

## RE-CULTIVATING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY THROUGH CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR A CORRUPT FREE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

<sup>1</sup>Emmanuel Okon IBOK

<sup>2</sup>Aniashi, Benedict UNDISHIKELE

<sup>3</sup>Aya, Eke KANU

*Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies*

*University of Calabar Calabar, Nigeria*

*ibokemmanuelokon@gmail.com,*

*Drbenny04@Yahoo.com*

*ekekanuaya1@gmail.com,*

*+2347068967449 +2348035326214 +2348037335136,*

**Dennis, Ubong WESTON**

*Department of Adult and Non-formal Education*

*College of Education, Afaha Nsit*

*Akwa Ibom State – Nigeria*

*westonubong@yahoo.com, westonubong@yahoo.com*

*+2348025391066*

### Abstract

*Academic disintegrity is a serious problem that entails unethical academic practices with negative consequences for individuals, institutions and society around the world. If left unchecked, academic disintegrity can damage the culture of integrity that adult learning centres seek to promote, and it can even undermine the value of a degree from a given institution.*

*Academic integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia. It is the commitment to and demonstration of honest and moral behaviour in an academic setting. Academic integrity is fundamental to learning, teaching and research. It involves upholding ethical standards in all aspects of academic work. Academic integrity entails acting with principles of honesty, fairness, diligence, trust, responsibility and requires respect for knowledge and its development. Continuing education remains the pivot upon which the wheels of the society revolve. It is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. The paper highlights the concepts of academic integrity/academic dishonesty and continuing education, importance of academic integrity in academia, and continuing education as a tool for re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society. The paper finally suggests among others that adult should be continually educated on the dangers of academic dishonesty or academic theft.*

**Keywords:** Academic Integrity, Academic Dishonesty and Continuing Education

## Introduction

The need for academic integrity in the world of academia cannot be over emphasised. Academic integrity is critical to every aspect of the educational enterprise, from the moment a child embarks on formal learning in pre-school, through to post-doctoral fellowship and beyond. Academic integrity is the cornerstone of ethical academic practice and is premised on a set of values which are; honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage. Academic integrity entails upholding ethical standards in all aspects of academic work. It encompasses values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism, maintenance of academic standards, honesty and rigor in research and academic publishing. Academic integrity is the moral code that governs academic instructions. It involves upholding the academic honesty policies set forth by any given educational institution. Promoting academic integrity is inevitable in the development of any nation. In modern societies where complexities are increasing day by day, progress is impossible without continuing education.

Continuing education is critical and essential in re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society. The social roles of continuing education in every society are apparent in its contributions to human development. Continuing education remains the pivot upon which the wheels of the society revolve. It's very relevant in the training and development of human resources in any country through imparting appropriate skills, capacities, values, knowledge and attitudes which can be used in the transformation of individuals, communities, nations and the world at large. Therefore, continuing education is a veritable tool in re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society. This paper is divided as follows: first, the paper clarifies some key concepts. Next, the paper highlights the forms of academic dishonesty, consequences of academic dishonesty and the importance of academic integrity: then the paper examines continuing education as a tool for re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society. Finally, the concluding aspect, provides suggestions which will serve as a viable option in discouraging academic dishonesty in our educational institutions.

## Concept of Continuing Education

Continuing education also referred to as adult education is a term used to describe a variety of learning opportunities that are geared towards individuals outside of the formal education system. Continuing education differs from child education. Continuing education encompasses a broad range of practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. It involves any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfilment as a life-long learner. In particular, continuing education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn and that they are able and willing to take responsibility for that learning and that the learning itself is able to respond to their needs. Continuing education according to Wilson & Hayes (2020) is an all-encompassing term describing *additional formal learning activities that are generally not focused on a college degree outcome*. This kind of education is acquired to *maintain, improve, or expand skills and knowledge*.

Continuing education is not only for the elderly or illiterates. It covers all forms of education and training designed for persons designated by the society as adults. National institute of adult education (1970) (England and Wales) as cited in Sakineh and Hamid (2011) defined continuing education as “any kind of education for people who are old enough to work, vote, fight and many who have completed the cycle of continuing education, (if any) commenced in childhood.”

UNESCO in Onyenemezu (2012), summarily viewed continuing education as an “entire body of organized educational processes involving any of formal, informal or non-formal settings with the aim of bringing about changes in their attitudes.” Similarly, Merriam and Brockett cited in Nafukho, Amutabi and Otunga (2005) defined continuing education as activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles or perception defines them as adults. Continuing education entails the acquisition of knowledge and learning of skills intentionally or unintentionally for self-improvement and societal development. Lindeman, (1996) opined that education is life not a mere preparation for an unknown kind of future living. The whole of life is learning, therefore, education has no end. This new venture is called continuing education not because it is confined to adults but because adulthood, maturity defines it limits. Continuing education is not only for the elderly or illiterate. It covers all learning programmes which allows people to learn new knowledge, attitude, and behaviour that will help to sustain and improve the quality of living for the people. Houce as cited in Nzeneri (2010), defined continuing education as a process by which men and women (alone, in groups or institutional settings) seeks to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skills, their knowledge or their sensitiveness. Continuing education can also be seen as any form of learning activities adults engages beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfilment as a life-long learner. Okedara and Bown in Ihejirika (2013), viewed continuing education as the rubric of education that covers training and instructions outside the formal education system and ranges from individualized apprenticeship to nationwide literacy. It may be vocational, as in the case of craft training centres in Nigeria designed to provide employments opportunities for young school leavers and for other unemployed persons. Continuing education is not only concerned with preparing people for life, but also concerned with helping people to live more successfully.

### **Concepts of Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia. It is the commitment to and demonstration of honest and moral behaviour in an academic setting. It entails demonstrating and upholding the highest integrity and honesty in all the academic work that you do. Academic integrity in simple terms means doing your own work and not cheating and not presenting the work of others as your own. Academic integrity is fundamental to learning, teaching and research. It involves upholding ethical standards in all aspects of academic work. Academic integrity entails acting with principles of fairness, honesty, diligence, trust and responsibility and requires respect for knowledge and its development. Academic integrity encompasses values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism, maintenance of academic standards, honesty and rigor in research and academic publishing.

The need for academic integrity in the world of academia cannot be overemphasised. Academic integrity is critical to every aspect of the educational enterprise, from the moment a child embarks on formal learning in preschool, through to post-doctoral fellowships, internationally published research and everything in between. Academic integrity is the cornerstone of ethical academic practice and is premised on a set of values most commonly articulated by the international center for academic integrity (ICAI) as honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (fundamental values project ICAI, 1999). In 2013 the ICAI added the additional virtue of courage in recognition of the need for all members of the academic community to act courageously to uphold the principle of academic integrity.

The international center for academic integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment, even in the face of adversity to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideas to action (ICAI, 2013). Exemplary academic integrity project, 2013 defined academic integrity as acting with values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. It is important for students, teachers, researchers and professional staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions and show fairness in every part of their work. Academic integrity is important for an individuals and a school's reputation. Similarly, Macfarlane, Zhang and Pun (2014), defined academic integrity as the "values, behaviour and conduct of academics in all aspects of their practice" while noting that the term has often been misappropriated to refer to the conduct of students, particularly in relation to behaviours such as plagiarism and cheating. Academic integrity is an interdisciplinary concepts that provides the foundation for every aspect and all levels of education.

Academic integrity means upholding the academic honesty policies set forth by any given educational institution. It involves learning how to express original ideas, cite sources, work independently and report results accurately and honestly. Academic integrity is the moral code that governs academic institutions. In other words, it is the standard or ethics by which concerned organizations ensure that grades, publications, research, teaching and other academic efforts are conducted in an above-board, honest fashion (Michael, 2013).

### **Forms of Academic Dishonesty**

The following are some common forms of academic dishonesty:

- 1) Cheating: Cheating takes different forms it could be looking over someone's shoulder during an exam or any forbidden sharing of information between students regarding an exam or exercise. Many elaborate methods of cheating have been developed over the years to include storing information in calculators, pagers, cell phones and other electronic devices.
- 2) Deception: Deception means providing false information to facilitator concerning an academic assignment. Example include, giving dishonest excuse when asking for a deadline extension or falsely claiming to have submitted work.

- 3) Fabrication: Fabrication is the falsification of data, information or citations in an academic assignment. This includes making up citations to back up arguments or inventing quotations.
- 4) Plagiarism: Plagiarism as defined in the 1995 Random House compact unabridged dictionary, as the “use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s original work. In an academic setting, it is seen as the adoption or reproduction of original intellectual creations (such as concepts, ideas, methods, pieces of information or expressions, etc) of another author (whether an individual, group or organization) without proper acknowledgment. This can range from borrowing a particular phrase or sentence to paraphrasing someone else’s original idea without citing it. Plagiarism takes the following forms;
  - Submitting someone else’s work as their own
  - Taking passages from their own previous work without adding citations
  - Remitting someone’s work without properly citing sources
    - a) Using quotations, but not citing the source
    - b) Interweaving various sources together in the work without citing
    - c) Citing some, but not all passages that should be cited
    - d) Melding together cited and uncited sections of the piece
    - e) Providing proper citations but failing to change the structure and wording of the borrowed ideas enough
    - f) Inaccurately citing the source
    - g) Relying too heavily on other people’s work. Failing to bring original thought into the text (Stepchyshn & Robert, 2007).
- 5) Misrepresentation: Is any act or omission that is intended to deceive an instructor for academic advantage. Misrepresentation includes lying to an instructor in an attempt to increase one’s grade or lying to an instructor when confronted with allegations of academic dishonesty.
- 6) Conspiracy: conspiracy means working together with one or more persons to commit or attempt to commit academic dishonesty.
- 7) Collusion: Collusion is the act of two or more students working together on an individual assignment.
- 8) Duplicate submission: A duplicate submission means a student submits the same paper for two different classes within the same semester, the student must have the permission of both instructors.
- 9) Bribery: Bribery takes two forms:
  - i) Bribing someone for an academic advantage or accepting such a bribe (i.e. a student offers an instructor money, goods, or services in exchange for a passing grade or an instructor accepts this bribe).
  - ii) Using an academic advantage as a bribe (i.e. an instructor offers a student a passing grade in exchange for money, goods or services or a student accepts this bribe).

### **Importance of academic integrity in academia**

Academic integrity embodies the fundamental core-values of fairness, honesty, trust, respect and responsibility and from a student's perspective it equates to not cheating, lying or stealing. Academic integrity is the cornerstone of truth, high ethics and academic quality to promote credible intellectual inquiry and knowledge sharing. Divyansh (2022) opined that academic integrity is vital in every student's life. Academic integrity instills values and ethics in students. The importance of academic integrity is evident in all aspects of life. It is important for students to understand the difference between right and wrong. In a learning environment, students are expected to behave properly. Ron (2018) opined that academic programmes that do not adhere to enforce strict integrity standards provide a disservice to students, confer hollow degrees and poison the learning environment. Academic integrity ensures that individuals earn degrees that will be of greater market place value as well as being of academic, personal and professional worth. Academic dishonesty stunts the development of important skills such as reading, writing, research, analysis, synthesis and comprehension".

In other words, being dishonest in education impairs people development of their cognitive ability but to the contrary it makes them less capable of using and expanding their knowledge bank. Academic integrity is essential for the formation of new ideas. It shows a path for how new knowledge is built. Academic integrity gives proper credit to the people whose information and ideas have been used. Academic integrity helps in the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence. Academic integrity is essential as it help run educational institutions smoothly. It helps set the standards of what's acceptable and what's not hence protecting the interests of both the educators and the learners. Academic integrity helps in the development of adult learners/instructor personality. It also helps in regulating the education system and ensures that education contributes positively towards human welfare. As with integrity generally, academic integrity carries with it benefits for the individual practicing right behaviour as well as benefits for the broader culture. Adult learners with academic integrity experiences optimal intellectual and skills development. Adult learners with academic integrity experiences equitable opportunities to excel. Thomas (1992) summarized the benefits of academic integrity as follows:

- i) Encourage moral reflection: academic integrity foster moral thinking and thoughtful decision making through reading, research, essay writing, journaling, discussion and debate.
- ii) It helps students acquire the moral skills of solving conflicts fairly
- iii) Develop the "conscience of craft", academic integrity foster students' valuing of learning, capacity for working hard, commitment to excellence and public sense of work as affecting the lives of others
- iv) Academic integrity helps students to develop important human qualities such as justice, diligence, compassion, respect and courage and to understand why it is important to live by them.
- v) Academic integrity promotes character development through the exploration of ethical issues across the curriculum.

In a similar vein, Arwanrna (2016) opined that academic integrity is interpreted as the values, behaviour and conduct of academics in all aspects of their practice; teaching, learning, research and service. He outlined the importance/benefits of promoting academic integrity in academia as follows;

- i) Academic integrity affects learning environment quality
- ii) Academic integrity is a fundamental requirement for producing good scholars
- iii) Academic integrity facilitates formation of self-reliance habits
- iv) Academic integrity protects people's right
- v) Academic integrity affects the institution's academic reputation
- vi) Academic integrity affects the credibility of the university degree
- vii) Equity is affected by academic dishonesty
- viii) Academic integrity affects students professional development.

### **Consequences of Academic Dishonesty**

The most obvious consequences of academic dishonesty are the penalties the educational institution can impose on the offending learners. In addition to official sanctions from an educational institution, other consequences include serious moral, ethical and academic problems. Cizek (2013) disused the moral consequences of academic dishonesty to include:

- i) The "habit forming" nature of cheating and cheating's devaluation of hard work, integrity and fairness. The habitual nature of cheating indicates that those who cheat in academic activities and think they can get away with it may continue to cheat at work, in family life and in other aspects of life. In the long run, this attitude can be harmful not only to the cheater but to everyone else affected by his or her actions.
- ii) Loss of intellectual property: Academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, is the equivalent of stealing another person's property. An original work (idea, writing, design, art and so on) created by someone is the "currency" for that individual and when another person uses it without permission, the author loses his or her intellectual property, recognition and possible income.
- iii) Inaccurate assessment: When adult learners cheat or plagiarize in academic activities, instructors cannot accurately assess their performance or evaluate learners' mastery of the knowledge, skills and applications necessary in their field. As a result institutions may grant credentials to those who do not really deserve them which can have serious practical ramifications in the work place.
- iv) Adult learners' self-esteem: learners who cheat and at first get away with it may in the long run feel guilty and suffer from low self-esteem. This loss of self-respect can lead to a host of other problems, including difficulties with their careers, families and other important aspects of life. Although, some learners may think cheating is harmless and that it's potential penalties would impact only themselves it is crucial that they understand the far-reaching consequences of academic dishonesty and the serious societal and personal; ramifications it can have.

- v) Practical concerns: When learners who commit acts of academic dishonesty are granted credentials confirming that they have successfully completed a course or programme of study when they have not, it can have serious consequences in the work place.

### **Continuing Education as a tool for re-cultivating Academic Integrity for a Corrupt free Nigerian Society**

Continuing education is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. It remains the pivot upon which the wheels of the society revolve. A country is said to be developed when the adults citizenry are able to contribute and participate in the growth of the society. Continuing education is very relevant in the training and development of human resources in any country through imparting the appropriate skills, capacities, values, knowledge and attitudes which can be used in the transformation of individuals and re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society and the world at large.

Continuing education is an important diffusion mechanism of empowerment and fostering mind-sets, skills and behaviours. It helps in the training of self-confident individuals who are aware of the dangers of academic dishonesty. Hence continuing education is a veritable tool that is not only concerned with preparing people for life, but also concerned with helping people to live more successfully. Thus, continuing education assist adult learners to increase competence or negotiate transitions in their social roles as (workers, parents, retirees and so on) to help them gain greater fulfilment in their personal lives and to assist them in solving personal and educational problems in legitimate ways. Sakineh and Hamid (2011), opined that continuing education is an element which is needed for determination and reinforcement of character. They stressed that continuing education instill good behaviour in the lives of learners which in turn compels adult learners to exhibit integrity in their learning and other endeavours of their lives. Continuing education makes it possible for adult learners to get an extensive opportunity or structure for developing behavioural and technical skills which enhances their level of growth thereby leading to a more confident individual who exhibits integrity in all areas of his or her life. Continuing education help enhance an individual's functional knowledge and skills at any level and lead to expansion of their personality and mental horizons. Continuing education promotes understanding of social obligations and rules as well as the acquisition of basic skills which enable adults to function as responsible members of the society. Continuing education imparts in an individual, knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will precipitate and galvanize the spirit of integrity/honesty for self-actualisation and a corrupt free Nigerian society. The implication of the above is that continuing education molds and trains adult learners to be useful in the society and contribute positively towards a corrupt free Nigerian society. Through continuing education, the culture of integrity is promoted by enabling individuals to discover and unlock their latent creative potentials in them and apply same to improve efficiency of their personal and societal efforts. Continuing education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Continuing education is a weapon to improving one's life. It is probably the most important



tool in changing one's life. It is a lifelong process that ends with death. Continuing education certainly determines the quality of an individual's life. Continuing education inculcate virtues like honesty, integrity and hard work in an individual life thereby improving one's knowledge, skills and develops the personality and attitude of the individual.

Continuing education is indispensable to individual and society for it helps in the inculcation of knowledge, integrity and acceptable standard of conduct. Continuing education helps individuals to learn the culture of the society thereby fostering a positive mindset in the life of the individual. Continuing education offers learning opportunities which fits the individual for his adult role in the society. Kdkasi (2018), opined that continuing education instill and transmit the social norms, values and beliefs into the next generation. In this sense, continuing education is a veritable tool in re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society. Continuing education helps groom the personality of individuals which assist an adult learner to adjust in any environment, group, community and society. Continuing education helps one to think rationally and conclude any event, situation and issue with reasonable explanation.

## Conclusion

This paper has carefully discussed continuing education as a tool for re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society. It examined the concept of continuing education and academic integrity. The paper also outlined the forms of academic dis-honesty. The paper also x-rayed the importance of academic integrity and also highlighted the consequences of academic dis-honesty. It is the belief of this paper that if continuing education is made available to the adult citizens of the country, institutions of learning in Nigeria will attain a greater height in academic integrity which will in turn lead to a corrupt free Nigerian society.

It is obvious that re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society cannot take place if the adult citizens are not sufficiently enlightened. Based on this, it is therefore necessary in re-cultivating academic integrity for a corrupt free Nigerian society; Academic institution should educate their learners about what constitutes academic integrity. Stiffer penalties should be spelt out and meted to those involved in academic dishonesty.

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