

## Causes of Corruption in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia

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## Causes of Corruption in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia

สาเหตุของการทุจริตในโรงเรียนเอกชนในมอนโรเวียไลบีเรีย

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## Abstract

The objective of this qualitative research is to investigate the causes of corruption in private schools and to implement guidelines to eliminate corruption in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia. The study performed an inclusive investigation through interviews and observations with school employees including principals, teachers, students, parents, community members, and community leaders. The data was coded, performing a thematic analysis using the Professional Accountability Model. As observed in the thematic analysis, the qualitative method was implied using the Professional Accountability Model to allow the students to acquire quality education in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia. The professional accountability enables teachers to obtain moral characters in schools to deliver quality education to students with the absence of corruption. with the professional accountability Model, all employees observe the rules and regulations, in turn, enables the students to obtain their dreams. The implications of these findings as it relates to other contexts are discussed.

## Keywords:

Causes, Corruption, Private, Schools, Monrovia, Liberia

## บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาสาเหตุของการทุจริตในโรงเรียนเอกชนและนำแนวทางในการกำจัดการทุจริตในโรงเรียนเอกชนในมอนโรเวียไลบีเรีย การศึกษาดำเนินการสอบสวนอย่างครอบคลุมผ่านการสัมภาษณ์และการสังเกตกับพนักงานของโรงเรียนรวมถึงผู้ว่าจ้างครูนักเรียนผู้ปกครองสมาชิกชุมชนและผู้นำชุมชนข้อมูลถูกเข้ารหัสทำการวิเคราะห์เฉพาะเรื่องโดยใช้ Professional Accountability Model ตามที่สังเกตในการวิเคราะห์ให้ใจความวิธีการเชิงคุณภาพโดยนัยใช้รูปแบบความรับผิดชอบมืออาชีพเพื่อให้นักเรียนได้รับการศึกษาที่มีคุณภาพในโรงเรียนเอกชนในมอนโรเวียไลบีเรีย ความรับผิดชอบต่อวิชาชีพช่วยให้ครูได้รับคุณธรรมในโรงเรียนเพื่อมอบการศึกษาที่มีคุณภาพให้กับนักเรียนโดยปราศจากการคอร์รัปชัน ด้วยรูปแบบความรับผิดชอบต่อวิชาชีพพนักงานทุกคนปฏิบัติตามกฎและข้อบังคับในทางกลับกันทำให้นักเรียนได้รับความฝัน ความหมายของการค้นพบนี้เกี่ยวข้องกับบริบทอื่น ๆ ที่กล่าวถึง

## คำสำคัญ:

สาเหตุ, การทุจริต, ส่วนตัว, โรงเรียน, มอนโรเวีย, ไลบีเรีย

## Introduction

Corruption in education is defined as “the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services as a consequence on access, quality or equity in education” Hallak and Poisson (2005). Corruption is said to be one of the profane trinity of contaminated money and criminal activities (Baker, 2005). It is very bad in our society. Because it causes people in the country to stay unfortunate, depressed and illiterate. Corruption also causes a high dropout rate in the School System in Liberia. (Kaufmann et al., 1999; Gupta et al., 2001). Moreover, corruption causes low income in the country (Li et al., 2000), lack of excellent infrastructure (Tanzi and Davoodi, 1997), and above all, lack of competence (Lamchetbsdorff, 2003a), corruption is a thoughtful problem that poor people are facing (Chetwynd E., Chetwynd F. and Spector B 2003) and the citizen haven't experienced any good expectation from corruption.

Tanzi (1997:164-165) suggested that corruption is a problem that everybody is facing in the world. To date, the World Bank has carried out over 600 anti-corruption programs dealing with corruption since 1996 (Banerjee et al., 2012, p.1). The accountability process needs to be implemented in the private school in order to eliminate corruption in private schools in Liberia Anderson (2005).

Monrovia is the capital city of Liberia. It is located on the west coast of Africa. The country is the oldest republic in Africa. Liberia as a nation, since she has her independence in 1847, has never satisfied its legal commitments to give open consideration, social equality, political security, quality educations, monetary

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changes, and social welfare to its people. Liberia had suffered a long term civil war which has a negative effect on the educational sector in the country. A few years ago, there were just a couple of studies on corruption. From that point, various scholarly articles have been published. This has drawn the attention researcher about the problem.

In the Republic of Liberia, the government approves the yearly budget indicated for all schools through the ministry of finance while the Ministry of Education supplies to the schools either directly or through district education officers. Through that, we experience many shortcomings in the transparency and accountability failure that lead to leakages of corruption. As a result, the education system in Liberia is under critical observation due to public understanding of corruption. In addition, the international community plans to express grave concerns for good governing and management in the education sectors. According to the educational sectors plan (2010-2020), “at present, open communications and suitable documentation mechanism is not proper to bring out accountability and justification of transactions. Furthermore, the planning rule's pronouncement leads to improper execution in Liberia.

The practice of ‘corruption’ is a silent weapon used by teachers or school administrators against both female and male students in the educational system in Liberia, yet to date; no drastic disciplinary action has been taken to correct those abuses. The government of Liberia passed a law in the early 1970s during the presidency of the late president William Tolbert that “lowered the age of consent to twelve” (Perkins 2006). Even within the period of a woman president,

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, violence against girl's students in the educational system has not stopped. Violence against students, especially girls in Liberia, is a normal practice that has little or no academic chronicle.

This research will attempt to create academic chronicle on the violence from teachers against students, accountability within the stakeholders, school's principals, community members and parents within the selected schools. The practice of corruption and bypassing criteria link from the upper institution (government of Liberia) to the lower institution (classroom) (Dedze, 2005).

### Literature review

In arguing the issue of corruption in private secondary schools in Liberia most especially in the Bushrod Island area, it is imperative to know the corruption practices in the school as they are very dynamic in this study. Among some key corruption practices that were found are; parents corrupt practice, student's corrupt practice, teacher's corrupt practice and examinations corrupt practices.

During the study, the researcher recognized some forms of corrupt practices in the school which is in line with Oyinlola. According to Oyinlola (2009), there are some forms of corruption practices that are available in the Liberian private secondary schools. Some forms of corrupt practices are as follow;

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#### Parent corrupt practices

Parent corruption rehearses is a form of corrupt practices that operated by most guardians in Monrovia, Liberia. The parents bolster their kids by giving those cash to pay for grades. A few guardians additionally go to school and pay cash to teachers or school administrators in return for grades. During the study, the teachers noticed that "guardians add to student's sluggishness in school. Guardians likewise contribute to the demonstration of corruption in school, by supporting their children"

#### Students' Corrupt Practices

Student's degenerate practice is a form of corruption that is practice by most students whose utilizations cash to energize their students or administrators while some female students utilize sex to impact their school principals or instructors to empower them to approach exam questions and answers or to elevate them to the next class. These processes lead to student's laziness in private schools. To avoid student's corrupt practice in private schools, the government, parents, stakeholders, community members, community leaders, and school administrators need to involve in a child's education and also need to recognize the right to child's education.

#### Examination Councils' Corrupt Practices

Examination council corrupt practice is a form of corrupt practice involves the invigilators, supervisors, or examination officers most especially during the external examinations in Liberia; West African examination council (WAEC) and West Africa senior school

certificate examination (WASSCE) and examination in the school. These two examinations are taken every year by some students who are in grade six, ninth and twelve grades respectively. Examiners try to organize the students for them to put money together and give to them as transportation as to allocate them what they call extra-time Oyinlola (2009) assumed that the parents also pay for admission into the university in Liberia

### Teachers 'Corrupt Practices

This type of corruption practice is predominant in private schools even in private universities. Teacher's demand money from students in exchange for grade. The teachers who need to contribute immensely to children's education are destroying the school system by corrupting the children's mindset (Oyinlola, 2009). Addition form of corruption is where teachers are not being paid well and teachers will have the end of year exam and students must pass this exam to be promoted to the next class (David, 2002.).

The research suggests Professional accountability model as a means of giving responsibility and good moral behavior to teachers to carry on their duties in the educational sectors. When professional accountability is implemented in private schools, all teachers will have decent characters towards the student's achievement.

### Methodology

This study employed qualitative method research to provide tangible information on the problem of corruption in Monrovia, Liberia. The research utilized explicit selection to give a set of an informant who can appropriately give concrete and important data

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so as to address the causes of corruption in Liberia private schools. There are six (6) groups: 1) principals, 2) teachers, 3) parents, 4) community members, 5) community leaders and, 6) students. The study recruit participant on their willingness to partake in the interview. Three schools along with three communities were properly investigated according to the objective of the study.

### Data collection instruments

As a qualitative method approach was employed, in-depth interview and observation were conducted to collect primary data. The interviews were conducted by interviewers in accordance with the researcher questionnaire base on the objective of the study. In-debt interview are used for in-dept. interviews. Observations involve participation. The method of observation of the researcher is to understand the purpose of observed phenomenon. When researcher was in the schools, observe the context of the general condition in the schools of study and communities and also observed the social behavior associated with the study.

After data were collected, interview was conducted with the selected sample size to reinforce primary data. Documents and records were used to collect the secondary data. First, interview form, second, group discussions, and program activities were used to collect data from students in the selected schools.

### Data analysis Procedures

In this study, the qualitative data was analyzed and interpreted based on Professional Accountability analysis. After

conducting the interviews, the researcher wrote up the notes, listens to the recorded tapes, and transcribed the Liberia colloquia English Conversations of the interview. The transcribed materials were then translated into Standard English. The data from interviews, documents and record were coded, and then themes were created for data interpretation.

### Scope of research

The participant of this study will be the school's principal, teachers, students, community members including community leaders and parents in the selected areas. These people are chosen because they can contribute immensely in the fight against corruption within the Bushrod Island area and in the country at large. The parents can help acknowledge the students about corruption in the educational sectors. The principals, teachers, staff and students within Monrovia, Liberia are choosing in order to know the root causes of corruption in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia, and other private schools in the country and how to solve the problems.

Corruption in educational sectors has affected many people in Liberia; there is a high illiteracy rate in the country. Therefore, my study will be providing insight into the phenomena that exist in Liberia's private secondary education system with empirical evidence. Moreover, this research will help to contribute to other researches, in solving the problem of corruption in the educational sectors. Finally, it will raise the awareness of the different stakeholders to involve in Liberia's educational system of the existing problem, its effects, and possible reforms in curbing these problems that is destroying

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her educational quality and standards.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is being developed based on the concepts, theories, books, and related research on this study through the review of the literature. Using the professional accountability model as an analytical framework, this study had investigated the causes of corruption in detail in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia. School principals, teachers, and community members including community leaders, parents and students had been interviewed in order to achieve the objectives of this study. The study had investigated corruption in school through bribery, fraud, extortion, and favoritism. Not only considering the school's program, school's structure, school's staff, and school's strategy rather, it consider also consider the professional accountability model as a means to give good characters and moral behavior to teachers and encourage parents, stakeholders, government, community members and community leaders. Professional accountability is to ensure that teachers have good integrity and also have a good professional skill as a teacher.

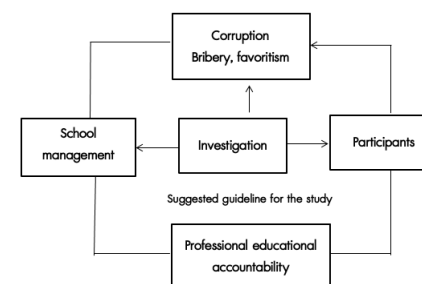


Fig.1 Conceptual Framework

As mentioned in figure 1 the conceptual framework of the research. In the selected schools in Monrovia, Liberia, the researcher recognized four forms of corruption practices that affect the school system. The four forms of corrupt practices that were found in the schools are teacher's corrupt practices, student's corrupt practices, parent's corrupt practices and the examination council corrupt practices. The researcher investigates the four forms of corrupt practices in the school through the school management programs. The study includes the participants as a source of receiving concrete information to obtain the objective of the study. After investigation, the study suggests the Professional Accountability Model as a guideline to eliminate corruption in private schools in Monrovia, Liberia.

## Results

The research was conducted base on the objective of this study; the causes of corruption in private schools and implementing guidelines to eliminate corruption in Liberia private schools in Monrovia, Liberia. The study interrogates school principals, teachers, senior students, parents, community members, and community leaders. The result had revealed some causes of corruption in private schools and has been grouped into several themes. These include: (i) Educational administration, (ii) Low salary, (iii) Support from the government towards private schools in Liberia, and (iv) laziness of students.

## Educational Administration

In private schools in Liberia, the educational administration has to do with the recruitment, admission, and promotion in the school. Corruption takes place in different structure in the educational administration. For instance, the recruitment process is not done by

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those who qualify for a particular job but rather, who is in close relationship with the boss. Promoting staffs or teachers is not based on the qualification as well. It depends on who is pushing the file giving great opportunities to the unqualified employees and depriving the qualify ones the opportunity to produce good quality education to students.

The fake certificate is rampant in the private educational system. The issue of the fake certificates is rampant in the system as a result, even those with qualify certificates are effected. Students are relied upon to be evaluated dependent on the objective of the educational curriculum. Anyway, corruption practices disappoint this more since students are abused from multiple points of view, for example, students offering a bribe to increase educational opportunity to pass exams freely, some female students surrendering to sexual support so as to obtain good grades in the school. Students purchasing examination papers before the tests and even the instance of students copying from one another. According to the study, the parents emphasize that "the administration is not running the private schools properly" when schools are not operating well, it derives from the administrative department. The statement from most teachers was "the administrators are the cause of student's failure in school" the researcher observed and took it into consideration of the statement by the teachers. One fact is that the real qualify employees is not considered. The administrators prefer to employ family members or a close relation. To avoid favoritism in schools, the government needs to intervene in private schools as it is done in public schools.

### Low salary receive by teachers

A Low salary is a monthly wage receives by employees in a particular working arena. The study focuses on the employees in private schools in Liberia. Low salary received by the teachers/staff; because of low salary, teachers mostly engage in corruption and/or extracting illegal money from students and again, makes the students not be serious for their lessons. Government investment in higher education with standards and facilities that are second to none will attract students and highly acclaimed teachers. Low salary is one of the many contributing factors that are hugely affecting the schools not to be of quality. During principals interview, most of them indicated that "the reason of low salaries in private schools is because the private schools are not subsidies in any form of financial assistance from the government of Liberia as a result the school fees paid by parents is not enough to operate/manage both the schools and employees' salaries" although many parents emphasize that low salary is not the major cause of corruption in private. The majority explained that one of the possible reasons for corruption in private schools is the greed of teachers Kromah A, M, (2019).

The community member's perspective on the low salary received by teachers is that "when teachers receive a low salary, they will find other suitable ways to satisfy their need since the salary is not enough to satisfy the needs" from their perspective, it is now known that low salary receive by teacher is a huge disadvantage to promote quality education in private schools.

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#### Support from the government towards private schools in Liberia

Since the study objective is to investigate the causes of corruption in private schools in Liberia and to implement guidelines to eliminate corruption in the society, therefore it was necessary to investigate the impact of the Liberian government towards private schools in Liberia. One of the causes prescribed by the instructors/teachers is that "the government is not supporting the school system in Liberia most especially, in private schools" majority of the principals further clarified that once the school isn't getting any help from the government, it will be difficult to battle corruption in the school" Government is not doing well for the private schools. The government is not subsidizing private schools. The Liberia government, because of little or no subsidy for private schools, and over 40 percent of children don't attend school had decided to allow schools to be run by private companies, such as bridge international academics.

Over the years, both parents and students have been suffering to pay school fees and the West African examination fees. It has been one of the root causes of student's dropout from schools. The new president who took office in 2018 announced free tuition for all public schools and universities in the country. He also pays the fees for every student who will sit the West African examination in the country. The policy of President George Weah is to reform the educational sector in the country. The researcher is looking forward to the great step ahead by his Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah.



### Laziness of students

Laziness of students is when students relax at home and rely upon offering bribe for the grade. The laziness of students is not natural but rather intentional because they will still have to pay something whether to make a pass or not. Because corruption is not ingrained in society, the students will not take their lessons seriously because, at the end of the semester, they will still make a token of little money to have passed. In order to have a corruption-free, the sector needs effective leadership to combat corruption in the educational arena. The Liberian government through the Minister of Education needs to consider the right to child's education. Students involve in laziness because there are no rules and regulations enforced by the administration of the school to the seriousness of the students. The government needs to support both public and private schools if they are really concern about youth generation. The study suggests that parents need to play major roles in a child's education. The government, administrators, stakeholders, teachers, parents, community members, and community leaders need to help in the process of transforming students. It should contain a collaborating process in society in order to create a better future for the young generation.

Student's laziness arises when there is no one observing them and situating them on the straight path, they will definitely go out of hand and it will cause a massive drop out in school. Parents also need to consider that the children are the future leader in the society therefore, deserve better education to keep them sustainable. The government needs to implement educational policy in all schools.

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Stakeholders, teachers, community members, and community leaders need to involve in the betterment of students.

### Recommendations

The study provides a better understanding of the causes of corruption in private schools to principals, teachers, parents, community members, and community leaders. The organizational structure and administrative procedures in the selected schools need to be built on principles of accountability and transparency. To eliminate corruption in the school, the researcher suggests the following recommendations.

1. Parents, community members, community leaders, and stakeholders' involvement is very important in school.
2. Principal, as head of the institution, needs to run the school properly and take legal actions against any perpetrators in the act of corruption.
3. The school needs to implement the accountability process in the school to allow every employee or student to be accountable for their doing. According to the research, Professional Accountability Model is suitable to be implicated in all schools in Liberia to eliminate corruption in the school system.
4. To increase teacher's salaries, and also the government of Liberia needs to take into consideration teacher's salaries; finally, the government needs to understand the right to children's education.

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