staff salaries and benefits, resulting to personal financial difficulties and limited resources, which leads to lack of accountability and transparency among academic staff. Therefore, the impetus of this study is to ascertain the main root causes of corrupt practices among academic staff of all Nigerian universities and determine an effective leadership style to be adopted by the university administrators in order to eliminate corrupt practices among academic staff and restore university integrity. Hence the topic: "Leadership Style, Corrupt Practices, and Institutional Integrity".

Literature Review

Events taking place in our educational settings show that "standard" has been neglected and is seriously falling. In fact, Okebukola (2002) and Ndili (2004) observed that university education in Nigeria appears to be bedeviled by corrupt practices and crises of different kinds which is unmatched to the available space, facilities and substandard textbooks, and handouts;(which students are forced to buy); admission malpractice, nepotism, cultism, money embezzlement and diversion of money, certificate forgery, overuse of power, and poor supervision of students' work(e.g. research projects, teachings practice, laboratory practical, practicum etc.) among others. As rightly pointed out by Okebukola (2002) and Ndili (2004), every university requires adequate facilities, human resources and infrastructure for effective teaching and learning. Regrettably, there is absence and gross inadequate provision of these facilities in our universities. These have resulted in lowered 'standard' in our universities and have probably encouraged engagement in different types of corrupt or unethical practices by academic and non-academic staff as well as the students.

Manifestation of Academic Staff Corrupt Practices:

In academic settings, corruption can manifest in various ways, such as; plagiarism and academic dishonesty, nepotism and favoritism in hiring and promotion, embezzlement of research funds, corruption in admissions and grading, conflict of interest, unethical research practices, lack of accountability, bribery, grade inflation and sexual harassment among others. These practices can compromise the integrity of academic teaching, and learning, and undermine the credibility of the academic institutions.

Causes of Corrupt Practices among Academic Staff

Academic corruption can be caused by so many factors which include:

1. Poor management and leadership resulting to ineffective policies and procedures
2. Inadequate salaries and benefits resulting to personal financial difficulties
3. Limited resources and infrastructure resulting to lack of accountability and transparency

4. Inadequate whistleblower protection resulting to limited job security and high competition

Okogie (2012) identified several factors that contribute to corruption in education which include; poor governance and leadership; lack of transparency and accountability; insufficient resources and funding; and cultural and social norms.

Ineffective Leadership Styles that Encourage Academic Corrupt Practices

Bass and Riggio (2006), and Blanchard (2010) identified these three leadership styles that can inadvertently encourage corrupt practices among academic staff:

1. Autocratic Leadership: Is characterized by centralized decision-making with little input from followers, lack of transparency and minimal accountability. This style can create an environment where corrupt practices thrive, as decisions are made without input or scrutiny from others.
2. Transactional Leadership: It focuses on task completion, rewards and punishments, and can lead to a culture of "do whatever it takes to achieve results." This style can inadvertently encourage corrupt practices, such as cheating or falsifying data, to meet performance targets.
3. Laissez-Faire Leadership: Is marked by a hands-off approach, lack of supervision, and minimal oversight. This style can lead to a lack of accountability and create opportunities for corrupt practices to go undetected.

Effective Leadership Styles that Discourage Academic Corrupt Practices

Liden et al. (2008), Bass et al (2006), and Brown et al (2005) identified these three leadership styles that can help create a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability and ultimately mitigate academic corrupt practices:

1. Servant Leadership: It prioritizes followers' needs, and fosters a supportive culture of trust, empathy, and open communication. Servant leaders discourage corrupt practices by prioritizing the needs of their staff and empowering them to make decisions, and create an environment where whistle-blowing is encouraged and protected.
2. Transformational Leadership: Is inspirational, visionary, and empowers followers. It encourages transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate staff to adopt a culture of integrity, innovation, and excellence, through which they discourage corrupt practices.
3. Ethical Leadership: It sets high moral standards, leads by example, and promotes a culture of integrity. Ethical leaders discourage corrupt practices by clearly communicating their expectations, ensuring accountability, and addressing unethical behavior promptly and fairly.

Consequences of Academic Corrupt Practices on University Integrity

Academic corrupt practices can have severe consequences on University Integrity such as undermining the credibility of academic qualifications, eroding trust in academic institutions, perpetuating inequality and social injustice, distorting the research agenda, and compromising the quality of education and research. Kuranchie et al. (2014) asserted that corruption in education negatively affects the welfare of a society by bringing up distorted values in the youths. Regrettably, universities which are supposed to be citadel of learning

for producing people with sound mind, knowledge, character and integrity appear to have also become centers for producing high level dishonest and corrupt persons (Nnodum, 2008).

Corrupt Practices and Academic Goals Achievement

The consequences of academic corruption are so enormous that it has not only negated the good objectives of education as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (Revised 2004), but has turned our institutions of learning into centers for moral decadence, crime propagation, lawlessness and social disintegration. Thus, standards both in academic performance, general conduct and behavior, have really gone down. Apart from denting the image of the country, it has affected the quality of our degrees and certificates by lowering the validity and reliability of the different assessment measures used in evaluating learning outcome. This fact is reflected in the attitude of the outside world (and even Nigerians) towards certificates obtained from Nigerian institutions of learning and the level of acceptance of Nigerian certificates and the products of Nigerian institutions of learning. Okogie (2012) emphasized that corruption in education can have severe consequences like undermining the quality of education, perpetuating inequality, and eroding public trust.

Servant Leadership Style as Strategy to Mitigate Academic Corrupt Practices

Corrupt practices can be mitigated when servant leadership style is adopted by prioritizing staff well-being and providing training and developmental programs for academic staff on ethics and integrity, promoting accountability to ensure that academic staff are held responsible for their actions. After which, open feedback and regular audit should be introduced for easy detection of corrupt practice. This will foster transparency and accountability, and ultimately mitigate academic corrupt practices in universities.

Servant Leadership Style as Propeller to Reinstate University Integrity

University integrity can be reinstated when academic leaders through the adoption of Servant Leadership style, create an environment that empowers academic staff to take ownership and make decisions that will build strong relationships and credibility with team members, stakeholders and students, and foster a culture of teamwork, mutual respect and open communication, which will motivate and encourage active participation and commitment from team members, stakeholders and communities and enhance the reputation and integrity of the university and its leaders.

Servant Leadership and Academic Goals Achievement

Servant leadership style encourages employees' engagement and satisfaction, improves teamwork and collaboration, which enhances creativity and innovation, and brings better decision making and problem solving techniques that increase trust and loyalty, and finally improve organizational culture and reputation, all of which facilitate the accomplishment of academic goals and objectives.

Theoretical Framework

The review of related literature is discussed in relation to Leadership Style, Corrupt Practices and Institutional Integrity. This study is hinged on the Servant Leadership Theory propounded by Greenleaf (1970). Servant Leadership is a new kind of leadership model – a

model which puts serving others as the number one priority. Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and the sharing of power in decision-making (Greenleaf 1996). Each of these central tenets is explored individually below, to present a fuller picture of the Servant-leadership framework:

1. **Service to Others:** Servant-leadership begins when a leader assumes the position of servant in their interactions with followers. Authentic, legitimate leadership arises not from the exercise of power or self-interested actions, but from a fundamental desire to first help others. Greenleaf wrote that this “simple fact is the key to a leader’s greatness” (Greenleaf, 1970). A servant-leader’s primary motivation and purpose is to encourage greatness in others, while organizational success is the indirect, derived outcome of servant-leadership.
2. **Holistic Approach to Work:** Servant-leadership holds that “The work exists for the person as much as the person exists for the work” (Greenleaf, 1996). It challenges organizations to rethink the relationships that exist between people, organizations and society as a whole. The theory promotes a view that individuals should be encouraged to be who they are, in their professional as well as personal lives. This more personal integrated valuation of individuals, it is theorized, ultimately benefits the long-term interests and performance of the organization.
3. **Promoting a Sense of community:** Greenleaf lamented the loss of community in modern society, calling it “the lost knowledge of these times” (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant-leadership questions the institution’s ability to provide human services, and argues that only community, defined as groups of individuals that are jointly liable for each other both individually and as a unit, can perform this function. Only by establishing this sense of community among followers can an organization succeed in its objectives. Further, the theory posits that this sense of community can arise only from the actions of individual servant-leaders.
4. **Sharing of Power in Decision-Making:** Effective servant-leadership is best evidenced by the cultivation of servant-leadership in others. By nurturing participatory, empowering environments, and encouraging the talents of followers, the servant-leader creates a more effective, motivated workforce and ultimately a more successful organization. As phrased by Russell (2001), “Leaders enable others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away”.

Servant-Leadership Attributes:

1. **Listening:** A critical communication tool, necessary for accurate communication and for actively demonstrating respect for others. According to Greenleaf (1970), “Only a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening first”.
2. **Empathy:** The ability to mentally project one’s own consciousness into that of another individual. Greenleaf (1970) wrote, “The servant always accepts and empathizes, never rejects” and “Men grow taller when those who lead them empathize, and when they are accepted for who they are...”.
3. **Healing:** Greenleaf defined healing as “to make whole”. The servant-leader recognizes the shared human desire to find wholeness in one self, and supports it in others.
4. **Awareness:** Without awareness, “we miss leadership opportunities” (Greenleaf, 1970).
5. **Persuasion:** The effective servant-leader builds group consensus through “gentle but clear and persistent persuasion, and does not exert group compliance through position power.

Greenleaf notes that “A fresh look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways” (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant-leadership utilizes personal, rather than position power, to influence followers and achieve organizational objectives.

6. Conceptualization: The servant-leader can conceive solutions to problems that do not currently exist.
7. Foresight: Prescience, or foresight, is a better than average guess about what is going to happen in the future (Greenleaf, 1970).
8. Stewardship: Organizational stewards, or ‘trustees’ are concerned not only for the individual followers within the organization, but also the organization as a whole, and its impact on and relationship with all of society.
9. Commitment to the growth of people: A demonstrated appreciation and encouragement of others. Per Greenleaf, “The secret of institution building is to be able to weld a team of such people by lifting them up to grow taller than they would otherwise be” (Greenleaf, 1970).
10. Building community – The rise of large institutions has eroded community, the social pact that unites individuals in society. According to Greenleaf (1970), “All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form...is for enough servant-leaders to show the way”.

Therefore, servant leadership style with its emphasis on employee empowerment, teamwork and followers’ happiness which is the hallmark of success, will bring about an inevitable outcome of a satisfied workforce that will serve as an ideal fit for achievement of organizational objectives, elimination of academic staff corrupt practices, and re-establishment of Institutional Integrity.

Implications

Academic staff corrupt practices in Nigerian Universities is a problem that is caused by the adoption of ineffective leadership styles by University administrators, which result to poor management and ineffective policies. Therefore, it is recommended that all Nigerian University administrators should adopt the Servant Leadership style in order to reduce corrupt practices among academic staff by create a positive and productive work environment that encourages trust, open communication, collaboration, innovation, growth and development, accountability, transparency, recognition, appreciation and continuous improvement among staff, which will build strong and effective teams that will drive organizational success and make positive impacts on the stakeholders. This position corroborates the assertions of Liden et al. (2008), who asserted that servant leadership helps to create a positive work environment and increases employees’ sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. Awasthi and Wallumbwa (2003) opined that servant leadership style is one of the essential leadership philosophies for fostering closeness, trust and tolerance between supporters and leaders in order to attain equality, development and true democracy in society. Berendit et al., (2012) postulates that servant leaders can be viewed as trustees of the human capital of an organization. Therefore, University administrators should provide training and development programs that will help their academic staff to understand the implications of corrupt practices and promote ethical behavior. The study also reveals that there are other factors that fuel the exhibition of

corrupt practices among academic staff which include; inadequate salaries and benefits that result to personal financial difficulties; and the provision of limited resources and infrastructures that result to lack of accountability and transparency among academic staff. It is also recommended that all Nigerian public university administrators should ensure timely payment of adequate salaries, benefits and incentives, to negate financial difficulties faced by academic staff; and motivate them by provision of adequate funding and resource allocation and infrastructures, so as to discourage corrupt practices, foster ethical behavior and re-establish university integrity. This assertion is in line with Okebukola (2002) and Ndili (2004), who rightly pointed out that every university requires adequate facilities, human resources and infrastructure for effective teaching and learning. Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000), opined that motivational factors (intrinsic motivation) make employees to persevere, work harder and produce result of higher quality. Skinner (2006), argued that teachers who feel deprived of these factors are less motivated to do their best in the classroom. Therefore, there is need for a cultural shift in academic institutions to prioritize the needs of their staff so as to motivate them to adopt the culture of integrity and ethics, in order to enhance their reputation, attract top talent and increase public trust. By reducing corruption, universities can ensure a fair and supportive learning environment that promotes students' well-being and success in Nigerian Universities.

Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that Servant leadership style is a critical factor that can be used in preventing corrupt practices such as plagiarism and academic dishonesty, nepotism and favoritism in hiring and promotion, embezzlement of research funds, corruption in admissions and grading, conflict of interest, unethical research practices, lack of accountability, bribery, grade inflation and sexual harassment among academic staff in Universities. It highlights the need for a paradigm shift in leadership approaches to address the insidious corrupt practices in all Nigerian Universities. The study therefore suggests that universities should adopt servant leadership as a philosophy to promote a culture of transparency and accountability and also motivate their staff, so as to reduce the incidence of corrupt practices, promote academic integrity, and maintain public trust. The study has implications for university governance, policy-making, and leadership development, highlighting the need for academic institutions to prioritize integrity and ethics. By implementing these strategies, the Nigerian universities will be able to transform their culture, eliminate corrupt practices, regain the University integrity, and reclaim their reputation as bastions of academic excellence, character formation and shaping the future of the Nation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- * University leaders should adopt servant leadership approach to promote a culture of transparency, accountability, and integrity.
- * Provide training and development opportunities for academic leaders to enhance their servant leadership skills.
- * Payment of adequate salaries and benefits to staff as at when due, to enable them overcome financial difficulties that will encourage their involvement in corrupt practices.

- * Provision of enough resources and infrastructure that will discourage lack of accountability and transparency.
- * Establish open communication channels for reporting corrupt practices, and ensure that reports are addressed promptly.
- * Regularly monitor, review and update university policies to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity.
- * Empower academic staff to take ownership and make decisions, reducing the need for corrupt practices.
- * Incentivize academic staff to demonstrate integrity and ethics in their work.

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