

Education and the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria, a land that is highly blessed with human and material resources is facing the challenges of bad governance and corruption. These factors are responsible for the high level of under development, economic stagnation and high poverty rate. Corruption has ruined and destroyed all sectors of Nigerian including the education sector which was expected to produce transformed citizens and provide answers to societal challenges. The education sector has failed in her responsibilities to produce individuals who are morally upright with the right types of values and behaviours. Hence, the vicious cycle of corruption and poverty. This paper therefore focused on education and the fight against corruption with a review and discussion of the concept of education, corruption, good governance and its benefits, and the roles of education in fighting corruption. The study concluded that our governments and our educational system have failed us in the fight against corruption and this calls for a rethink on how to start all over again with dedication and passion to save Nigeria from total collapse. The researcher therefore suggested the following among others as the way forward: a change of the mindset of the citizens through the education system and the national orientation agency; stringent punishment for public officers convicted of corruption including naming, shaming and publishing their names in black book to serve as deterrents to others.

Key Words: Education, Corruption, Fight, Nigeria Government, and Functional Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world. It is located in Africa. The country is highly blessed with human and material resources that are not adequately utilized. Nigeria is a member of the Common Wealth Nations and United Nations Organization. Nigeria is a signatory to most of the Common Wealth and United Nations Acts and Ratifications. One of such Acts is the Human Right Act of 1948 which recognizes the right of access to education as one of the fundamental human rights. Education in Nigeria is perceived as an instrument “par excellent” for effecting national development (FRN, 2014). This makes it to be highly rated in the national development plans because it is the most important instrument of change; be it social, technological, industrial, or intellectual change. Any meaningful or fundamental change has to be preceded by a functional educational system.

The educational system has passed through various reforms in Nigeria aimed at making the sector relevant to the social, religious political and technological needs of the country. Education is a major instrument for the fight against injustice, corruption, social marginalization and bad leadership. Nigeria became an independent state on 1st October, 1960. At this point, the focus of the Nigerian government was to enhance

the standard of living of the people through the purposeful creation of agencies in the different sectors of the nation’s economy to cater for the specific needs of the people in terms of development. However, these agencies created by the government to facilitate development became patronage for political loyalty conduit pipes for corruption in the society (Akintoye and Opeyemi, 2014). Corruption could be explained as dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviours carried out by those in positions of authority or entrusted with something or an office.

Over the years, the noble goals of development by the Nigerian government through the creation of public agencies have been challenged and even truncated by corrupt practices on the part of public office holders managing these agencies. This has degenerated to lack of trust and confidence by the citizens on the government and their policies. According to TAFGN (2011-2015, p.5), Nigeria’s inability to decisively tackle most of her development and social challenges such as poverty, unemployment insecurity and deplorable state of infrastructure have been largely attributed to corruption and bad government at all levels. The education sector is not spared from corruption and bad leadership. Hence, this all important sector that is expected to provide answers to all our societal problems is in a deplorable condition and can hardly provide functional education for the development of the individual and the promotion of progressive, peaceful and United Nigeria.

This societal ailment has ravaged all sectors of the Nigerian economy to the extent that the various agencies, ethnic groups, regions, zones, past and present leaders are pointing accusing fingers on one another. It is against this backdrop that the researcher was motivated to examine the topic: Education and the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The concept of Education

Education has been viewed by Ihieme and Ebirim (2016) as the process of training, an instrument that is designed to teach knowledge and develop skills. Fafunwa (1982) defines education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society which he lives. It is the approved process in a conducive environment of actual teaching by a determined and qualified teacher to a prepared learner willingly learning with the unanimous aim of achieving predetermined objectives which have positive value to the society. It is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the

power of reasoning and others intellectually for nature life. An educational system is said to be functional if it meets the needs of the people and leads to economic growth and development. Every country strives to improve its developmental level, through the transformation of its socio-political and economic life. In all these transformations education plays a very prominent role (Ikwuegbu and Nwaneri, 2014).

Education seeks to nourish the good qualities in man and draws out the best in every individual. It seeks to develop the innate capacities of man. By educating an individual, we attempt to give him some desirable knowledge, understanding, skills interests, attitudes and critical thinking. That is he acquires knowledge of history, geography, arithmetic, languages and sciences. He develops some understanding about the deeper things in life, the complex human relations, and the cause and effect relationship and so on. He gets some interests in and attitudes towards social work, democratic living, co-operative management and so on. As an individual in the society, he has to think critically about various issues in life and take decisions about them being free from bias and prejudices, superstitions and blind beliefs. He has to learn all the qualities of the head, hand and heart through the process of education (Uzonwune, 2016).

The unprecedented number of social vices observed in Nigeria in recent times is attributed to lack of relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable them become functional and active members of the society and contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. The incidence of anti-social behaviours such as: corruption in public offices, kidnapping, intolerance, bunkering, rape, armed robbing, lack of respect for sanctity of life, use of illegal arms and weapons, cultism, lack of respect for elders and politically motivated ethnic/religious crisis are observed all over Nigeria. Honesty, hardwork and loyalty to constituted authority and the nation have been thrown overboard (Mbawem and Ibe, 2019). These pertinent issues are crying for urgent attention and fundamental change in our value system, attitudes, psyche, human thinking and practices as they undoubtedly constitute threats to peaceful existence in the nation and overall development of the Nigerian State.

Citizenship education is a very important branch of education that focus on the development of civic virtues and individual virtues. It is believed by many scholars that citizenship education has the potentials to reduce or curb these social vices. Citizenship education embodies the cultivation of a sense of national cohesion, loyalty, obligations and duty to the state as well as fellow citizens. It is that education through which pupils in the school system are taught about their rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities as good citizens and through which they will be encouraged to seek such rights and privileges, perform their duties, and play a positive and active role in the growth and development of the society (Ezegbe, 2012). The provision of citizenship education is one of the major avenues of fighting corruption and other anti-social

behaviours by the education sector. The education sector has the capacity of achieving this through a functional education system.

Functional education is the education that helps the society to meet her development needs. Asaju and Adagba (2014) described functional education as the type of education that equips the recipient with the knowledge and skills needed for the performance of productive tasks. The strategy here is to select knowledge that is concrete, usable and relevant to the students need, rather than something that is abstract and theoretical. Providing functional education requires the following:

- Adequate provision of infrastructure in all levels of our educational system,
- Formulation of well articulated policies and school curriculum,
- Recruitment of adequate quality and quantity of staff,
- Adequate funding of education, and
- Good students.

A careful examination of the above factors and the current situation of things in Nigeria will definitely convince us that the country has a lot of things to do in order to have a functional education required by this present generation and beyond.

III. CONCEPT OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal offence undertaken by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority, to acquire illicit benefit or abuse power for one's private gain (Wikipedia, 2021). Corruption according to James Chai (2020) is dishonest behaviour by those in positions of power such as managers on government officials. Corruption can include giving or accepting bribes or inappropriate gifts, double-dealing, under-the-table transactions, manipulating elections, diverting funds, laundering money and defrauding investors (www.invetopedia.com). According to Ogbedi (2012) in Nigeria, there is a consensus among all well-meaning individuals and foreign nations that corruption has inevitably become a major clog in the quest for sustainable growth and development. It is the single most critical impediment to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). There is a clear manifestation of corruption on the economic wellbeing of Nigerians through the distribution of government expenditure.

Corruption militates against economic growth. It distorts free market operations and prevents efficient and sufficient allocation of resources (Aliyu and Elijah, 2008). Corruption is more pronounced in sectors that could not easily be detected and perceived. It reduces productivity of civil servants (Egunjobi, 2013). In a study conducted by Mauro (1995) on the effect of corruption on growth of per capital Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that covered six countries between 1960 and 1985, it was discovered that decrease in one

standard deviation in the corruption index led to the increase of 0.8 percent of the annual per capital GDP growth rate. Corruption increases the allocation of public investment above the required resources. Project allocations and contracts are inflated in Nigeria with a view to misappropriating the resources. This demonstrates the injustice and dishonesty among public officers, signifying non adherence to rule of law and ethical code of conduct. Ahiyie and Elijah (2008) observed that corruption has negative effect on economic growth and development, it exerts negative effect on human capital development and total employment but impacts positively on government expenditure due to inflated public expenditure geared towards misappropriating certain percentage of the resources.

The magnitude of corruption in a state is determined by the prevailing economic status (Egunjobi, 2013). This was supported by Ali and Isse (2003) when they stated that where the economic situation of a country is poor, there is high tendency for the prevalence of high corruption perception index. Conversely, they found out that a country with good macroeconomic performance has greater tendency to experience low manifestation of corruption. Hence, by implication the country acquires the potentials of achieving economic growth and development. Besides, it is assumed that manifestation of corrupt practices is directly related to economic stagnation and miscarriage of opportunities (Akindele, 2005). Corruption in Nigeria is accelerated by bad governance. According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2021) Transparency International (2020) report of their corruption perception index (CPI), Nigeria is ranked 149 out of 180 countries assessed. This makes Nigeria the 31st most corrupt country in the world with a score of 25 out of 100. Countries with high CPI experience high social and economic crises, lack of financial transparency, and high rate of human right abuses CPI exposes the level of public sector corruption as determined by experts assessment and opinion surveys. The CPI generally defines corruption as the misuse of public power for private benefit. This is a very common case in Nigeria.

Bad governance may be described as a situation where relationship between the government, the private sector and the civil society is not in order. It is a condition where government fails to manage the resources (human and material) and the institutions of the nation for the optimum benefit of the generality of the populace (Ayuba, 2014). It is where the rule of law does not take its course, a state where the socio-political atmosphere does not stimulate economic activities that would advance the country. Bad governance in Africa is demonstrated by its long list of dictatorial leaders, non-free media and undemocratic effects on the level of production, consumption, gross private domestic investments, government spending, net exports, employment and money market. Other symptoms of bad government and corruption are excessive costs, poor service to the public and failure to achieve aims of government policies. The only way to overcome these challenges is by ensuring that here is good

governance. Good governance is the competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to the people's needs (Ayuba, 2014). Good governance according to Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is anchored on eight principles which are: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability. It is so sad that none of these principles is adequately observed or practiced by Nigerian government.

ESCAP (2000) notes that good governance helps a country to gain maximum utility from its resources in a manner which is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. It ensures that political and economic activities benefit the whole society rather than a few individuals. The major benefits of good governance according to ESCAP (2000, p.103) include:

- Stable political and economic environment which will encourage investments and flourishing business.
- Sustainable development of a country's resources both human and material.
- Improvement of health and educational facilities that is accessible to all.
- The protection of human rights. It's only through good governance that a community can guarantee basic needs of its citizens such as the right to food, shelter, health care and to fair, equitable and accessible justice system.
- With good governance, the security of life and property will be ensured and people will go about their duty businesses without fear. This will enhance productivity level of the nation. Besides, the human capital often lost due to crisis will be saved.
- With good governance, attractive and conducive business environment will be created and sustained. This will not only encourage local investors to invest in any part of the nation but will attract foreign investors into the nation. With encouraging political and economic policies, with the assurance of the security of their investments and with the large market in Nigeria, investors will pull their resources to invest.
- With good governance, there will be peaceful co-existence within and between communities, within and between political parties, in and between religious groups, in and between the different arms of government. There will be freedom of movement in different parts of Nigeria with a harmonious co-existence; ideas will be shared in honesty. Objective and constructive criticisms will be offered and the nations will be better off.
- With good governance, justice will be administered in Nigeria without fear or favour. The guilt will be punished under the provisions of the law, while those

not guilty will be set free. This will not only promote peaceful co-existence but will deter all kinds of crimes that people commit and go scot free. It will also ensure that people pursue truth and are honest all the time. In this way our value system will be better developed.

- With good governance in Nigeria, bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds will become strangers in Nigeria. This in turn will ensure that the right people are placed in the right positions. With embezzlement nipped, the monies meant for development projects will be judiciously used. Thus money voted for electricity, roads, agriculture, education, health, water resources, industrialization, poverty alleviation etc will be spent fully and adequately in the relevant sectors. This will put Nigeria on a progressive and sustainable path of development.
- With good governance, an enabling environment will be created for effective participation in governance by the entire population. This will enable the poor, the rich, literate and illiterate, men and women, young and the old, people of diverse religions, and tribes to have a say in the affairs of the nation. In the long run, there will be trust and confidence in both the government and the process of governance.

The Roles of Education Sector in Fighting Corruption

The inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and the society is one of the major goals of education enshrined in the National Policy on Education. Considering the level of corruption and indiscipline among public office holders and civil servants in Nigeria, it is obvious that this goal has not been achieved. The school curriculum has been expanded by including courses like social studies at the basic education level, civic education at the secondary level, Nigerian peoples and culture and introduction to logic and philosophy at the tertiary level. These courses are geared towards providing citizenship education and promoting moral values in our educational system. It is often said that educational certificates are awarded to those who have been found worthy in character and learning. This appears to be a rhetoric statement or perhaps it was like that in the past because present observations clearly indicates that our educational system especially at the tertiary level pays less attention on character moulding and inculcation of proper societal values.

Corruption and indiscipline are experienced everywhere in our social life to the extent that the fight against corruption through the school system and anti-graft agencies are not effective or yielding positive results. For instance, in the family and village setting, corrupting, cheating, stealing, killing, etc. are going on. The justice system has collapsed. The traditional rulers are no longer promoting moral values rather they are not politicians. They are busy given chieftaincy titles to criminals, averting justice in favour of those who greased their palms with money. This is the type of environment our children are brought up. The school system

is not free from corruption and indiscipline. The teacher will enter into the class to condemn immoral acts, indiscipline and corruption. He/she will tell the students that these things are bad. How about his/her practical life. Does he/she practice what he is teaching? Today, teachers are involved in extortion of money from the students, laissez jaire attitude to work, sexual harassment of students. These make anti corruption crusade counterproductive.

The government and her anti-graft agencies have not equally helped matters in terms of living up to expectation with regards to their responsibilities. It appears there is selective prosecution of alleged corrupt public officers. The justice system is also too slow. It takes a long time to secure justice in Nigeria.

For instance, the recent case of Senator Orji Uzor Kalu (former governor of Abia State), who is standing trial for embezzling over seven point two billion naira while he was the governor Abia State. It took about twelve years to secure justice in that case by EFCC and funny enough the justice sentencing him to twelve years imprisonment was later nullified by the Supreme Court who ordered that the case should be tried again at the appeal court. We experience a lot of executive recklessness in terms of disobeying the rule of law and court judgements. Non declaration of assets by executive officers and lack of transparency and accountability of financial matters, all these promote corruption in Nigeria.

In addition to all these, the education sector, these is inadequate provision of infrastructure, teaching facilities, recruitment of enough qualified teaching and non teaching staff, poor remuneration of teachers at all levels which has led to instability in the education system, poor conditions of service of teachers generally in Nigeria have promoted corruption and inefficiency in the educational system. Teachers are no longer totally committed to their jobs because their salaries in a month cannot sustain them and their families. They are today petty traders selling all sorts of wears in the market and in the school, part time workers here and there, farmers, contract staff at different points, adjunct lecturers and so on. All these have affected our standard of education and character moulding in our society.

Despite all these challenges, the educational system has made significant inputs in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. In most corruption countries the public sector which should be responsible for regulating public education and ensuring the wellbeing of society becomes the root cause for a self perpetuating cycle of poverty and ignorance. As a matter of fact, education offers a way out of poverty by challenging the corruptive structure and systems within the public sector. This can be achieved through raising men and women who will demand for their rights from the government. Intellectuals in different fields of study who can stand on their feet and say no to corruption.

It is a sad indictment that a country so richly blessed in natural and human resources still has more than 70% of its population

surviving on less than a dollar per day. Nigeria is a classic case of what corruption can do to a country. I do not see us making any meaningful progress unless we begin to turn the tide by making deliberate attempts at self evaluation and diagnosis –looking inwards to the root causes of this issue and taking decisive steps to begin to nip it in the bud. According to, Nelson Mandela education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world. The role of education in nation building and development is well understood and this is why many advanced nations ensure that every citizen in their country is educated. Good growth and development. On the part of the individual, education helps to strongly eliminate or reduce illegal behaviours, increasing civic responsibilities and improving social cohesion (Durojaiye, 2017).

At the societal level, education impacts social cohesion, which is the acceptance of and support of social norms and behaviour. By promoting social cohesion, education fosters adherence of a social corruption and education in Nigeria. Social contracts components include: willingness to pay taxes and fulfill other public obligations the willingness to participate in public affairs, maintain cleanliness of one's property, act responsibly or be a good citizen. If good citizenships is associated to non corrupt behaviour, then education could reduce corruption. This suggests that education attainment should lead to less corruption of individuals and nations. This outcome is not assured. However, the effect education would have on corruption and other social vices will depend on the curriculum content and the prevailing environment in which education is being given.

The expectation that education attainment should result to less level of corruption has not been the case in Nigeria. This is because the education sector is equally bedeviled by high level of corruption. Children learn societal norms and behaviours through their schooling. Yet we hear of students paying bribes for good grades, to gain admissions or purchase questions in advance. This brings to fore the importance of institutional culture. The more time a student spend in a system with a warped culture, the more they may come to accept such culture as corruption, as a social norm, an acceptable behaviour, hence the more likely they may conform to this. In essence education provides more opportunities to get involved in bribery, therefore, more highly educated individuals are more likely to pay bribes. For example, the elites in Nigeria are more likely to own a business, be involved in public affairs or other activities that will bring them close to government officials. In the same way, the elites are likely to secure good jobs and a higher value of time. This could lead to individuals placing a higher value on quick service deliver and making bribery worthwhile.

According to Durojaiye (2017) our corrupt leaders are merely products of a distorted society, they have emerged from our broken system. Through our damaged mindset, we voted them into power despite their poor and non impressive records. Having been nurtured and brought up in Nigeria where

bribery is seen as normal thing for expressing gratitude-widening the inequality gap and increasing the level of poverty through reckless spending and putting individuals interest before the public good. These are the type of educated leaders we have entrusted with the task of providing good quality education for our children. This is absurd and it appears our educational system has been unable to actually bear good fruits for the majority of Nigerians. It has not been able to curb corruption in Nigeria.

III. CONCLUSION

Corruption has ravaged all the sectors in Nigeria and it is responsible for the under development, economic and social crisis witnessed all over the country. It has become a social norm and an acceptable way of life to the extent that corrupt people are celebrated and recognized by awarding chieftaincy titles to them or appointment into public offices. The various governments at all levels have failed due to this cankerworm that has eaten up the whole country. No government in Nigeria has demonstrated the resolve and will power to fight corruption rather they have been pampering and nurturing it, hence it is growing bigger every day. The present situation indicates that we are highly confused and will soon get to a cross road.

The education system which is suppose to ensure the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, inculcate the right types of values and attitudes to the survival of the individual and the society at large, the education system which is suppose to ensure the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and, the acquisition of appropriate skills, the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2014:2) is now a mirage. Hence, the education sector has failed in their responsibilities due to corruption. We need to have a rethink and start all over again with dedication and passion to save Nigeria from total collapse.

The Way Forward

The researcher based on the conclusion, hereby suggests the following as the ways forward in our fight against corruption through education:

1. There should be a change of mindset of the citizens through the education system and the national orientation agency.
2. Stringent punishments should be given to public officers who are convicted of corruption. Naming, shaming and publishing their names in black book may serve as deterrents to others.
3. The campaign of change begins with me should be intensified with total commitment and dedication beginning with those at the top public offices to those at the bottom.
4. There should be total repackaging of our educational system by reviewing our curriculum, educational

policies, funding, infrastructure, staffing and teachers conditions of service.

5. Nigeria should emulate countries like Singapore, Malaysia and India who were at the same stage of development with her in the past, but today they are doing well.

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