



Corrupt Practices: Threat to Quality Education in Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper examines how corrupt practices in education serve as threat to the quality of education particularly in Nigeria. It identified the enormous roles quality education play in the personal life of citizens and the development of an entire nation. According to the paper, the development of a nation is predicated on the quality of education offered to its citizenry. This is based on the reason that quality education is responsible for producing the manpower that work in different sectors of the nation's economy. Quality education plays enormous roles in shaping the life of citizenry and the nation at large. The paper argues that corrupt practices have threatened the quality of education offered to her citizenry and has gone a long way in affecting the quality of lives of the citizenry and impairing on the pace of development of the entire nation. To curb these challenges, the paper recommended sensitization of stakeholders through seminar, conferences, workshops and symposium, institutionalization of anti-corruption group that monitors and reports, punishing of offenders to serve as deterrent to others, integrating of religion/religious instructions, guidance and counseling civic education into the curriculum, ensure online financial transactions, strict adherence to due process and complying with the 26% UNESCO recommendations of funding education.

Keywords: Quality education, corrupt practices and threat

1. Introduction

There is no gain saying that quality education is a vehicle for development because it equips people with requisite skills and capacities needed to help them lead meaningful life and also contribute maximally to the development of their immediate society and the nation at large. General development of any nation globally therefore solely depends on the quality of education offered to her citizens. This alludes to the common saying that no nation can rise above the quality of its education. For instance, quality education produces the different manpower that manages all the different sectors of the nation's economy. It also implies that all other sectors of the country's economy rest squarely on the quality of manpower produced from the education sector. Put differently, the nation quality of education can affect the other sectors positively or negatively depending on the state or status of the educational system.

It is in recognition of the above Daluba, (2015) avers that for any nation to make appreciable effort in attainment of development, it has to commit substantial proportion of her resources to the provision of education. This has also informed UNESCO recommendations that nations globally should commit 26% of its resources to the education sector in order to offer quality education to her citizenry. It is worthy of note here that the efficiency of quality education as an instrument of transformation

depends entirely on how all the stakeholders, (students, parents, teachers, proprietors, policymakers, examination council, ministry of education and the government) collaboratively manage, execute and implement policy on education meant for the upliftment of educational sector. In other words, quality education needs an enabling environment to effectively thrive.

Despite the critical role quality education plays in improving individual life and enhancing national development, quality education in Nigeria today is wallowing within the valleys of numerous problems one of which is corrupt practices. Corrupt practices have characterized the education sector. All levels and structures in the education sector are thriving grounds for corrupt practices. This has become so prevalent that all stake holders in the sector practice corruption without any fear as if it is not against the rule / law. Personal experiences have shown that every activity in the education sector provides opportunity for the stakeholders to demonstrate their corrupt tendencies. Consequently, our schools are without walls and roofs, classes without desks, chairs and books, empty laboratories, obsolete teaching materials. poor quality of graduated students speaks volume of the impacts it has on the educational system. Not forgetting underpaid/unpaid teachers, decline in standards, overstaffing, exam malpractice and cultism.

These practices have continuously threatened the quality of education offered to the citizenry besides, affected the realization of the goal of education for all and by extension impaired on the development of the entire nation. There is no gainsaying that corrupt practices increases costs management of the education sector, reduces the efficiency and quality of services, distorts the decision-making process, deny many people their right to access education and undermines social values. The above situation has called for concern from stakeholders and well-meaning Nigerians hence: the need for this paper.

2. Concept of Quality Education

The complex nature of the concept of quality has attracted many definitions from several scholars. It has equally made it difficult to have a

commonly accepted definition. Some scholars due to the complexity have resorted to using indicators in order to describe it. Some scholars refer to quality education as the worth it brings to individual or society at large. For example Asiyai and Oghuvbu (2009) defined quality as a measure of how good or bad the products of higher education institutions in Nigeria are in terms of their academic performance and meeting established standards. These scholars see quality education as the worth of the inputs into education systems, lecturers, instructional facilities and evaluation procedures which translates to the outputs. Quality instructional materials refer to its appropriateness in meeting the desired needs in the education sector. One thing is to make the materials accessible but may not be the appropriate ones that are required to enhance learning in classroom situation. The appropriate materials needed to meet the different expectations of the different levels of education are made accessible and properly utilized for the attainment of the goal of education

Essential resources needed in the education are the human, physical facilities or instructional materials and financial resources. These inputs are very critical in determining the quality of education. For instance, the qualifications of teachers determine to a great extent the skills that will be imparted into the learners. Subscribing, Frederick, (1973) avers that human resources . . . constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop, the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. This has informed the agreement of Harmon, Oosterbeek and Walker [2000], that the more educated countries are developing faster due to the fact that the school enables the labor force to innovate new technologies and to adapt the existing ones to the local production. Similarly, facilities deficiencies in school create harsh learning environment that impair on

effective teaching and learning. Above all, when funds are not made available for procurement of learning materials and motivation of teachers, the system must obviously be negatively affected. For the facilities to impact on the quality of education needs the strong synergy among stakeholders in the sector to create enabling environment through effectively harnessing the financial, material and human resources for the realization of the goal of education.

Other school of thought see quality education from the perspective of the worth of the products or out-put from the sector in term of different skills and knowledge acquired by graduates from the system. Quality education is expected to address critical issues like the dignity of labour, quality leadership and committed citizenship, industrial harmony, political stability, religious tolerance, self-reliance and security. Quality education entails that the products of education should be able to perform according to expected standard and compete favourably with their peers in other countries of the world. This goes on to allude to the fact that all the skilled manpower in society for example engineers, pharmacists, medical doctors, pilots, bankers, business men, teachers, politicians, administrators, security personnel and agriculturalist are all products of education. They affect the society either positively or negatively depending on the state or status of the educational system.

It is in view of the above that Akinpelu, (2000) argued that education without quality can even be more dangerous than no education, stressing that without quality, education has no value. This is because poor educational status trains out unskilled personnel who in-turn go into the market and destroy the economy of the nation and vice visa. Uncertified teachers on the other hand obviously have nothing worthwhile to offer to their learners hence; they produce half-bake or unskilled graduates who cannot contribute anything to themselves and to the development of the society at large. When products from education are worth the inputs or investment, quality is said to have been attained and reverse become the case when the investment out leave

the products. The quality of outputs is known through feedback from employers and the public.

UNICEF (2000).said quality in education' recognizes five dimensions: learners, environment, content, processes, and outcomes, founded on 'the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation. The above are the indices for determining the quality in an education set up.

3. Concept of Corrupt Practices

All attempts to give corrupt practices in the education sector a common and all-embracing definition remained elusive. Hornby (2011) defines corrupt practice as dishonest or illegal behavior, especially of people in authority; it is about people willing to use their power to do dishonest or illegal things in return for money or to get advantage. This means, any action that involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. It is interesting that stakeholders deliberately break the rules in order to achieve their personal desire. This goes on to explain that corrupt practices are deliberate efforts to disobey the rules. A cursory review of corrupt practices in the education will reveal that stakeholders are conscious of the existence of the law or rule but intentionally distort in order to attain selfish desire. One other way to look at corrupt practice is when individuals act negates the moral principle that guides their official responsibilities either in an organization.

Any behavior that does not conform to the rules and regulations or codes of conduct, norms of the society and or rule of law are considered as corrupt practices. Literature and personal experience revealed that almost every school activities provide opportunity for stake holders to demonstrate sharp corrupt practices. (Akinyemi, 2004). Corruption seen from this perspective therefore represents a departure from what the society considers as correct procedures in exchange of goods, services or money on the part of every body that makes up the society. Corruption in education therefore, can be seen as the pervasion of the expected standard of behaviour by those in authority in the

educational system for their own personal gain to the detriments of others and the system in its pursuit of quality manpower and national development. Above all, corrupt practices in education are expressions of a multitude of deviant behaviours by stakeholders in the sector. Hallak and Poisson (2007) extend the definition of corruption in the education sector to “the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and, as a consequence, on access, quality or equity in education. The above definition is an inclination of someone who uses his position to amass wealth and other advantages for himself at the detriment of the masses, the institution where he works which is against the oath or rules and regulations of the institution he has promised to keep. We can infer from the foregoing that corruption in education includes all forms of irregularities taking place in the academia and which have a direct negative effect on the quality and standard of education. It refers to those behaviours or actions that work towards breaking certain moral or social codes of conduct or administrative rules. In another way, corruption is the inducement or persuasion to influence people to do things that are contrary to laid down rule or norms and values of an organization or society.

Any activity or behavior that makes one to compromise the rules and regulations, norms or ethics and code of conduct for personal gains is therefore referred to as corrupt practices. It is worthy of note again that some civil servants deliberately bend the rules of the school for selfish reasons. For instance when teachers are in desperate need of money, they ask students to contribute for the execution of a particular project however, the ulterior motive behind the project is money. Stakeholders in the school system misappropriate power and resource in such a manner that would benefit their selfish interest. Analytically, the above definition is an inclination of someone who uses his position to amass wealth for his personal use at the detriment of the entire populace.

4. Corrupt Practices and Quality of Education

Corruption in the education industry in form of misappropriation of educational resources terribly creates infrastructural deficits that result in poor instructional delivery that denies many people access to education. For example, Mumuni and Sweeney (2013) report that #3.3 billion (US \$ 21 million) “had been lost in 2005 and 2006 to illegal and unauthorized utilization of funds. Similarly, Okorosaye-Orubite (2008) confirms that a particular State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in Nigeria criminally and outrageously spent #800 million (Eight hundred million naira only) in executing a one day training workshop for teachers. Consequently, there are facilities deaths and deficiency in schools to the extent that some students sit on floor, under shed of tress, under roof without ceilings or windows while yet teachers stay for many months without salaries.

The importance of instructional facilities in enhancing teaching-learning cannot be overemphasized. We cannot also deny the fact that when the essential facilities to support effective teaching and learning are not available, it creates harsh academic environment that negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning that take place in the school. Inadequate educational facilities in schools and strike actions by teachers may have contributed to the mass failure of students (Ogu, 2016). It also contributes to student’s drop-out of school hence; many people are denied access to education which is one of the fundamental human right.

The goal of education in Nigeria is to inculcate sound moral values, good character, integrity, honesty, hard work, and respect among the students for useful living in the society. The attainment of the above however depends on the positive disposition of students at all levels of education in the course of their academic pursuit. The presence of indiscipline in our schools however, has developed among students such negative disposition that eroded such values as respect, honesty, commitment and hard work or dedication. Indiscipline distracts

students' concentration in the class for effective teaching and learning to take place. Indiscipline manifested in form of cultism and drug abuse sometimes lead to riot and its attendant destruction of school facilities and subsequent closure of the school thereby distorting academic activities like non-coverage of school syllabus. It equally increases cost of managing the school by requiring more funds by administration to put back in place the facilities destroyed in the course of crisis. Owen (2001) says that truancy and absenteeism may lead a child into drug addiction, and in most cases student that absent from school, his or her Intelligent Quotient (IQ) would be going retarded and such students would score below average in his class work because he missed all the normal school lessons and all the academic school training which he is supposed to have acquired.

Corrupt practices in the form of embezzlement, fraud and misappropriation denies teachers basic entitlement like salaries and other indices that contribute to motivation of staff for optimal service delivery. Poor service delivery by teachers eventually manifests among students in form of poor academic performance which denies some candidates the opportunity of meeting up the requirements for admission into institutions of higher learning. This again reduces the number of candidates that seek admission to tertiary level of education.

Corrupt practices in our schools have equally eroded good values among students (learners) thereby giving way to laziness. It is common for students to bribe their teachers to get good grades or pass school examinations which makes them become lazy based on the reason that there are no incentives for them to work as hard as they should. This has eventually influenced student's ability to work hard in order to succeed in their educational career, suppress their talent and influence their academic performance negatively.

Teachers have been recognized as indispensable human resource and more important than the quality of materials: and the level of financing. Personal observations however revealed that due

to favouritism in the recruitment of teachers, unqualified (unprofessional) ones have found their ways into the classroom. This category of teachers lacks the basic requisite skills for effective imparting of knowledge into the learners. In view of the fact that they do not have anything, it follows that they cannot give anything to the learners. Therefore, going by the dictum that 'no educational system may rise above the quality of its teachers' then it is obvious we cannot expect quality education from these teachers. They mislead their students thereby producing half-baked and shallow-knowledge or students who often perform poorly in their examinations and poor application of the acquired skills. Douglas & Chinyere, (2017) pointed out that if one pauses, possibly for casual analytic insights or reflections on the quality of manpower that Nigeria produces under the prevailing circumstances that is dominated by corruption in her education system, one can simply console himself that Nigerian graduates may not effectively compete internationally with their counterparts in other parts of the world and it is here that the tragedy or implications of corruption and other fraudulent sharp practices in education for national development can kick Nigeria on the face because it (Nigeria) has lost its own potential human resources that should have fast tracked her national development to corruption.

Mohamed, (2014), avers that another avenue through which corruption could affect education is through its perverse impact on the volume and the effectiveness of international aid for education. We cannot deny the fact that many developing countries depend largely on international aid to support their education sector in improving access to education and enhancing equity and quality of educational services. But in countries where corruption has characterized the education sector, it would be quite challenging to make an efficient use of aid flows since a large part of international aid targeted at education is usually shifted away from its intended purposes. The aforementioned activity also discourages the international donor community to offer any further aid, resulting in limited external assistance and hence reduced resources available for education. During the last

few years, aid ineffectiveness due to corrupt practices seems to imply that “it makes little sense, for instance, to channel resources through national budgets in countries where egregious corruption is known to exist” (UNESCO, 2009).

Teachers practices of corruption in form of lateness to work and absenteeism impairs on the educational system. For example, Teacher absenteeism from the foregoing affects educational quality and eventually impacts student achievement negatively. Corroborating the above position, Porres, (2016) in his research work on the impacts of teachers’ absenteeism on academic achievement concluded that teachers’ absenteeism has a direct negative impact on student learning. Statistical evidence shows that students whose teachers miss more days of class have lower scores on state achievement tests. Raegen Miller looked at the impact of teacher absences on fourth-grade test scores in a large, urban school district and found that ten teacher absences within a school year causes a significant loss in math Finlayson, (2009). It is also worthy of note that these activities also affect the effective administration of the educational system. Bruno (2002) purports that “when there is a high teacher absence, it tends to lower the morale of remaining teachers resulting in high teacher turnover”. Other teachers tend to feel more burdened because they may have to plan for the teacher who is absent. In addition to teacher morale, urban teachers tend to become frustrated with poor resource allocations in their schools and tend to desire to disconnect from the inner city campus with high rates of minority children whose families are labeled as low-income

One of the cardinal goals of Universal Basic Education is to reduce the incidences of drop-out by providing basic relevant and qualitative education for every Nigerian child. Regrettably, corrupt practices at all levels of education have rather contributed to increasing the number of drop-out from school. For example, facility deficiencies in school, poor management system and extortion of students through unofficial charges of fees make some of the learners to drop out of school. Sergio, (2005) noted that illegal enrolment fees may easily hinder

academic opportunities of children from economically disadvantaged families since they simply cannot afford to make these illegal payments to continue their education. Available information revealed that Nigeria has more than thirteen (13) million children that are out-of-school which accounts for 47% of the out-of-school population in the world (Abubakar, 2018). These figures are worrisome and call for concern from all well-meaning education stakeholders. Recent surveys conducted on the impact of corruption on the provision of social services – including education – thus suggest, for instance, that illegal payments for school entrance and other hidden costs help explain low school enrolment and drop-out rates in developing countries; and that bribes and payoffs in teacher recruitment and promotion tend to lower the quality of public school teachers (Hallak & Poisson, 2005).

These dropouts are usually found hawking in streets, motor garages, bar joints, clubs, hotels, bus-stops and markets to generate income for their family instead of being in the school. Some of them are subjected to similar child abuse such as working on the farms and looking after their parents’ domestic animals like sheep, cattle or goats instead of schooling. The major concern here is that this act denies some children of their basic right to education and also reduces the hope of attainment of Nigerian National goal of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) which stipulates that every child of school-going age should have access to quality basic education. The major concern here is that the goal of education for all may not be attainable under this scenario. Besides, it threatens effective planning and allocation of human, material and financial resources of the school.

The issue of “ghost workers” syndrome which manifests in forms where non-existing workers, dead workers, retired and workers who have resigned their appointments keep receiving salaries and other benefits and entitlements meant for workers (Sergio, 2005). Besides that fact that this threatens effective management of the educational system, it also increases the cost of running our educational system.

Corruption has led to production of unqualified graduates who cannot contribute anything

meaningful to the development of the society. This is because most of the graduates are grossly deficient in competence or capacity. Graduates from Nigerians universities now find it hard to enroll for direct post-graduate studies abroad (Education Transparency International 2013). Presently, there are graduates who cannot fill out or complete a simple form, cannot write a simple essay or explain simple concepts in their area of study. According to Mitsga (2010), National youth corpsers sent to teach in secondary schools were withdrawn due to their inability to communicate in simple correct English. Indeed, the scheme had to withdraw some of them from secondary schools as they were not able to communicate in simple correct English. One begins to wonder how they managed to graduate if not that the system was compromised. The Nation Newspaper (2010:41) reported that six First Class graduates of Nigerian universities admitted to the African University of Science and Technology, Abuja for postgraduate studies abandoned their scholarships because they could not cope with the academic rigours of the university. The issue of incompetence is applicable to other sectors like medicine; engineering and law now produce many non-practicing professionals.

The multiplier effects of corruption in the education are glaring among the low quality of products from the sector. For example patients died at the hands of such medical doctors, justice are lost at the hands of such lawyer, civil engineers are ashamed due to prevalence of building collapse, the issue of insecurity abound as security apparatuses cannot guarantee the nation the needed protection, road accidents and plane crashes are no longer news in Nigeria, economists cannot rescue the country from inflations which has protracted for many years while politicians cannot give the citizens the appropriate leadership that will usher us into true democracy. Many Nigerians today are afraid of consulting newly graduated medical doctors when they are sick because they feel that many are hardly better than quacks; many prefer to look for succour from road side mechanics and electricians rather than from our mechanical and electrical engineers (Pius, Obawale and Kayode,

2011). This depicts clearly the status or quality of education offered in the country, Nigeria.

Besides the fact that corrupt practices deny some candidates the opportunity meeting up the requirements for admission into institutions of higher learning, it presents a bad image of the school to the society. It also goes that the potential human personnel required to feed into the nation's diverse economic sector will be deprived. It is in view of the above situation that Omeregie, (2005) lamented over the products of secondary schools that could neither be useful in the society nor gain admission into higher institution without the aid of parents and (compromising) teachers or forgery.

Corrupt practices have stigmatised graduates from the education sector. For instance, the society has lost confidence in the graduates from the Nigerian educational system and even the entire system itself. This is predicated on the different corrupt practices that have characterized the system: its prevalence seems to have been institutionalized.

Due to corruption in the education sector, teachers are deprived the necessary attention that enhances their productivity. For instance, teachers sometimes stay for some months without salaries. Consequently, some of them have to look elsewhere by embarking on other business in order to supplement or put food on the table. This obviously must affect their effective service delivery. It is obvious that one cannot expect effective performance from such teachers when their welfare are not properly taken care of to enable them put in their best in term of service delivery.

5. Conclusion

The paper identified Quality education as the fulcrum upon which other developmental facets are hinged upon in Nigeria. This informed the reason why Nigeria among other countries placed high premium on ensuring this quality is assured at all levels of education to afford her citizens the needed knowledge and skills. Any compromise in the quality of the system impairs on the development of the entire country. It is rather regrettable that despite the lofty

advantages quality education bring to a nation, the issue of corrupt practices has characterized our educational industry. Its prevalence seems to have been institutionalized because all stakeholders of the sector are involved and they practice without any fear of embracement.

There is no-gain-saying the fact that corrupt practices affects the education quality negatively. As one would say, to destroy a nation does not need ammunition but one need to destroy the quality of its educational system. The paper argued that poor quality education produces unskilled people who cannot contribute anything meaningful to the development of the nation. It further discussed extensively how corruption has robbed the quality of our educational system. Unless informed decisions and actions are taken to arrest this situation, the country is doom to collapse. In other words, measures must be employed to reduce these corrupt practices in the education sector. These measures to prevent corruption in the field of education are geared in particular to enhancing the quantity, quality and efficiency of the education system, and of course access to education.

From the foregoing, we can clearly see the damaging consequences of corruption in the educational system as shown in different perspectives. However, the pertinent question now would be: is there any remedy to the consequences of corruption and unethical practice in the Nigerian educational sector? The paper also made frantic efforts by recommending some ways that could help curb these challenges.

6. Recommendations

In view of the above challenges of corruption in the Nigerian educational system, the following recommendations were proffered to curbs these challenges:

- There is need to institutionalize monitoring team that monitors and reports all cases of corruption to the appropriate authorities for action. The teams should be properly funded and their capacity strengthened for effective

service delivery and sustainability. Formation and of anti-corruption clubs and funding of their programs and activities will ensure sensitization of all stakeholders is also critical to curbing these challenges.

- It is also expedient to sensitize various stakeholders through conferences, seminars, training programmes and workshops. Participants should be exposed to the damages corrupt practices have done in our educational system.
- Integrating such courses as religion/religious instructions, guidance and counseling civic education into the curriculum at all levels of education
- Stakeholders who indulge in corrupt practices should be adequately punished. This would serve as deterrent to others who plan to indulge in corruption.
- Making financial transactions online through banks accounts and provision of bills for every transaction involving money can go a long way to reduce cases of misappropriations.
- Make clear norms and regulations, transparent procedures and an explicit policy framework specifying, for each of the steps involved, the distribution of responsibilities between different stakeholders in the allocation, distribution and use of educational resources.
- The Nigeria educational system must be adequately funded and equipped in line with the 26% UNESCO recommendations.

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