

# African business schools must change tack to combat corruption

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Business schools in Africa must equip future business leaders with political skills, if business education is to play a significant role in combating systemic corruption, says research from the University of Bath.

Dr Tahiru Azaaviele Liedong, Assistant Professor of Strategy in the School of Management, says that business schools cannot solely rely on developing an individual's ethical outlook to counter corruption; they must also give students pragmatic political skills to draw on in the face of bribery and corruption in the public sector.

He calls on business schools in Africa to nurture students into future 'institutional entrepreneurs' by exposing them not only to the sources of corruption and the effects of corruption on firms and communities, but also to the approaches and strategies that could be deployed by the business community to bring about political transparency and public accountability.

He notes that business schools should add [corporate political activity](#) to their curricula, as this would give students a grounding in strategies that firms can use to influence their political environments, from mobilising other stakeholders to shape government policy and speaking out against corrupt practices, to spearheading collective attempts to change values and behaviour.

In 2016, the United Nations estimated that corrupt practices cost developing countries \$1.26 trillion a year - money which could be used to fund public infrastructure, provide social services or alleviate abject poverty.

The private sector is not the major source of the corruption related problems in Africa, but often finds itself the victim of corrupt procurement and adverse policy decisions. Managers who try to combat the menace often get isolated, victimised

or 'burned out'. Others are simply unable to withstand the pressure of systemic bribery because they lack the skills required to stamp it out.

Dr Tahiru Azaaviele Liedong said: "The onus is on business schools in Africa to empower future business leaders to act to strengthen State institutions and ultimately eradicate corruption."

"Much has been written about the menace of corruption in Africa and considerable work has been done to curb it, but the gains are not significant. We need new ways of using business education to fight corruption because ethical business leaders will always struggle to fight systemic corruption if their main response is to fall back on passive resistance, such as refusing to collude or pay bribes."

Dr Liedong says that training students to become politically skilled 'institutional entrepreneurs' and managers will help companies to play an active corporate citizenship role, adding: "The key to combating corruption in Africa is good governance and well-functioning institutions, and business schools can take a prominent role in this regard by acting as agents for positive and institutional change across Africa."

Dr Liedong has rich industry experience, having worked in investment banking, treasury, development banking and management consulting both in Africa and the UK. He hopes that his research will generate dialogue that will make African [business](#) education relevant and effective in the fight against [corruption](#) in Africa.

**More information:** Tahiru Azaaviele Liedong, Combating Corruption in Africa through Institutional Entrepreneurship: Peering in from Business-Government Relations, *Africa Journal of Management* (2017). DOI: [10.1080/23322373.2017.1379825](https://doi.org/10.1080/23322373.2017.1379825)

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