

Academic Fraud/Corruption in Nigeria Universities: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract: *This paper addressed the issues, challenges and entrepreneurial way forward to academic fraud. The paper reviewed literatures on academic fraud, academic dishonesty and academic cheating. The results of the literature reviewed shows that students and writers participate in academic fraud knowingly and unknowingly. Also, there are triangulated factors attributed to academic fraud likewise anti-academic fraud measures. However, the study coined the five-core entrepreneurial way forward to curtailing academic fraud called “**Problem-based Outreach (PbO)**.” Hence, it is expedient for the governing bodies on academic fraud to institute academic symposium on academic integrity into their school curriculum. The study also recommended that empirical study on factors influencing academic fraud of students in institutions in Nigeria is indispensable.*

Keywords: Academic Fraud; Academic Fraud issues and Challenges; Entrepreneurial way forward;

I. Introduction

Academic dishonesty, academic misconduct, academic fraud, and a lack of academic integrity are all terms that refer to actions taken by students, lecturers, teachers, and institutions that go against the expected norms and moral standards in academics and professions in schools, colleges, universities, and other learning institutions.

Commitment, integrity, and honesty are vital to the pursuit of academic knowledge in both learning institutions and our educational system..

According to Stella Maris (2016), the Nigerian educational system is rife with recorded and unreported incidences of academic cheating, corruption, and breaches, making academic integrity a major concern. It's possible that the difficulty in establishing a culture of integrity in Nigerian academic institutions stems from differing perceptions on what constitutes academic honesty. As a result, achieving academic integrity in Nigeria requires an united perspective and a holistic approach.

Academic corruption does not have a universal definition, according to research and many studies. Academic dishonesty, fraud, misconduct, corruption, and lack of integrity are all dealt with differently by universities and educational institutions in different places and nations. Bribery, misinstructing, misguidance, misleading, misdirection, false intelligence, misinformation, racketeering, and other forms of corruption are commonly connected with corruption.

Bribery is the act of paying someone money or giving them a gift in order to influence their behavior. Bribery is a felony, according to Dictionary, and is described as "the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of any object of value in order to influence the acts of a public official or other person in charge of a legal responsibility or educational institutions.

"A bribe is a present given to influence the behavior of the recipient. It can be money, goods, property, preferment, privilege, emolument, object of worth, advantage, or simply a promise or undertaking to induce or influence the conduct, vote, or influence of a person in an official or public role, notably in grading pupils or marking exam scripts.

Corruption is unethical or criminal behavior that occurs all across the world, including among academics. Academic corruption, academic dishonesty, and academic fraud, in this situation, are academic misconduct actions occurring within and outside of academic environments or systems, regardless of the perpetrator (s).

However, there are no contemporary studies that explore the entrepreneurial approach to academic fraud, cheating, or dishonesty, necessitating this research.

Issues linked to academic fraud, obstacles of academic fraud, conclusion and entrepreneurial path forward to academic fraud, and topic of further investigation make up the remainder of this paper.

II. Literature Review

Studies on academic fraud or academic cheating is not new and have been studied extensively with empirical evidence that shows its alarming rate in recent years (Miranda & Freire, 2011). Although, academic dishonesty first surfaced in the accounting literature

review in 2010 as curricular issue (Apostolou, Dorminey, Hassell, & Watson, 2013). Nevertheless, it is important to know that academic fraud has been used synonymously in literatures with academic dishonesty and academic cheating. There is no universally accepted definition for academic fraud (Kibler, 1993) and what is considered as academic fraud is a function of context (Martinez & Ramírez, 2018). However, academic fraud (academic dishonesty) has been defined differently by scholars with consensual conclusion of illegality.

In that case, academic fraud is defined as “several forms of behaviour which give benefits for students improperly including cheating, plagiarism, stealing, and fabricating something related to the academic activity (Sagoro, 2013). It is also defined as all forms of cheating or fraud which include: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance on assignments and examinations among others (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015). In like manner, academic fraud is also defined as: (i) omitted reference of sources in the quotes made in writing final projects, (ii) cooperation for mid-term or final term tests (when they are required to do it independently), (iii) cheating during examination, and (iv) no involvement in group assignment completion (Kardoyo, Arief, Nurkhin, & Pramusinto, 2018).

Another scholar defined academic fraud from the perspective of unethical or abuse of academic office or academic power. Thus, “academic fraud is defined as the use of public office for private gain in the academic field, especially regarding accreditation of courses and institutions, examinations for access and for transfers between institutions, certificates and diplomas, university/college research and publications (Hallak & Poisson, 2007)”. In like manner, other scholar defined academic fraud from assessment perspective. Hence, academic assessment is a universal practice to determine academic performance, however, when the academic assessment indicators is subject to corruption, it is called academic fraud (Martinez & Ramírez, 2018)

Observably, academic fraud or dishonest occurs among unethical; students, writers, academic accessors to mention a few. Some students or writers are aware that academic: dishonest, cheating and fraud is a sanctionable offence while others do not know (Sagoro, 2013). However, the issues of academic dishonest, cheating or fraud in both developing and developed economies is alarming (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015).

Observably, scholastic misrepresentation is a center maladjustment to the nature of schooling overall and absorptive limit specifically. A few investigations have been completed on issues; challenges; factors that require scholarly misrepresentation, cheating or untruthfulness; hypothesis of extortion according to triangle point of view; and Fraud Pentagon hypothesis. Despite all that, academic fraud in higher institution is an issue that has not been extensively explored in Latin America (Martinez & Ramírez, 2018) including Nigeria. Although, “most of the studies on academic fraud are referenced in United States and Canada (Martinez & Ramírez, 2018)”. Although, fraud in the corporate world has been studied extensively, leading to an institutionalized theoretical framework, which is lacking in academic fraud or dishonesty due to dearth of rigorous studies (Apostolou, Dorminey, Hassell, & Watson, 2013). Hence, the factors attributed to cheating in higher education are tantamount to fraud in the corporate world (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015).

(a) Issues relating to academic fraud/Corruption

Several issues relating to academic fraud have been discussed in literatures (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015), among the issues is the factors that necessitate academic fraud, as mapped out in a triangular form: (i) Incentive such as fear of failure/pressure to succeed; need for financial support; lack of time; social pressure; institutional support and awareness of peers cheating (ii) opportunity such as absence of in-class deterrents; lack of faculty resources to act; and strategies to minimized perceived opportunities and (iii) attitude/rationalisation such as awareness of what constitutes cheating; ethical sensitivity; perceived lackadaisical attitude; peer behaviours and quality of teaching (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015) to mention a few. Furthermore, those who participate in academic dishonest or cheating consider it as an acceptable behavior and tend to describe it as a causal of external factors (Miranda & Freire, 2011). Although, there are anti-academic fraud measures put in place as mapped out in a triangular forms: (i) concealment such as expectation of punishment if caught; multiple exam formats and scramble seating (ii) conversion such as lack of possible sanctions; Faculty non-reporting; and prior successful cheating with future intention to cheat (iii) act such as index of academic integrity; and ranking seriousness of type of cheating (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015).

Two types of academic fraud, dishonesty or cheating as stated by renown scholars in a recent study: (i) active academic fraud, (ii) passive academic fraud; both intend to deceive (Martinez & Ramírez, 2018). Active dishonesty entails academic fraud activities that benefits academic fraud culprit(s) directly while passive academic fraud involves collaboration of culprits to benefit themselves indirectly (Martinez & Ramírez, 2018).

Adebayo (2011) observed that the type of cheating behaviours engaging by Nigerian University students are quite different from those engaged in by British University Students. Most frequently occurring behaviours among the Nigerian sample fall under the facts that Newstead et al (1996) have described as collaborative cheating and examination colluding. These include behaviours like

writing somebody's coursework, colluding with others to communicate answers to one another, over marking one another's course work e.t.c. This is quite different from plagiarism and non-collaborative cheating characteristic of the British sample reported by Newstead et al (1996). Adebayo attributed the reasons for these differences to differences in population, difference in cultural ethnic, differences in emphasis placed on examination as part of educational assessment. Observed pattern among the Nigerian sample does not suggest, however that in tackling problems of cheating in Nigerian other forms of cheating apart from the collaborative and collusion types should be ignored. To do so will be to ignore the obvious fact that while some of these cheating behavior are low in ranks among the Nigerian sample higher percentage of this sample still engage in the act than the percentage of British sample as reported by Newstead et al (1996). For example, while "taking an examination for someone else" (impersonating) ranks 21st among the British sample. In Adebayo's study only 1% of this sample reported involvement unlike the Nigerian sample that ranked 20th with 20% of the sample involved. Similarly, while "copying another student's coursework without their knowledge" is ranked 21st by the Nigerian sample with 18% reporting involvement, it is ranked 16th by the British sample with only 6% reporting involvement. The long and shy of this record is that deceiving conduct in whatever structure is more uncontrolled among the Nigerian University test, just that community and arrangement cheating are the most successive.

b. Challenges of academic fraud/Corruption

"Academic dishonesty undermines the quality of education and it is against the education system's major aims; to create responsible and respectful citizens (Miranda & Freire, 2011)". In support of that, male students participate more in academic fraud than female likewise, worse academic results students copy more than students with good results (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). Scholars have postulated that "students who cheat in colleges are more likely to engage in unethical behaviors in their subsequent work life (Lewellyn & Rodriguez, 2015)". Moreover, the direction of scholastic contemptibility not just prompts more horrid and fake future for endeavors, yet in addition make difficulties for academicians that qualities moral instruction and moral improvement schooling frameworks (Lewellyn and Rodriguez, 2015).

The appearing disappointment of advanced education to ingrain scholarly upright and moral preparing on understudies particularly the innovative based understudies cause the understudies to acknowledge scholastic untrustworthiness as new typical; prompting challenge of imparting uprightness in future business pioneers (Lewellyn and Rodriguez, 2015). Also, "the normalization of academic dishonest behaviours may have an influence on those who will be the future decision makers of the country. Furthermore, while students recognize the seriousness of academic dishonest behaviors, many students learn that copying is a common behavior in universities despite the prohibition of political institutions (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). Thus, students' beliefs and practices about academic integrity are likely to influence individual and business ethics values (Miranda & Freire, 2011)".

In characterizing Academic misrepresentation one might be enticed to recognize an innocent misstep and conscious misquote made with an expectation to mislead others. Scholastic extortion includes a conscious work to mislead and incorporates copyright infringement, creation of information, distortion of verifiable sources, messing with proof, specific concealment of undesirable or inadmissible outcomes, and robbery of thoughts.

A few instances of scholastic misrepresentation are not difficult to identify and demonstrate. For instance, the errors between the distributed work and the records, notes, or information on which it is said to rest might be really incredible that purposeful distortion is the main conceivable derivation. In different cases the deduction is more hard to draw. A few mistakes are unavoidable in any examination; others might be the consequence of carelessness, yet not extortion.

Regardless of whether research procedures were extremely messy or purposely deceptive in some cases raises troublesome issues of reality and judgment. Making the suitable judgment about research strategies requires refinement about both the topic and the exploration and the examination techniques for the work under audit. At long last, charges of the burglary of insightful thoughts are difficult to confirm in light of the fact that thoughts are frequently "in the air." Cases of synchronous revelation are normal in science.

III. Conclusion

This paper shows that understudies and essayists partake in scholastic extortion intentionally and unwittingly. For those offenders that take an interest in scholarly misrepresentation shows reasons that appears to be sensible in their points of view yet not viable in scholastic morals. In any case, there specific exercises that are scholastic cheats yet very little perception have been given to it in writings such as (i) falsification of academic information like credentials, (ii) manipulation of academic research data, (iii) bias towards certain literature review to support your argument, (iv) unethical self-citation (v) journal editor mandating author to cite paper(s) from their journal before they can published their research in their journal; all of that are better positioned or defined as academic fraud, dishonest or cheating.

IV. Entrepreneurial way forward to academic fraud

Given all of that however, it is indispensable at this time to provide the entrepreneurial way forward to curtailing the academic menace otherwise called academic: fraud, dishonest and cheating that have eating deep in our educational systems; leading to educational system maladjustment. The core entrepreneurial way forward to curtailing academic fraud is what we coined: **“Problem-based Outreach (PbO).”** The stages to actualizing/addressing “Problem-based Outreach (PbO)” as far as curtailing academic fraud is concerned is stated thus:

Stage one (1) is problem identification otherwise known as ideation stage. This is the stage of sleepless nights thinking of the causes of, prevalence of and extent of the type(s) of academic fraud in the academic community and becoming thoroughly familiar with academic fraud identified is necessary. This stage requires significant absorptive capacity for prevalent academic fraud identification. In the context of problem identification, three simultaneous elements are to be integrated such as; (i) perceived economic opportunities, (ii) introduction of innovation and (iii) taking calculated risk.

Stage two (2) is problem conception stage otherwise known as conceptualization stage. This is the stage of generalizing the possibility of the problem conception into a tangible offer by considering all the factors needed in tackling or curtailing the types of identified academic fraud. The problem conception stage has four simultaneous elements such as (i) feasibility study on the needed technologies to tackle the identified academic fraud, (ii) feasible/ workable plans to implement recommendations from feasibility report, (iii) harnessing capital for acquisition of needed technologies to tackle the identified academic fraud and (iv) formation and resource organization.

Stage three (3), this stage entails institutionalizing governing bodies on academic fraud otherwise known as venture creation stage. The governing bodies on academic fraud is to oversee the affairs of academic community regarding tackling academic fraud. More importantly, the governing bodies perhaps be decentralized per Colleges/Department for efficiency and effectiveness.

Stage four (4), this is sanctionable stage otherwise called commercialisation stage or implementation stage. At this stage, the governing bodies on academic fraud have been empowered to sanction academic fraud culprit(s) with reasonable penalty(ies). The implementation of sanctionable penalty will be made possible provided the governing bodies have sensitized the academic community on the importance of academic integrity and sanctionable penalties awaiting those that will flout the ethics of academic integrity.

And the last stage which is the stage five (5), otherwise known as business growth requires regulatory bodies in the academic community to be innovative in tackling or curtailing academic fraud by training and re-training the stakeholders of the academic community on the dos and don'ts of academic integrity. Also, there is need for regulatory bodies in the academic community to continuously acquire new-streams of technology(ies) to curtailing identified academic fraud. However, it is expedient for the governing bodies on academic fraud to institute academic symposium on academic integrity into their school curriculum.

V. Area of further study

This study recommends that empirical study is necessary on factors influencing academic fraud in academic environment in both entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial institutions in Nigeria.

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