NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION

POSITION PAPER ON GRADE SORTING IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Preamble
It will be recalled that, on 16th March, 2005, the National Universities Commission made a formal declaration of War Against Sorting (WAS) in Nigerian Universities with a battle cry of “Sort and Be Damned. The declaration was followed by a system wide sensitisation and public awareness on the phenomenon. Students and parents were sensitised to their rights. Universities were required to set up efforts at investigation, discipline and publicity of success stories on quarterly basis. That action yielded the desired results. The incidents reduced to the barest minimum.

Of recent, the Commission observed the resurfacing of reported cases of Grade Sorting on university campuses with grievous consequence on the students in particular and the delivery of quality university education in Nigeria in general.

The Commission had defined Sorting as a practice where a lazy or an academically deficient student sorts himself/herself out with the teacher or other persons in authority in the university with a view to securing favours that will wipe out such deficiency. When a student switches to the sorting mode, he/she trades a commodity for academic favours. This commodity is primarily money, gift items or sex. The teacher may be sorted out for better grades, while the administrator is sorted for admission and doctored transcripts. Purchase of hand-out and books authored by lecturer to be assured good grades in a course is sorting. A few thousand Naira in an envelope submitted with the course form to be awarded high marks in the course is sorting. A female student’s one-hour sexual interaction with the teacher in the office or in an obscure hotel for better grades is sorting. Buying the lecturer tyres for his/her car, dresses for the children and for the teacher himself/herself and food, items for the home is sorting.
Over the years, the media has been awash with articles about the level of moral decadence corroding our Engine Rooms of Learning. This hydra-headed monster of buying and selling of grades by students and lecturers has been reported severally by the media in recent times.

Consequently, Grade Sorting has become a recurring societal problem and is very popular within the University Community. This calls for concerted efforts at cleansing the System.

**Root Causes**

The following are the root causes of Grade Sorting in Nigerian universities, among others:

a. Present generation of students prefer to be either glued to the television sets viewing movies and listening to music, or walking around with their gadgets. Only few serious-minded students would be seen burying their heads in their books;

b. Some parents encourage their wards to buy examination grades and possibly certificates rather than monitoring their academic performance and social lives;

and

c. In some instances, it is some lecturers who are found guilty of finding a solution to their insatiable wants/desires by extorting these articles of-trade from the students.

Whichever is the case, collectively, it must be eradicated.

**Consequences**

Just as viruses lower the body's immunity to disease attacks, Grade Sorting has greatly affected the value of certificates issued by Nigerian Universities. Most foreign Institutions do not trust the certificates awarded by our Universities and thus, request a verification letter from the Federal Ministry of Education to confirm its authenticity.

Sorting has also lead a number of students to fall prey to joining cult groups on campuses in order to seek protection against victimization by lecturers. The belief is that, once a student becomes a cultist, he or she becomes immune to any form of threat or
harassment from any quarters, especially from lecturers who take pleasure in oppressing students academically and otherwise.

Sorting has also, led female students into a life of prostitution. Some female, students, particularly those from low-income families and those who are influenced by peers, have fallen into the danger of engaging in all types of activities (including prostitution) in order to pay lecturers for grades they didn't work for.

Another vital effect of Grade 'Sorting has been the dearth of the scholarship and hard work among our students, so much so that even the brilliant ones have fallen prey to the plague. This has had a ripple effect on the quality of graduates who are sometimes unable to defend their "excellent certificates".

**Way Forward**

The National Universities Commission, as the agency responsible for the orderly development of Nigerian Universities, condemns, in totality, any act that encourages giving and receiving any form of gratification in exchange for grades or other academic favours from lecturers or administrators.

The Universities are advised to mount aggressive awareness campaign against Grade Sorting and its consequences on their campuses.

All cases of harassment of students for gratification by lecturers must be investigated and reported to the Commission.

The Universities are advised to set up a Committee or Task Force on "**War on Grade Sorting**" (WGS) with the sole objective of eradicating, social and academic vices in Nigerian university campuses.

National Universities Commission, May 2016