

Corruption and Education in Nigeria: A Synopsis

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ABSTRACT

Corruption has seriously degraded the Nigerian educational system, therefore compromising the accessibility and quality of education. The many aspects and effects of corruption within the Nigerian educational system are examined in this paper. It looks at how misallocation of resources, bribery, favouritism in admissions, as well as examination fraud, compromise the integrity and efficacy of education. The survey also emphasises how demoralised teachers are and how public confidence in educational institutions is erasing. Furthermore, taken into consideration are the long-term consequences on national growth. The results highlight the pressing necessity of open government, solid monitoring systems, and a strong ethical framework to fight corruption and forward a fair, equitable, and high-quality educational system. The education sector being a subsector of Nigerian society plagued with the ills of the country.

Keywords: Corruption, Quality Education, Access, Teachers' Motivation

INTRODUCTION

The growth and operation of vital sectors are severely hampered by corruption, a widespread problem in many societies. Corrupt practices have had a significant impact on Nigeria's educational system, which has had a negative impact on students, teachers, and the future of the country (Ogunbumi and Adefabi, 2024). Corruption in Nigeria's educational system can take many different forms, from unethical academic practices to financial misappropriation (Premium Times, 2020). The theft of money intended for educational development is one common problem. For example, serious misuses of special funds like the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) have been discovered by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) (NAN, 2022). These misuses often include violations of procurement regulations and the misappropriation of funds intended to improve the infrastructure and calibre of education.

The existence of "quiet corruption," a word that refers to non-financial wrongdoing by administrators and educators, is another crucial symptom. According to a report on Lagos State public schools, there are significant rates of test malpractice, teacher absenteeism, student sexual harassment, and favouritism (Salau, 2019). Similarly, according to Transparency International's 2020 annual report, corrupt officials in Nigeria embezzle 66% of the funds allocated to education. These immoral actions undermine public confidence in educational institutions and lower the quality of instruction.

Additionally, the development of illicit academic institutions and admissions racketeering have grown widespread. By creating unaccredited institutions and colleges, misleading parents and students, and undervaluing the country's educational standards, dishonest people take advantage of the great demand for education (Odo, 2015). These issues are very disturbing because the progress of Nigeria and the prospects of its young people are seriously threatened by corruption in the country's educational system. The quality and legitimacy of education have been seriously weakened by the many forms of corruption, which range from

cash misappropriation to unethical academic activities (Nwaokugha & Ezeugwu, 2017). Therefore, studying how corruption affects the Nigerian educational system becomes very essential.

Concept of Education

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019) education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and values throughout one's life, enabling individuals to adapt to changing circumstances and contribute to society in meaningful ways. World Bank (2018) provided a holistic description on the concept as she described education to be a comprehensive and integrated process that fosters the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and ethical growth of individuals, preparing them to live fulfilling and productive lives. Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development (2019) defined education as the process of creating, acquiring, and applying knowledge to solve problems, make informed decisions, and contribute to the betterment of society. The International Labour Organisation (2017) holds a similar position with a little addition on the subject as it defined education to be the acquisition of skills and competencies that enable individuals to perform tasks, solve problems, and adapt to new situations in various contexts. Based on the lifelong characteristics involved in acquiring education, Peerzada (2016) described it as the unfolding of what is already enfolded in the man. Also, aligning thought with the perspectives of the World bank, Kanibin, (2019) defined education as the total process of training, gaining of special competencies, knowledge, behaviours and morals required by an individual to be responsible while contributing to societal development.

Invariably, from the various perspectives provided on the concept of education, it is true to assert that education portends the capacity to deal with every challenge associated with man by addressing the complete development of the individual. Education, therefore, is a process of training man in the cognitive (knowledge), emotional (feelings, attitude, behaviour), and psychomotor domains. This helps in dealing with the entire growth process of the individual. It therefore helps a person become a well-educated, cultured, disciplined, employable, and productive person. Education solves ignorance, poverty, and illnesses in the society (Ogunode, Attah & Ebute, 2023; Edinoh, Saidu & Okpunukpang, 2024). So, eliminating corruption in education is a necessary approach of attaining an efficient and effective administration of education as education is the catalyst for productivity, good health, development and positive change to their society at large.

Concept of Corruption

Since scholars saw corruption in diverse ways, there is no generally accepted description for it. Like any other societal concern, corruption defies a parochial prescription and cannot be defined with one size fits all description. According to Liu (2016), corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain. Nuhu (2014) stipulates the following taxonomy of synonyms and phrases may serve as a starting point for understanding the vast scope of the phenomenon: bribery, crookedness, demoralisation, dishonesty, extortion, fraud, graft, jobbery, profiteering, shadiness, unscrupulousness, veracity, baseness, decadence, degeneration, degradation, depravity, evil, immorality, impurity, iniquity, perversion, profligacy, sinfulness, debasement, decay, defilement, distortion, doctoring, falsification, foulness, infection, pollution, putrefaction, rot, etc. Graycar (2015) assert that corruption demoralises the administration, undermines the whole process of formulating and implementing policies, reduces services, and puts a strain on the economy. This position is in agreement with Oji (2024) as the author described corruption as any action that undermines democratic institutions and the rule of law and results in economic and social suffering is considered corruption.

So, based on the definitions provided above, the distortion of integrity or the status quo via favouritism, bribery, or moral decay is known as corruption. This suggests an initial mood of anticipation for both social and personal purity. when two or more people have collaborated to alter the way society's processes are structured or how functionality behaves in order to create circumstances that are dishonest, unfaithful, or defiled. We may claim that there has been corruption. In summary, corruption is the introduction of extraneous transactions with the intention of affecting judgements and positions of trust as well as the usual sequence of events. A complicated social, political, and economic issue that impacts every nation is corruption. Corruption weakens democratic institutions, impedes economic growth, and fuels political unrest.

Any action carried out in a public, private, or corporate setting that involves the exchange of cash, gifts, or other valuables—including cash in kind—such as a person's signature or sexual knowledge—that undermines what is valuable and has a detrimental impact on society for individual or collective benefit is considered corruption. A complex and diverse phenomenon, corruption is a gear in Nigeria's wheel of development and progress. Both the public and commercial sectors have seen delays in service delivery as a result of corruption. Essential services have been delayed and denied as a consequence of the bureaucratic backlog in service delivery. It has stymied genuine worship of God in the religious sphere and left the country in a state of chronic underdevelopment. As it moves from public office to other areas of business, its definition becomes more complex. It is now evident from the criteria above that a transactional connection involving at least two persons is necessary for corruption to occur. The inequality that should exist between the provider and the recipient is another prerequisite that would allow the occurrence to come to pass.

According to this study, corruption in the educational sector can take many different forms, from financial theft to unethical academic practices that jeopardise citizens' access to high-quality education and negatively impact the less fortunate and impoverished members of society. This opinion is highly reflected in the views expressed by Transparency International (2010), who perceive corruption as an abuse of entrusted power for private benefit. All of these descriptions on corruption are significantly related to what is happening in both the public and private schools, although the menace appear more prevalent in the public schools.

Influence of Corruption on Education in Nigeria

The impact of corruption on education is profound and multifaceted, affecting various aspects of the educational system and society at large. Some of these impact include

1. **Quality of Education:** Corruption leads to misallocation of resources, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, poor teaching materials, and unqualified teacher. A study carried out by Obona (2019) on the contribution of corruption towards the falling quality of education in Nigeria buttresses the point that the deterioration in the standard of education in Nigeria traced to the level of corruption perpetrated within the education sector. Corruption compromises the quality of education and hinders students' learning outcomes. This is inline with Ogunode (2020) who assert that provision of infrastructures, such as library, laboratories, offices, halls and habitable classrooms with chairs and adequate teachers to take each of the respective subject aid the delivery of quality teaching service in an institution.

Similarly, the provision of adequate infrastructure aids the delivery of effective administration of the school by the non-teaching staff. This segment of the institution help in ensuring smooth running of the school, thereby, guaranteeing the delivery of fast and reliable service. It is impossible to overstate the significance of school infrastructure in achieving learning objectives.

The delivery of the teaching and learning process in schools is facilitated by school infrastructure. The classrooms aid in learning, the school fence shields children, instructors, and administrators from intruders, and the school offices provide a comfortable working environment for educators. Unfortunately, despite how crucial these facilities are to achieving learning goals, it seems that most educational institutions are experiencing a scarcity. Corruption in Nigerian educational administration has been connected to this scarcity issue (Ogunode & Johnson, 2021).

2. **Access to Education:** For many students, especially those from underprivileged families, access to education is restricted by corruption in the form of bribes and partiality in admissions procedures. According to Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017), parents and students routinely and brazenly influence the education sector via contributions to the school, undeserved gifts, and incentives in order to influence choices about their children and wards. In this case, they act in this manner. Madaki (2019) in reviewing the effect of corruption on the education system on educational system in Nigeria, posit that many citizens do not have equal access to education as the limited spaces are usually overtaken by the highest bidder. The author further assert that, when corrupt students or parents are unable to accomplish their goal of inducement, they try to make the work unpleasant for the individual.

Additionally, seminars and workshops that aim to refresh educators and practitioners in the field of education and re-strategize and propose new ways to the efficient implementation of educational programs are used as a means of embezzling funds.

3. **Teacher's Motivation and Morale:** Teachers get discouraged and lose desire to provide their best work when unscrupulous practices like nepotism and favouritism are common. This may result in a drop in the general quality of instruction. The motivation and morale of teachers may suffer when unethical behaviours like nepotism and favouritism are common in the educational system. Teachers may feel discouraged and demoralised if they see or encounter nepotism and favouritism. They could feel that their diligence and commitment are not appreciated, which would make them less inclined to provide their best effort.

Additionally, the confidence between administrators and instructors may be damaged by nepotism and favouritism. Teachers lose faith in the system's fairness and integrity when they see that chances, promotions, and awards are granted based more on personal connections than on merit. Teachers may be less satisfied with their jobs if they believe their efforts are not adequately valued or acknowledged. Their general dedication to their career may suffer as a result, as well as their excitement for their job. According to Clara (2017), corruption also includes actions that give preference to friends, family, or association members when recruiting new employees or elevating family members or employees to positions for which they are unfit because they have a common group. Therefore, among academics from many fields, corruption is a well-known occurrence.

4. **Economic, Social, and Political Impact:** Corruption in education has a major long-term economic effect. Economic growth and development are hampered by a workforce with low levels of education since they are less inventive and creative. It is widely accepted that a nation cannot achieve quick economic and social progress unless its inhabitants are properly educated and taught (Ahmed 2013). Because, it is seen as an instrument used to bring about growth and development in a nation (Nwankwo & Nweke, 2016).

Corruption in education weakens societal cohesiveness and erodes confidence in government agencies. It erodes the principles of justice and integrity and promotes a culture of dishonesty. Because it may cause public discontent and instability, corruption in education can have political ramifications. Corruption, according to Amaele (2011), is "the transformation of good into evil," and corrupt conduct is the disobedience of societal norms and standards. Corruption in education, as we all know, occurs when individuals in positions of power within the educational system use their position for personal benefit, neglecting the well-being of both students and the system as a whole, all in the name of achieving national development goals and producing high-quality workforces.

Furthermore, it may damage the government's credibility and capacity to rule. According to Abraham (2011), the increase in militancy, kidnapping, and insurgency experienced in Nigeria is to dissatisfaction with the lack of financing, jobs, and educational prospects. In the opinion of Onwuka (2009), corruption in a nation's political life is tragic, but corruption in the educational sector has the potential to create a domino effect of corruption in society at large, which would undermine development mechanisms.

5. **Global Competitiveness:** Countries that have rampant educational corruption would struggle to compete in today's globalised economy. They have a hard time competing on a global scale since their workforce is not well-equipped to spur innovation and economic development. Corruption in schools contributes to long-term poverty and inequality, which in turn impedes sustainable development. This has a negative impact on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially those pertaining to fair opportunity and high-quality education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The educational system in Nigeria is plagued by corruption, which greatly affects the quality, accessibility, and equity of education. To combat this, we need to strengthen oversight mechanisms, promote transparency, and cultivate a culture of integrity and accountability. Only by working together can we lessen the negative effects

of corruption on education and harness its power to bring about positive change. Education is crucial for attaining sustainable development because it equips individuals to tackle global issues like climate change, poverty, and inequality, while also promoting social, economic, and environmental justice.

Based on the findings above, the following suggestions are made

1. Establish clear, merit-based criteria for the recruitment and promotion of teachers. Ensure that these processes are transparent and free from favouritism and nepotism. Publicize job openings widely and use standardized assessments to evaluate candidates.
2. Create independent oversight bodies to monitor the recruitment, promotion, and allocation of resources within educational institutions. These bodies should have the authority to investigate and address instances of corruption.
3. Integrate ethics education and training for teachers, administrators, and policymakers to foster a culture of integrity and accountability. Encourage adherence to professional codes of conduct and establish clear consequences for unethical behavior.
4. Provide teachers with opportunities for continuous professional development and career advancement based on merit. Offer mentoring and support programs to help teachers grow and excel in their roles.
5. Invest in improving the physical and psychological working conditions for teachers. Ensure that schools are adequately resourced, and teachers have access to necessary teaching materials and support services.
6. Provide competitive salaries and benefits to teachers to reduce the temptation for corrupt practices. Ensure that teacher remuneration is commensurate with their qualifications, experience, and performance.
7. Encourage collaboration and teamwork among teachers. Create opportunities for teachers to share best practices, support each other, and work together to improve the overall quality of education.
8. Implement transparent and fair systems for evaluating teacher performance. Use multiple measures of performance, including student outcomes, peer evaluations, and self-assessments, to provide a comprehensive assessment of teacher effectiveness.
9. Involve parents, students, and community members in the governance and oversight of educational institutions. Encourage their participation in decision-making processes to ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are considered.
10. Raise awareness about the negative impact of corruption on education and advocate for policies and practices that promote transparency, fairness, and accountability. Encourage teachers, students, and community members to speak out against corruption and support efforts to combat it.

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