Educational integrity in policy implementation and practice: A virtue for African students and leaders for development

Chukwunenye Clifford Njoku
Department of International Relations and Strategic Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya
Email: clifnjoku@yahoo.com

Education empowers men and women who lead their society to make decisions in the best interest of their community on the basis of reason, understanding of the common good as nurtured in them in a life time of gathering information through learning. Western education as perceived in Africa has helped in the development of Europe and America through developing people with educational integrity and intellectual repute. Africa needs students and leaders of similar qualities and abilities puts into action the reasoning and wisdom acquired through education and experience. Many of the ethical dilemmas surrounding African growth problems are exacerbated by isolating educational integrity and African rich cultural values from policy implementations and practices in governance for transformation, hence development is marred. This paper adopts a historical narrative methodology to reflect on African rich cultural values, while examining African students and leaders in this light. It draws on the theoretical framework of Adjibolosoo's *human factor* for Africa's development theory, and concludes with modest recommendations.
Keywords: Educational integrity, higher education, African students, policy implementation, development

Introduction

Educational integrity is an asset, and of great value for any society in which young people and leaders alike understand the need to embrace virtue. The paper takes a look at educational integrity as a concept specifically in relation to moral values and commitment towards societal goals. Educational integrity is required of students and leaders for national development, and it generates questions of critical concern in many African countries. In his concern for 21st century African well-being, Professor Modl noted that African society is in dire need of youths who could imbibe moral and social values which will help the Church and the state in solidarity to build a good and accommodating society for her citizenry (Modl, in Abba 2005 ,p. 11). Indeed, education is widely accepted as a leading instrument for promoting economic growth, which is crucial to Africa where growth is essential if the continent is to escape from its poverty trap.

Within these noble goals of education for Africa's socio-political and economic transformation lies educational integrity which is pivotal in the life of every African student for Africa's yearning for growth and development through transparent policy implementation and practices. Mungazi and Walker (1997) pointed out the need for people to learn how to embrace human qualities such as integrity, honesty, truthfulness and faithfulness and consider these as essential components in educational processes. Educational systems should constantly be reformed continously to attain relevance to the needs of the students and the developmental transformation of society (Mungazi & Walker, 1997:30). The rich African moral orientation and ethical values need to be encouraged as beacons of strength to African students and leaders and should be integrated in their higher education to enhance self-discipline that would encourage good leadership for social development.

Theoretical framework

For many decades now, many post-colonial leaders of Africa and other developing countries seem to be overwhelmed by the tasks that development strategies demand for the wellbeing of

their peoples. The result is that the developing world has failed to achieve widespread and sustainable human-centered development. True development thinking tends to revolve around intellectual vision and honesty towards economic growth in which the human factor remains a determinant. In other words, the theoretical framework underpinning this study stems from Adjibolosoo's (1996) *human factor development* ('HF'). According to him, "the effective and efficient running of business organization, political machinery, economic and social institutions requires well-educated, knowledgeable, responsible, trustworthy and accountable citizens. The planning, organization and operations of these institutions require appropriate human qualities and/or characteristics (i.e. HF) if they are to function as expected in society" (Adjibolosoo, 1996, p.30).

In his human factor for Africa's development theory, Adjibolosoo (1994) posits that the lack of appropriate human factor (HF) in African countries has been one of the contributory factors for ineffectiveness of development planning, economic, political and social policy formulation, and the continent's inability to achieve successful democratic governance. Inability to achieve successful industrialisation, political maturation, social progress, economic growth and the continent's development depends not only on the economic resources available but HF (Adjibolosoo, 1994, pp. 27-33), which is a spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social change, economic and political institutions to function, and remain functional over time. Such dimensions give support to the workings and application of the rule of law, political harmony, a disciplined labour force, a just legal system, and respect for human dignity and the sanctity of life. In other words, no political institution can function effectively without being taken care of by committed persons who believe in the ideals of the society (Adjibolosoo 1995, pp. 4-5).

Battling with poor foundational roots in African youth education

Introduction

Educational integrity is not acquired overnight, it is achieved through the concerted effort of students who desire and aspire to live a worthy life in the society. It is believed that educated individuals who embrace integrity and consistently adhere to strong moral principles can hardly deviate from self-discipline and honest leadership. This calls for university attainment and civic responsibilities of parents and teachers to inculcate good moral values in the life of every child for his or her future true relevance in society.

Given this, those who acquire poor home training and those who engage in all forms of malpractices in colleges and universities are bereft of educational integrity and can hardly lead the society well after their education. In other words, policies are initiated through human wealth of educational knowledge that triggers creative ideas and directions to reaching certain societal goals. In the same vein, poor practices in policy implementation for development in Africa may be due in part to dishonesty amongst educated officials. Most of the bad traits of African leaders are in part rooted in an earlier academic dishonesty of bygone school years of unchecked misbehaviour or stubbornly resisted ill-behaviour. When the foundation of any structure is weak, the a risk of its imminent collapse could be envisaged. A society can only experience change if young people are given an orientation that makes them have an inward realisation of self-worth, discipline and the quest to contribute to the society in which their lives derive meaning.

Educational constraints

Africa's profound challenges and widening economic and social gaps since the 1990s have been on the rise. Persistent economic crises and poverty affect education in Africa and a number of conferences have been held to awaken the consciousness of all stake holders in education. (UNESCO, Report on the State of Education in Africa,1995). However, the UNESCO Report also indicated that some remarkable progress was made in African education in the 1970s

though this experience did not last long and was eroded in the 1980s due to the economic crises in the continent. Education in Africa witnessed a phase of growth between 1975 and 1980 and a phase of decline since then. There was a drastic reduction in primary level enrolment, from 7.2 percent in 1975-1980 to 2.3 percent in 1981-1990, whilst secondary level enrolment fell from 11.7 percent to 5.1 percent, and the tertiary level fell from 10.7 percent to 5.5 percent. Due to economic crisis and adoption of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, the continent became the only region in the world that reduced its per capita expenditure on education. While developing countries as a block devoted an average of $30 to educational expenditure per capita in 1980, $27 in 1985, $39 in 1990 and $49 in 1992, sub-Saharan Africa devoted only $42 in 1980, $26 in 1985, $28 in 1990 and again $28 in 1992.

However, the 1990s witnessed a renewed commitment towards educational goals in Africa, reversing the previous trend. In Africa, official educational enrolment capturing all three levels rose from 54.4 million in 1975 to 116.5 million in 1992. Primary level enrolment rose from 45.1 million to 86.1 million, while the secondary and tertiary levels rose from 8.3 million to 27.1 million, and 929,000 to 3.3 million respectively. However, a larger proportion of education expenditure is consumed by the salaries of teaching and administrative personnel thus leaving relatively little for other inputs into education (UNESCO, Report on the State of Education in Africa, 1995). Furthermore, problems of lack of education and inappropriate skills prevail in Africa, although education is so important in addressing Africa's unemployment, because it is the critical element of human capital development (UN, Economic Report on Africa 2010, p.66).

Improved attainment of school/university years could benefit African students' educational integrity values for leadership and development

Educational training has become increasingly important in the life of every child for his or her future relevance in what he or she can attain in the society. Educational training impacts on a child and student a lifelong experience and makes him or her live such nurtured life pattern. Teaching African students societal values that imbibe a sense of virtue in them as future leaders has become so important in colleges and universities for their future wellbeing. Giroux and McLaren (1986) point out that, "By acknowledging the legitimacy of their cultural expression, we give the students their own "voice" in the classroom" (Giroux & McLaren 1986, pp. 213-238). Educational knowledge gives empowerment and refines a person's behaviour and his or her role in society, hence Dei (2010) correctly notes:

> Knowledge and survival go hand in hand. In other words knowledge is for survival and all knowledge must compel action. Knowledge is meaningful when lived and practiced. Knowledge cannot be simply an abstract thought. Every knowledge is a "living document". Knowledge must be actualized in everyday practice. Consequently, we cannot separate theory from practice. The key to human survival is the ability of society to pass knowledge down through generations by cultural transmission. (Dei 2010, pp. 80-81).

Indeed, molding African youths through higher education is immensely important for their future role. This is consistent with Darraji's (2005) view that, even among the Diaspora Africans in America, moral instructions given in school include the infinite value of love of truth, of justice, of integrity, of fidelity in contracts, of personal purity. It forms part of the teaching that charitableness in judgment must be earnestly inculcated (Darraji 2005). Schools reward individual possession of specific intellectual and attributes. Placing emphasis on doing better than others and raising a means of reward system to honour such accomplishment, schools reinforce individual competition (Gay 1975, pp. 30-33; Boykin 1994, p. 247). In his classical notes about African Diaspora students, Cummins remarks that, "When we fail to acknowledge the integrity of the cultural capital many African American bring with them, we foster greater negative teaching expectations for these children. We alienate these children. We dismember them by demeaning their integrity" (Boykin 1994, p. 250).

Truly, education influences the life of an individual student as a disciplined person who gets equipped for a contribution to the society after school. For instance, in his insightful analogy on 'democracy', and its practices, Clark points out that a narrow political conception of 'democracy' would have the following features: (a) the accountability of rulers, political institutions and policies, the freedom to associate and organise politically, and the rule of law (Clark 1994). Walking in concert with Clark's assertion, Kobia correctly argues that, for democracy to flourish there must be a politically literate and active citizenry, who take a direct and personal responsibility in the workings of society and the government. These literate people have a working knowledge of the aims and purposes of government, how it is constituted, maintained and renewed; how government policy is formulated and implemented; the nature and scope of government institutions, processes and procedures and how they operate. Political literacy works in tandem with political action. If one has knowledge of political processes and institutions of government that is not translated into action regularly, it remains useless and dangerous. In other words, democracy is sustained by those who are willing to find out, investigate and explore problems and issues in society and people who are ready to come up with a plan of action for their resolution (Kobia 1993).

Bitzer (2009), however, suggests that the focus of academics and people who are involved in investigating the field of higher education should primarily endeavour to facilitate its core business under two aims that make any institution significant in higher education, thus:

- To teach in such a way that students benefit maximally from their higher educational experience by increasing their sensitivity towards historical, contemporary and future issues, and to assist students in becoming independent, intrinsically motivated and self-monitoring lifelong learners;
- To extend the publicly accessible body of knowledge through conceptual, theoretical and empirical research, scholarship and publication.

However, with this insight, administration, professional entrepreneurship and leadership in any discipline or field of study including consultancy services should be subordinated to the aims (Bitzer, 2009, p. xii).

African needs and shifts: Reflections on educational integrity in a century-old Western academic culture

In our globalised world, African contemporary society can only be knowledge-driven, peaceful and progressive if schools and universities produce well-meaning individuals whose contributions are immensely pivotal towards social development, and also bridge the missing link in societal norms and values. The importance of higher institutions of learning as training arenas for students who would become futures leaders cannot be overemphasised. For instance, drawing analogy from an American professor at the University of California Davis, who emphasised on academic integrity thus:

> Our academic integrity policies at UC-Davis provoke students to reflect on their own ethics and values. We hope students realize that following community standards develops their own sense of personal integrity (Templeton Foundation, 1999, p. 48).

Further insight is given by Students Judicial Affairs (SJA) at the UC-Davis University which promotes academic integrity thus enforcing the Code of Academic Conduct, publishing and disseminating standards for ethical academic behaviour, and facilitating students' learning through the disciplinary process and also encourages the moral development of students who break the rules. The SJA helps students in fostering skills for making ethical decisions and assists them to not to fall into the trap of such breaches in future. (Templeton Foundation 1999, p. 48).

Drawn from most universities around the globe are inspiring notes that situate peace, orderliness and good moral behaviour at in the heart of every student who embraces university and college education. In placing emphasis on their core foundational roots, many universities in Europe and America, for instance, not only pursue high intellectual goals but attach to it the great virtue of educational integrity. For example, the University of Southern Carolina-Columbia showcases itself as a public comprehensive institution, which was founded in 1801 to create a learning environment filled with the finest quality of human behaviour, such as mutual respect, integrity, and selflessness. This is encapsulated in its Creed which serves as a social honour code for the USC students, which also establishes the University values for governing peer relationships. The Creed suggests that individual virtue is its own reward, hence the Carolinian Creed: The community of scholars at the University of South Carolina is dedicated to personal and academic excellence. Choosing to join the community obligates each member to a code of civilised behaviour. As a Carolinan:

- I will practice personal and academic integrity
- I will respect the dignity of all persons
- I will respect the rights and property of others;
- I will discourage bigotry, striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions.
- I will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings, and their need for conditions which support their work and development. (Templeton Foundation 1999, p. 50).

Given allegiance to these ideals obligates and strongly makes each student to refrain from behaviours that threaten the freedom and respect which all members of the university community deserve. Hence the creed focuses on understanding, appreciating, and living the values of civility, compassion, empathy, and openness - values that help mold students into citizens of character and integrity (Templeton Foundation 1999, p. 50).

Truly, if African youths could avail themselves of opportunities to attain college and university education within and beyond Africa, and become well-exposed to higher educational learning, it will imbibe in them a fresh and rewarding orientation that will benefit them and the society at large. It is amazing to note how universities and colleges mold students' lives righteously in such articulated programs that are rich in moral education. We may gain further insight by the pace set by most western educational institutions. For example, Malone College has a concept of stewardship that unifies its General education program which it classifies in four areas namely, Stewardship under God, Stewardship and Skill, Stewardship and Science, and Stewardship and Society. This education experience helps students forge a link between their learning and how their lives are patterned (Templeton Foundation, 1999, p. 66). In a more religious context, J. Howard Pew, who was one of the founders of Grove City College in 1876 noted in one of the institution's guiding spirits thus: "the College's prime responsibility is to inculcate in the minds and hearts of youths those Christian moral and ethical principles without which our country cannot long endure" (Pew, cited in Templeton Foundation, 1999, p. 66). These ethical absolutes and Christian moral teachings guide the College's efforts to develop intellect and character in the classroom, hence taught courses include:

- Evaluating cultural, economic, political, and social structures and policies in light of Christian principles;
- Helping students develop a Biblical worldview that directs their private and public lives;
- Emphasizing the importance of religious, political, and social freedom;
- Discussing the connection between the ethical standards and practices of a society and the moral commitments and character of individuals. (Templeton Foundation, 1999)

To expose more Africans to higher education will help them to overcome lingering problems in the continent as good individuals similar to a recent Saint Anselm College graduate's remarks in his inspiring words thus, "The goal of the Humanities programme is not just to introduce students to artistic and political genius from antiquity to the present, but also to encourage us to ask the most penetrating questions about what it means to be a human being" (Templeton Foundation, 1999, p. 71).

Relatively, Adjibolosoo (1996) correctly stated that developing countries (DCs) and those among the least developed countries (LDCs) today face economic, political and cultural difficulties as a result of the lack of people who are rich in the necessary human factor (HF), not necessarily the lack of technology or abundant capital. To overcome the human factor problem, countries need to pay attention to their existing educational system and training programs in order to uncover their teething problems. If education systems and training and monitoring have failed to produce men and women of dedication, commitment, responsibility, accountability, integrity and trustworthiness, etc, then there is need to make them better equipped to achieve the intended HF development goals (Adjibolosoo, 1996, p. 30).

Dei (2010) emphasises that character and moral development are equally questions of spiritual development of the learner of which education must be about an affirmation of students' spiritualities and identities (Dei, 2010, p. 82). While recognising the importance of school and university education as life-transforming arenas for the good of students and society as a whole, Bitzer (2009) stresses that South Africa's constitution is driven by its mandate "to realize a system of education that is transformed and democratized in alignment with the values guarding human dignity, equality, human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism, and one that ensures the right to basic education for all citizens". In line with this noble goal are the most important recommendations to the National Commission on Higher Education in South Africa which started in 1995 and culminated in Higher Education Act of 1997. Two among its major recommendations are (i) an expansion of student enrolment and broadened access to teach a wider distribution of social groups, and class, including adult learners, and (ii) greater responsiveness to societal needs and interest, etc (Bitzer 2009, p. 13).

University as a life-transforming arena is consistent with Allen's (1997) view of "the teaching and modeling of such ideals as equity and openness. Accountability, integrity and honour are central to the education mission of a university climate which fosters academic integrity" (Allen, 1997, p. 134). In other words, their lives will be enriched apart from award of degrees which motivates an individual, he or she gains experience from a university system that models and upholds values and ethical standards (Heslep, 1995).

Africa needs a shift in more student educational attainment producing a morally-oriented citizenry for its transformation consistent with UNESCO's Dakar declaration:

> Basic learning needs . . . comprise both essential learning tools . . . and the basic learning content . . . required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. (UNESCO, World Education forum, Dakar, 2000).

Similarly, in his articulated and insightful view on Africa, President Mbeki expressed his prospects for higher educational attainment for Africans thus: "If the next (21st) century is going to be characterised as a truly African century, for social and economic progress of the African people, the century of durable peace and sustained development in Africa, then the success of this project is dependent on the success of our education systems. For nowhere in the world has sustained development been attained without a well-functioning system of education, without universal and sound primary education, without an effective higher education and research sector, without equality of educational opportunity" (Mbeki, 1999). Finally, on its policy in 1977, the Nigerian government highlighted a set of values which education should seek to inculcate. This was contained in the Guidelines for the Fourth National Development Plan 1981-85 which include: (i) respect for the worth and dignity of the individual; (ii) faith in man's ability to make rational decisions; (iii) moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations; (iv) shared responsibility for the common good of society; (v) respect for the dignity of labour; and (vi) promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of children (Edeybaro, 1996, p.14).

Educational integrity, policy implementation and practice in Africa: Some challenges

Introduction

Implementation problems in most developing countries of Africa and elsewhere could be attributed to the problem of a widening gap between intentions and results in programs. Management of national resources and all the sectors of the economy are piloted by educated men and women of their time. It needs to be emphasised that no matter how beautiful the blueprint of a program may be, a defective implementation of it will make nonsense of the whole program. In their note on poor policy implementation in Nigeria, Manyong, et al posited:

> There was a tendency to regard the formulation of policies as ends in themselves, rather than being means to desired ends. As such, little attention was paid to the efficient implementation of policies. Bureaucrats and policy implementers tended to lose sight of the fundamental objectives of policies, instead, focusing on superficial issues. Poor managerial capacity, bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption and high rates of policy turnover tend to complicate the problem of policy implementation (Manyong et al 2005, p. 56).

Policy implementation and practice

In emerging democracies, educated leaders and public officials who preach democratic principles may be found to be guilty of not practising what they preach to the public, as the actual implementation of those principles are new to them (Antwi-Boasiako & Bonna 2009, p. 72). The term "democracy" implies government by the people, but it is most times difficult for the ruled to demand changes, as politicians have often shown that those who elected them to power do not know how political systems work. Many campaign with promises in order to win election but hardly fulfill those promises. Coup makers, monarchs and other national leaders make promises for change but political change has become a fallacy for the ruled. Rawlings' military coup in Ghana in 1979 was welcomed by the public and university students due to its promise to wipe out injustice and corruption and give power back to the people. The Rawlings Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) executed top officials in its "housecleaning" exercise in the armed forces and society at large to restore a sense of moral responsibility, principle of accountability and probity in the public sector of the country. This did not change the situation for corruption still prevailed in Ghana right from 1980 to 2008 (Antwi-Boasiako & Bonna 2009, p.73). In Uganda, a well-planned strategy to bridge the educational gap between the south and the poor north is frustrated by poor implementation (World Bank Report 2009, p. 247). The story about Nigeria reflects a complete deficit of governance, in which a crisis of governance is conspicuous due to failed policies of the ruling elites in providing essential collective goods such as physical infrastructure, the rule of law, or the legitimate symbol of state authority and political community (Lewis 2002).

Conclusion

Educational integrity in its true sense is an embodiment of ideals and values of honesty, trust, equity, self-respect and responsibility, integrated in the life of students and educated individuals in social life and the translation of these values into action. The essence of education is to create an immense impact on the human society hence one cannot claim to be rational until he or she is educated. This study has touched on the African situation other than being narrowed to academics and has also emphasised various aspects of national life and development dilemmas in some African countries where morally-oriented human capital has become a precondition for growth and development. Day to day activities provide learning opportunities for teachers, parents and children. The role of higher educational institutions that make learning opportunities a prioritised goal and rewarding it has been given strong emphasis in this paper to expose and imbibe in African students' positive and rich educational values as they grow up as could be observed in the illustrations.

In Africa lack of educational integrity manifests in governance and in people's social life even among the educated. The rate of academic dishonesty among African students in higher education is on the rise in view of countless examination malpractices in most African institutions. Many youths in Africa end up being mere labourers or petty traders in a continent that requires many more educated men and women of virtue to move it forward. This paper has touched on resource gaps, as shown in years of fluctuating fortunes in the education sector in Africa. The danger of untrained adults and students who are not exposed to higher educational attainments with its accorded-rewards of integrating educational integrity in them leaves the society with people of manipulative mentality and uncivil character. It is the same cheating mentality and bad character he or she may import into social life and work places. There is no doubt that men of occultic dispositions who engage in political assassinations, corruption and other forms of illicit behaviours in African elections and in ethnic rivalries are people who never acquired strong moral principles education endowed on students, as they display mastery of their art in over-heating the polity either by killing others, misusing available national resources or making their country ungovernable.

The future of Africa could be more secure in its growth and development race with the wider world if its teaming young people could embrace higher education which is infused with educational integrity. In fact, educational integrity is crucial to African development and redemption - a strategy for moving forward and changing old corrupt lifestyles by raising intellectual minds who are epitomes of educational integrity that would bring about honesty, respect, equity, trust and all 'just' values in policy practice and implementation in governance for orderly and progressive African society.

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