RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STAFF MORALE IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

by

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Abstract

The prevalence of academic dishonesty in educational institutions all over the world, and the assumption that proper ethics enhance staff morale, prompted the study. The study seeks to investigate the relationship of proper work ethics (academic integrity) with staff morale. The study population consisted of academic staff members of colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria. The sample consisted of 461 staff members randomly selected from nine colleges of education. The instrument was the questionnaire tagged Academic Staff Morale and Academic Integrity Questionnaire (ASMAIQ). Simple percentage, weighted average and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to test the questions and hypothesis raised. The study found that there was no significant relationship between deans/heads of department' academic integrity and staff morale. It recommended that institutional managers should learn to treat staff fairly and offer them needed assistance to promote professionalism and save staff undue stress and discontent.

Keywords: academic integrity, morale, head of department

Introduction

All over the world, academic staff and students in higher institutions have been observed to be involved in varying forms of academic dishonesty, ranging from plagiarism to cheating in tests and examinations (Alutu & Aluede, 2005; Amalu, 2005; Ikupa, 1997; Kibler, 1993). Academic integrity has become an important issue of concern today because of the prevalence of dishonesty in institutions of higher learning. There have been complaints by employers of labour about the poor quality of graduates from the institutions. These graduates have been observed to perform far below and at variance with their declared level of pass, as contained in their certificates. This has resulted in the slow pace of development in the country and low ranking of Nigerian graduates. Despite the varying measures to deter academic dishonesty, the practice has remained endemic (Olasehinde-Williams, Abdullahi & Owolabi, 2003; Crown & Spiller, 1998). Academic dishonesty is also encouraged by staff who aid and abet dishonesty in institutions. This hinders the proper acquisition of intellectual skills required to enable students to develop into useful members of the society, as contained in the National policy on Education (NPE, 2004). Today, all forms of corrupt practices are often said to be found in Nigerian higher institutions ranging from cheating in tests and examinations; copying somebody's else assignment or term paper; using other people's materials, facts, research findings, et-cetra without referencing the author(s) appropriately. These are termed academic fraud. Some other forms of corruption involve the use of power/positions to act dishonestly in return for money or undue advantage, demand by some staff for gratification, whether in cash or kind in form of sexual harassment, in the discharge of lawful duties. At other times, it is the enforcement of students to subscribe to materials or books authored by some academic staff as a means to passing courses taught by such lecturers. Again some academic and non-teaching staff accepts gratification to allow students to have pre-knowledge of examination questions, alter grades, issue unmerited certificates, and disclose the contents of a confidential document or official information without proper authorization, et-cetra, in institutions.

According to Nwalor (2012), teachers are confronted with challenging tests as their remuneration is still relatively poor, they

are seriously overworked, sometimes given jobs without the requisite tools for successful execution. They are psychologically tortured, having lost respect and dignity in a society that measures worth only in pecuniary terms and having to teach largely uninspiring students (Nwalor, 2012). These challenges are responsible for the academic and non-teaching staff' pursuit of material things and pleasure, and is also responsible for students' desire for good grades at all costs. According to Akinola (1994), greed makes people to sacrifice decorum in the pursuit of wants. He further observed "as long as the greedy is unable to control his mighty appetite for more of anything, so long will he have nothing to do with discipline and orderliness". This, in higher institutions, result in the production of poorly prepared or half-baked graduates expected to operate the industries, build the roads and structures, administer services in the hospitals, as well as provide leadership for the schools, industries and people. The outcome is therefore failure of the industries, health sector, infrastructures and of government itself. The study therefore seeks to focus its searchlight on the attention given to staff morale in the bid to stamp out academic dishonesty in institutions of higher learning. This makes the study differ in its approach, from earlier studies, as it seeks to determine the relationship between academic integrity and staff morale, towards the production of quality graduates from the institutions.

Literature Review

Academic integrity involves commitment to such values as honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility within all academic endeavors (Centre for Academic Integrity). According to McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (2001), with increasing competition for the most desired positions in the job market and for a few coveted places available in the leading business, law, and medical schools, today's undergraduates experience considerable pressure to do well. They are therefore faced with the basic decision –to cheat or not to cheat in their academic work. Research has shown that too often pressures on undergraduates lead them to engage in various forms of academic dishonesty (McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield, 1999; Bowers, 1964). Again McCabe and Drinan (1999) observed that generational differences in values, effect of electronic technologies on campus and increased competition for grades and jobs could undermine a

culture of academic integrity. Nwalor (2012) observed that teachers are under immense pressure for improved performance from the administration which continually raves up performance baseline in the bid to redress standards decay. Teachers are expected to climb to the next rung of their professional ladder; but constrained by infrastructural and other inadequacies, they succumb to the temptation to take unethical shortcuts to achieve the goal. These include but are not limited to plagiarism, patronage of obscure phony journals to satisfy the ever increasing minimum number of publications for the next promotion. Such people, according to Nwalor (2012), concentrate on the publication activity at the expense of other essential duties, particularly the teaching assignment; and no one takes any notice so long as the students get the grades they desire. He further stated that teachers who came into teaching as a job of last resort, become nuisance to the society by their uncanny way of taking advantage of the system.

Olasehinde-Williams (2006) observed that academic integrity places a strong expectation on all members of the educational system (administrators, staff and students) to act honestly in all situations relating to the goals of the education enterprise. She added that any manifestation of academic dishonesty by any member of the university community represents a fundamental impairment of the principle of academic integrity. Allen (1997) submitted that when academic staff complies with the obligations of the integrity principle, they will be promoting and modeling such traits as industry, transparency and honesty which are essential in sustaining academic integrity. University administrators have a major responsibility to initiate and sustain a free and fair framework for dealing with violations of academic integrity policy (Olasehinde-Williams, 2006). Morrisette (2001) opined that fraudulent behaviors are tolerated by administrators and faculty whose reputations are compromised in the process. He stated that this results in undue stress experienced by faculty members, discontent and eventual burnout. According to Stovall (1989), it seems that the aim of higher education are being defeated with the recurring feature of academic dishonesty, which has become a regular feature of most, if not all campuses, in spite of the fact that academic integrity is expected to be a significant component of the philosophies and mission of many higher education institutions. Faculty have been

observed as a factor influencing academic dishonesty through their uncaring or indifference to their teaching, or to their students' learning, lax attitudes towards dishonesty, peer pressures to support a friend and a diminishing sense of academic integrity and ethical values among students (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2003; Whitley, 1998; McCabe, 1992).

On the other hand, morale relates with the satisfaction and positive feelings which persons have and is brought to bear on their performance at work. Desler (1991) stressed that morale has multiple interrelated factors that includes; employee age, educational level, occupational level, the job itself, considerate leadership and organizational climate. Hartman (2003) identified the following issues as influencing employee morale – training and education, mission statement, procedure and roles, supervision, staff empowerment, recognition, feedback and communication, and institutional environment; although different issues may affect each individual. Taiwo (1984) opined that people are greatly motivated when they are consulted on actions affecting them and by taking decisions on tasks that they would be performing.

The study' focus on relationship between academic integrity and staff morale is apt, as it is observed that students 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). This paper therefore considered the demonstration of academic integrity by deans/heads of department and its relationship to academic staff morale in Nigerian Colleges of Education. The paper also seeks to ascertain the veracity of the long-held conventional assumption among managers that high morale is enhanced by managers' positive attitude and proper work ethics, not withstanding the changes in working conditions (Hawthorne experiment, 1927 – 1932).

Earlier studies focused on the prevalence of academic dishonesty in institutions, reducing the occurrences of academic dishonesty, faculties' perception and responses to academic dishonesty, etc (Tadesse & Getachew, 2009; Olasehinde-Williams, 2006; Marzean, 2001; McCabe & Trevino 1996), yet cases of academic dishonesty has not abated. The war against academic dishonesty can

hardly be won by the university administration alone (Olasehinde-Williams, 2008), therefore the need to enhance the morale of staff to effectively compliment the efforts of the institutions at stamping out academic integrity. This informed the present researcher to undertake the study on the relationship between academic integrity and staff morale, bearing in mind that faculty lacking in morale can contribute to the connivance, cover-up and subtle encouragement of academic dishonesty in institutions. The study seeks to draw the attention of institutional administrators to the issue of staff morale, in the bid to stamp out or reduce to the bearest minimum, the issue of academic dishonesty in institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Academic dishonesty in educational institutions has been reported all over the world and varying recommendations had been made to curb the practice. This includes sanctions against perpetrators of the act, adoption of academic integrity policies, creation of institutional environment that promotes academic integrity, etc. Despite all these measures, academic dishonesty is still rampant in the institutions. This therefore calls for the need to take another look at the issue and to consider other ways to combat the menace in the institutions. This writer therefore seeks to address the problem through the consideration of staff morale which will encourage faculty discipline, dedication to duty, professionalism and fairness in dealing with students; in order to promote hard work, transparency and honesty. This paper therefore investigated the relationship between academic integrity of deans/heads of department and staff morale in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated:

- the extent to which deans and heads of department demonstrate academic integrity in the course of their duties in colleges of education
- the level of morale among academic staff in colleges of education in Nigeria
- the relationship between academic integrity and staff morale in colleges of education in Nigeria.

Significance of the study

The findings of the study are meant to help the institutions to finally overcome the menace of academic dishonesty and thus enhance the production of high quality graduates for Nigerian schools. This study has implications for government and institutional administrators at ensuring the production of high quality graduates. It has implications for academic staff and students of these institutions who need to imbibe the character of honesty and integrity; while it has implications for employers of labor that are desirous of contracting highly qualified graduates to enhance their organizational outputs.

Research Questions

Based on the problem statement, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

(i) Do deans and heads of department demonstrate requisite academic integrity in the performance of their duties in colleges of education in Nigeria?

(ii) Do academic staff in colleges of education in Nigeria show a high level of morale?

(iii) Does the demonstration of academic integrity by institutional heads enhance staff happiness and satisfaction on the job?

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis generated for the study is:

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between the demonstrations of academic integrity by deans/heads of department and academic staff morale in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research, based on correlation design and carried out ex-post facto. The population for this study comprised of deans of schools, heads of department, and academic staff members of all colleges of education in Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select nine (9) out of ten (10) colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria. Random sampling technique was employed to select 461 academic staff members from the nine colleges. out of which 92 of them were heads of department.

The basic instrument used for obtaining data was the 20-item Academic Staff Morale and Academic Integrity Questionnaire. The layout of the questionnaire showed its division into sections A and B, with section A containing questions relating to the deans and heads of department' demonstration of academic integrity; while section B contained questions on the satisfaction and positive feelings of academic staff on their job. The test-retest method was adopted to determine the reliability of the instrument, and a coefficient alpha of .70 was obtained, showing a high degree of reliability. Heads of department assessed their deans' demonstration of academic integrity; while the other selected academic staff assessed heads of department' academic integrity. Simple percentage and weighted average was employed to determine the level of deans/heads of department' demonstration of academic integrity. It was also used to determine the level of academic staff morale. The only hypothesis generated was analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool. It was tested at .05 level of significance.

Data Analysis

The results of the study are presented in tables:

Question 1: Do deans and heads of department demonstrate requisite academic integrity in the performance of their duties in colleges of education in Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of deans and heads of department' academic integrity

Academic Integrity Levels	Population	Percentages of Responses
High (70>)	241	52.19%
Moderate (50-69)	171	37.16%
Low (25-49)	42	9.12%
Very low (<25)	7	1.49%

The results in Table 1 indicate that deans and heads of department' demonstration of academic integrity was generally high. with 241 respondents (52.19%) rating their integrity high, 171 respondents (37.16%) rating it moderate. 42 respondents (9.12%) rating it low and 7 respondents (1.49%) rating it very low.

Table 2: Staff response on deans and heads of department' academic integrity

Variables	Responses in Percentages				Weighted
	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Average
1	59.2	35.6	5.0	0.2	88.45
2	52.9	36.7	9.8	0.7	85.50
3	35.4	49.5	11.7	3.5	79.25
4	52.9	41.2	5.2	0.7	86.58
5	57.7	28.6	12.4	1.3	85.68
6	68.5	26.5	3.5	1.5	90.50
7	61.4	32.3	5.2	1.1	88.50
8	44.0	42.5	11.3	2.2	82.08
9	42.5	41.0	14.3	2.2	80.95
10	47.9	37.7	12.8	1.5	82.95

The weighted average in table 2 revealed that the most demonstrated variable of academic integrity was variable 6 (concerned with thorough preparation of students), followed by variable 7 (encourage work collaboration among staff). This was followed by variable 1, (use of appropriate techniques in handling instructional matters). On the other hand, the least demonstrated variable was 3, (exclude personal prejudices when judging others); while the second least demonstrated variable was 9, (readily offer assistance to subordinate staff).

Again, deans and heads of department were observed to regularly demonstrate academic integrity, as 9 out of the 10 variables had its highest ratings ticked "always"; while variable 3 only had its highest rating as "sometimes". This again established the fact that variable 3 (exclusion of personal prejudices when judging others) is not often demonstrated. This reveals that the deans and heads of department show personal prejudices when judging and dealing with staff.

Question 2: Do academic staff in colleges of education in Nigeria show a high level of morale?

Table 3: Level of staff morale

Morale levels	Population	Percentage of Responses
High (70>)	156	33.88%
Moderate (50-69)	171	37.24%
Low (25-49)	94	20.38%
Very low (<25)	40	8.81%

Evidence in table 3 revealed that the level of academic staff morale was generally high, as 156 respondents (33.88%) rated their morale high, 171 respondents (37.24%) rated it moderate, 94 (20.38%) rated it low, while only 40 (8.81%) rated it very low.

Table 4: Staff response on staff morale

Variables	Responses in Percentages				Weighted
	Very Much (4)	Much (3)	Fairly (2)	Very Little (1)	Average
1	42.1	31.5	16.9	7.6	76.08
2	49.5	34.5	12.1	3.5	82.30
3	36.9	43.8	15.2	3.7	78.28
4	29.9	34.3	22.8	12.8	70.23
5	26.2	34.5	27.5	11.5	68.70
6	32.3	42.1	21.0	4.6	75.53
7	18.9	29.7	29.5	21.9	61.40
8	38.0	40.6	17.1	4.1	78.03
9	30.6	32.5	23.4	13.0	69.93
10	44.3	37.7	13.4	4.3	80.35

The weighted average in table 4 revealed that the best demonstrated variable of staff morale was 2 (proud to be associated with the institution), followed by variable 10 (freedom to plan work without undue interference).This was followed by variable 3 (respect judgment of deans and heads of department). The least demonstrated variable of staff morale was 7 (staff are adequately remunerated for work done), while the second least demonstrated variable was 5 (personal and professional development of staff are taken care of).

Table 4 revealed respondents opinion on the level of satisfaction of staff with respect to the variables in the questionnaire. Items 1, 2 and 10 had its highest percentages rated "very much"; while the other items (3-9) had its highest percentages rated "much". These showed academic staff whose morale is generally high.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the demonstrations of academic integrity by deans and heads of department, and academic staff morale in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation analysis of academic integrity and staff morale

Variables	No of events	X	SD	Df	Cal. R	Critical R	Decision
Academic Integrity	10	3.502	0.336	9	0.249	0.602	H_0 Accepted
Staff Morale		2.974	0.250				

The results in Table 5 revealed that there was no significant relationship between academic integrity of deans/heads of department, and academic staff morale. This is at variance with the findings of Adewole (1987) who reported that there was a corresponding relationship between principal's performance of their instructional duties and teachers level of performance of their expected instructional duties.

Discussion and Implications

The results in tables 1 and 2 showed that deans and heads of department in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria demonstrated a high level of academic integrity in performing their tasks. This agrees with McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino (2004) that honor code faculty have more positive attitude towards their school academic integrity policies. This revealed a picture of middle-level managers who are concerned with thorough preparation of students, who encourage work collaboration among staff, and who use appropriate techniques in handling institutional matters. These managers do not compromise organizational interest for any other interest, and they ensure that academic staff does not rush through course contents towards the end of semesters or shortly before the beginning of semester examinations.

On the other hand, deans and heads of department were reported to show personal prejudices when judging staff. This encourages bias and it affects staff performance. They were also reported to fail in offering assistance to subordinates when it was required, which affects staff productivity and output. This negatively rubs on the quality of students from the institutions.

The result in tables 3 and 4 also showed that academic staff morale in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria was high. This agrees with the findings of Olorisade (2008) that the level of academic staff morale in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria was generally high. This depicts a picture of academic staff who are proud to be associated with their institutions, and who feel free to plan their work without undue interference. On the other hand, respondents reported that staff were not adequately remunerated for work done and that their personal and professional advancement were not taken care serious.

Evidences from this research also showed that there was no significant relationship between academic integrity of deans/ heads of department and academic staff morale. This is at variance with the long held assumption that manager's positive attitude and proper work ethics correlates with staff morale and performance in organizations (Hawthorne experiment, 1927 – 1932). The lack of relationship between deans/heads of department' academic integrity and staff morale may be because the demonstration of academic integrity by deans and heads of department do not have direct bearing with the factors that promote staff morale. For example, respondents reported that they were not adequately remunerated for work done, nor were their personal and professional advancement taken care of. Furthermore, the lack of relationship between academic integrity and staff morale may suggest that academic integrity is neither a priority for some staff nor is it of any importance as long as their welfare needs are met. Therefore such staff may try to meet their needs and satisfy their desires through any means lawful or otherwise. Again the demonstration of academic integrity which ought to engender trust and enhance staff morale no longer does with some staff, as lust for material possessions makes the demonstration of integrity an old-fashioned art in the contemporary Nigerian society, from which higher institutions are not totally immune. In some other instances, the demonstration of academic integrity actually deter those academic staff of colleges, who may want to exploit the students and dishonestly acquire material possessions through the enforcement of the purchase of handouts/textbooks authored by them.

Considering the lack of relationship between academic integrity and academic staff morale, it can be inferred that the high

expectations of many academic staff in relation to the Nigerian society' emphasis on wealth acquisition at all cost, encourage such staff to act in dubious /dishonest ways to make more money and/or acquire material possessions. Again the comparison of academic staff earnings with counterparts in other sectors of the economy like; oil and gas, banking, telecommunications, etc make some of them to act dishonestly to acquire what such other individuals have as material possessions like; expensive cars, houses, fat bank accounts, etc. Furthermore the lust for more and more material possession to impress friends, family and community members that they (academic staff) have "arrived" do not make them act honestly and uprightly. Again the greed of some academic staff makes them to force students to purchase handouts/textbooks if such students want to pass courses taught by them, not minding whether such students deserve to pass or not. Some academic staff sometimes compromise their integrity by aiding and abetting examination malpractices or alters grades in favour of students who offer to pay some gratification to such staff.

The above-discussed points encourage students in higher institutions to throw caution to the wind in the bid to pass examinations, even if it entails offering gratification in cash or kind by female students. It provides students with alibi to cheat in examinations, tests, and plagiarize other people's work with the active connivance of their lecturers. It also offers opportunities for students to have their results/grades altered in their favour after "greasing" the palms of their lecturers. All these discourage hard work in students, who then fail to attend lectures regularly, as they believe the purchase of handouts/textbooks as well as lecturers' gratification will assure them of passing courses offered and with good grades too. The consequence of all these are;

i) it encourages dishonesty in students and aids laziness, thus eroding the culture of learning with negative consequences on their private lives even after graduation.
ii) it produces graduates who are not worthy in character, which negatively rubs on the society through varying shady deals even in government businesses.
iii) poor and inadequate preparation of students in these institutions, result in the production of quacks as professionals, with dire

consequences on national life through the poor performances of pupils taught by such graduates.

iv) students wrongly placed due to malpractice or connivance of staff, soon become handicapped and incompetent for occupational preparations and job placement.

v) lowers standard of education by default as results do not show a true reflection of students abilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study showed that deans/heads of department' demonstration of academic integrity and staff morale were high; but there was no significant relationship between academic integrity of deans/heads of department and staff morale in colleges of education in South-Western Nigeria. On the basis of the findings, and considering the effects of academic staff dishonesty in carrying out their duties, the following recommendations are being suggested:

Institutional administrators are enjoined to treat their staff members fairly and on equal terms, to build confidence in the staff. This will engender trust and encourage staff to become committed to their task, which will enhance institutional performance and reduce discontent and burnout.

The administrators are also encouraged to offer needed assistance to staff. This will encourage hard work; help the staff to overcome difficulties on the job and to perform optimally, thereby promoting the quality of graduates from the institutions

Administrators must ensure that staff development is taken seriously to promote professionalism and competence. This will also enhance staff morale and promote effectiveness of staff that will result in higher institutional productivity.

Staff remuneration should be improved upon to protect them from undue stress, discontent and eventual burnout. This would discourage academic dishonesty and encourage the sustenance of competent staff, who would not be prone to inducement of money or material things, or get attracted to other sectors of the economy where staff are better paid.

Institutions should encourage a re-orientation of the society on the need to promote integrity in all spheres of endeavors, and to de-emphasize the craze for wealth and material possessions. This

should begin with regular education that stresses the value underpinning academic integrity for staff and students in institutions of higher learning.

Institutional managers like the Vice-chancellors of Universities, Rectors of Polytechnics; Provosts of Colleges of Education should constantly promote work ethics in their institutions by being role models themselves, to encourage adherence to rules and institutional policies by staff and students, and as well raise the standard of education.

Institutional managers, including the deans of faculties/schools and heads of departments should effectively monitor staff attendance at lectures and ensure proper handling of student matters by their staff.

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