



Ethical Lapses in the Nigerian Higher Education System

Obiora F. Ike's Ethics of Education
and the Nigerian Context

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Abstract

This study uses secondary data to examine Obiora's education ethics vis-à-vis the higher education system in Nigeria. The discourse centered on government educational agencies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC); National Board for Technical Education (NBTE); National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and their roles in the management of the educational system in Nigeria. The study further highlights the ethical lapses in the tertiary education system in Nigeria. The researcher suggests that, the government should encourage private ownership of tertiary institutions, while the government through its agencies supervises them.

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1. Introduction

“ True education must be an 'education in criticism'. It is the exercise to question things from their origin, allowing doubt and examination of the problem to come to a balanced conclusion and position” (Ike, 2016, 4)¹

Educational development is one of the bedrocks of any developed and civilized nation. Due to the role of education in the development of nations, attention of government, its functionaries, corporate societies, religious organizations, private individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, and even multi-national profit-making organizations have been drawn to the development of the educational sector. While the government often takes the lead in the educational sector in terms of providing the legal frameworks for the sector and teachers as well as building schools, other stakeholders such as corporate societies, religious organizations, private individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, and multi-national profit-making organizations provide infrastructural facilities such the physical building, laboratories, equipment, libraries and books, sports equipment, workshops for practical, and studios, etc. The above picture is peculiar to third-world or developing countries where the educational sector is primarily or almost exclusive in the hands of the government. But in other climes (development nations) the government provides the legal frameworks for the smooth operations of the educational sector while other stakeholders are mostly the proprietors of the schools in the higher education sector. This kind of system, therefore, allows the government to set up a good standard for the educational sector. This kind of structure allows supervision from the government and its agencies for the effective delivery of service to the subscribed members of society. But on the contrary, the system that allows the government to take a major lead as proprietors are

¹ Ike, O. F. 2016. “Ethics in Higher Education as Tool for Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny”. In: O. F. Ike (Ed.), *Catholic Social Teaching, Historical Overview and Application to the Challenges of Africa*. Printed and bounded by BEW IT LTD, 4.

usually skewed towards being ineffective because the government cannot supervise itself as a proprietor and as the initiator of the legal framework.

It is believed that in an educational system where the government is the major proprietor and at the same time the initiator, and implementer of legal and moral frameworks, ethical values are often undermined while in the educational sector where non-state actors are major proprietors, ethical principles are upheld. This tends to be the greatest problem in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. In Nigeria for instance, there are several ethical and administrative issues confronting the educational sector. We hear often about admission fraud, anointed student candidates, drug abuse, campus prostitution, and absenteeism from classes during lectures occasioned by the strike because of non-payment of salaries and other entitlements, which also brought about students’ demonstration. Ike (2019) believes in this distinction. He believes that private universities for instance have the abundant capacities to become the “Hope and Future of Higher Education in Africa”². He drew his conclusion based on the fact that many private institutions are built on the strong epistemic values of their founders. Though this seems to be true, not in practice in Nigeria as pieces of evidence show that private universities are not exempted from unethical (corrupt) practices in the conduct of their daily affairs.

But what are ethics and higher education as we delve into the discussion in detail? *Ethics* — has been seen differently by different scholars. According to Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) is about human behavior and ways of thinking that affect the behavior and well-being of other members of our community³. Other views see ethics as rightness or wrongness. Ethics is anchored on what is right or wrong, what is good or bad in a given field or discipline. It focuses

² Ike, Obiora F. 2019. “Higher Education in Crisis: The Role of Ethics in Private Universities for Nation Building”, in: *Higher Education in Crisis*, Ikechukwu J. Ani / Obiora F. Ike (Eds.), Education Ethics Series No. 5, Geneva: Globethics.net available at <https://www.globethics.net/education-ethics-series>

³ Ajayi, K. and Adeniji, A. 2009. “Pursuing discipline and ethical issues in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.” *African Research Review*, Vol.3 (1), 284-300.

on how humans should live their lives and, in particular, how they should behave towards others, it is, therefore, pertinent to all forms of human activities. Ethics is also related to moral values. Adedara and Bewaji (2017, 179) see ethics as a moral philosophy that concerns itself with the “norms of behavior; right and wrong, good and evil, approbation and reprobation”⁴ Wimmer and Dominic (2003) state that ethical behavior is the “proper thing to do”.⁵ These researchers assume that someone who behaves ethically will be convinced that he has acted in a “morally appropriate manner” Indisputably, ethics is found in all human endeavors as Parrish-Sprowl (2000, 204) asserts that “ethical considerations reside in nearly every human activity, be it thought, word or deeds”.⁶

Higher education in Nigeria is known as tertiary education and classified according to National Policy on Education 1998 as university education sector; it includes all universities. Technical education sector takes care of polytechnics; teacher education sector handles colleges of education. Professional schools is where monotronics are situated (Ajayi & Adeniji, 2009). The focus of this study, therefore, is on these classifications.

2. Nigeria higher educational structure and ethical lapses

The Nigerian educational sector is one of the largest and most complex sectors (ministries). Under the Federal Ministry of Education are about 217 Universities, and 152 Polytechnics of which the Federal government owns 37, the various state governments own 51 and the private sector owns 64 and 205

⁴ Adedara, P. B. & Bewaji, J. A. 2017. *Media Theory, Practice and Ethics: A Textbook of Film and Television Studies*. Ibadan: Bwright Integrated Publishers Limited.

⁵ Wimmer, R. D. & Dominic, J.R. 2003. *Mass Media Research an Introduction*. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth.

⁶ Parrish-Sprowl, J. 2000. “Ethical Considerations in Development Communication”. In: A. A. Moemeka (Ed.), *Development Communication in Action Building and Participation*. University Press of America. 203-204.

accredited Colleges of Education while sub-ministries or agencies according to infomeidiang.com are twenty-four and includes: National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS); Nigerian Educational Research Development Council (NERDC); West African Examination Council (WAEC); Nigeria French Language Village (NFV); National Commission for Adult Education Mass Literacy and Non-Formal Education (NMEC); National Examination Council (NECO); Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN); Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC); National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE); Computer Professional Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN); Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB); National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB). Others are National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA); National Teachers Institute (NTI); National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NNLAN); Teachers’ Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN); National Library of Nigeria (NLN); Federal Scholarship Board (FSB); Nigerian Arabic Language Village (NALV); Nigerian Mathematical Centre (NMC); National Universities Commission (NUC); National Board for Technical Education (NBTE); National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) (Quari, 2022).⁷

Our interest in this study is to examine a few of these agencies vis-a-vis ethics in tertiary education in Nigeria. Let us begin with National Universities Commission (NUC). This agency is manned by its Executive Secretary, it is the agency saddled with the responsibility of licensing universities both public and private, and supervising the university educational system. This agency is also directly responsible for approving and accreditation of courses. This agency also Supervises, monitors, and evaluates universities' curricula. The agency set the benchmark (standard) for university education in Nigeria. But surprisingly, Nigerian university education is marred with corruption, ranging from examination malpractice, sex scandal, bribery, poor curriculum development, lack and shortage of manpower, and poor manpower development. Some Lecturers moonlight regularly, teaching in five to six universities at a

⁷ Quadri, O. 2022, July 9. List of 24 agencies under Ministry of Education in Nigeria. <https://infomeidiang.com/agencies-under-ministry-of-education-nigeria/>

time. Lecturers also leave their universities and posed in other universities as full-time staff during accreditation just for the sake of one hundred thousand naira (#100,000.00). Sad enough, society looks up to lecturers as role models and mentors of another generation. Worried by this act, Ike queried,

“ But what do we teach the young? Can the teacher give students what the teacher does not possess? How do we educate ourselves? How does education take place? Is education anything, nothing, or something? Does this something stand for a system that educates what is human in humankind, especially the young? (Ike, 2016)⁸

The truth is, NUC has refused to do the needful by creating a database for Nigerian lecturers to track their place of primary assignment and to prevent moonlighting and the unethical behavior of lecturers during accreditation. These are some of the ethical issues that render Nigerian universities very ineffective and also affect their global ranking. University leadership sometimes submit to this unwholesome behavior as a means of rescuing the university from failing accreditation exercise. This is major because the proprietors of the universities have failed to provide the necessary funding for the proper administration of the universities. Adeyemi and Obadiora (2020) in their survey research conducted to ascertain the level of compliance to professional ethics by academic and non-academic staff as stakeholders in Nigerian universities found that they have a low level of implementation of professional ethics among the university staff.⁹

⁸ Ike, O. F. 2016. “Ethics in Higher Education as Tool for Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny”, op. cit.

⁹ Adeyemi, B. A., & Obadiora, A. J. 2020. “Maintenance of professional ethics in a Nigerian higher institution of learning: Stakeholders views on the best practices”. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 7(5), 11–20.

The view expressed above shows that, despite putting a structure in place, the ethical standard needs to be set and above all, ethics without application further creates a chaotic situation. This is the true picture of Nigerian university education.

On the other hand, the Nigerian Polytechnics/Monotechnics are supervised by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) managed by Executive Secretary. This agency under the Federal Ministry of Education performs similar functions to its sister counterpart (NUC). Nigerian Polytechnics/Monotechnics seems to face higher ethical issues than the universities. The supervision and attention on Polytechnics/Monotechnics on the part of government and the supervisory agency tend to be weaker if not absent thereby paving the way to a high level of indiscipline amongst staff and students. In the Nigerian Polytechnics/Monotechnics, poor-quality textbooks are sold to students at lecturers' fixed prices, which creates room for exploitation and extortion. Sometimes marks are awarded for the purchase of poorly written, edited, printed books. Sex for the grade is not left out in the system, bribery, forgery, poor curriculum development, lack and shortage of manpower and poor manpower development as well as poor enumeration to staff are among the many ethical issues in the system.

During accreditation of courses by NBTE, lecturers sometimes are hired from the sister institution(s) and sometimes from nearby or far away universities who posed as full-time staff of the institution. This unethical conduct from Polytechnic/Monotechnics and Universities teachers is also a pointer to the fact that NBTE has failed in the discharge of its responsibility. A database for all Polytechnic/Monotechnics, Colleges of Education will provide the solution to this hydra-headed problem.

Acknowledging the enormity of the problems (ethical lapses) the current Executive Secretary of NBTE, Prof Bugaje in his paper presented at a seminar recently held in Kaduna State University's maiden edition of the science conference. Prof Bugaje in his paper entitled, “The Role of Science in Job Creation and Economic Revitalization” alleged that Nigerian Polytechnics have failed in providing functional education to the nation.

The constant failure of the Nigerian Polytechnics in providing functional education to Nigerians orchestrated by gross ineffective supervision and monitoring by NBTE led the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2021 to establish Education and Allied Institutions from the already founded Tertiary Education Department to provide skilled and semi-skilled technical and specialized middle and high-level manpower through available relevant distinctive education in Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Innovation Enterprise. This rescue agency had the following objectives among others:

- i. To manage the newly established Federal tertiary education institutions or take over the existing State Polytechnics in partnership with appropriate agencies.
- ii. To manage parastatals such as NBTE, JAMB, and TETFund on Polytechnic matters.

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). This is the agency that is responsible for the supervision of Colleges of Education. Colleges of Education are the third force in the Nigerian tertiary educational system. The idea behind the establishment of Colleges of Education is to train the needed manpower (teachers) for primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, Colleges of Education have been left unattended by proprietors and lack proper supervision. In recent times, Colleges of Education exist as a dumping ground for almost all frustrating Nigerian youths who could not make it to the universities and polytechnics. You can now imagine the level of indiscipline and unethical practices on display in Nigerian Colleges of Education

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) is an agency set up by the Federal Government as a rescue agent to salvage the decay and the decline in the educational sector as a result of a long period of neglect and poor resource allocation to the educational sector. Some of the primary responsibilities of this agency are to manage, disburse and monitor the education tax to public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The intervention funds are meant to address library intervention, research grants, academic staff training and development, publication of the journal, and manuscript development.

Haven taken a panoramic assessment of the agency's responsibilities we can now relate this argument to Virtue Ethics- Aristotle's philosophical thought, premised on the virtue of the person making the decision. This theory requires the decision maker to understand what virtue is good for the public. We adopt this theory to explain this topic since our discourse looks at decision makers at a different level. At the highest level is the government as proprietor and decision maker followed by tertiary education agencies also as decision makers, private owners equally make decisions, tertiary education administrators are not left out in decision-making process, teachers' decisions impact even more on the students, which is why Obiora Ike sees teachers as the “producers of future global leaders”. The students themselves are also decision-makers in one way or the other. Ethical theories represent the perspectives from which individuals seek guidance as they make a decision. Each theory has a different view on the decision-making process. Different persons make decisions differently depending on the set of goals the decision maker seeks to accomplish to be within a set time. The goals according to (Adetunji et al., 2022) are on four levels. Beneficence — what is right is doing good to others; least harm — the decision maker chooses not to harm. Respect for autonomy — decision-making gives room for autonomy. Justice — guides the decision makers to take decisions that appear to be fair to all.

3. Ethical burden in Nigerian universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and colleges of education

Earlier, we laid a foundation for the discussion of ethical burden in Nigerian tertiary institutions under the sub-heading, “Nigeria higher educational structure and ethical lapses”. Under this heading, we try to expose the ethical lapses in the three major Federal Government agencies responsible for monitoring the most recognized tertiary institutions in Nigeria; universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and colleges of education. At this point, we shall take a look at individual ethical issues that are common in these three institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

Indiscriminate absence from classes and non-availability for project supervision

Many Nigerian lecturers and teachers absent themselves from classes indiscriminately. Oftentimes, you see students waiting for hours in the classroom for their teacher without any information regarding whether or not the teacher will come to the class. Sometimes the teacher shows up 30 minutes before the end of the class. This scenario is rampant in government-owned universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and colleges of education where lecturers are lords due to a lack of quality control and assurance. One of the major reasons why undergraduate projects in Nigeria is nothing to reckon with is the non-availability of lecturers to supervise the projects. For Nigerian lecturers, lecturing in Nigeria do not obey the law of contract and principles of engagement.

Non-enforcement of class attendance

In most Nigerian universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, and colleges of education class attendance are not taken seriously even when research has shown that there is a significant relationship between attendance and good performance. Some lecturers do not care about attendance so students could lazy around and possibly fail examinations so that such students could come for settlement. Another twist to this is the lack of quality control by institutions' administration. No mechanism is put in place to checkmate this act of indiscipline and unethical conduct among lecturers.

Late commencement of lectures and non-completion of course outline

This is another serious bridge of contract by lecturers in the Nigerian tertiary educational system. Some lecturers due to over-engagement which as moonlighting may be attending to other institutions, while the parents or the second, third, fourth even fifth institution suffers. This is another avenue where lecturers make courses difficult for students, a strategy or lacuna that influences students to go for bribery for marks. It is a major reflection of the lack of quality control on the part of the institutional administrators.

The setting of difficult tests and examination

This unethical practice is very common with corrupt and deformed lecturers. Lecturers who want to collect money for students will first and foremost absent themselves from classes, resume their lectures late, disregard course outlines, and ignored attendances. All of these are psychological intimidations of students. Their questions sometimes do not have a marking guide because they have no answers to the questions they set. The aim is to collect money from students.

Gratification and sexual harassment

The outcome of lecturers’ psychological intimidation of students is bribe-taking and sexual harassment. There are two sets of deformed lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The first group is the avaricious lecturers who can do anything for money and material gains. These interglots in their rapacious behavior lure students to give them bribes or material gifts for marks they do not deserve. Another category of deformed lecturers in Nigerian higher education is pleasure seekers. These lecturers are the ones who award marks for sex. This seems to be the number one unethical practice on Nigerian campuses. Many campuses are finding it difficult to deal with the issue of sex obsession and hypersexuality, a psychiatric disorder that has taken a toll on Nigerian tertiary education. According to Ikechi and Akanwa (2012), young academics are most guilty of sexual harassment.¹⁰

Campus prostitution

Due to pressure on the female students to meet up with financial demands of certain lecturers, a percentage of the female students resort to prostitution to meet up with the demands. These young female students prefer to wear body-revealing dresses that could attract male lecturers.

¹⁰ Ikechi, K. S. & Akanwa, U. N. 2012. “Unethical Practices in the Nigerian Educational System”. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(8), 451–464.

Cultism

One of the greatest vices confronting Nigerian campuses as a result of lack of discipline and ethical standards which many scholars attribute to the long stay of the military in Nigeria is cultism. Cult activities have been on the increase for a long time now. Some students are initiated into a cult through their lecturers' influence and others through their friends. The reasons for cultism on campus include but are not limited to intimidation of female students, and access to lecturers who are members of the same course. Ikechi and Akanwa (2012) assert that cultism has dangerously affected the psyche of young Nigerians irrespective of gender, age, and religious background. Mfonobong (2022, 1) writes, "the Nigerian universities have been the major place that has been influenced and affected by activities of cult groups" Among the notable cult groups on Nigerian campuses are Pyrate Confraternity, Black Axe, Vikings, Buccaneer, Supreme Eiyé Confraternity, Mafia Confraternity, Two-Two Confraternity, Eternal Fraternal Order, Maphite Confraternity, and Black Bra Confraternity, etc. ¹¹

Drug/ substance abuse

Drug abuse is the stimuli that catapult Nigerian students into a cult. It emboldens them to engage in cult activities. Due to a lack of ethical standards, Nigerian students are wholesomely involved in taking alcohol, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, nicotine, cigarettes, and other tobacco products.

Monetization of Intellectual property/ Lecturers' involvement in students' project writing

Academic standard in Nigeria is decaying as the day goes by. The trend today in Nigeria is the commercialization of intellectual property. This is now the development for the avarice and cupidity lecturers. These lecturers sell their works for money and also help students write their project, thesis, or disser-

¹¹ Mfonobong, D. 2022, July 9. Top popular cult groups in Nigerian universities and symbols. <https://nigerianinfinder.com/top-cult-groups-nigerian-universities/>

tation for a fee. Sometimes these lecturers give the project, thesis, or dissertation to a younger colleague or bright students to write while he pays them for their service. The shocking part of this ugly trend is that most senior faculty members are involved in this dirty act.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice is not only widespread on Nigerian campuses but has eaten deep into the very fabric of the educational system. Ikechi and Akanwa (2012) described it as “scandalous” saying that lecturers have raised the bar of examination malpractice. Examination malpractice has reached its peak in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Lecturers even aid students to cheat in examinations. As invigilators sometimes they take their eyes off the students to enable them to cheat with any foreign material they came to examination with. While some invigilators do not even stay in the examination hall to invigilate, they will prefer to hang around the door or window or engage other invigilators in conversation to allow the students to have a filled day.

Favored making and deceitful recording/ substitution of scripts

This is a very common practice in Nigerian institutions. Due to a large number of students, some examiners do give their scripts to their Postgraduate students, junior colleagues, or undergraduate in upper classes to grade for them. This new examiner then tells students that he is in the custody of their scripts and from there he is contacted. Sometimes, lecturers deceitfully record scores for students. This is common when fraudulent level examination officers would have collected money from a student and promised such students that he has access to all the scores and he can do something about them. Polytechnics and monotechnics in Nigeria are guiltier of this unethical practice. When this attempt fails, lecturers sometimes resort to the substitution of the script to enable the students to write afresh even with their notes or textbooks.

Admission syndicates and racketeering

This unethical practice is usually an admission officer-student deal. On many Nigerian campuses admission is bought with money and the admission offic-

ers do have some students as the middlemen who collect money on their behalf. Some students who may not have the right contact for this illicit business do it on their own and oftentimes fall victim.

Non-utilization of TETFund Grant

The level of corruption in the Nigerian educational system is alarming. Tertiary institutions ordinarily ought to be a home of decency but in Nigeria, the reserve is the case. Many scholars who access TETFund grants do not utilize the fund for the purpose for which the grant was given. Some scholars have won a grant for research but diverted the fund for their marriage, purchase of a car, completion of their building project, health care, or travel abroad. While some who win grants for further studies abroad never travel, and some who travel abroad with the grant never return to Nigeria as contained in the grants agreement.

Falsifying research data/plagiarism

Research is the life-wire of the tertiary institution, particularly the university education. Research is governed by ethics, yet many researchers do not border ethics in their profession. In Nigeria, research ethics is not emphasized. You may take two research courses at the undergraduate level without tutoring on research ethics. You may as well take a course at Masters and Ph.D. programmes without knowledge of research ethics. These are some of the problems faced by academics in Nigeria, coupled with the fact that corrupt practices have become a norm in our educational system. Ethics is very important in research because creates the boundary between what is right in research and what is wrong. According to Wimmer and Dominic (2003) researchers are always confronted with ethical problems such as tampering with data.¹² These researchers averred that researchers are expected to exercise judicious caution in processing their data to guard against needless errors that might affect the results and warn researchers from plagiarism. This counsel is

¹² Wimmer, R. D. & Dominic, J.R. 2003. *Mass Media Research an Introduction*. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth.

simply but noise to many Nigerian scholars. Data falsification and plagiarism are among the numerous ethical issues often ignored in Nigeria. Researchers may sample 10 respondents then add another “0” to 10 and claim 100. The responsibilities of the university are multi-dimensional due to its multi-disciplinary nature. Research is one of the major responsibilities of the university in its multi-disciplinary status. One of the greatest benefits of university research is in the area of medical and health sciences. This area has indeed placed the university at the heart of society as a sovereign institution. The global pandemic and COVID-19 experience are further proof of the importance of research in the medical and health sciences. The last pandemic exposed corrupt and least developed countries of the world to the poor state of their tertiary education about research in medical and health sciences. Given the imperativeness of ethical standards in health research, the World Medical Association in 1975 came up with a *Declaration of Helsinki* an ethical obligation that suggests careful methods of conducting medical research without impacting and damaging our environment.

4. Conclusion

Obiora Ike’s educational ethics: Imperativeness for Nigerian higher education

The education they say increases an inborn worth. According to Dukor (2017), education substantiates the moral worth of an individual as a moral and rational agent.¹³ Ike (2016) believes that education is the epicenter of human existence, necessary equipment for character formation for the young, and a means to acquiring power and accessing opportunities, and resources¹⁴. Obiora Ike’s reflection and submission is humanity in retrospect. Ethical

¹³ Dukor, M. 2017, May 3. Ethical issues in Nigeria’s higher education and governance. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/opinion/ethical-issues-in-nigerias-higher-education-and-governance/>

¹⁴ Ike, O. F. “Ethics in Higher Education as Tool for Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny”, op. cit.

principles establish a strong culture of discipline and enthrone excellence. Tertiary institutions are called citadels of learning because of their culture of excellence. Ike (2019) expressed this same view and asserts that universities are but “citadels of a new Leadership, producing inspiring and innovative ideas with initiatives that lead to broad-based social movements for change”.¹⁵ The hope of a nation rests squarely on the outputs of its educational system. As Dukor further states that the “absence of quality education makes nonsense the ideal of individuals and the society’s development leading most often than not violence, poverty, unemployment, corruption, graft, unaccountability, and potential instability”. Prof Bugaje in his paper also expressed the same view. Bugaje blamed the high level of insecurity in the country on joblessness orchestrated by the non-functional educational system. In tertiary education particularly, the university is an institution where ideas are nurtured, skills are developed, and liberate human thinking and reasoning, thus, the university is an institution for autonomous intellectual fabricated in research and multiplicity of thoughts. Ike (2019) in his opinion, thought and reflection on a University education, believes that university education has a great role to play in the society’s plays in the welfare and well-being of global society by providing all-encompassing education to students, performing original and *horizon*-broadening research, and transfer new knowledge for the benefit of society. He, therefore, quipped that a good education obtained through Higher Education systems reinforces wealth and stability. University teachers produce the global leaders of tomorrow. Consequently (Ike, 2017a, 1), “tertiary education system that is not rooted in ethical principles cannot serve the 21st-century global society”. He sees education in the 21st Century as a process that must prime the students to inculcate discipline, be free from social vices and become responsible members of society, develop their thinking ability, improves on their innovative endowment, creates and decide their destiny while the teacher’s responsibility in this new order is to “guide the student to know how to acquire knowledge that is not mere information but

¹⁵ Ike, O. F. 2019. “Higher Education in Crisis: The Role of Ethics in Private Universities for Nation Building”, op. cit.

the knowledge that is reflected, offering essential insights needed for effective living”(Ike, 2019, 1).

The available literature on educational ethics has also shown that the absence of ethical standards has been the reason for corruption, graft, unaccountability, impunity, mediocrity, and erosion of quality assurance. This view is also succinctly expressed by Globethics.net report (2018, 4):

“ allowing unethical practices to flourish, such as abuse of power, cheating, sexual harassment, indiscipline, corruption and mediocrity by teachers, students and institutions harm society.

Ethics and values transform, correct, draws boundary, safeguard, protect, preserve, and maintain high standards in the educational sector. Ethical principles establish a balance system where everyone knows his/her limits, responsibilities, and functions as well as carries out those functions efficiently. Ike draws up four notable ethical hypotheses that should guide the operations of the university and by extension tertiary institutions. We strongly believe that these ethical propositions if adhered to by our tertiary institutions can change the current narrative in the Nigerian educational sector. What are these assumptions? Obiora Ike posits that universities should employ ethical principles in teaching

“ to transform students into responsible citizens and future leaders; research – to integrate responsibility into research through ethical principles that create innovation and, promote scientific progress and respect the balance of the human and spiritual ecology of humankind; governance – to turn the spotlight into the institutions themselves by ensuring that codes of ethics and **principles of balance of power driven by values** are inculcated in the institutional framework itself and put into practice at all levels – teaching by doing; society – to integrate the notion of responsibility in the discussion with higher education's main stakeholders such as regulators, Commissions, Ministries of Education and Governments.

Does Ike leave us with this question?

“ Is there any other viable alternative for humanity at this time? What future does society expect if the leaders of the future are not equipped with real life-skills during formation and training as medical doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, technicians, diplomats, academics, professionals, pastors, development practitioners, researchers, sociologists, community leaders, family members, *and* citizens of their countries?

Recommendations

The extant literature reviewed for this study shows the gross ethical lapses in the tertiary education system in Nigeria. The lapses start from the government agencies saddled with the supervisory responsibilities over the tertiary institutions in Nigeria and end with the tertiary institutions themselves. To remedy this ugly situation in the Nigerian educational sector, the researcher suggests that, the government should encourage private ownership of tertiary institutions while the government through its agencies supervises them, this is also in line with Ike's view, which he asserts that, private universities have the abundant capacities to become the “Hope and Future of Higher Education in Africa because they are built on strong epistemic values” (ibid.). The researcher also recommends that a database should be developed by NUC, NBTE, and NCCE to checkmate the illegal movement of teachers during resource verification and accreditation exercises. This is also hitched on Ike's thought that a tertiary education system that is not rooted in ethical principles cannot serve the 21st-century global society. We also recommend that workshops on ethics in tertiary institutions should be conducted periodically.

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6. Short biography

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