

Chapter V

Creating a Firewall Against Unethical Behaviours in Open and Distance Education Practice

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ABSTRACT

The current process of democratizing education has inevitably led to the explosive demands by the citizens of the different countries for unrestricted admission into the conventional tertiary institutions as full time students. Unfortunately, the universities have no absorptive capacity to meet the demands due to many perennial factors. In order to meet these enormous requirements, it therefore becomes paramount for universities to restructure, re-engineer and reform. The paradigm shift therefore necessitates the repositioning of tertiary institutions in order to effect the change from “selective learning” to “lifelong learning” and from what “we offer” to what “you need” and therefore, simultaneously develop the skills of “learning to learn,” especially in their clients. Where many distance learning institutions (DLIs) have become relevant in the current dispensation is in their ability to create wider accessibility to education through the open, distance and flexible operation, which allows for learning and earning going pari-passu in meeting the needs and aspirations of their heterogeneous clientele. Paradoxically, however, the majority of the world population who are ignorant of the operation and value of distance education generally, view its products as well as its programmes, not only as useless but also as inferior when compared to those of the conventional universities. Their opaque arguments for casting aspersions on distance education institutions (DEIs) may centre on their individual doubts on the quality and massification, as well as the incidence of possible masquerading identity. Closely related to this is the general notion of whether the DEI or ODL, in any way, adhere to professional ethics or academic

standards. Adherence to high academic standards, which is informed through the doggedly pursued predetermined ethics, has a predictable relationship to professional behaviour and academic integrity of the ODL, at least comparatively. Ethical principles are known indexes in organizational direction and commitments, but its lapses erode known standards in academic and research ventures, as well as the quality of community service.

INTRODUCTION

An important dimension confronting professional behaviour and academic credibility, especially in ODL today, is the challenge of multiple meanings with the concomitant dual interpretation of workplace academic standards or ethics. This chapter specifically addresses these issues with the attempt to operationalize workplace ethics generally and distance education (DE) in particular. As part of the objective, therefore, the broad spectrum of this chapter is to examine the meaning of ethics and academic standards (otherwise, professional boundaries), its role in distance education, the synthesis of the emerging ethical issues in DE, the control mechanisms required to maintain quality in distance education and its various interconnectivity in academic integrity, organizational commitments in conventional programmes and online cheating in ODL. The chapter also discusses some suggested methods for curtailing ethical abuses, and thus improving professional behaviour and academic credibility in DELs.

BACKGROUND

In education generally, but in open distance learning (ODL) in particular, the issue of ethical standards or simply ethics, especially as it defines strict professional behaviour and academic credibility, has had its debate both conjecturally and age long. Over time, the dimension of what aspect of professional behaviour or discipline should constitute the “right,” or the “wrong” otherwise obnoxious practice, often attract multiple inter-

pretations the world over. Unfortunately though, despite the pace of our educational development, institutions of higher learning (IHL) still have difficulties both in the interpretation and application of institutional rules and regulations, especially when there are disciplinary crises.

The word “ethics,” however, may be more appreciated within the tripod interconnectivity of “ethics,” “philosophy” and “morals,” which share a lot of proximity in terms of their depth of meaning and somehow, on how they are applied, especially within education. Taken from the Latin word “ethica” and from the Ancient Greek “ἠθική” (φιλοσοφία), it means “moral philosophy” which is equally derived from the adjective of “ἦθος ēthos” indicating either “custom,” “traditions” or “habit” and which all indicate a fundamental branch of philosophy, which as well encompasses the right conduct and good life. While morals essentially connote the practice of right or good actions, the term “ethics” defines the theory of “right action” and “greater good,” but philosophy, without equivocation, gives meanings to their logics. Without doubt therefore, it is usually and often the case when such terms as “professional ethics” or “ethics of the profession” otherwise, “workplace ethics” are used to define the limits, coverage, and boundaries for members, within which organizational goals and objectives are pursued. Organizational (work or professional) ethics specifies standards that should give premium on how professional behaviour or tasks are to be facilitated while recognizing the worth, dignity, potentials and uniqueness of personnels who are the driving force within the existing socio-cultural and politico-economic contexts.

It essentially defines professional responsibilities and rights motivated and directed by known values. Professional values inform and modify principles; and are an important way (ingredients) of living out an ethical commitment (American Counselling Association (ACA), 2005). It documents and defines code of conduct (otherwise, moral responsibilities) within academics, where the organization or the institution so concerned is education. Professional behaviour in education generally, and implicates the learners and programme/course facilitators (PF/CF), whether among the teaching and the nonteaching personnel, and for whom both individual and collective responsibilities are codified to direct organizational commitments.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR VS. ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Discussing the relevance of professional behaviour or boundaries as encapsulated in ethical behaviour equally defines the status of clientele (i.e., their responsibilities and rights) in service delivery, reception and application in education generally, and the ODL in particular. Recipients of the ODL, for instance, have rights that are made functional with the concomitant responsibilities. It is part of their rights to attend and participate in interactive lecture formats (i.e., it is the case with the centre for distance learning programme, University of Ibadan, Nigeria), to be sent lectures through correspondence, receive support (such as academic counseling, integrity/dishonesty policy information, etc.) while, it is their responsibility to undertake and submit course assignments when due. As specified in the ODL directives on the rules and regulations, it is a mandatory responsibility that learners must register within a given time frame while they must also present themselves for examinations. Where participation in examinations is to be deferred, the learners have the responsibility to inform the appropriate

authority in advance. Academic competence and credibility which expectedly are the watch words for all and sundry, presuppose that learners would be independent and collaborate where and when necessary in the acquisition of relevant skills and academic competences without plagiarism.

Plagiarizing work of other people without due acknowledgement, especially in the virtual learning programme as well as in the conventional system, has a lot of ethical implications. It can lead to summary dismissal from work or studies or it could even attract demotion, a failure in course grade for a paper, and sometimes, expulsion from the programme. It equally potentially affects institutional image negatively. Using the information from academics (Distance Education Student Handbook, 2008) different perspectives on plagiarism were summarized and they include, among others, the following:

- a. Copying and pasting text from online media, such as encyclopedias;
- b. copying and pasting text from any Web site;
- c. transcribing text from any printed material, such as books, magazines, encyclopedias or newspapers;
- d. simply modifying text from any of the above sources or replacing a few selected words using a thesaurus;
- e. using photographs, video or audio without permission or acknowledgment;
- f. using another student's work and claiming it as your own, even with permission (known as collusion);
- g. the acquisition of work from commercial sources; and
- h. translation from one language to another is not using your own words, which fall under the guidelines for quotations, summaries and paraphrases.

In consequence, for a highly recognizable academic standards and workplace professional

behaviour, both learners and PF/CF would be expected to appreciate and translate operational goals within internalized work ethics, to real positive action.

RELATED THEMES IN PURSUANCE OF ODL ACADEMIC STANDARDS

According to Fieser (2007), who discussed the field of ethics (otherwise, moral philosophy), ethical theories are categorized into three general areas: (a) metaethics; (b) normative ethics; and (c) applied ethics. While meta-ethics, with its subthemes of metaphysical and psychological issues (i.e., egoism and altruism, emotion and reason, male-female morality) talks about the origin and meaning of ethical concepts as well as the underlying mental basis of moral judgments and conduct, the normative ethics mainly concerns issues of moral standards that regulate “right and wrong conduct.” Within academics, for instance, learners are prompted through effective participatory learner-teacher activities, to initiate and develop the capacity for independent and collaborative efforts to academic success rather than engaging in cheating to pass, which is punishable. The normative ethics usually operates, therefore, within the “Golden Rule” which establishes the single or set of principle (principles) against which all human actions are evaluated and judged. The assumption bothering the normative ethics gets empowered by its subtheories of: (a) virtue theories (b) duty theories or deontological or the nonconsequentialist theories (i.e., right theory, categorical imperative and prima facie vs. actual duty); and (c) the consequentialist theories summarized in ethical egoism, ethical altruism and utilitarianism. In ethical egoism, actions are considered to be morally right if the consequences of the actions are more favourable than unfavourable only to the agent performing the action. In ethical altruism, actions are considered to be morally right if the consequences of the actions are more favourable

than unfavourable to everyone except the agent. Actions are, however, morally right if the consequences of the actions are more favourable than unfavourable to everyone (utilitarianism). The third categorization of ethical theory is the applied ethics, which consists of the analysis of specific and controversial moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, pilfering, examination malpractices, sexual abuse, and results falsification. Understanding the interconnectivity of the relatedness of the subthemes and their respective underpinnings in education has potential for mitigating abuses in workplace professional behaviour as well as academic fraud. It harnesses the opportunity for improved and sustainable individual and collective tasks commitments.

UNDERSTANDING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN GENERAL STUDIES

Over time, and globally, different methods abound to epitomize the varied sophisticated strategies that learners, whether in the conventional study stream or ODL, utilized in cheating. Without any doubt, cheating in its different forms usually erodes professional and academic credibility for which any college or university would have earned and are known. Some of the methods often adopted by learners include, among others, writing faintly, but legibly on examination slabs, handkerchiefs, thighs or palms. Ladies sometimes have written or scribbled writings tugged under their braziers and others would trade sex for improved school grades. Both men and women equally offer expensive souvenirs or gifts under similar pretext. Some programme/course facilitators (PF/CF) orchestrate some of the so tagged shielded meetings to negotiate course grades for students under agreed conditions acceptable to the parties. Cizek’s (1999) study is a useful summary for understanding how some of the unethical academic-related behaviours are perpetuated. According to Cizek, these are: (a) looking at an-

other pupil's test paper during a test, (b) dropping one's paper so that other pupils can cheat off it, (c) dropping one's paper and having another pupil pick it up, cheat from it, and re-drop the paper so the original dropper can reclaim his or her paper, (d) passing an eraser between two pupils who write test information on the eraser, (e) developing codes such as tapping the floor three times to indicate that a multiple-choice item should be answered "C," (f) looking at pupils' papers while walking up to the teacher to ask a question about the test, or (g) using cribbed notes or small pieces of paper to cheat. Cribbed notes can be hidden in many ingenious places, such as: (h) switching scratch paper, often allowed by teachers during tests, with one's own scratch paper that contains test answers, or (i) writing test information on the desktop and erasing it after the test.

The advancement and benefits arising from the effective use of technology is a notable device being utilized, especially in ODL programmes. But for several reasons, cheating-related behaviours have become prominent through e-learning. In Adkins, Kenkel and Lim's (2008) observation study, the inception of online education led to the rapid growth of dotcoms involved in the sales of prewritten and custom tailored term papers or digital paper mills. The study further revealed that paper mills such as schoolsucks.com, papertopics.com, and cheathouse.com offer recycled papers and custom tailored assignments to students at a rate of \$20 to \$35 (Heberling, 2002; cited in Adkins, Kenkel, & Lim, 2008). There are also paper store enterprises incorporations doing business under www.termpapers-on-file.com, who are prone to offer "the largest catalog of expertly-research model term papers at a service charge of between \$9.95 for pre-existing papers and \$19.95 per page for custom research. In consequence, and in writing a critique to the online paper mills activities, Anderson (2001) concluded that even though the paper mills may not outwardly endorse cheating, the message they are sending is that it

is acceptable to cut corners. Using the "ringers" otherwise, experts who stand in to take test for others were equally identified as a prominent cheating source. According to Wein, at the University of Arizona campus, a flyer was circulated offering services of attending classes or lectures and taking examinations for a fee (Wein, 1994; cited in Adkins et al., 2008). While a Rutgers' survey found that half of the students utilized in the study had plagiarized work they found on the Internet (Slobogin, 2002), cell phones are used to record pictures of test questions or notes and answers to multiple choice questions through text messages to fellow classmates (Cheaters Amok, ABC, 2004).

ISSUES AND TRENDS OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Considering the controversies and the lockjam that surround the term "ethics" (otherwise, ethical standards), defining the term within education generally and the open distance learning (ODL) in particular may not be easy. In the conventional institutions, for instance, various universities' calendars specify some measures of academic standards, including rules and regulations for degree certification and the evaluation of examination results. Some of such universities' calendars define the minimum standards required for the learners' qualification to be admissible into the examination hall, while others specify conduct within examination. One of such examination rules requires, for instance, that under no circumstance should a student sitting for an examination be allowed to bring into the examination hall any material so labeled, as privileged examination aid, but that contravenes a descent conduct of the examination regulation. Added to this, particularly at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) (Rules for the Conduct of Examination,

2007), is the proviso that “no candidate shall assist, or interfere with, or obtain information from another candidate” (subsection 14). Though the same university calendar have specifications on employees’ mandate (i.e., teaching and the non-teaching staff members), and as it is the case with other distance education institutions or the ODL as the case may be (University of South Africa Information Brochure, 2007, 2008; University of London External Degree Programme, 2008; University of Ibadan Centre for External Studies, 2008), several issues are easily predicated.

Foremost in the 21st century adaptation on e-learning is the problem of how the ODL management would curtail the menace of examination dishonesty and impersonation, as most examinations are conducted online at certain instances. Competing issues, such as the identification of the most adequate methods for facilitating professional behaviour and in particular academic credibility, is one of the main challenges confronting the ODL programme globally. Though some of the ODL maintain face-to-face examination format with learners (LS) following regulated and designated time frames (i.e., the case of UNISA, University of Ibadan, etc.), and most examinations are conducted through several designated centres, that does not obliterate the possibility of cheating or dishonesty. Closed to the aforementioned is the issue of how effectively ODL would ensure the loyalty of appointed designated centres’ officers when the conduct of such examinations is comparable to the conventional type. The assessment of learners’ coursework, and a concomitant random evaluation, has equally constituted some age-long challenge, particularly in ODL. Course assignments have been assumed to constitute the product of combined efforts rather than that of the learners alone. Using external assessors in facilitating teaching practice, counseling practicum and other related internship-prone learners’ activity has often raised the question on academic credibility, especially where the students’ enrolment is astronomical and coverage zones are expansive.

In the discussion on cheating via the use of technology, Olt (2002) submitted that distance does not diminish the possibility of students cheating with or without an accomplice on online assessments. Online students, rather than developing codes or passing erasers, pass private e-mails, which instructors have no means of intercepting. In some other instances, learners can download an assessment, look up the answers before actually taking it and share those answers with classmates (Olt, 2002). Rather than using cribbed notes or writing answers within the margins of the textbook or on desktop, student simply use the “verboten” sources during assessment. Olt’s study reported an alarming 10-point increase from the previous survey conducted 15 years ago from *Who’s Who among American High School Students*, indicating that 80% of the 3,123 students surveyed admitted to cheating on an examination (Bushweller, 1999) while in a related study another 84% of respondents said that cheating was a phenomenon in their college (Branigan, 2001). Similarly, 50% of them “did not believe that cheating was necessarily wrong,” and 95% of those who had cheated “said they had never been caught” (Kleiner & Lord, 1999). The number of students reporting that they have engaged in serious cheating continues to increase (Adkins et al., 2008) while Niels’ (1997) study found evidence of correlation between academic dishonesty and academic practices around the nation. The sampling of parental position on students’ cheating or parents aiding and abetting dishonesty was not atypically different. In a study by McCabe (2001), it was found that out of the student respondents on cheating, and who said that copying a few sentences without citation was not wrong even though less than that number felt otherwise, 22% of the students in the study turned in assignments done by their parents. The study further found that in a poll response where 66% of students said that cheating “didn’t seem like a big deal” 66% of their parents equally agreed and corroborated the assertion of their children. This is a bad omen that may taint the

respectability of the quality of DE programmes if nothing drastic is done to forestall the global spread of this attitude.

PERSONAL OPINIONS IN ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND LEGAL INTERPRETATIONS

Fundamental in the strict adherence and application of standard rules and regulations, especially as it affects the ODL practice and education generally, is the challenge of double meanings arising from legal interpretation. Whether it is considered from the perspective of the employee handbook or student handbook, different codes have defined professional and academic boundaries both to the programme facilitators (PF) on one hand and the recipients of programmes (whether through the ODL or the conventional method of education) on the other. Such erstwhile rules and regulations may unequivocally specify within its proviso when and how personnels' (otherwise, students') actions can be regarded as "wrong" or "right," while simultaneously dictating sanctions. Perhaps one of the most significant challenges of the ODL through the ages is its inability in securing the protection and sanctity of the handbook regulations, at least in absolute terms. Handbook regulations and the ingrained regulations in university calendars, which have been products of flouted actions, taunt the seriousness of professional behaviour and academic credibility in the majority of the institutions of higher education (IHE) globally. Using the problem of plagiarism as the index of explanation, several interpretations abound whenever "copyright" issues are debated. In Bills' (1990) study, Statistics show that 6 out of 10 undergraduates admit to plagiarism, but on the question of what happens when those students enter law school, it then focused on the difficulty created by the lack of a uniform definition of plagiarism and differing opinions on how much "intent" matters. The discussion

further concluded when it said that plagiarism was not the same thing as copyright infringement. Such dual interpretations on the direct application of infringement rules as corrective measures, from either professional or academic abuses, are part of the constraints that confront the effective maintenance of ethical practices across many institutions.

IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN DISTANCE LEARNING

A critical element in this paper is how to make professional behaviour and academic credibility as the function of dividends of ethical practice in education generally, but particularly in ODL programmes. Fundamental in that regard is the utilization of the benefits or operationalisation of commitment (i.e., whether from the perspective of PF/CF or students), which serve as inducements to organizational output or service delivery. Commitment, as several studies (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; O'Reilly, 1991) have confirmed, is a strong index in improving professional behaviour (otherwise, organizational performance) as well as goal attainment. Maintaining expected high academic standards with concomitant dividends, in especially output in higher education, has therefore the propensity for a strong reliance on ethical standards. Wherever the workplace ethics are unambiguously appropriated, high professional performance, which can be predictable, then becomes the product of collective behaviour.

Although Meyer et al. (1993) proposed the three model-approaches to commitment and which are affective, continuance and the normative commitments, O'Reilly's proposition includes compliance, identification and internalization of organizational values (i.e., workplace ethics). In Martin and Nicholls (1987), three main pillars of commitment along with their subcategorizations were identified, and these are: (a) a sense of

belongingness which ensures that the work force (otherwise, the entire student body) is (i) informed, (ii) involved and (iii) sharing in organizational success; (b) sense of excitement in job (but for the students, their academic responsibilities or professional competences and growth) reinforced by professional or academic (i) pride, (ii) trust, and (iii) accountability of results; and (c) confidence in the management which is facilitated by the attention to (i) authority (otherwise, ethical standards or workplace rules and regulations) (ii) dedication and (iii) competence. Annexing the benefits of the gains following collective organizational commitments has potency for translating ethical behaviour for good performance and professional maturity, responsibility and academic integrity.

Contributing to discussion on issues related to the mitigation of the varied challenges arising from ethical abuses, in terms of professional negligence, and in particular on the ODL and education in general, Hinman (2000), Olt (2002) and Adkins et al. (2008) have provided suggestions on the amelioration of online cheating and plagiarism. When online cheating and plagiarism (both professionally, that is, with the academics themselves, or the students), whether in the attempt to respond to examination tasks, assignment, projects and dissertation/theses writing and academic research publications, wane, professional acceptability increases just as academic credibility gets boosted while simultaneously, the direct dividends of organizational ethics then become infectious positively and functionally.

In pursuance of this paradigm, and according to Hinman (2000), the three model-approaches for minimizing online cheating should constitute (a) the virtue approach (which sought to provide necessary skills for students and academic staff members who do not want to cheat); (b) the prevention method (i.e., attempting to develop empowerment skills in the elimination or reduction of opportunities for students to cheat or simply reducing the pressure to cheat); and finally (c) the police approach (which sought to identify, catch

and punish those who cheat), respectively. Other methods for improving academic integrity and professional behaviour may include developing, through concerted efforts, a rotational curriculum enabled through the allocation of original assignments and reading or providing alternative, project-based assessments where creativity is significantly the vogue, as well as difficult-to-guess multiple choice items. The importance of regulatory seminars and workshops at workable intervals, both among the PF/CF and students in the ODL, should be emphasized with a concomitant follow-up on the proviso in workplace ethics on the academic integrity/dishonesty policy. McCabe and Pavela (1997) have epitomized this in their 10-principles of academic integrity, which suggest that academic institutions should:

- a. affirm the importance of academic integrity;
- b. foster love of learning;
- c. treat students as ends in themselves;
- d. promote an environment of trust in the classroom;
- e. encourage student responsibility for academic integrity;
- f. clarify expectations for students;
- g. develop fair and relevant forms of assessment;
- h. reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty;
- i. challenge academic dishonesty when it occurs; and
- j. help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

CONCLUSION

Both faculty members and learners have the moral responsibility to curtail workplace professional and academic abuses. To facilitate the sustainability of adequate professional behaviour and academic credibility, all PF/CF and learners must

understand, accept and utilize predetermined ethical standards to direct their daily responsibilities and be unconditionally committed to total organizational goals. It must be noted that learning is a fundamental human right. Universal access to education for all throughout life is equally an ethical priority. The efficient way of ensuring wider accessibility to education by all and sundry is through distance learning. It must be stated right from the outset that education is much more than learning, as educated citizenry will, all things being equal, contribute realistically to both national and international peace, tolerance, orderliness and respect. Education should provide each person with the creative idea to innovate and to live responsibly in relation to one another in his/her community.

Having gone this far, it is pertinent to note that the onus is on the universities the world over, whether such is a conventional or a virtual institution, not only to transfer appropriate knowledge and skills to their products but also and more importantly too to instil in them some forms of academic values such as honesty, transparency, collegiality and openness and social values, which include respect, loyalty, integrity, decency, faithfulness, civic engagement and responsibility. These are very essential components of developing a whole person to be useful both to himself or herself and to the society in which he/she lives.

Unfortunately, most distance education institutions are no longer driven by their major core business of knowledge generation, skills transfer and moral rejuvenation. Rather, they camouflage their operations under the business model paradigm, thus commercializing education and thereby treating knowledge as a commodity that is manufactured in a large quantity from an industry, with a view to increasing the profit margin. If the perception of universities in the 21st century is to create wealth at the expense of quality human capacity development, certainly there will be compromises here and there in order to stay in “business” and this will loom large on

the end product which will be defective, irrelevant and unsuitable for the public’s consumption.

The reason for the universities to embrace the business model of education, one would guess, stems also from the dwindling financial resource allocation to them by the state. Yet, they must strive to survive; hence, the daunting challenges of fees increase, establishment of financially self-financing academic and professional programmes and more importantly, the drive to launch full blast distance education outfits. Their full-time academic programmes are therefore packaged on DE mode and targeted at the working adults; even when such institutions have no business in dabbling to distance education because they lack the wherewithal to meaningfully and professionally engage in such an activity.

We have indicated earlier in our chapter that the problem of ethical issue is not limited to the virtual universities alone, but also affects the conventional institutions because of the changing educational landscape globally. The impact of technology on our pedagogical offering is enormous; hence, Bennett (1998) has proffered a triangular scenario for the future.

1. One possibility is that the number and size of institutions of higher education will rapidly shrink as global electronic educational opportunities grow. He notes that many campuses will become service stations through which multiple learning modules are made available to students at a distance. Price will become a greater factor in student choice.
2. A second possibility is that the telecommunications revolution will prove to have minimal impact on educational institutions. It is a fad and it will go away; however, the telecommunications revolution has already advanced too far to be reversed.
3. In the third scenario, most institutions will remain, but will find themselves playing altered roles. Most campuses now pay insufficient collegial attention to pedagogy. The

telecommunications revolution will spark renewed and revived attention to pedagogy and creative collaboration using innovative classrooms and laboratories will come about. Significant distance learning will occur, but the role will remain for the traditional residential institution. Assessment criteria will be considerably improved. The Internet provides an extension of the library and laboratory, a vehicle for rapid dissemination and critique of findings, and a forum for endlessly varied discussion groups. For faculty who have been isolated by geography or campus politics, telecommunications will rejuvenate interaction with scholars elsewhere.

Be that as it may, technology has now come to stay as an extension of human beings, and the improper use of it may render most distance education institutions impotent with their expected roles. On the other hand, technology could enhance the performance level of many distance education institutions if they are keen to put in place proper control mechanisms to monitor and standardize the quality of their programmes. Ethical consideration is a relatively new concept in education, so much that the society is endemic in the water of corruption and moral decadence that it has almost become impossible to draw the line between what is right and what is wrong in society. No matter whose horse is gored, it is pertinent for us to guarantee ethical value orientation in our education system through policy formulation, so that we can remain relevant in our national socio-economic development. In order to have further debate on how to improve the current unethical situation in our educational practices, we have given below some recommendations which may serve as signposts for addressing this menace from spreading further into all the other strata of the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Policy Formulation**
We need to formulate policies that will set a standard pattern of behaviour and ODL operation as a model for the students in both the traditional and the virtual institutions. Such policies must not only be honoured and implemented, but also respected as a code of conduct for encouraging moral uprightness in their educational activities. These will also be similar and comparable to other professions such as medical, law and journalism to mention just a few. This will also incorporate the value orientation that sets a pace for respect and control of the use of other people's intellectual property on the Internet, for instance, and thereby develop independent learning in the learners.
2. **Misplaced Societal Value**
There must be a way by which the government can conscientize the employers of labour, both in the private and public sectors of the economy, not to lay too much emphasis on paper qualification for job employment or promotion, as the craze for such is creating criminality among the youth of African countries. Alternatively, there must be standardized tests across all disciplines for all applicants seeking employment to go through, in order to prove their mettle in whatever field they may claim to be qualified. This is because tests test knowledge, and whoever cheated the system previously in order to be awarded unmerited qualification, whether such is acquired through the conventional or virtual educational institution, will through such tests be exposed as an inadequate material.
3. **Indolent Educators**
Apathy, laziness and tardiness on the part of the lecturers should also be addressed.

Inability to monitor, assess and follow up the students' work to know that whatever is submitted as an assignment by a student is not of the quality and standard of a particular student, based on the keen evaluation of the previous performance record of students should be a thing that could easily be detected by a curious tutor whether in a conventional or distance education institution. Maybe as a result of heavy workload, particularly in a distance education programme, where a lecturer is subjected to marking too numerous scripts and assignments may inevitably lead to frustration, especially when no form of incentive is given to them. Therefore, there is the possibility for such lecturers to merely scan through the pages of such scripts without any critical assessment of the contents. Many part-time lecturers also are in the habit of becoming "machineries" in the marking process, without any concern for quality maintenance but for the drive to make more money through the number of scripts they are able to mark, but not thoroughly. There are cases of complicity of examiners with the students on the basis of sexual gratification or monetary reward, starting even with passing some students in substandard assignments or awarding inflated marks on the examination scripts. Students have also become so sophisticated in the mode of cheating in exams. Some of them write possible answers on their palms and thighs or sit close to their friends to perpetrate their nefarious acts by either exchanging scripts in the exam halls or developing elongated necks to spy on other people's work, whether or not such is even the correct answer.

4. **Corrupt Society**

Moral decadence in terms of scandal of unbelievable magnitude is found among the top public government functionaries, private enterprises, politicians, bankers and even

academics the world over. This practice has sown evil corrupt seeds in our society. Like the biblical "forbidden fruit" in the garden of Eden, which Eve ate and she also gave to Adam to eat, and which consequently led to their expulsion from that glorious garden, many of our college students today have also eaten, unconsciously, such forbidden fruits which have been handed over to them by some of the egocentric leaders and the "big wigs" in our societies. The youth of nowadays are therefore worse in corrupt practices, including involvement in high rates of academic fraud and crimes in different dimensions, because the word "ethics" has long been blown off from their respective dictionaries of life.

5. **Inappropriate Home Training**

Charity, they say, begins at home. Unfortunately, with the current global economic recession, which has brought about a high degree of unemployment and which has led to the practical manifestation of the Darwinian theory of the "survival of the fittest," parents have therefore abdicated their traditional roles of being "teachers" in imparting sound home training to their children. The home, which used to be the most respected potent primary agent of socialization, has collapsed almost totally, as parents have no time for their wards because they are always busy chasing after earthly treasures to the detriment of the proper upbringing of their children. There is endless matrimonial conflict leading to an upsurge of divorce and thus making the youth disillusioned about what constitutes the proper values of the society. They start with little lies, but gradually move to the level of pilfering and consequently become champions in stealing, robbery and fraud of international magnitude. Let the parents embrace the reality of the dictum which says "bend a sapling and you have bent a

tree” and apply this to their process of nurturing their children, so that they will not be public nuisances when they grow up to adulthood and thereby become a menace to the society.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

- a. There is need for a comparative study of conventional and distance education institutions, with possible focus on the genealogy, magnitude of practice and the implications of the violation of ethical issues which were identified in this chapter, vis-à-vis the quality of products and programmes.
- b. More research effort is required on ethical issues in online educational settings with regard to the attitude, beliefs and behaviour of both the students and staff of virtual universities.
- c. There must be a systematic research activity on the appropriateness or otherwise of the applications and the use of ICT for educational delivery, which is more often adopted by both the single and bi-modal tertiary institutions but with negative implication for learners’ access.

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