

Combating Corruption to Enhance Learner Academic Achievement: A Qualitative Study of Zimbabwean Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract : The aim of the study was to investigate participants' views on how corruption can be combated to enhance learner academic achievement. The study was undertaken on three select public secondary institutions in Zimbabwe. This study also focuses on exploring the various views of educators; parents and the learners on the role played by corruption in perpetuating the seemingly existing learner academic achievement disparities in various educational institutions. The study further interrogates and examines the nexus between the prevalence of corruption in schools and the subsequent influence on the academic achievement of learners. Corruption is considered a form of social injustice; hence in Zimbabwe, the general consensus is that it is perceived rife to the extent that it is overtaking the traditional factors that contributed to the poor academic achievement of learners. Coupled to this, have been the issue of gross abuse of power and some malpractices emanating from concealment of essential and official transactions in the conduct of business. Through proposing robust anti-corruption mechanisms, teaching and learning resources poured in schools would be put into good use. This would prevent the unlawful diversion and misappropriation of the resources in question which has always been the culture. This study is of paramount significance to curriculum planners, teachers, parents, and learners. The study was informed by the interpretive paradigm; thus qualitative research approaches were used. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were adopted in 'site and participants' selection. A representative sample of (150) participants was used. The study found that the majority of the participants perceived corruption as a social problem and a human right threat affecting the quality of teaching and learning processes in the education sector. It was established that corruption prevalence within institutions is as a result of the perpetual weakening of ethical values and other variables linked to upholding of 'Ubuntu' among general citizenry. It was further established that greediness and weak systems are major causes of rampant corruption within institutions of higher learning and are manifesting through abuse of power, bribery, misappropriation and embezzlement of material and financial resources. Therefore, there is great need to collectively address the problem of corruption in educational institutions and society at large. The study additionally concludes that successful combating of corruption will promote successful moral development of students as well as safeguarding their human rights entitlements. The study recommends the adoption of principles of good corporate governance within educational institutions in order to successfully curb corruption. The study further recommends the intensification of interventionist strategies and strengthening of systems in educational institutions as well as regular audits to overcome the problem associated with rampant corruption cases.

Keywords : academic achievement, combating, corruption, good corporate governance, qualitative study

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