

## University Education Policy in the Fight against Corruption and the Economic Development in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent the university education policy could justify the fight against corruption for sustainable development of Nigeria. This study was designed to provide baseline information for re-engineering university policy-plan in solving the problem of corruption in order to achieve system efficiency and economic development of the nation. Expected findings would be significant to students, teachers policy makers, educational administrators, theory and practice. The ex-post facto designed study had one research question and one hypothesis which guided the investigation. With the use of random sampling technique, 600 academic staff were drawn from the academic staff population in the two universities studied. Data collection was carried out using "University Policy in the Fight Against Corruption and Economic Development Questionnaire" (UPFACEDQ). Percentages, population t-test and mean rank-order were used to statistically analyze data collected for this study. Results obtained revealed that university policy in the fight against corruption for economic development was not significantly high. The on-going policy in the fight against corruption was not yielding the desired result in the university system. It was therefore recommended that staff and students be taught the moral values for the appreciation of the social advantages in the fight against corruption for economic development.

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**Keywords:** economic development, corruption, fight, university, policy.

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is a service that significantly contributes within the context of a sound macro-economic and political environment. University education is administered by the society with a view to achieve rapid socio-economic growth and development enough to perpetuate their existence. Desired changes in employment, wealth and productivity proceed a society-related education that guarantees individuals welfare and national development. According to Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985), national development is the improvement of a nation's productive capacity. In Nigeria, this productive capacity can be addressed basically through sound university education policy plans properly aligned with the fight against corruption, apparently intended to grow and develop the economy. This explains the goal of tertiary education as ashrined in National Policy on Education (FRN 2004:36) in Nigeria which specifically intent to:

- a. Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training
- b. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society

- c. Develop the intellectual capacity of the individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment
- d. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful member of the society

It is the basis of the above that university education managers could ensure increase transparency in social and economic transactions (devoid of corruption) for the common goal of the society since corruption crosses all social sectors. The fact that there is a positive relationship between education and economy confirms that the economy invest in education for significant returns on investment to accure to both individuals and the society (Psacharopoulos, 1972). Education therefore, accelerates economic development on the basis that it impacts knowledge, skills and attitude required for productive activities. Ekpo (2012) adduce that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Nigeria grew by 7.68 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011, which is slightly higher than the 7.40 percent growth in third quarter of the same year. Even in the heart of the

global economic crisis in 2008, Nigerian economy registered a growth rate of 6.4 percent. Also, the economic growth is put at eight percent, the rate of inflation is 12.5 percent and the deficit/growth domestic product ratio is around the acceptable range of four to five percent. The foreign reserves are enough to finance at least 12 months of imports. These indices signal satisfactory macro-economic performance of increase growth rates but cannot alter the structure in favour of building a modern industrial economy. Thus, the increase growth is without significant development. The major challenge of such increasing growth rates in Nigeria is that the rates are non-employment generating (UNDESA, 2011).

According to Babalola (2007), youth unemployment among graduates in Nigeria borders on the inability of the universities to prepare their students adequately in their various programmes of studies. This is basically because of corruption which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the university system. University education which suppose to be the driving force for producing a desirable output for development turn out to produce output who lack employable skills or skills which are at variance with that required by the labour market. Corruption becomes endemic and results in poor university education system with high rate of youth unemployment. In line with the social indicators from the National Bureau of Statistics as espoused by Ekpo (2011), the rate of unemployment in 2007 was 14 percent; jumping to 19.7 percent in 2009 and skyrocketed to 23.9 percent in 2011. About 16 millions Nigerians in 2011 who were able and willing to work could not find employment. The implication here is that despite the impressive growth rates, the high rate of unemployment couple with the seemingly rising rate of inflation suggest that the economy is in a state of stagflation. The fight against corruption becomes necessary in order to involve clear mines in the process of re-thinking and re-branding universities for knowledge-base and economic development.

Corruption can be defined as inducement to wrong by bribery or any unlawful means. It is a dishonest behaviour by people who work for government and politicians. Fasokun (2010) defined corruption as a behaviour which exploit human person, disdainfully using men and women for selfish interests. Corruption is a phenomenon that has always existed but only in recent years the awareness has grown at the international level (Carr, 2011). In Nigeria, corruption has been a canker worm that has bedeviled all societies (universities inclusive). Ameh (2012) asserts that the recent rating by the Berlin based Transparency International in its 2011 annual corruption perception index report rated Nigeria 143<sup>rd</sup> out of 183 nations. This menace of corruption though a global phenomenon (not peculiar to Nigeria), has

assumed an alarming proportion in Nigeria. Thus, the need to fight corruption consciously in order to achieve set targets or intentions in the practice and culture of legality in the university system.

According to Obasanjo (2001), the fall in ideological blocs and globalization of information impact on the economy, contribute to shedding greater light on corruption and making people more effectively aware of it. In the light of this, the university education policy in this study is the administrative plans whose value depends on adequate and appropriate reflection of enduring policy (curriculum contents, finance, and facilities and political system) in the system. The power of a policy can hardly be emphasized because it expresses the plan of action agreed or chosen (Hornby, 2005). The success in the fight against corruption can be achieved where university policy in terms of these variables are articulated and properly implemented with socially responsible behaviors towards socio-economic realities (employment, wealth, income and productivity). This is relevant in view of the nation's state of public universities being bankrupt, quantitatively and qualitatively (Ekanem, 2011).

Universities can make use of the university policy plans such as curriculum, finance, facilities and political system in response to the needs of achieving social intention through effective management (devoid of corruption). The curriculum contents and implementation are external and non-negotiable. The skills, knowledge and values which the university transmits are designed by the society while the output (graduates) is strictly defined by this policy matrix socially determined. Anything outside this, productivity is economically not viable. Lack of transparency in financial management couple with inadequate internal control measures can encourage corruption (Kazakevicus, 2003). This can further worsen with lack of democracy, absence of free press and democratic systems of checks and balances. Corruption also causes serious harm to material resources and places a costly burden on the economy. It can be more harmful to immaterial goods which are closely connected to the quantitative and human dimension of life in society (UNDESA, 2011). Finally, corruption radically distorts the political system in that the role of representative institutions between client's requests and governmental services are negatively affected (Ameh, 2012). The fact that a university is a political proxy for perspective, the policy provision should be effectively re-aligned with the fight against corruption in order to prevent staff from illegitimate benefits and undue advantage which could be financial or in other forms (Ribadu, 2006). This study is delimited to universities in Cross River State of Nigeria while the major limitation to the study is the scarce literature in the area of study. The

study contributes to the filling of such gap and hence to bring added knowledge to literature.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem of this study centres around the noticeable dishonest behaviour prevalent among the public university workers in Nigeria. This is harmful to the growth and wellbeing of university education with a negative consequence on productive capacity of the nation. The price of these corrupt practices by workers to a socially-related education is paid by the monies intended for legitimate use of the society. This necessities, the need for re-alignment of the policy plans of curriculum contents, finance, facilities and political system, with the fight against corruption in the universities. Corruption is of great concern to universities, government and individuals requiring co-operation in the fight against it in all sectors of the economy. Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and some civil societies organizations set up and recognized by Nigerian government are commendable efforts to ameliorate this problem. The results are still discouraging. This study is necessary now in order to achieve the objectives of university education towards attaining an economically developed nation since corruption is endemic in the system. The question remains, can university education policy be aligned socially with the fight against corruption in order to guarantee individual wellbeing, growth and development in Nigeria? This study is designed to find an answer to this poser.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

One research question was formulated for the study: What factors inhibit effective policy in the fight against corruption in university education for economic development in Nigeria?

**HYPOTHESIS**

The university education policy in the fight against corruption for economic development in Nigeria is not significantly high.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the ex-post facto design. It was carried out in Cross River State of Nigeria. The state is one of the six states that constitute the south-south geo-political zone, lying on the eastern axis of the nation. It covered two universities located therein one owned by the Federal Government while the other is owned by the state government in Calabar, the state capital. A sample size of 600 academic staff was drawn randomly from the population of 1350 members of academic staff. Further breakdown of the sample showed that 300 staff were drawn from each of the two institutions. Data collection was carried out using a researcher developed instrument titled University Policy in the Fight Against Corruption and

Economic Development Questionnaire (UPFACEDQ). The instrument has ten (10) items of the Likert-type. Six-point scale was used with responsive categories, scored as very strongly agree-6, strongly agreed-5, agree-4, disagree-3, strongly disagree-2, very strongly disagree-1. The questionnaire was face-validated by experts in measurement evaluation, while the trial test using Cronbach alpha gave an index of 0.81. This figure indicated that the instrument was reliable for use in achieving the research objectives.

The questionnaire copies were personally administered by the researcher and two research assistants recruited from each of the institutions. The instrument was administered to 600 subjects sampled and the measure adopted in doing this was without any mortality rate. The participants were also un-structurally interviewed on the possible factors that could inhibit effective university policy plans in the fight against corruption for economic development in Nigeria. Statistical techniques of percentages, population t-test and mean rank-order were applied to analyze data generated for the study.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The information gathered from the academic staff were subjected to descriptive statistics, using tables, percentages and population t-test. The analyses were shown in tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Percentages of response to university education policy in the fight against corruption for economic development (N=600)

S/N	Items	Yes Agreement	No Disagreement	Total %
1	Academic staff demonstration of capacity to show-case standard in curriculum practices	40	60	100
2	Academic fraud in university education	63	37	100
3	Adequacy of internal control measures in financial practices	36	64	100
4	Transparency in the use of finance	41	59	100
5	Media coverage of corruption	32	68	100
6	Disaffection between govern and the governed	66	34	100
7	Independent internal audit that reports direct to the management	70	30	100
8	Consistence and periodic surprise audit checks on assets	31	69	100
9	Distortion in the political system	67	33	100
10	Practice and culture of legality	28	72	100

N=600 in all cases

The result of the data analysis presented in table 1 have shown generally that the sampled academic staff exhibit negative opinion towards the policy plan in the fight against corruption in the universities. For example, 40 percent of the staff agree that they demonstrated capacity to show-case standard in curriculum practices. Also, 64 percent disagreed that there were adequate internal control measures in the financial practices. All other statements, as shown in table 1 attracted percentages of agreement/disagreement ranging from 59 percent to 72 percent from the respondents that indicated negative opinion to the on-going policy plans in the fight against corruption in the universities. This result also indicated that the on-going policy in the fight against corruption in the universities were having negative effects in the university education system, and are therefore, not achieving the desired results.

Table 2: Population t-test analysis of whether university education policy in the fight against corruption for economic development is significantly high

Variable	Mean	SD	t-values
Overall policy in the fight against corruption for economic development	38.36	6.00	1.81
Hypothesized mean	35.00	0.00	

$P < 0.05$ , critical=1.96; df = 599. (N=600).

The findings of analysis in Table 2 showed that when the overall mean value (38.36) representing the academic staff general opinion on the university policy in the fight against corruption for economic development was compared with the reference mean value of 35.00 (obtained by multiplying the mid-point between agree and disagree (3.5) by the number of items (10), it yielded a significant t-value of 1.81. The result agreed with and summarize the results in Table 1. The null hypothesis was accepted and the interpretation was that the university policy in the fight against corruption for economic development in Nigeria is not significantly high. This was because the obtained t-value (1.81) was found to be lower than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 alpha level of significance, with 599 degrees of freedom.

Table 3: Qualitative result on factors inhibiting university education policy in the fight against corruption for economic development

S/N	Factors	Mean	Rank order
1	Absence of moral values conviction for social advantage	3.96	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Lack of transparency in financial practices.	2.55	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Lack of skilled manpower in key operations.	2.25	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Negative influence on relationship between the government and the governed	1.98	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Distortions in the political system.	1.94	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Lack of respect to the rules of law.	1.56	6 <sup>th</sup>

N=600 in all cases.

Table 3 revealed the outstanding reasons given by the respondents on factors that inhibit the effective university policy in the fight against corruption for economic development in Nigeria. This result was obtained on unstructured interview conducted by the researcher. The factors were in the order of absence of moral values conviction, lack of transparency in financial practices, lack of skilled manpower in key operations, negative influence between government and governed, distortions in political system and lack of respect to the rules of law.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study revealed that the academic staff sampled exhibited a significantly low opinion towards the on-going university policy plans in the fight against corruption for economic development. Their low opinion was reflected in the areas of inadequacy of the policy and their unwillingness to implement the policy in the fight against corruption in the universities. The implication of this was that, administrators were well informed of the need of the policy aligned with the fight against corruption and the understanding of the dynamics behind the illegal practices, yet they failed in their performances. The anomaly was explained by the qualitative results obtained in this study to the effect that the staff lack the moral conviction, transparency, skills, respect to the rules of law while the system revealed negative influence on relationship between the government and the governed with distortions in the political system. Education at this level cannot accelerate economic development with these limitations since corruption will not allow for effective knowledge, skills and attitude required by university output for productive activities and economic development.

This finding was similar to research results of Carr (2011) and Fasokun (2010). In these results, the respondents showed low opinion towards the plans to fight corruption. The uniqueness of the findings were derived from the fact that the fight against corruption is a global phenomenon (affecting the rich and poor countries). This is crucial in the fight against corruption since denial of existence of corruption or complacency has been identified as a dangerous act fuelling the ready climate of corruption. Information Technology (IT) has made the world a global village and knowledge-driven. Universities could strive to enhance productivity and spread the efficiency of programmed activities towards the achievement of clearly determined goals. This fact was relevant as Nigerian university graduates employed in various establishments were not capable of performing creditably (UNAESA, 2011). Thus, no significant development could be registered in most sectors of the economy due to the fact that corruption is endemic in the university system and programmes run are not functional in nature.

The population t-test analysis revealed a significant low result attesting to the fact that the on-going policy in the fight against corruption were not yielding the desired results. This finding was similar to the ones by other researchers in the Less Developed Countries (LDC) of the world. For example Mullins (2006) found a low opinion in the policy to counter corruption in Kenya higher institutions which impacted negatively in the employment, wealth and productivity of the nation. In Nigeria, the mismatch between higher institution curriculum and the needs for the labour market has been a major challenge which resulted in poor university output (Babalola, 2007). The universities lacks the ability to consult private sectors in fashioning out its programmes which made academic staff to teach using outdated curriculum, resources and teaching methods. The effect of this is in the growing unemployment among Nigerian graduates from universities leaving the nation without significant development, though with increase growth (Ekpo, 2012).

The decay in the education sector negatively impact on the university education level. Corruption including academic fraud in the system cannot be acceptable. Individuals need to receive university education benefits in the form of higher earnings and the society as a whole benefit in the form of higher aggregate productivity and higher tax returns (Ekanem, 2011). This could be achieved by stakeholders through commitment in rehabilitation and transformation of university education towards socially responsible economic development of the nation.

The anti-corruption agenda introduced by the Obasanjo administration in 1999 was a necessary response to tackling the problem of corruption in Nigeria. However, conscious efforts could be made by educational administrators with transparency by effectively observing the internal control measures of the financial practices (due process) to safeguard institutional assets and liabilities. This articulation was noted in World Bank (2000) that adherence to such controls by organizations may end up in nations' development economically, socio-culturally and politically. More so, without free press, without democratic systems of checks and balances, corruption could be made easier in the universities. The fight against corruption could be championed by internal audit departments with irrevocable mandates to report directly to the top management of the universities. This independence of internal audit should be maintained to avoid undue influence on the reports and to ascertain consistency in socially responsible behaviours in the universities (Kazakevivi, 2003). This study revealed positive responses in favour of the internal control variable and should be sustained.

The study also showed a high level of distortions in the political system of the universities. This means that political choices favoured the narrow objectives of those who possessed the means to influence these choices. This became obstacle to bring about the common good of all citizens and could contribute to underdevelopment and poverty, which may prevent the society of bright opportunity for sustainable development (FRN, 2004). Also, the university system tend to be weak as the study revealed a low percentage of practice and culture of legality. This result supported the view of Ameh (2012) who noted that respect for rules, correct functioning of economic, political institutions and transparency were deprived of in a school system with illegality. The universities as prime human capital institutions could be made to function for the common good of all in order to remain afloat in a global competitive economy.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the university education policy in the fight against corruption for the economic development in Nigeria was not significantly high. The on-going policy in the fight against corruption was not yielding the desired results in the system. Factors inhibiting university education policy in the fight against corruption for economic development in Nigeria were identified.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conscious attempts at all levels of education to teach moral values and to convince the staff and students of the social advantages associated with these values.
2. All financial transactions in the universities should be carried out transparently after appropriate authorization and approvals by responsible officials.
3. Only efficient qualified manpower should be engaged in carrying out operations in the universities.
4. There should be deliberate effort by administrators to promote favourable relationship between the govern and the governed in universities.
5. The internal control procedures should be duly observed in the universities
6. Every staff in the university system should be law abiding and administrators to effectively implement the university policy in the fight against corruption.

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