

Contract of the Construction of Faculty of Clinical Sciences Phase 1 (lot1 1) in University of Abuja executed with Irregularities.

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Background

Corruption has remained a persistent phenomenon in Nigeria. It has become the norm for public officials to divert public funds meant for the implementation of developmental projects that would be of benefit to citizens for personal use. According to Transparency International's corruption index in 2020, Nigeria was ranked 149th out of the 180 listed countries with a score of 25% against corruption.

Corruption runs through every level of Nigerian government, from massive contract fraud across different MDAs, through petty bribery, money laundering schemes, embezzlement, ghost workers, abuse of power and office etc. it is estimated that corruption within the state apparatus might cost the country about 30% of its annual gross domestic profit (GDP).

Although, education is fundamental to achieving national development, the prevalence of corruption generally in Nigeria and particularly the education sector would not encourage realistic national development to take effect. This is simply because endemic corruption in the Nigeria education industry has created a vicious circle of deficit culture so intensive that virtually all good plans and budgetary provisions for improved facilities in the education industry ended up being



embezzled without corresponding provisions of the budgeted infrastructure (Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu, 2017).

This contract ambiguities or misappropriation of funds meant for educational development means that infrastructure and facilities for effective teaching and learning wouldn't be available, which heightened lack of access to quality education especially in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The 2017 Audit report of the federation of Nigeria showed how N9.8bn being about 57.45% of total contract sum of N17.057bn was not accounted for on 32 social service contracts. Educational development contracts which are primarily beneficial to youths, women, children and people leaving with disabilities (PLWDs) which constitutes about 75% of these contracts were found either abandoned, partially executed or executed with irregularities. This made it extremely difficult for citizens to access quality and affordable education and hindered Nigeria's journey towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

Contract for the construction of faculty of clinical science phase 1 (LOT 1) in University of Abuja executed with irregularities revealed N50.3m price variation on a nonfluctuating contract. This which resulted from circumvention of the approved threshold for the University Tenders Board and have led to loss of public funds and not getting value for money paid for the contract by the government and students who are the primary beneficiaries of the contract.

With the objective of ameliorating infractions in social service contract of Nigerian universities and promoting stakeholder's engagement in the development of Nigeria education sector through accountability and citizens participation in public audit, PLSI is advocating stakeholder's engagement using this policy brief.

Approaches

PLSI through its Value for Money advocacy project analyzed the 2017 Audit report of the federation to highlight key developmental issues, monitored the project and engaged stakeholders. The Contract for the construction of faculty of clinical sciences phase 1 (LOT 1) in university of Abuja was spotlighted, monitored and key stakeholders such as youths, students, leaders of University of Abuja community and Anti-corruption agencies were engaged.

Results and Conclusion

In the opinion of the Auditor, the contract of construction of faculty of clinical sciences phase 1 (LOT 1) at University of Abuja awarded on 15th September, 2016 with a total contract sum of N234.8m as agreed at the 74th regular meeting of the University Council by the Tenders Board. The contract was stated to be nonfluctuating. Examination of the contract file revealed that the contract was varied by

N50.3m (21% increase in the original contract value.) by the end of 2016.

During independent monitoring of the project on 27th August, 2020 to verify the project status, we observed that the project was not completed and poorly constructed. Most of the materials used were substandard as the ceiling in the laboratory was already broken.

Implications

These irregularities and variation in the contract sum awarded by University of Abuja implies that the students who are the primary beneficiaries of the project will lack adequate infrastructural facilities to acquire quality education which may eventually increase Nigeria unemployment rate and poverty level. Also, this might affirm the fear of Nigeria not being able to achieve the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 as education play a vital role in localizing and achieving the global goals.

Recommendations

- 1 **Enforce financial Regulation 3117:** PLSI and other key stakeholders call for the immediate enforcement of the financial regulation 3117 on the Vice Chancellor and the University Tenders Board as this will help prevent reoccurrence in other institutions.
- 2 **Fund or Properties/Assets Recovery:** The vice Chancellor/University Tenders Board must be compelled to refund the increased contract sum or properties/assets worth the increased contract sum must be confiscated with immediate effect in other prevent further corrupt practices.
- 3 **Re-award of Contract:** In other to achieve quality education in this community and also for the student to derive value for the public fund utilized, the contract of construction of faculty of clinical sciences, University of Abuja should be re-awarded with adequate monitoring to ensure quality materials are used and contract fully executed.
- 4 **Contract Transparency:** Information on the process of awarding and execution of contracts in the University must be made available to all key stakeholders (Students, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff, Host community leaders and representatives etc.).

Images of poorly constructed Faculty of Clinical Science at University of Abuja

