

# Teachers' Ethical Behaviour: A Panacea for Curbing Corruption in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Balafama Ipalibo-Wokoma, Prof. C. U. Madumere Obike, Dr. S. C. Anyamele

*Department of Educational Management, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria*

**Abstract:-** The study examined teachers' ethical behaviour as a panacea for corruption in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The teacher is a major tool for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. It is glaring that corruption which is the systematic use of public office for personal/private benefit has gone far in educational system. This calls for a professional code of conduct to guide the behavior of the teacher. Therefore teachers' professional code of ethics are generally intended to guide and regulate the conduct of the teachers, so as to abide by the rules and regulations that were formulated by members in the teaching industry for the improvement of their professional interest and welfare. A teacher as an input operator in the education system who is charged with the responsibility of converting raw materials into finished goods, that is dynamic students must possess the ethical values of the teaching profession in order to reduce the damages of corruption. Therefore the study identified accountability, fairness, efficiency and integrity as ways of managing corruption in secondary education. It further identified some challenges such as: lack of teachers' professional development, lack of interest in the teaching profession, conflict of interest and teachers addiction to drugs and alcohol was also discussed as challenges. Nevertheless the followings were suggested as the way forward; Government and educational stakeholders should encourage and sponsor teachers' professional training, teachers' code of conduct should be made available to all teachers, among others.

**Key Words:** Teachers' Ethical Behaviour, Corruption, Secondary Education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an asset, a preparation for life; a change agent. It is a tool for effective service delivery for sustainable societal development. The teacher is a major tool for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. This calls for a professional code of conduct to guide the behavior of the teacher. Therefore the teachers, educationists have it as a duty to provide the type of education that meets the needs, aspirations and values of the society, because education has a lasting effect on individuals and it also influences the society in several morally, spiritually, intellectually and physically. Therefore an ethical teacher should morally apply a systematical means of presenting facts, ideas, skills and techniques to the learners, since teaching is the process of guidance by which the learner is able to grasp ideas, facts, skills and techniques from the teachers.

It is empirically proven that despite Nigeria's abundant natural resources the country is still classified among the poor countries in the world. Furthermore about 54% of the population earns less than one Dollar per day. Ali (2008) stated that there is high rate of poverty and hunger in the midst of plenty which therefore the manifestation of corruption. It is apparent that what happened to society at large affects educational sector and what happened to the educational sector affect the society. However, in public secondary schools in Rivers State, some teachers have ethical behaviour which is in consonant with Rivers State educational policy. Therefore teachers' ethical behaviour determines the service delivery and the academic performance of the students. Today the quest for school administrators, teachers and some educational bureaucrats to acquire wealth, educational quality has been sacrificed, our schools has become mere shadow of the past in terms of academic standards. Therefore it is on this premise that the researcher is provoked to investigate the impact of teachers' ethical behavior on corruption in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS

### *The Concept of a Teacher*

A teacher is a person who is trained to acquire knowledge, skills, attitude and values in a formal training institution, in order to teach the students in the most acceptable way. A teacher is also an instructor, who has relevant training in a well established teachers' college institution. A teacher can be a subject specialist or an educator. As a subject specialist, the teacher should have genuine professional interest in the learning and teaching of his/her subject (Peter, 2018).

The primary obligation of the teaching profession in Nigeria is to guide children, youths and adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skill, to develop healthy attitudes that enable them live in harmony with all other individuals, and to help them become happy, useful, and responsible citizens. The ultimate strength of the nation lies in the social responsibility, economic competence and moral strength of the individual. Teachers are the center of instructional process; they are the most vital instrument in achieving instructional goals. The teacher possesses the capacity, competency and the ability to

make or mar the school, because the professional competency of the teacher determines the educational output and economic productivity (Peter, 2018). In the words of Afe, (2000) a teacher is a person who instructs the students to provide the teaching - learning process and who in his capacity to do this functions at various capacities as an educator, instructor, tutor, lecturer, counselor, professor, among others. The teacher builds the structure between the learners and the parents, between educational institution and other institutions of the state. On this premise, Aghenta in Nwakouga (2014) sees a teacher as an input operator in the education system who is charged with the responsibility of converting raw materials into finished products, that is productive students. He further stressed that in actualizing the educational goal and teachers' job performance, the students' must be equipped with employable skills, in order to contribute to the economic growth and development of the nation.

#### *The Concept of Ethics:*

Ethics is a moral code, morals, morality, moral standard, moral principles, moral values, rights and wrongs, principles ideas, credo, ethics, rules of conduct, standards. Ethics when applied to a profession refers to moral principles or rules of conduct or special control mechanism that govern the actions of members of occupation. Ethical rules and regulations have no legal authorities behind them instead there are issues of morality or what is wrong in the discharge of members' professional duties. Therefore teachers' professional codes of ethics are generally intended to guide and regulate the conduct of the teachers. Teacher rules and regulations are formulated by members in the teaching industry for the improvement of their professional interest and welfare. Obunadike further opined that teachers' professional ethics are both philosophical and sociological. The philosophical point of view is concerned with what is right or wrong in member's profession performance of their professional duties. And the sociological aspect of professional ethics is concerned with the issue of occupational self-control and self-regulation in the discharge of its specialized functions to the society concerned. Ethics is often regarded as certain terms like obligation, conflict of interest, right, wrong, responsibility, fairness, measured or qualified (Ikotun, 2004). However, conceptualized unethical practices in teaching profession exist whenever public servants, individually or collectively use position in a way which compromises public confidence and trust because of conflict of loyalties or values or as a result or attempts to achieve some form of private gain at the expense of public welfare or common goods (Obunadike, 2016). This assertion presumes the use of public office to covertly or overtly act contrary to expected public goods. Unethical conduct in teaching profession also implies actions using once position to satisfy his/her goal father(s) cronicskins and kith, race, religious affiliations among other, against public good. In view of this, teacher ethical behaviour implies the adopted code of professional ethics that guides the conduct of the teacher in teaching profession.

#### *The Concept of Public Secondary Schools*

Public secondary schools are those secondary schools funded by both the Federal, State and Local government. The state government is expected to take full control of those secondary schools by providing all the necessary infrastructures for effective service delivery. There are 247 public secondary schools in Rivers State. Secondary education in Rivers State stands as a bridge between primary and tertiary levels of education. Therefore it is expedient to note that it is established with the broad aim of preparing students for useful living within the society and for higher education. The goal of secondary school in Nigeria shall be, according to (FRN 2004:14), which entails preparing;

1. Useful living within the society.
2. Higher (Tertiary) education.

Secondary school education occupies a very strategic, position in any nation and also consumes the product of primary system. The number of primary school leavers who would receive secondary education is determined by the absorptive capacity of the secondary education itself. These make Nigeria secondary education to be a gateway to higher education both academy and professional. Ige (2013) in addition, opined that secondary education provides opportunity for a student to acquire additional knowledge, skill and trades beyond the primary level. Public secondary schools are government owned schools which is proposed to develop the child beyond the primary level. It is divided into two stages.

*Junior secondary stage:* which is the first three years stage of secondary school education. The curriculum at this stage is pre-vocational and academics. At the end of three years, Students at this stage will be prepared for junior secondary certificate examination (JSCE), and their certification will be based on students' performance in continuous assessment and JSCE result. This is being handled or organized by the Federal Government (if it is a federal school) or state ministry of education. Students who meet up with the promotion requirement will now proceed to the senior secondary stage for another three years training. This is in line with the 6-3-3-4 education system(2004)

*Senior secondary stage;* This is another three years after the junior secondary stage. It aims at developing the knowledge and skills of students beyond the junior secondary level. The curriculum is academics and vocational, students at this stage are expected to offer minimum of seven and maximum of eight subject (Ige, 2013). He further stated that student certification at this level is based on their performance to the continuous assessment and senior school certification examination (SSCE), coordinated by the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). Minimum of five, credit including English and Mathematics is required at two sitting, before a student can proceed to tertiary level from this level.

From the foregoing, Ige (2013) opined the following points as specific aims of secondary education in Nigeria.

- Providing all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of high level irrespective of sex, social status, Religious or ethnic background.
- Providing diversification curriculum to help for difference in talents, and various skills
- Providing trained human capital for sustainable economic growth and development
- Promoting, developing and maintaining Nigeria languages, arts and culture
- Developing students for self improvement and independent, though the inculcation of employable skills to the students
- Providing technical knowledge and vocational skills, necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development .National Policy on Education, (2004.)

#### *The concept of Corruption:*

According to United Nation Development Programme Anti-Corruption Practice Note of 2004, referring back to a policy paper approved by the executive committee in 1998. Corruption can be defined as “the misuse of public power, office or authority for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, spend money or embezzlement. (UNDP, 2010) corruption in public secondary schools takes many shapes. For example corruption in this content is defined as the systematic use of public office for personal/private benefit whose impact is significant on access, quality or equity in education. (Hallac and Poisson, 2002). To support this view, the World Bank (2000) stated that corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain. When a principal or teacher in public secondary schools accepts, solicits, extorts a bribe from the students and parents. Public secondary school principals or teachers also offers bribes bypass education policies for his or her personal profit. Indeed corruption is a cancer that has eaten deeply into the materials of education section, this leads to poverty and unemployment because the resources meant for educational sector has now been diverted into few hands and the sector suffers. On this note Phillips and Akpokighe (2014) observed that corruption leads to a growing gap between the rich and the poor and depends poverty by enriching a few at the expense of the fellow citizens. To Saliyou, (2000) corruption reduces economic growth, embarks inequalities and reduces the government’s capacity to respond to people’s needs.

The behaviour of public officers (civil servants, military and police personnel, elected officers among others) and former public officials, contractors, business associate of public officials towards the utilization and distribution of resources has proved Nigeria’s society corrupts (Torulagha, 2018). Torulagha further argued that education sector is as corrupt as public and private sectors. Therefore to win the way of corruption the must be a total clean-up in the educational

sector. This very important since education is the second most strongest and effective tool for socialization. Larger percentage of youths today our product of educational system. The educational sector today appears to produce graduates who looks employable skills and discipline, thereby involved in breaking the laws, involving in social vices and becoming a liability to the society. This as a result of corruption associated in the educational sectors. School principals and teachers involves in the business of paying professional examination takers so that the record of academic performance in the standardized examinations is improved (Torulagha, 2018). Students will be asked to contribute funds so as to hire these professional examination takers some public secondary schools now has become a special centre for examination malpractice. Due to insufficient funding public secondary schools, public school administrators, teachers extort money from students in various ways. In view of this Ajuko, 2008 opined that corruption is an ethical and social problem which varies from ministry to ministry, place to place, time to time, culture to culture and with the level of economic development. Corruption is one of the major causes of examination malpractice, it disable every aspect of educational system which includes political development economic development, social development among others. Due to high level of unemployment the educational sector has been congested with unqualified and incompetent teachers, who venture into teaching as a result of no other work, thereby concentrating more on how to extolled the students rather than the positive change. Samson (2013) observed that we toy around education thinking that we have gotten human capital and therefore we can do away with education with application in of corruption as a shortcut for good results for our children. Now the statement of the problem is which type of human capital do we have in public secondary schools today? And who are the management and operators of private schools today in Nigeria? With what qualification as a teacher, how experience and competence are the administrators.

### III. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS’ ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN CURBING CORRUPTION

1. Accountability: The teacher is accountable to the school administrator, adherence to the school rules and regulation and also to the policies of the government. The teacher is also accountable to the students by encouraging the students to strive for higher standards and to value education. This will reduce corruption, examination malpractice among others.
2. Fairness and Integrity: Ethical teacher is trustworthy, a prudent manger of the school resources. He/she is to respect the right and dignity of students, avoid conflict, but take on professional responsibilities. placing the students and school interest more than his personal interest. Treat all students and colleagues

equally. This will go along way reducing corruption in the school.

3. Efficiency and Effectiveness: Ethical teacher work to maximize school resources so as to achieve a productive outcome. Ethical teacher avoid wastage of school resources. Resource wastage is very common in public schools, hence ethical teacher avoid this area of corrupt practices. He/she also maintain high standard of competency
4. Teachers' ethical behavior reduces corruption by the teacher being responsive to the government and the needs of the society. This is achieved through respect to the rule of law, working to implement high quality of education service, among others.

#### IV. CHALLENGES OF TEACHERS' ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN CURBING CORRUPTION IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The followings are challenges of teachers' ethical behavior in order to curb corruption in secondary school educational system.

1. **Lack of professional development among teachers:** This is as a result of low interest of leaders in the development of teachers. Teacher training and development entails sponsoring teachers to workshops, seminars and conferences. This will develop new and positive values and attitude in the teacher.
2. **Corruption:** Corruption is any behavior that is contrary to the trust, powers and responsibility placed on a teacher. Corruption ruins educational development in Nigeria today as a result of personal interest, mismanagement of public funds and poor management strategies among others. It brings about indiscipline and unchallant attitude of the teachers. Corruption render the policy makers ill equipped in dealing with complex problems.
3. Lack of interest in teaching profession: It is empirically proven that many teachers today join the teaching industry because to them there is no other option, therefore they lack interest and passion for the profession, and as a result involve in all forms of malpractices in the system. They seek for quick way of making money.
4. Conflict of Interest: This occurs when teachers' private interest have the potential to interfere with his/her primary assignment. That is when a teacher has a second job elsewhere, the attention will be divided, they by breaking rules and regulation of the institution.
5. Addiction to Alcohol and Tobacco: It is glaring that many teachers in public school are drug addict. This is in consonant with the teachers' professional code of conduct. It can affect the health, safety and the job performance of such teacher.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the impact of the teachers' ethical behavior on Corruption in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The paper pointed out how corruption has destroyed the educational system, beginning from the policy makers, the administrators, teachers, parents and students. The roles of teachers' ethical behavior was discussed which include; accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, fairness and integrity among others. Lack of teachers professional development. Lack of interest in the teaching profession, conflict of interest and teacher's addiction to drugs and alcohol was also discussed as challenges of curbing corruption in secondary school system. Nevertheless the following recommendations were made Government and educational stakeholders should encourage and sponsor teachers' professional training, teachers' code of conduct should be made available to all teachers, among others.

#### VI. THE WAY FORWARD

1. Government and educational stakeholders should encourage and sponsor their teachers on continues teacher development. This will enhance teachers' performance, also reduce corruption in the system.
2. Education administrators should make available teachers' code of conduct to all teachers and educate them on the danger of corruption in the system.
3. Educational administrators should base employment on qualification and merit. This will help in reducing those that are regarding teaching as part time job.
4. Teachers should be discouraged by administrators from involving in any other job during their primary assignment period. This should be followed with discipline and punishments.
5. All public schools should have Guidance Counselors. Both teachers and students that are drug addicts should be advised to visit the counseling department.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Afe, J. O. (1992). *Trends in Teacher Education: The case of Colleges of Education in Nigeria*. NEAP Publication.
- [2]. Aluko, S.A.(2008) Corruption and national development: A lecture delivered at the centre for democratic development research and training, Zaria as part of the activities of Prof. BalaUsman Annual Memorial Lecture, on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May.
- [3]. Ige, A. M. (2013) Provision of Secondary Education in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *Journal of African Studies and Development*. 5(1) 1-9.
- [4]. National Policy on Education (2014) Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council .Federal Republic of Nigeria. Gazette. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Abuja, Nigeria.
- [5]. Nwakougha,D.O.(2014). Key issues in teaching. In Okorie, N. Onyeike , V. Igwe, L. Anyaogo, R. Asodike, D. (eds). *Teachers, School and Society*. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers
- [6]. Obunadike,J.C. (2016). Ethics in educational administration and management. In Modebelu, M.Eya, L&Obunadike, C.(Eds). *Educational Management the Nigeria Perspective*.Anambra: Scoa Heritage Nigeria Limited.
- [7]. UNDP (2008). Prime on Corruption and development: Anti-corruption interventions for poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development democratic governance group, bureau for development policy: New York.

[8]. UNDP.(2010) UNDP Framework on corruption and development: Anti-corruption Guidance note. Retrieved, September 05,2018, from: <http://www.undp.org/publications/anti-corruption>.

[9]. World Bank(2000). Anticorruption in transition: A contribution to the policy debate. Washington DC: World Bank.