

DISCIPLINE AND INDISCIPLINE IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

BY

**PROF. (MRS) A.A. JEKAYINFA - PRESIDENT, HISTORY OF EDUCATION
SOCIETY OF NIGERIA**

**BEING THE TEXT OF A PAPER DELIVERED AT THE WORKSHOP ON
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COURTESIES

Opening Note

This paper is not sacrosanct, as to the eventual submission of this presentation. Rather, it is to challenge us as stakeholders in higher education who are the primary elements in nation building to engage in meaningful discussion after the presentation so as to evolve a Communiqué that can help to solidify the foundation of our higher education especially through value reorientation.

Introduction

The higher educational system is seen to make a fundamental contribution to the future of any country and plays a vital role in country's intellectual, economic, cultural and social development. The sector educates our future professional workforce, produces future leaders, provides jobs, drives much of our economic and regional success, and facilitates cultural and trade links with other countries. It plays a key role in the growing knowledge and innovation based economy, enriches our social environment and promotes the tolerance debate that underpins society. Therefore all the enterprise in this sector must be conducted with integrity. We are all aware of the rottenness in our higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, and, no well-meaning academic is happy about the situation, there is therefore the need for urgent actions if higher education will achieve its purposes. Thus, a discussion of this nature is timely and needful. This paper will therefore focus its discussion on:

- Explaining Discipline and Indiscipline**
- Some Types of Indiscipline noticeable in Higher Institutions of Learning**
- Conclusions**
- The ways forward**

Discipline and Indiscipline Explained

Discipline is ‘the readiness or willingness of an individual to demonstrate decent and decorous conduct, respect for authority, high sense of responsibility, love for orderliness, eagerness to discharge duties with promptitude and efficiency’. When an individual fails to discharge these characteristics, indiscipline is said to have occurred (Afolabi, 1998).

Discipline in a broad sense means orderliness which is the opposite of confusion. It is a fundamental requirement for every segment of the society. Discipline and indiscipline can directly be linked with ethics which deals with what is good or bad, right or wrong.

Disciplined behaviour is a necessity for individuals, small groups, organizations and national health and survival. The *Oxford Advanced learners’ Dictionary*, defines indiscipline as lack of control in the behaviour of a group of people. In other words, indiscipline is the inability of a person to live in accordance with rules.

Indiscipline is the breaking of rules and regulations of institutions. Individuals willingly or unwillingly violating laid down rules of an institution, which hampers the smooth running of the institution, are not disciplined. Indiscipline can simply be seen as mode of life NOT in conformity with rules and non-subjection to control. By extension, the term indiscipline connotes the violations of school rules and regulations capable of obstructing the smooth and orderly functioning of the school system. Indiscipline breeds corruption and other related social vices.

For organizational objectives to be achieved, discipline is so much needed. Members of such established organization or group must have a common purpose; it is this purpose that binds them together to work as a group, towards the achievement of the objectives.

These purposes cannot be achieved without conformity among the members of this group. In the process of conforming, members find themselves submitting or repressing some of their natural behaviours or thinking, not because they are afraid of being reprimanded or condemned but because they feel committed to the fellowship and ideals of the group. In the higher educational system, the purpose of discipline is to produce graduates who will be well behaved in the society by differentiating what is good from what is bad and striving to do good for the general welfare of the society. Therefore, both the students and the workers in these citadels of learning should be properly disciplined.

TYPES OF INDISCIPLINE NOTICEABLE IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING IN NIGERIA

The list of unethical behaviour which constitutes indiscipline in the higher education system is inexhaustible. Some of the noticeable acts of indiscipline are therefore discussed in this paper:

Method of Appointment

The method of appointments in Nigerian higher institutions (both public and private) is causing a lot of concern to those who have education at heart. Ifedili (2009) observed that there was suppression of excellence and diligence and promotion of mediocrity in the appointments and promotions in Nigeria federal institutions. Many higher institutions do not seem to employ based on merit but based on who backs the candidates. The present educational management condones favoritism and nepotism. It will be an understatement to say that approximately fifty percent of workers are employed based on staff relationship or political affiliation or tribe. Many of these have no integrity, not committed and, academically and experience wise, not qualified. There are many good job seekers but because there is no godfather to talk for them, they remain unemployed while the wrong people are employed. This type of system breeds lawlessness and low productivity. Many people flout the rules and they cannot be disciplined because they are protected by those who brought them into the system or by their Unions. Some of the managers selected to head various parts of higher institutions are never appointed based purely on merit but on the ground that they would be faithful. This is the reason why many seem to find it difficult to control their subordinates. This is in line with the submission of Levitt (1974) that the process by which a manager is selected is a critical element in managerial success.

Negligence of Duties by Workers

The present nonchalant attitude among Nigeria higher institution workers – both academics and non-academics - is also indiscipline and it is becoming a sort of concern to many stakeholders. The non-academic staffs, who are supposed to be in the office by eight in the morning, hardly come to their offices by nine o'clock, and not minding their lateness, some of them would disappear to their other private businesses; some move from one office to another chatting, while those officers who are expected to be controlling the junior ones report at times by eleven under the excuse that they either closed late the previous day or are held up in the traffic, while files pile up unattended for a long time.

The academic staffs are not left out in these unholy behaviors; they hardly have

time for their students, they go late to their lectures and leave the classroom early. Some will not put in their best in their full time jobs but hustle for part time teaching jobs in other higher institutions in their geographical zones. This affects quality of teaching and learning both at their main job and the part time ones. Many of them do not carry out any research which is one of the requirements for promotion, some stay at one level between five to ten years without producing a paper and they continue to search for monetary gains. Remuneration for workers in higher education system has increased, yet the poor attitude persists. It is a general notion in Nigeria that government work is nobody's work and therefore does not deserve commitment.

Academic Fraud

The approval of collaborative researches makes things worse now. Paper writing or conducting researches is now a matter of rub my back and I rub yours. For example, if five people collaborate to write a paper, it may be that only one person writes and puts the names of the other four who will also put his/her name in the papers which each of them also have written or will write. Attendance at learned conferences for most lecturers is by proxy, they will never create time to attend, yet you see papers presented in conferences they never attended in their Curriculum Vitae.

Plagiarism among the lazy academic staffs is no longer news especially when putting in for promotion. Majority of them apply fire brigade approach towards writing of papers and when they discover that they may not likely meet up with the promotion criteria, they result to plagiarizing. These attitudes had inadvertently been extended to the students during project writing. In fact, some unscrupulous lecturers support their students to rank xerox the projects of past students. Some students will copy already written projects and just change the bio data of the former author. Ridiculous enough, some students will even forget to change the acknowledgement and the dedication contents of projects they had copied.

Poor handling of Students' Results

Lecturers are expected to be in loco parentis, i.e. they are supposed to act like parents to the students, but the reverse is always the case when you look at what obtains in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Some teaching and non-teaching staff have a way of frustrating students when they are looking for results which should not be the case in the first instance. Some results are not included in the result sheet intentionally for ridiculous pecuniary reasons – recharge cards and miserable amount of money – others may lose examination script and students are asked to retake such courses etc. Some lecturers do not at times mark students

scripts but award arbitrary grades under the flimsy excuses like the students are many, there is a short time limit for submission of grades. Thanks to God for some institutions like the University of Ilorin now that employ the use Computer Based Testing (CBT) in examining the students.

Flouting of codes of conduct

Teachers' codes of conduct have been viewed as a useful mechanism for reducing corruption in some parts of education systems. However, their effectiveness may often be influenced by the processes used in their development and by the monitoring and control procedures that they require for implementation. Some professions, such as law and medicine, have long had their own codes of conduct and/or agreed official statements of ethical behaviour. However, widespread acceptance of the importance of the need to fight fraud and corruption has led other professional groups to develop such codes – particularly within the national and international public service. Codes of conduct have also emerged in the education sector – especially in higher education, often with the aim of curbing academic fraud – and in many cases have taken the place of regulations that have traditionally governed the teaching profession. These codes detail teachers' obligations both in their teaching (competence, regular attendance, etc.) and in their relationships with the administration, their colleagues, their students, and the community at large. However what is prevalent is flagrant disobedience of these codes by lecturers and sad enough, professors.

Academic Dishonesty/Examination Malpractices

This is also indiscipline behaviour in the higher education sector. Academic dishonesty in tertiary institutions is not a recent phenomenon or is it peculiar to Nigeria or Africa (Ikupa, 1997). However, the alarming rate of the incidence of academic dishonesty on campuses calls for more novel ways to redressing the problem (Alutu & Aluede, 2005). It has become a major problem in all higher institutions in Nigeria and the world over, as research has indicated that students on most, if not all, campuses cheat on their course work and tests (Kibler, 1993). It is a serious issue affecting all segments of higher education. Many students in higher educational systems nowadays value achievement and the ability to complete successfully their programs, more than they value independent scholarship and this has given rise to increasing incidence of academic dishonesty on campuses. On the part of the academic community, it is yet to develop the intellectual values, such as honesty, tolerance, respect, truth, rigor and fairness, which are associated with effective scholarship in all of its students (Kibler, 1993).

There are evidences that tend to suggest the fact that incidents of academic

dishonesty on campuses of higher institutions are increasing at an alarming rate. Such incidents tend to conflict with the core purpose of higher education--training of the mind and character for the acquisition of practical and theoretical skills, knowledge and functional ideas for development, the search for truth and knowledge and the creation and communication of ideas (Nanna, 1997; Peterson, 1988, as cited in Aaron, 1992). Though, many incidents of academic dishonesty in Nigeria's higher education is not well documented, but according to the Examination Ethics Project (2004, as cited in Amalu, 2005), incidents of examination malpractices in states and geo-political zones in Nigeria show that in spite of efforts put in place by the examination ethics project between 2003-2004, incidents of examination malpractices increased by 40%. In addition, it is common knowledge that incidents of academic dishonesty are increasing leading to cancellation of examinations and rustication of students involved in examination malpractices.

Indecent Dressing

This has come to characterize the dress pattern of many students on the campuses of higher learning in Nigeria. There is hardly any higher institution of learning in this country that is not faced with this nauseating problem. The way students on these campuses of learning particularly, the female ones, dress seductively leaves much to be desired. What the girls call skirts that they wear is just "one inch" longer than their pants. When they put on such dresses, they struggle to sit down, find difficulty in climbing machines, cross gutters as well as pick anything from the ground. Apart from the skimpy and tight fitting nature of these dresses, they are again transparent; revealing certain parts of the bodies that under normal dressing patterns ought to be hidden away from the glare of people. In the case of boys, their pattern of dress is different; some look so dirty and very unattractive with unkempt hairs and dirty jeans having pockets of holes deliberately created around the knees. The lower part of their trousers are allowed to flow on the ground because they go through their heels into their legs like socks. The waist of their trousers are lowered and fastened tightly at the middle of the two bottom lobes to reveal their boxers (pants). And when they are walking, they drag their legs and one of their hands particularly, the left one, cupping their invisible scrotum as if they will fall to the ground if not supported (Omede, 2011).

Many of them because of how they dressed had at one time or the other become victims of rape, lured into prostitution, used for ritual purpose, unable to complete their education or training and also engaged in other ancillary social and moral problems like cultism and lying to mention these few.

Sexual harassment

This act of indiscipline has almost become a monster in institutions of learning, from generation to generation. It is used to prevent a person from being able to focus or excel based upon her sex. The harassment is generally sexual in nature and can vary from verbal abuse to physical assault and both professors and students are capable of engaging in sexual harassment. There are two basic types of sexual harassment:

The first is a sort of sexual harassment when a person with some degree of power over a person requires that person submit to some sort of unwanted sexual advance. For example, a lecturer may say that he will give a student 'A' for sleeping with him, or threaten to lower the student's grade if she does not put up with inappropriate sexual comments. A fellow student may refuse to turn in group work of a female student if she doesn't submit to sexual advances. The second is a sort of harassment by female students who use their indecent dressing to sexually harass the lecturers. Who then harasses who in the higher educational system?

Cultism

Cultism is another menace to our higher education system and it is reflection of what is happening in the larger society. Cultists lure innocent students into cultism, claiming to be protecting their interest while others joined out of share youthful inquisitiveness. Unknowingly, several students entered cultists' traps and discovered that they cannot opt out. Rivalry among cult groups had led to blood-letting on several occasions leading at times to closure of institutions and extension of school session. Some parents have been put in perpetual sorrow; lecturers perceived as too strict or disciplined are either maimed or killed; so many glorious destinies have been wasted or diverted negatively by these cultists.

Corruption

The definition of education corruption derives from the more general set of corruption issues. But because education is an important public good, its professional standards include more than just material goods; hence the definition of education corruption includes the abuse of authority for personal as well as material gain. In a democracy, the public takes a very active interest in the fairness of its education system, if the public does not trust the education system to be fair or effective; more may be sacrificed than economic growth. If the school system cannot be trusted, it may detract from a nation's sense of social cohesion, the principal ingredient of all successful modern societies.

People involved in education systems – from the uppermost echelons right down to the school level – are confronted by corrupt practices at some stage. Much researches have been undertaken on corruption in education over the last decade by the World Bank, the International Institute for Educational Planning - United

Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (IIEP-UNESCO), Transparency International, the Soros Foundation, and several Universities. Much of these researches have applied methods of broad analyses of corruption in the public sector, and have tended to use the general definition of corruption as: “the use of public resources for private gain”. For example, some of these researches have examined large-scale corruption involving top-ranking decision-makers and large amount of money – through the misappropriation of funds intended for major public works, such as the construction of schools. Some have also dealt with petty corruption involving public officials at all levels of education systems, as well as small sums of money that are sometimes misappropriated as a matter of course, such as the imposition of illegal enrolment fees by schools.

The extent, nature, and costs of corruption vary widely from country to country. Studies by the World Bank have shown that the industrialized world is somewhat less corrupt than emerging economies. However, in some emerging economies such as Botswana, Chile, and Slovenia it has been demonstrated that the prevalence of corruption is lower than in certain member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2006).

According to the 2007 figures published within the framework of corruption in higher education for 60 countries, education is seldom considered to be the most corrupt public sector. The police, the legal system/judiciary, the registry, and permit services are generally considered to be more corrupt (Transparency International, 2007). It is difficult to provide accurate estimates of the costs of corruption in the education sector. The available estimates have been limited to monetary amounts and resources in kind (for example, textbooks, equipment, and school meals) that have been misappropriated for private use at various levels of an education system (Chua, 1999).

Other acts of indiscipline among students are:

- ✚ Drug abuse, smoking, alcohol consumption
- ✚ Disobedience to teachers and school's rules and regulations
- ✚ Armed robbery and stealing
- ✚ Absenteeism (Staying in hostel or having social club meeting during lectures, Unauthorized exit from school)
- ✚ Noise making during lecture/ Shuffling of feet during lecture
- ✚ Participation in students' unrest

Ways forward

There is the great need to focus on strategies that can help prevent or reduce cheating in campuses. Efforts to prevent cheating in colleges and universities

should primarily begin at the institutional level. Thus, colleges and universities should establish environments that would promote academic integrity, and help students develop the values needed to deal effectively with the moral and ethical dilemmas facing present day college students. In most, if not all the colleges and universities today, the only prevalent method of communicating about academic dishonesty to students is through the traditional method of student handbook, catalogues and new student orientation exercises. This method have shown overtime that it is not effective in achieving the much desired goals of informing students about the gravity of academic dishonesty. It would be of great value if academic advisers imbue on higher education managers an ethos of promoting academic integrity established by all forms of written and verbal communication and by the extent which integrity is a priority for the leadership of the institution is important (Kibler, 1994). It is most likely that the failure of higher institutions of learning to establish an academic ethos would often create campus environment that tends to encourage academic dishonesty.

There is no denying the fact that the faculty has a very significant role to play in creating a climate of honesty, fairness, trust, respect and responsibility. Students on their part rely on the faculty to establish clear classroom expectations, promote an atmosphere in which learning with integrity is encouraged, while situations that promote academic dishonesty is out-rightly confronted (Duke University, 2002). Academic advisers can assist in attaining this goal by impressing on the faculty to adopt McCabe and Pavela's (1997) and Cole and Kiss' (2000) strategies for academic integrity. These strategies include:

- (a) Stressing the importance of academic integrity in the class, and discussing why it should matter to the students, faculty and the administrators,
- (b) Impressing on the teachers the need to be role models, by having teachers cite sources in their lectures.
- (c) Teachers should be made to make students to understand what not only constitute plagiarism, and examination cheating, but also be able to impress on the students the need to avoid engaging in these acts.
- (d) Teachers should also be made to talk to the students on how to manage their time, take lecture notes, and how to appropriately and effectively use the Internet.

Teachers should be made to provide students with written guidelines about collaborating with peers, citing sources, using notes of examination of previous classes and assessing information during examinations (Duke University, 2002).

Academic advisers can also be of assistance to higher education managers in checking acts of academic dishonesty by developing a structured program that would teach students basic study and examination taking skills. This program should be able to teach the students to acquire basic assertiveness skills that would enable them the choice of doing what is right, even if it is not in their own favour (Alutu & Alutu, 2003).

In addition, academic advisers could further apply themselves to the goals of stemming academic dishonesty on campuses by employing psychologically oriented therapeutic measures to help students change their attitudes towards academic dishonesty. Thus, if the cognitive component of attitudes towards academic dishonesty is restructured, the affective and behavioural components of the students are most likely to be positively affected (Alutu & Alutu, 2003).

Discipline should be an integral and essential part of higher education system, and a defined dress code is one of the ways to instill such. It will also instill a sense of responsibility when undergraduates of higher institutions dress in a proper manner, indicating an obvious difference when examined alongside their counterparts who are not in the higher institution. Many profession and companies also require certain dress codes, so a defined dress code system on campuses will help prepare students for their career in real world. The common saying ‘you are addressed the way you are dressed’ is nothing short of the truth. This is why many education stakeholders support the idea of having dress codes in each higher educational institution.

The following are also suggested for better organization and management of human resources in the higher educational systems for better productivity:

- There should proper reorientation of staff by organizing conferences, seminars and workshops for various cadres of workers.
- There should be formalistic impersonality in the appointments and promotions of staff. Merit should be the major criteria. Promotion of mediocrity should be avoided in the system.
- All workers who have disobeyed institution laws and are queried and warned three times should be relieved of their duties and replaced with prospective good workers.
- The non-academics should be rotated every three years in order to make administration more productive.
- Rules and regulations guiding the organization should be strictly adhered to by all.
- There should be workers’ assessment by the students.

- There should be development of transparent regulation systems in our higher educational institutions on financial matters. The ground rules and regulations must be re-visited with the aim of removing opportunities for corruption. This requires the definition of an explicit policy framework that specifies the powers of each player involved at every step and level of the process.
- There should be standards in building management capacity: The strengthening of institutional capacities in some key areas is often indispensable for a better application of the standards and rules in force. Appropriate mechanisms of scrutiny (including internal and external auditing) should be put in place.
- Further training for public officers in areas such as management, accounting, evaluation, supervision, and even ethics is advocated.
- To combat corruption, existing monopolies must be cut back, the discretionary aspects of power curbed, and accountability systems strengthened. This requires the development of more decentralized management systems.

Devi (2003) showed how vital the right to information and education are for the control of corruption so, it is recommended that citizens should be sufficiently aware of their rights and well enough informed of the actual situation not only to detect fraud, but also to demand what they are entitled to by right.

Conclusion

Discipline is a very important issue that tend to undermine the provision of quality education in the higher educational system in Nigeria. This is because the overall goals of the higher educational system as enunciated in the National Policy of Education can hardly be achieved by all the stakeholders without strict conformity and adherence to the rules and regulations and the ideals of the entire society. It therefore becomes necessary that teachers, parents, government and all the stakeholders in education should pull resources together and not relent in their efforts to maintain and guarantee discipline as well as promote the habits of piety and obedience among the students and workers of our higher institutions. Enforcement of discipline in our higher educational system will thus become a means of fulfilling section 1 (5) of the National Policy on Education which aims at:

- _ the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- _ the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society;
- _ the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;

_ the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

This is a task that must be done by *all* and *sundry* so as to move the higher educational systems in Nigeria forward.

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