PROPAGATING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS THROUGH LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

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Abstract

The study investigated academic integrity in tertiary institutions and the role of libraries. Libraries acquire, organize and grant access to library patrons in the use of information resources. However, technological advancement and the open access advocacy, which has made the plethora of information resources available and accessible to all, seem to have influenced the integrity of academic researches and publications output. *Academic integrity* is the commitment to, and demonstration of honest and moral behavior in an academic setting. However, academic success among students or promotion among academic staff have been bedeviled by lack of integrity and flawed by dishonesty. The paper posits that librarians through library services would promote academic integrity with a robust information literacy programme and by enforcing copyright laws and technology usage in institutional libraries to curtail academic dishonesty. It is recommended that institutions should put academic integrity policy in place with librarians as part of the operators.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Tertiary Institution, Nigeria, Delta State University, Library Services, Information Services, Librarian

Introduction

Tertiary education is the third tier of formal education in the Nigerian education system depicting the post-secondary school level. The institutions consist of the Universities, Polytechnics/Monotechnics and Colleges of various categories, among others. These institutions are saddled with the responsibilities of educating and training middle class and high level manpower for productivity, economic and social development of the nation. The essence of tertiary education in Nigeria is to advance Nigeria's economic growth and global competitiveness through the provision of accessible, relevant, high quality education; and to constantly attract, develop and graduate competent, knowledgeable and talented individuals from the institutions

(Wikipedia, 2019). In achieving the above goals, tertiary institutions educate the youth to become active and productive members of society and seek to meet and match industry's demand with a competent and globally competitive workforce (Wikipedia, 2020).

Good education **is a product of effective teaching and learning coupled with personal study habit on the part of the learner. It does not come by chance. The essence of engaging in any educational expedition is aimed at personal goal attainment (advancement/promotion) or achieving success academically or for scholarly recognition, whether as students or researchers and the faculty.** Tertiary institutions engage in teaching, learning, research and community development, which implies that tertiary education, targets the regeneration of the trainee (students/researcher) at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, conducting progressive research by faculty members and research institutions for societal advancement.

However, the quest for academic success among students or promotion on the part of academic staff has been bedeviled by lack of integrity and flawed by academic dishonesty. Some students, researchers and faculty members engage in shady deals to either pass tests, examinations or to earn promotions through assignments or term papers carried out or in published articles respectively. The outcome of which is plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification of ideas, claiming it as personal. Students are typically involved in cheating, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. Studies carried out in different parts of the world revealed that between 40 and 80% of students are involved in academic dishonesty for at least once (McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Teferra, 2001; Brown, 2002; Moeck, 2002; Kusnoor & Falik, 2013 and Kyei & Nduro, 2014). In some of these studies, respondents said they had engaged in academic dishonesty and/or had witnessed their colleagues do so. Also, the National Survey of Student Engagement at Indiana University (2003) revealed, "87% of college students surveyed reported that their peers sometimes "copy and paste" information from the Web for reports and papers-without citing sources. These exhibited behaviours by students and faculty members/researchers have been christened as 'dishonest behavior' and tagged as academic fraud, plagiarism, copyright violation, etc.

Okebukola (2015) identified some forms of academic dishonesty of scholars as;

    i.   Knowingly representing the work of others as one's own.

    ii.   Using, obtaining, or providing unauthorised assistance on examinations, papers, or any other academic work.

    iii.   Fabricating data in support of laboratory or field work.

    iv.   Forging a signature to certify completion of a course assignment or a recommendation to graduate school.

    v.   Unfairly advancing one's academic position by hoarding or damaging library materials.

    vi.   Misrepresenting one's academic accomplishments

The world of academics had frowned at these behaviours over time but it seems that with the advancement in technology, more academics still fall prey. Hence, the introduction of plagiarism tests for intellectual works in tertiary institutions and many narrow minded academics cry woof over it. Therefore, this study examines the place of the library and information center, being the hub on which all academic activities revolve, in the educational process in mitigating academic dishonesty and enthroning academic integrity.

Why Academic Integrity?

Integrity is defined as the strict adherence to moral values and principles, uprightness (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary, 1996). In other words, integrity is a state of steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards. The core principles of integrity are to create foundation for success in all of life's endeavors (Hendrix, 2016). A person of integrity does not compromise standards but upholds core values of humanity especially honesty. In the context of this paper on tertiary education, being an academic environment is termed academic integrity. Integrity in academic settings prepares students for personal and professional challenges as well as providing a blueprint for future fulfillment and success (International Center for Academic Integrity ICAI, 2015).

There is the absence of a generally accepted definition of academic integrity but could be classified as honest, responsible scholarship (Soroya, Hashmi & Soroya, 2016). Okebukola (2015) define academic integrity as "adherence to a state of high moral principles and professional standards and values in scholarship especially in teaching, learning and research. Academic integrity means putting values into practice by being honest in the academic work, being fair to others, and taking responsibility for learning, and also following the conventions of scholarship (La Trobe University, 2020). According to the University of North California (2020), *academic integrity* is the commitment to, and demonstration of honest and moral behavior in an academic setting. It is a way of providing credit to other people when using their ideas or acknowledging their contributions and failure to do this is called plagiarism (Morrow, 2020). It is the basis of the institution's goal to enable an exchange of ideas and develop new knowledge, and it requires that individual scholars work with and trust one another (ICAI, 2014).

Academic integrity is vital in tertiary education because according to La Trobe University (2020), it will ensure the quality of teaching and learning, meaning that the graduates would have successfully completed the necessary learning to **demonstrate integrity in their future employment with** honesty, fairness and responsibility in the workplace; institutions **rules, laws and regulations** about academic integrity would be adhered to by staff and students; and where necessary, **penalties for academic misconduct must be enforced if found** guilty. Thus, the major benefit of ensuring we remain in good standing in academic integrity is the improvement in the academic reputation of the Nigerian university system (Okebukola, 2015). The author stated further that it will esteem the university, soaring with attendant national and global respectability, hike the respectability of certificates and esteem of researchers.

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The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2014) identified the following as core for academic integrity;

I. **Honesty** breeds sincerity. Honest individuals take stock of individual abilities and represent their effort fairly.

ii. **Trust** you need to trust other people for easy working relationships in the community. Where all members are doing best in their work, where structures and policies are fair and all are treated fairly establishes trust in the system.

iii. **Fairness** is aligned to trust. Believe that everyone will be treated fairly and judged by the same standard as all others in the community. For example, you can trust that your professors will evaluate all work fairly and not favor one person over another. The best work comes out of a fair system.

iv. **Respect** makes every individual's point of view and opinions count. This is seen by one "listening to other points of view, being prepared, meeting deadlines, and performing to the best of their ability." lecturers show respect by listening to students' ideas and "providing full and honest feedback."

v. **Responsibility** is acknowledging agency and being accountable in daily actions and work. Everyone should personally perform their work with integrity and encourage others to act with integrity too. Academic integrity starts with an individual that positively influence others.

From the forgoing, academic integrity is achievable if all stakeholders carry out or perform their duties objectively and display capability for sharing individualized ideas in intellectual works with regard to other persons' idea.

The Role of Library and Librarians in Ensuring Academic Integrity

Academic Libraries are part of tertiary institutions. The library focuses on supporting students and researchers in their learning and research outcomes. The library engages in orientation programme for fresh students / newly employed staff and in the general studies unit teaching the use of library as a means of reaching out to staff and students on library policies and by extension providing information literacy skills to facilitate their study and research. Information literacy being the ability to recognise information needs and identify, evaluate and use information effectively, etc. is relevant in maintaining academic integrity in tertiary institutions and even in the workplace.

Information literacy education is the catalyst required to transform the information society into a learning society (Bruce, 2004). The use of information literacy tools assist students in critical

thinking skills thereby repositioning them for better understanding of their role in contributing to scholarly discussions in their field of disciplines. The Association of College and Research Libraries Framework on Information Literacy highlights many areas in which students are developing their "knowledge practices" and "dispositions" as information literate individuals (Lampert, 2008). Within this framework, librarians speak on the students' role in producing scholarship and their commitment to sourcing material that is based on truthful, authoritative knowledge that has been shared throughout a lifetime of scholarly exploration. Librarians are professionally trained to be engaged in the scholarly discussion of academic integrity.

Librarians in institutions of higher learning work with the academic integrity group or committee to instruct students in learning more about academic integrity as well as those who have academic misconduct violations. Many librarians serving on these committees often find themselves repeatedly asked to track down sources in reviewed plagiarism cases (Wood, 2004). The benefits of engaging librarians in this type of teaching go beyond the librarians understanding of plagiarism or citation. Librarians use their insights on how knowledge should be constructed and the need to create knowledge that is honest, trustworthy and fair among users while teaching information literacy skills. Engaging librarians in the institutions as partners will enhance the understanding of academic integrity among faculty, researchers and students. Librarians can creatively embed academic integrity into teaching the traditional information literacy classes as well as within a student services context in academic libraries.

The Library's role in ensuring academic integrity (Hendrix, 2016) is to;

   i. promote academic integrity practices – not just techniques for avoiding plagiarism

   ii. enlighten student researchers about scholarly discourse

   iii. apply principles of ethical leadership, collaborative engagement, and socially responsible behaviour.

Based on the above, the librarian would guide students to understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information as provided for in the ACRL Standards; teaching them to be responsible as creators and users of information because information have value and must be used for scholarship discourse in the community of scholars (American Library Association, 2015).

Many libraries are utilizing online tutorials and / or in-class instructional techniques to help students to better understand what constitutes legitimate usage of texts and data retrieved via both print and Internet resources (Cox & Lindsay, 2008). Librarians often act as a sort of "anti-plagiarism" enforcer (Wood, 2004). The issue of academic integrity is a complex one that the library and librarians, like other academic support faculty and staff, can aid in such a collective endeavor requiring a holistic institutional approach. ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (Havious, 2016) outlined that an information literate student;

i.   accurately and appropriately documents sources, and uses paraphrases and direct quotes in order to avoid plagiarism;

ii.   understands issues related to privacy and security, censorship, intellectual property and copyright in order to use information responsibly; and

iii. legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images and sound.

As such, the librarian would provide education to information users (ALA, 2015) on;

i.   how to incorporate the ideas of others in their research;

ii.   the reason for and value of citing sources;

iii. their ability to contribute to the scholarly conversion; and

iv.   how to select and use the appropriate citation style.

With regard to the above roles, scholars are to ensure that in the course of their research or study and in maintaining academic integrity, they should adhere to (Imani & Johnson, 2018);

i.   using information appropriately, according to copyright and privacy laws;

ii.   acknowledging where the information used comes from;

iii. not presenting other people's work as personal works;

iv.   conducting research ethically, in line with the institutions' regulations;

v.   reporting truthfully on researches undertaken; and

vi.   acting in an ethical manner in all academic endeavors.

The Challenges of Librarians in Maintaining Academic Integrity

The population of Nigerians clamoring for education in order to acquire academic qualifications is on the increase as the day go by because of the emphasis on paper qualifcation. More so, the work space is quite limited with numerous unemployed youths, while those working adjust their age to remain in the job for fear of the unknown. As a result, many students engage in absurd practices to earn high grades so as to graduate with sound degree but lack the capability to accurately represent the certificates they carry; and faculty members in higher institutions come out with outrageous publications to earn promotion. Hence, in certain institutions, academic quality among faculty and students is on the decrease and graduates from such institutions are usually not appreciated, particularly by employers when they enter the workplace.

In this regard, some institutions have failed and are becoming more prone to a lack of academic integrity (Heyneman, 2009; 2013). Some scholars (Chapman & Miric, 2009; Osipian, 2013; Denisova-Schhmidt, Huber & Leontyeva, 2016) tagged this as academic corruption. Transparency International (TI, 2009) captured corruption as one of the vices affecting academic integrity in tertiary institutions globally. The indices include bribery, collusion, fraud, favoritism, lobbying, etc. that have plagued academic integrity in higher education. Some of these practices are outlined in the table below.

Terms	TI Definitions	Examples
Bribery	The offering, promising, giving, accepting, or soliciting of an advantage as an inducement for an action that is illegal, unethical, or a breach of trust. Inducements can take the form of gifts, loans, fees, rewards, or other advantages (taxes, services, donations, etc.).	A student bribes a pr ofessor to change a grade in his/her favor; A faculty member bribes a ghostwriter for his/her own publication; University administration demands bribes from service suppliers.
Collusion	A secret agreement between parties, in the public and/ or private sector, to conspire to commit actions aimed to deceive or commit fraud with the objective of illicit financial gain. The parties involved often are referred to as "cartels."	Faculty members ignore or pretend to ignore students' academic misbehavior; Facul ty members are involved in "citation" cartels: citing each other's works/journals without necessity; Administration chooses the winner in an open tender, based on a pre-agreement.
Conflict of interest	A situation where an individual, or the entity for which this person works, whether a government, business, media outlet, or civil society organization, is confronted with choosing between the duties and demands of their position and their own private interests.	A high -ranking official responsible for accreditation is placed in charge of a university, for which he and/or she recently worked; A professor grades his/her nephew/niece or supervisee A thesis written by his/her fiancé; A university manager responsible for catering buys food from his/her relatives only.
Favoritism	**Patronage**: form of favoritism in which a person is selected, regardless of qualifications or entitlement, for a job or government benefit because of political affiliations or connections **Nepotism**: form of favoritism based on acquaintances and familiar relationships whereby someone in an official position exploits his or her power and authority to provide a job or favor to a family member or friend, even though he or she may not be qualified or deserving.	A student is admitted, or a faculty member is hired/promoted, based only on his/her personal connections and/or family relations; academic achievement and other relevant competencies are not considered.
Fraud	To cheat: the act of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage (financial, political, or otherwise).	A student cheats in his/her written assignment, or a faculty member plagiarizes in his/her paper; A staff member falsifies an admissions application; A significant amount of a research grant goes to other purposes than what is indicated in the research proposal; Universities expect a contribution from students receiving financial support
Lobbying	Any activity carried out to influence a government or institution's policies and decisions in favor of a specific cause or outcome.	Some industries support research projects expecting positive and/or promising outcomes for their products/services.
Revolving doors	An individual who moves back and forth between public office and private companies, exploiting h is/ her period of government service for the benefit of the companies he/she used to regulate.	An influential government official opts for employment as a university rector.

Transparency International (2011)
http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/the_anti_corruption_plain_language_guide

On corrupt practices in higher institutions, Hallak and Poisson (2007) outlined "finance," "allocation of specific allowances," "construction, maintenance and school repairs," "distribution of equipment, furniture and materials," "writing of textbooks," "teacher appointment, management and training," "teacher behavior," "information systems," "examinations and diplomas, access to universities" and "institutional accreditation" as areas of possible corrupt behavior. According to Rumyantseva (2005), corruption could be with or without student's involvement; and that both forms of corruption influence the students' culture and attitudes with the first one directly, and the second indirectly influencing them. These practices manifest because of what I call "get to the top quick" syndrome by perpetrators with little or no efforts, thereby undermining integrity.

In related terms, Walker (1998) identified various types of plagiarism, being one of the corrupt practices as follows;

Table 2: Types of Plagiarism

s/n	Types	Examples
1.	Sham Paraphrasing	Material copied verbatim from text and source acknowledged in-line but represented as paraphrased
2.	Illicit Paraphrasing	Material paraphrased from text without in-line acknowledgement of source
3.	Illicit Paraphrasing	Material copied from another student's assignment with the knowledge of the other student
4.	Verbatim Copying	Material copied verbatim from text without in-line acknowledgement of the source
5.	Recycling	Same assignment submitted more than once for different courses
6.	Ghostwriting	Assignment written by third party and represented by student as own work
7.	Purloining	Assignment copied from another student's assignment or other person's paper without that person's knowledge

Surprisingly, most fresh students and newly employed do not consider that initial library education as important and do not consider information literacy as key to their academic development. Very limited numbers of students adequately use library services, particularly in the aspect of citation, referencing, copyright issues and plagiarism. They underplay the physical contact with staff, print and non-print materials in the library, but rather resort to Internet sources from the web that facilitates "copy" and "paste" in the course of writing their research papers. More so, the time frame for teaching library awareness / information literacy skills, if ever, is usually too limited to develop an activity or exercise that will work within the period and also achieve the goal of bringing greater awareness to students.

The most dynamic and productive learning environments are those that foster active engagement, including rigorous testing, spirited debate, and lively disagreements over ideas tempered by respect for those who voice them. In academic environments of integrity, even those who disagree on facts share respect and reverence for knowledge and the methods by which it is obtained (Fishman, 2013).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Maintaining academic integrity requires that individuals are honest thereby making the larger community an honest society. In the academic environment, as students and faculty alike seek knowledge, they must be honest with themselves and with each other.

A culture of academic integrity can reduce negative or uncomfortable situations due to potential faculty judgment and adverse consequences for students and faculty. Promoting academic integrity through library and information services supports the development of scholarship. A proactive approach to reminders of the fundamentals of academic integrity allows for intervals of instruction and reflection for scholars. Fostering a culture of academic integrity through information literacy within the institution can promote ethical responsibility.

Therefore, institutional approach to academic integrity with a clear policy and structure within the academic community should be instituted, which would build a culture of academic honesty, fairness, collaborative engagement and responsive intellectual behaviour among institutional members. A partnership between the institution's academic integrity structure and librarians in strategizing on ways to mitigate threats to academic integrity and entrenching information literacy skills among staff members would go a long way in promoting integrity in the academic community

As such, libraries should create an atmosphere for information literacy to be integrated in the general studies course and the library education programme to facilitate information literacy skills among members of the academic environment. Librarians would provide the ember for academic integrity by creating and building information literacy skills among students and researchers in tertiary institutions.

Libraries and Librarians should endeavor to adequately enforce copyright laws and technology usage in institutional libraries to curtail academic dishonesty. The library website should provide an avenue for addressing the issue of academic dishonesty, indicating the institution's policy and possible penalties to create institution wide awareness.

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