

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION AND INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA.

Laguo Livingstone Gilbert, PhD & Edum, Christian Clifford (PhD)
Department of Business Administration/Tourism and Hospitality Management
Faculty of Management Sciences Otuoke

ABSTRACT

This work examined the relationship between ethical consideration and institutions quality in South-south Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational approach. The study population was 6 tertiary institutions in South-south Nigeria; and the study respondents were 133 staff comprising of the, VCs, DVCs, Registrars, Bursars, Librarians, Deans of the six universities under study. The reliability of instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach alpha with a least value of 0.79. Ten hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used for the bivariate analysis. The finding revealed that there is positive relation between ethical consideration and institutional quality as used in this study. The study concludes that ethical consideration improved institutional quality. The study therefore recommended that tertiary institutions in South-south Nigeria should contribute ethically by identifying standard products/service types, insisting on product/service quality and trying to keep its product/service relevant through innovation.

Keywords: Ethical Consideration, Institutions Quality, Performance, Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The dramatic fall in the quality of education in Nigeria is not an idea nor a myth, but a reality which is a subject of contemporary history and sociological anthropology (Dukor, 2017). According to Dukor (2017) we live by it and we live in it but paradoxically most of us pretend not to be aware while pointing fingers to our neighbours. There are a number of unethical non-pedagogic and non-epistemic issues which underline the foundation of failed education in Nigeria and the liberal democratic reforms of growth which expanded the democratic specie for higher institutions that have yielded a multiplier effect of vices that accompany individualism, free market forces and primitive competition. The underlying vices here are corruption, graft, unaccountability, poor leadership, sorting, sex for grades, examination malpractices, cultism, prostitution, and erosion of quality assurance in Nigerian higher institutions. Education substantiates the moral worth of an individual as a moral and rational agent grounded in the Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative which treats man as an end and not a means to an end (Kant, 1998). Besides, certain contraries or antimonies are negotiations of this moral worth of the individual; implying that Nigeria's educational failure will continue to subsist unless these negatives are challenged by some ethical, cultural and epistemic solutions. Frankly speaking, we are getting to the point where the National Universities Commission, the Federal Ministry of Education, and all its associated bodies will have to express the rational and retro-active win to re-fashion our educational system which will meet the challenge of the future Nigeria.

Generally speaking, the problems identified in Nigerian universities which are directly related to issues of ethical concerns are becoming contemporary in recent times (Anya, 2002). According to Solomon & Hanson (2004), the toxicity of unethical practices in organizations is becoming unsecure for a healthy business operation. They believe that this business menace creates opportunity for institutions to scramble for survival against moral values. For instance, in government-owned federal universities some of the issues ranges from the sale of substandard academic handouts at exorbitant prices, by lecturers to scandals, bribery and grafts, victimization, sexual harassment of female students and other non-academic staff, proliferation of male and female cults, persistent incidence of rape, prostitution, obscene dressing and soliciting favours, murder, examination malpractices, lack of social amenities for students and staff, etc (Uyomu, 2002). Other proliferated problems which

researchers have found in government-owned universities that do not consider ethical practices in their operations are substandard services, lack of technological know-how and equipment for effective and efficient reading and learning activities, obsolesces of services, high corruption index, low morale and staff engagement, poor students' academic performance, operational inefficiency, negative corporate reputation and image, very poor rewards management system, low motivation for professional growth (Uyomu, 2002; Dukor, 2017; Okwu & Abu, 2017).

Sequel to the above studies, it is undoubtedly true to state here that ethical practice and its considerations in government-owned federal universities in the south-south region of Nigeria have not yet received any notable study to prove its significance; thereby this creates a knowledge gap for this study. Most of the studies done on ethical considerations in business were done outside Nigeria, and did not make use of the dimensions and indicators used in this study; as such is also a gap to be covered.

Considering the findings of various experts above showing the relevance of ethical decisions to performance, many tertiary institutions have not yet adopted or considered ethical practices in their operations as a benchmark for performance measurement and improvement. Thus, it is believed that government-owned federal universities that do not engage in ethical practices will suffer in areas such as lack of competitive posture, substandard services, low employee morale and commitments, loss of values, obsolesces, negative corporate reputation, etc (Okwu & Alu, 2007; Dukor, 2017; Baridam & Nwibere, 2008; Ujomu, 2002). In view of this; this study examines the relationship between ethical considerations and performance of government-owned universities in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between ethical considerations and institutional performance of government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between ethical considerations and institutional quality of government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

Ethical Considerations

In this research work, ethical considerations refers to the extent to which institutions or firms consider or take decisions that enhance moral principles in their institutional operations. Nnabuife and Ikon (2008) believe that ethical business considerations encompass assumed ethical dimensions because of the impact which the consideration or decision would have within the business environment or external environmental influences. This impact may be the outcome of the consideration to enhance the business or may also impact negatively on the business. Solomon and Hanson (1983) opine that ethical business considerations involve the decisions taken in business as it relates to public interests, social responsibility, human rights and justice. Weiss (1994) stress that in virtually all business decisions, the public concern must be noted and their impact considered. For instance, operational decisions in a firm have effects on the staff carrying out the decisions. Such decisions may involve a new method of carrying out the same job or duty in which case the staff involved has to be informed or retrained to fit into the new scheme. This type of business practice is considered ethical; as stakeholders impacts of the business are considered. Also, an internal decision taken by a firm as a result of new government policy(s) or directives would have effects on the staff, customers, suppliers and other creditors of the firm.

Practically, for instance in Nigeria, the National Agency for Foods, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) issued that from 2008 all soft drinks as carbonated mineral waters must be bottled in plastic and not any more in glass bottles (NAFDAC bulletin, 2005). Hence the reason for this ethical business consideration being that there are numerous cases of contaminated bottles recycled and used in bottling soft drinks by bottling companies; as sometimes parts of insects and solid wastes

are found in product bottles, which are obviously harmful to the health of the Nigerian citizens (NAFDAC, 2005). However, this type of government directive through its agency (NAFDAC) carries along with it a lot of ethical and social responsibility issues as it affects the firms involved. With the consideration and compliance of all firms concerned moving into plastic packs in their millions of units, one can imagine how the Nigerian environment will look like from 2008 to date. On this ground, apart from the cost involved in installing the plastic bottling line, the bottling companies would certainly think of how to keep the environment clean (Nnabuife and Ikon, 2008). In line with this, the agency will do the environmental impact assessment (EIA) on the ethical considerations of such business practices. Therefore, sound ethical business considerations or decisions would fall within what Solomon and Hanson (1992) referred to as the three (3Cs) of business ethics such as contributions, compliance, and consequences. These three variables become the dimensions in this work used to measure ethical consideration as it relates to institutional performance.

In most definitions of ethics, there was a reference to the concept of "obligation", particularly as it relates to professional responsibility (Blau, 1988). It is no doubt that in business, there are obligations to clients, stakeholders, customers, and society, all in making demands upon the organization and the individual employer (Jansen and Von Glinow, 1985). Ethics within the organization maybe an attempt by management and employers to do the right thing if there is a competing demand (Froelich and Kohke, 1991). According to Pfeiffer and Forster (1993) ethics is defined as the study of justification of ethical value judgments. An ethical value judgment is deciding between right or wrong, good or bad, better or worse, virtue or vice, or what should or should not be done. Justification or ethical principles provided reasons or evidence for truth or falsehood in a given judgment. Haas (1997) defined organizational ethics as a function of the collective attitudes of the people. He however, based organizational ethics on six ethical principles: honesty, fairness, promise keeping, respect for others, compassion and integrity. According to him, these ethical principles should be integrated with other organizational values, such as diversity, open communications, empowerment, recognition, and team work. A working definition of ethical theory, purposed by Brady (1988), stated that ethical judgments are largely based upon two premises: utilitarianism and Kant's formalism. Utilitarianism denoted the greatest good for the greatest number, while formalism depended on common human intuition and judgment process.

Institutional Quality: Institutional quality in this study refers to the extent to which certain sets of ethical standards are made to be complied by the universities while providing and delivering their academic services. These standards may be provided by the universities involved in their deemed capacity or any central organization, agency or commission overlooking the regulations governing such universities or institutions. For instance, such regulatory bodies may include National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities quality, standard organization of Nigeria (SON) for manufacturing companies Siyakiya (2017) disclose that institutional quality is one of the measures that indicates the quality of governance and institutional performance. Kuncic (2002) opines that to measure institutional performance, institutions must compute the latent quality of the institution's legal political and economic activities. However, Alonso *et al.*, (2020) stressed that institutional quality is conditioned by variables that can be modulated by public policy such as income per capita, national openness, quality of education, taxation and patterns of income distribution. Besides, Kandil (2009) analyzed the determinants of institutional quality to include six separate indicators of governance such as: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. Lehre (2015) describes institutional quality as a broad concept that captures law, individual rights and high quality governance regulation and services. One of the major stakeholders' perceptions of a good offer has been on quality or standard of product or service delivery. Quality institutions are always known for their adherence to customers' or other stakeholders' specifications or requirement. Quality institutions see this feature as a strategic tool for gaining competitive advantage (Whifford, 2011). Perhaps, in order to adhere to stakeholders' specifications of standards, institutions must be guided by some policies, regulatory

bodies and corporate governance strategies which could help them keep to ethical practices (Siyakuya, 2017; Rodrigo, 2009). Also, institution capacity is a key amongst others to improving the quality of institutions through enacting new and implementing and adhering strictly to existing rules on standards. In view of this, the study adopts three out of the six dimensions of institutional quality by Nifo and Vechione (2014) to include: regulatory quality, rule of law, and corruption control index.

Brief History of Tertiary Institutions in South-south Nigeria

At the end of the civil war in 1970, the Rivers State Government was faced with an acute shortage of trained teachers for its rapidly expanding programme of post-primary education. In view of this, a committee was appointed by the Ministry of Education to examine the problem and to make necessary recommendations on the establishment of an Advanced Teachers Training College. The report of the committee however, stressed the need to invest much energy in the right directions to ensure that the schools in Rivers State did not face the danger of either collapsing or producing students who would be worth nothing on graduation. After the required spade work by the Ministry of Education, Rivers State College of Education opened in temporary quarters at the Catholic Mission's Stella Maris College, Port Harcourt on 14 June, 1971 with an initial intake of 116 students, under the headship of Dr. William Maxwell Jnr., a USAID representative then serving in the state. In January 1972, the College moved to another temporary site at Oromineke in the D/Line area of Diobu, Port Harcourt. A new principal, the late J.E. Ohochukwu, was also appointed in October, 1972. From its foundation, the college had an uphill task to contend with the dearth of few academic staff, lack of adequate library facilities and shortage of accommodation which constituted very serious problems. However, many of the initial handicaps proved temporary as considerable progress began to be noticed in due course.

Rivers State College of Education was under the direct control of the Ministry of Education, until the promulgation of the nursery and miscellaneous education institution Edict No. 10 of 15 November, 1974. This edict established the college as a corporate body under the management of a Governing committee, headed by W.E. Alagoa, the then chairman of the Teaching Service Commission. In terms of Administrative Management and Growth, Edict No. 10 of 1974 did not satisfy the needs of Rivers State College of Education, hence the promulgation of Edict No. 1 of 25 February, 1975. The new edict marked a turning point in the history of the institution. With the attainment of full maturity, the college became well positioned to play a more dynamic role in the state. A Governing council was appointed to take the responsibility of recruitment of staff, general overall administrative and financial control of the institution. Following this transformation, E. Aguma, who was appointed principal in January, 1975 became the first Provost while Dr. E. T. Green succeeded Alagoa as the chairman of council in June, 1975. After an interregnum created by the change of government in the country in July 1975, a new governing council with Dr. F. A. Eke, as chairman and a new provost, R.I. C. Koko, were appointed on November, 1975. The problem of accommodation however, greatly inhibited the progress of the college. At this point, all students lived off-campus with limited classrooms.

In January, 1977 the college moved to its permanent site at Rumuolumeni although some essential facilities were still lacking on the campus. This bold step was a definite milestone in the life of the institution because physical presence on the spot placed the institution in a better position to make further plans for its continued growth and improvement of existing facilities. A unique event in the history of the college took place on March 11, 1978 on the occasion of its official opening and first graduation ceremony. Four sets of students totalling 462 in number received their diplomas on the successful completion of the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) programme. The graduands were made up of those who passed their examinations between 1974 and 1977. A great landmark in the history of the institution and the successful graduation ceremony was an eloquent testimony of the tireless labour of both the College Community and the Rivers State Government in the bold bid to produce well-trained non-graduate teachers for post primary institutions. With effect from January 1977, the Rivers State Ministry of Education made available two top model primary schools

in Port Harcourt. The Port Harcourt Primary School and the Seashell Model Primary School at this point formed part of the college. These schools provided some scope for teaching practice and research in primary education. The two schools were put under the administration of Rivers State College of Education in 1977 by the Education Ministry. Hitherto, they were managed by the then College of Science and Technology (CST), Port Harcourt now Rivers State University.

In the 1977/78 session another important development was achieved, the establishment of a Primary Education Department which offered a three-year NCE course open only to serving Grade II practicing teachers. It was designed to enhance effective teaching in both primary schools and Grade II Teachers Colleges and supervisory work in the primary schools. The formal launching ceremony of the programme was held on June, 9 1978 when 200 pioneer students matriculated. The department was run under the sponsorship of the UNESCO. Following the government's proclamation of its intention to run degree programmes in educational fields through colleges of education in 1980, the Rivers State Government decided to sponsor the programme in order to increase the number of teachers in the state. Prof. G.O.M. Tasié was appointed provost of the college and was expected to upgrade the college to a degree-awarding institution. At this point Chief A.B. Batubo was the chairman of the Governing Council of the College and following his appointment, the 1981/82 academic year witnessed the actual admission of candidates for degree programmes in Rivers State College of Education. On May 28, 1982, the College matriculated the pioneer students of the degree programme and by the end of the 1983/84 academic session, a total of 3,169 students had successfully passed through the various programmes of the college. Out of this figure, 2,504 went through the NCE programme, 531 passed through the ACE programme and 134 in the B.Ed programme. It is noteworthy that, of all the colleges of education which were affiliated to the University of Ibadan, Rivers State College of Education was the only one offering the Bachelor of Education degree in Education. Other achievements of the college between 1982 and 1984 were: the creation of some new academic departments; secretarial studies, integrated science and social sciences; the construction of the science laboratories for physics, chemistry and biology in 1993; the construction of staff office accommodation in December 1983.

At this time Prof. G.O.M. Tasié was re-appointed provost by the Military Governor of the State. Rivers State College of Education made giant strides within this period 1984-1987 especially in the improvement of its structures, facilities, funding and conditions of service, particularly by providing the visual Arts Laboratory building and by the construction of twin standard-size lawn tennis courts. In January, 1988, the Military Governor of River State approved the appointment of Professor S.T. Amakiri as Provost of the College. In May of the same year, Professor Isaac Deima was appointed to head the Governing Council. From 1988 to 1991 the college had achieved some of its dreams which included, six additional classroom block extensions and a one-room audio visual centre, a staff office block project and a Language laboratory were completed including hostels. In addition, the college has been enjoying the University Salary Structure (USS) and it is of note that Rivers State College of Education was the first College of Education that started the scheme. In the year 2009, a decision was reached by the state government to convert the Rivers State College of Education into a University in furtherance of its desire to provide opportunities for high quality education for citizens of the state. Given that the college had a long time been awarding degrees in affiliation with the University of Ibadan, the transition from a College of Education to a University should be easy for the institution. Further to this was the fact that many graduates of the defunct Rivers State College of Education have been yearning to improve their academic qualifications through the acquisition of university degrees, preferably within an environment they are used to. The Government of Rivers State considered it expedient to establish the second state owned University.

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was then established by the University of Education Law No. 8 of 2009 of the Rivers State Government passed by the Rivers State House of Assembly on 15 October 2009 and assented to by His Excellency, the Rt Hon. Rotimi Chibuike Ameachi, the Executive

Governor of Rivers State on 20 October, 2009. In 2016, the institution started offering post graduate courses and today the institution has produced her pioneer PGDE, MSC, MA, and PhD students.

The Common-Good Theory

This theory to ethics assumes a society comprising individuals whose own good is inextricably linked to the good of the community. Community members are bound by the pursuit of common values and goals. The common good is a notion that originated more than 2,000 years ago in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. More recently, contemporary ethicist John Rawls defined the common good as "certain general conditions that are...equally to everyone's advantage". In this theory, we focus on ensuring that the social policies, social systems, institutions, and environments on which we depend are beneficial to all. Examples of goods common to all include affordable health care, effective public safety, peace among nations, a just legal system, and an unpolluted environment. Appeals to the common good urge us to view ourselves as members of the same community, reflecting on broad questions concerning the kind of society we want to become and how we are to achieve that society. While respecting and valuing the freedom of individuals to pursue their own goals, the common-good theory challenges us also to recognize and further those goals we share in common.

The Virtue Theory

The virtue theory to ethics assumes that there are certain ideals toward which we should strive, which provide for the full development of our humanity. These ideals are discovered through thoughtful reflection on what kind of people we have the potential to become. Virtues are attitudes or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop our highest potentials. They enable us to pursue the ideals we have adopted. Honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, and prudence are all examples of virtues. Virtues are like habits; once acquired, they become characteristic of a person. Moreover, a person who has developed virtues will be naturally disposed to act in ways consistent with moral principles. The virtuous person is the ethical person.

In dealing with an ethical problem using the virtue theory, we might ask, what kind of person should I be? What will promote the development of character within myself and my community?

The Fairness or Justice Theory

The fairness or justice theory to ethics has its roots in the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said that "equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally." The basic moral question in this theory is: How fair is an action? Does it treat everyone in the same way, or does it show favoritism and discrimination?"

Favoritism gives benefits to some people without a justifiable reason for singling them out; discrimination imposes burdens on people who are no different from those on whom burdens are not imposed. Both favoritism and discrimination are unjust and wrong.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a correlational research design.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises of the six (6) government-owned federal universities in south-south Nigeria. While the target respondents is one hundred and thirty-three (133) staff comprising of the Deans, VCs, DVCs, Bursars, Registrars, Librarians of the six (6) tertiary institutions under study. These respondents were preferred because as middle and top level managers of the institutions under study, the researchers believe that they have the knowledge required to supply data needed for this study.

Methods of Data Analysis

The univariate analysis was done using the standard deviation and mean. For the continuous data, the study employed the use of inferential statistical tools. The hypotheses of the study (bivariate analysis) were therefore tested using the Spearman's Rank Order (Rho) correlation coefficient technique,

RESULTS

The Bivariate Analysis of the Data

The results for the bivariate analysis of the relationship between the of ethical considerations and the of institutional quality were presented in this section of the chapter. The tests (two-tailed) were carried out at a 95% confidence interval using the Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient.

Result for tests for relationship between ethical contribution and institutional quality

		Ethical consideration		Institutional quality		
Spearman's rho	Ethical contribution	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.442**	.355**	.395**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	130	130	130	130
		Correlation Coefficient	.442**	1.000	.536**	.620**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	130	130	130	130
Institutional quality	Correlation Coefficient	.355**	.536**	1.000	.482**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	
	N	130	130	130	130	
	Correlation Coefficient	.395**	.620**	.482**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	
	N	130	130	130	130	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data, 2019

The result for the relationship between ethical consideration and quality reveals that institutional effectiveness is significantly associated with ethical contribution (where $\rho = .442$ and $P = 0.000$), the evidence of the analysis indicates that ethical considerations are significantly associated with the measures of institutional quality.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the study are premised on the evidence presented from its empirical examination of the relationship between ethical considerations and institutional performance in the six (6) government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria. The study therefore concludes as follows:

1. Ethical considerations are very important in every institution's operation especially in government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria, if they must survive and compete favourably in the education industry.
2. Ethical contribution if considered and applied will enhance the performance of government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

3. Ethical compliance will enhance the performance of government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.
4. Ethical consequences will help to control the unethical practices of the government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the findings and conclusions of this work, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Institutions especially government-owned federal universities in south-south, Nigeria should contribute ethically by identifying standard products/service types, product/service quality, and product/service relevance that could create values and help to enhancing their performance.
2. Tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria part of Nigeria should comply with ethical standards by invigorating product/service utility, respecting stakeholders' human right, and dispensing justice to help boost their performance.
3. Tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria should be acquainted with the knowledge of consequences of ethical practices that could affect their corporate identity, corporate reputation, and corporate regulations negatively; and as a result, project them to very poor performance.
4. Tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria should provide adequate institutional infrastructure such as relevant technology and basic social amenities that could help to attract and retain talented employees, boost their morale and commitment, attract more customers (students) and give them more competitive edge over rivals.

REFERENCES

- Baridam, D.M. & Nwibere B. (2008) Managerial ethics and organizational effectiveness-The Nigerian experience. www.researchgate.net
- Blau, G. (1988). Testing the generalizability of a career commitment measure and its impact on employee turnover. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 35 (1).
- Kanungo, R.N. (1982b). Measurement of job and work involvement. *Journal of applied psychology*, 67(3), 341-349.
- Kant, L. & Hartman, S. (2005). A practical model for ethical decision making in issues in management and public relations. *A journal of public relations research* 17(3); 191-216
- Nnabuike, E. K.N. (1997). Ethics in Professional Business Management. A Paper Presented at a Workshop Organized for DVC Limited Nnewi, (Published in Osisioma, BC and Okoye, JC (2000), Successful Management.
- Pfeiffer, F & Foster, L (1993). Event related brain potentials during natural speech processing: Effect of semantic morphological and syntactic violations. *Cognitive Brain Research* 1(3), 183-92.
- Solomon R.C & Hanson, K, (2004). Ethical decision making in corporate entrepreneurial organizations, New York. Atheneum, Chicago/Turabian.