



***Independent Corrupt Practices and Other
Related Offences Commission (ICPC):***

**Topic: CORRUPTION, ETHICS AND EXTANT
RULES**

Presented By

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At

**Idris Abdulkadir Auditorium,
National Universities Commission (NUC), Abuja.**

On 11th May, 2017.

1.0 Background

Let us begin by saying that when we first read the subject matter, "**Corruption, Ethics and Extant Rules**" for presentation by the Chairman of the Commission, we were interestingly curious as to what connects technical education with corruption. Understandably, when we learnt that the paper is to be delivered at the instance of National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) we became relatively curious because it concerns regulatory management and governance in Federal Polytechnics.

But when we finally realized that this occasion is a Retreat organized by NBTE for newly reconstituted Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics we became excited because of the role of Governing Councils and the value of technical education in development. This Retreat by NBTE for Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria underscores the expected vital role of Governing Councils in institutional, leadership, and management endeavour.

At this time of Nigeria's existence when education including technical education is seemingly disconnected from transformational development due to lack of vision, corruption and other forms of unethical practices, the issues of governance of tertiary education remain a serious national concern. Thus, this Retreat for the reconstituted Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics is coming at the appropriate time towards a realization of effective management of institutions, institution building, and the management of innovative change in Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria.

2.0 Education, Ethics, Extant Rules and Corruption

From the preceding thoughts, it is required to establish the connections between education, ethics, extant rules and corruption in relation to the responsibilities of Governing Councils. To begin with, from these four variables corruption is the only social reality that is the odd one out, because corruption is objectionable to education, to ethics, and to extant rules. And this is moreso because the honest and pragmatic values of education, ethics, and extant rules negate the existence of corruption. Corruption runs against the three because it stands contrast with incompatible values that disregard and disrupt the purpose of education, including technical education. For instance, violation of extant rules, that is, established

systems, processes, and procedures are not only corruption, they are also unethical in principle and in practice.

It is significant to appreciate the fact that the goal of education particularly technical education is to serve moral, ethical, and collective good in line with the rule of collective conscience in the entire process of development. Thus, the goal of education is to ensure, guarantee, and foster a sense of well-thought responsibility that is core to the transformation of public service for national development. This makes education including technical education a public trust and a social good. Thus, the process of effective social organization of Federal Polytechnics for institutional and national development may not be a possibility without fidelity to extant rules like Anticorruption Legislations, etc. and this may require external representation like the Governing Councils to guarantee and exemplify good governance.

3.0 Corruption: Meaning and Types

Corruption is succinctly explained to mean the perversion of legal rules, established processes and procedures, code of conduct, and social norms in the service of unethical and illegitimate ends (*Asobie, 2012*). This means that corruption as defined by World Bank and Transparency International goes beyond abuse and misuse of public office and entrusted power for private gain. Corruption is a forbidden course of action against permissible values like extant legislations and moral and ethical code of conduct which when taken violate the means and the purpose of such extant legislations. Taken this forbidden course of action also violates the moral standard that governs every decent human and institutional conduct.

When men and women with entrusted power and responsibilities behave as if the extant legislations/rules that give them legitimate power and authority to exemplify the purpose of public service through governance is no longer plausible, they consequently hold in contempt the ethical principles of public life. These ethical principles of public life which include integrity, selflessness, honesty, objectivity, accountability, openness, leadership, and anticorruption when suspended for whatever gains it is corruption.

Corruption also entails the devaluing the processes of acquiring knowledge, knowledge, intellect, intellectual life, intellectual institutions, and the collective human and institutional

implementation or both against transformational change and progress. The types of corruption in the entire Nigerian political economy may not be different from those in tertiary education sector because of the high level and systemic tolerance for corruption and inclination to undertake course of actions that are prohibited by extant legislations and ethical and moral code of conduct.

One type of corruption that is very relevant to this paper because of the sector under discussion and the stature of men and women in the Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics is the professional type of corruption perpetrated by those who are expectedly seen to know better and are above board. For instance, professionals in the tertiary education sector are men and women assumed to be competent, skillful, known for integrity, incorruptible, ethical, and most probably seen as role models. This is because they are known to embody strict compliance to moral and professional code of conduct. But, without sense of moderation and plausible thought for good governance corruption will persist.

Other types of corruption prevalent in education sector of which the Governing Councils should be mindful of includes bribery, fraud, conflict of interest, encouraging mediocrity, procurement-induced corruption, embezzlement, money laundering, forgery, impersonation, interest peddling, dishonesty, encouraging weak integrity system, mismanagement, etc. Examination malpractices, admissions racketeering, sorting in kind and cash, scams in hostel accommodation, poor record keeping, unjust rewards, malfeasance in staff recruitment, arbitrariness, poor contract administration, poor quality of academic programmes, fraudulent accreditation exercise, and poor management of funds, etc. are other forms of corruption that are unethical and against extant anticorruption legislations. These are some of the pitfalls in the education sector that Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics should be mindful of.

4.0 Professional Conduct and Leadership Qualities

The Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria composed of men and women are professionals identified by government to ensure that their moral conduct must remain consistent with their ethical conduct in public sphere. This is crucial because when the moral values of individual member of each Governing Council is inconsistent with ethical code of conduct imposed by extant rules internal and external to Federal Polytechnics it may lead to corrupting the values of technical and vocational education and of public

service. The professional and leadership responsibility is to ensure that the vision of Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria should be implemented.

The responsibility of leadership in this context is the building of a climate of integrity as a moral and ethical priority for responsible and responsive governance of Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria. This requires honest commitment to the practice of excellence in the course of the governance of Federal Polytechnics. To this extent, the leadership and professional responsibilities of the Governing Councils is to establish a dynamic, creative and innovative climate for transformational ideas to flourish towards collective problem-solving, and this requires that all Governing Councils are expected to have and familiarize themselves with all the anticorruption legislations.

Among the numerous anticorruption legislations as extant legislations that are significant to the Governing Councils in the discharge of their professional responsibilities are the ICPC Act (2000), EFCC Act (2004), Public Procurement Act (2007), Freedom of Information Act (2011), Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007), Money Laundering Act (2012), and Code of Conduct and Tribunals Acts, and Public Service Rule (2009), etc. as tools required in fighting corruption and unethical conducts by the Governing Councils in Federal Polytechnics.

5.0 Standard Role Expected of Governing Councils in Federal Polytechnics

- i. The Governing Councils should have the capability to demonstrate leadership as representatives of the Federal Government; in other words, the process of decision making should not be arbitrary.
- ii. Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics have the responsibility to demonstrate the anticorruption values of individual and institutional accountability, transparency and due process to their immediate constituency, government and the general society.
- iii. Nigeria is in dire need of collective and dynamic transformation for social progress. This ambition requires the Governing Councils to ensure that Federal Polytechnics encourage creative innovations in order to become increasingly productive as a response to the rapidly changing world.

- iv. As external representatives of the Federal Government, Governing Councils should ensure that lecturers and students endeavour to demonstrate values for excellence through the development of new and credible technical and scientific ideas.
- v. The eternal vigilance of Governing Councils in monitoring and evaluating institutional accountability through effective leadership for positive change is crucial to the development of Federal Polytechnics.
- vi. Governing Councils as leaders have a standard role of building productive stakeholder relationship between it and the managers (Rector, Registrar, etc.) that involve constantly demonstrating supply and demand of integrity from each other.
- vii. Governing Councils should be able to demonstrate leadership rather than competing with the day to day managers of Federal Polytechnics for pecuniary gains that may contribute to the neglect of the primary purpose of Governing Councils.
- viii. Ensure that there is a committed readiness that strengthens Nigeria's capability to adopt and benefit from cutting-edge technologies, strengthen human capabilities, organizational developments, and improved institutional performance (Peters; 2003).
- ix. Governing Councils should consider building an integrity system that inspires the kind of technical and vocational education that embodies and guarantee shared destiny against corruption.
- x. A competent and result-driven performance management system that takes seriously honest monitoring and evaluation system should be encouraged by Governing Councils in order to whether is value addition or not.

6.0 Conclusion

All over the world, Polytechnics, whether publicly owned or private, do not only have demonstrable reputation for progressive change, they are also agent of change. In Nigeria today, there are too many opportunities in terms of human and material resources waiting to be explored and exploited to collective advantage towards a sophisticated level of development.

The Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics have a huge responsibility in this regard; hence the need for them to be agent of positive reform and development through management of Polytechnics for innovative transformation and change. Governing Councils should also consider building a robust internal mechanism for competent, effective, and efficient resource investment, allocation, and management.

Governing Councils may consider given honest primacy and commitment to the development of "institutions and policies, human capabilities, infrastructure, technological sophistication, and innovations for business development as inputs which should be made to lead to knowledge creation, increased competitiveness, and more generation of wealth as output" (GII; 2007) for Nigeria.

According to Jensens (1998) on his thoughts on what he called *Academic Bermuda Triangle*, "nobody knows where the initiative comes from and nobody knows where and how everything disappears". What this essentially means is that, in a climate where there is no individual and institutional accountability, there will be a collapse of ethical values leading to abuse of extant rules thereby precipitating corruption; in other words, lack of leadership and management.

References

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