

The Plague of Corruption and its Negative Impacts on Secondary education System in Bayelsa State

Nathaniel Okoko

Ochoma Peace Buzhi

and

Vincent Obaro Ossai, Ph.D

Abstract

This paper critically looked at negative implications of corruption in public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The article resolves that corruption contributes to the declining standard and quality of education in Bayelsa State. And that corruption in the educational sector is responsible for the turnout of huge numbers of unqualified candidates for employment and the increase in unemployment. The researchers further argued that corruption in the educational system is a dangerous plague that is thwarting development in the state. Corruption causes infrastructural insufficiencies, which leads to poor educational delivery and inaccessibility to quality education by citizens within the society. Corruption makes the Citizens to feel frustrated, disgruntled and disenchanted and leading teaming youths to be engaged in insurgency, kidnapping and militancy. These ugly phenomena need urgent attention because of its impacts on manpower and national development. The study identified the forms of corruption, the perpetrators of corruption, the effects of corruption, and the measures of curbing corruption in the public secondary schools in the state. The study came out with several administrative strategies for curbing corruption in secondary schools among others: payment of good salaries to teachers commensurate with the standard of living in the society, formation of anti-corruption clubs, proper value re-orientation, character education and check mating the movement of teachers during school hours. The study recommends the need to: increase the awareness of students and staff, principals should encourage the formation of anti-corruption clubs and encourage debates and essay writings on corruption related topics in order to help sensitize staff and students about corruption and the evils associated with it. That the Bayelsa state government should intensify its fight against corruption in the secondary education sector and as well Declare state of emergency in the education sector till the quality of education is improved. Keywords: plague, Corruption, effects, perpetrator, curbing, secondary education.

Introduction

A Plague is a very severe disease in people, and corruption is seen as a grave plague in the Educational sector today, especially in Bayelsa State public secondary schools. Education as a concept is seen as the totality of all the processes involved through which young and adults develop their skills which are of importance to both the society and to themselves. It is a design made to bring about learning which develops ones' knowledge and competence to influence his way of life positively towards contributing to the nation's economy. Daluba (2015) explains that education generally is aimed at producing intelligent, responsible and well-informed citizens who are capable of making positive contributions to the development and well-being of

themselves and their society, stressing that the quest for any development nationally cannot be realised without a solid educational base.

Education is regarded as the key upon which the developmental base of every nation hinges. It is the educational sector that produces the manpower that manages all aspects of the nation's economy. It equally entails the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and other capabilities needed to contribute favourably to the political, cultural and economic environments.

Education is the most powerful instrument for inculcating into citizens of any country good attributes and values for national building. Through education, a child's attitude and character is sharpened with the relevant skills, knowledge and competences needed to contribute to social, economic and political development of the society. Education is a fundamental human right and everybody has the right to be educated.

Education is equally seen as one of the main drivers of development, be it human, economic or political. Parents rely on the school to assist in molding the character of their children morally, mentally, spiritually, socially and emotionally.

In addition, education is to help produce individuals who demonstrate positive and sound values of their society. The ability of students to adapt to any environment they find themselves depends on the support they get from their teachers, classmates and principals during the education process. The students' critical thinking, communication and problem solving skills are largely dependent on the kind of education and training they are exposed to in school. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy of Education, recognised education as a pillar for piloting national development. As a result, there can be no development in the country without a formidable and sound system of education.

Secondary education in Nigeria

Secondary education in Nigeria is to help individuals live a useful life in the society as well as prepare them for higher education. The individual who passes through secondary education in the country is expected to be able to make useful contribution to the development of the society. It becomes imperative that the education the individual must receive at the secondary level in Nigeria must be of good quality in all ramifications. Good quality secondary education implies that the facilities, infrastructures, information and communication technology facilities, relevant curriculum are procured, and teachers of the right quality and quantity are recruited.

Quality education is that education that is relevant and adapted to the needs of the society and such needs must meet the standards in health, growth, and physical survival in a complex and globalized world. It implies education that is worthwhile and which empowers the recipients with relevant skills, knowledge, ideas, values and attitudes needed for him /her to take informed decisions and live a self-sustaining life. It is value-loaded and should produce disciplined behavior, hard work, improved cultural heritage and mutual respect within and outside the school community.

In his contribution, Majasan, (1998) maintained that 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. This shows that

quality education as the products of institutions of learning should be able to perform according to expected standard and compete favourably with their peers in other countries of the world. It is the education that produces a complete person. Complete in the sense that the person is intellectually, morally, physically, emotionally and socially developed.

Hence Akinpelu, (2000) argued that education without quality can even be more dangerous than no education, Stressing that without quality, education has no value. The public perception in the country is that the quality of education offered is low and that standards have dropped. These perceptions are based on lack of adherence to acceptable educational practices. Teacher qualifications are low, the learning environment does not promote effective learning, and basic facilities, teaching and learning resources are generally not available. Teacher-pupil ratios are high while general performance in examinations is poor and the graduates have low levels of competencies in the work environment.

When quality education measures up to the set standard, the end product should be able to perform well in the world of activities in real life situations, but if quality is denied, performance cannot meet the set standard. Quality determines how much and how well people learn and the extent to which education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits. One who has obtained quality education should be able to remain relevant and adapt to the needs of the society. Quality education entails: One that is meaningful by all standard, one that is capable of responding to individual and social needs, one that is worth all the resources, expended to obtain it.

Generally, when people talk about quality of education, they are comparing what the product of education could do in yesteryears to what it can do today. e.g. it is the belief of people that What a product of elementary school of yester years could do, cannot be effectively done by secondary school graduates of today. Product of primary school of yester years could easily write and read whereas secondary school of today cannot. Though the views of scholars on quality of education varies as a result of no well-defined instrument to measure it with utmost reliability and validity, one thing that is crucial is that it is a relative term. The quality of education is measured by how school leavers contribute to the growth of the society in terms of cognitive, effective and psychomotor. This is measured in terms of skills, knowledge and right attitude acquired by products of these schools.

A major issue posing a big challenge to education in Nigeria is corruption. The sting of corruption is hard on the entire Nigerian society and is damaging the education system especially at the secondary level. A society whose educational system is damaged by the plague of corruption would continue to face development challenges. Education develops the creative potentials of citizens and this on its own engineers a general turn around in the economic, political, social, and moral outlooks of citizens that targets placing citizens on lanes upon which they can positively explore situations to their advantage. The truth about the powers of education in bringing about rapid changes for man and society and the curiosity for its pursuit has according to transparency international (2013) singled out education as the largest element in the public sector of many countries in the world. As a sector, education in Nigeria is disastrously and terribly prone to corruption and why this is so and may continue to be so is the realization that globally, members of the larger society generally know and recognise that education is one sector that the Nigerian society must rely on for continuity, change and self-appraisal or criticism

in line with realities and subsequent upon this awareness, The sector normally attracts huge release of funds from international donor agencies, multinational corporations as part of their corporate social responsibility, federal, state, local governments, town unions, individuals etc. but regrettably such huge and massive flow of funds are not properly accounted for across all agencies and institutions that are involved in releasing funds to the education sector so much so that the seals and impressions of corruption and corrupt practices are noticed starting from the point of the release of such funds for education to the various ministries, parastatals and educational institutions where the funds are to be finally used.

Definition of Corruption

The term corruption has been defined by several authors. Corruption can be seen as the systematic use of public office for personal gain thereby negatively impacting significantly on access to education, equity and quality (Hallak & Poisson, 2002; Nwankwo & Nweke, 2016). Transparency International (2010) sees corruption as the abuse of power by individuals to whom is entrusted for personal gain.

Debanjo (2014) stated that corruption is an immoral and criminal act, a mindset to do wrong and a disposition to exhibit dishonest behaviour by committing an offence against morality, the law and the ethical norms of the society.

Corruption has been defined by various scholars from different field of study. Bardhan, (2003) sees corruption as the use of public office for private gains. He held a strong view of corruption to involve diverting public fund and resources into private pocket of government officials. These diverted funds are supposedly appropriated to the provision of public goods and services.

Lan Senior, (2006) sees corruption as an action that involves secretly providing a good or a service to a third party so that he or she can influence certain actions which benefit the corrupt, a third party, or both in which the corrupt agent has authority. This implies illegal and prohibitive efforts of certain individuals employed by the governments to effectively implement government policies and programmes but turned against their employers to advance their own decisive intentions hence subverting government intentions on sustainable development in the society.

Daniel Kaufmann as noted by Pedro, (2006), extends the concept to include legal corruption in which power is abused within the confines of the law as those with power often have the ability To make laws for their protection.

Morris (1991), a professor of politics, states that political corruption is the illegitimate use of public power to benefit a private interest (Morris, 1991). He equally toured the line of thought of Kaufman that access to political position in a country paves To corrupt practices by those who occupy the position. Corruption can also manifest in the form of favoritism, nepotism and clienteles. As observed by Clara (2017) acts that favor friends, family members or member of an association in job hiring or promoting a family member or staff member to a role they are not qualified for because they belongs to the same group also constitute corruption.

Prevalence of corruption in the educational system

The order of prevalent of corruption is examination malpractice, collection of illegal charges by principals, recruitment, extortion of money by teachers and with holding of text books allocated to schools, favouritism, irregular movement of teachers during school hours and admission corruption Whawo (2015) stated that examination malpractice, bribery, nepotism during

admission and extortion of money from students in order to get undeserved grades were among the forms of corruption. Some principals by admitting their relatives, church members and tribesmen practice corruption. Amini-Philips & Chukwuma (2017) found that extortion of money by lecturer, cheating in examination and bribery where forms of corruption. Choe, Dzhumashev, Islam, and Khan (2013) reported increased incidence of corruption in Bangladesh through payment of bribe by people of higher social class who bypass the red tape. Similar finding by Okpechi, et al (2018) indicated high prevalence of corruption among adolescents in Calabar, Nigeria.

Corruption as a plague in the educational system.

Corruption in the educational system, is widely regarded as a ruthless epidemic destroying the economy and societal values with its disastrous effects. Scholars have established that no sector of the nation's economy is immune from the venomous sting of corruption which showcases itself in variety of forms in the society, leading to underdevelopment and poor economic advancement. The United Nations convention against corruption (UNCAC), (2003) sees corruption as an insidious plague having several corrosive effects on nations. Accordingly, UNCAC stressed that corruption undermines the rule of law, quality of life and democratic principles, leads to violation of human rights, threatens human security and distortion of markets. Corruption hinders socio-economic growth and good governance (Asongo, 2013); frustrates reduction of poverty (Justesen & Bjornskov, 2014) and worsens political instability (Favzanegen & Witthuhn, 2016). A report by Asongo, (2013) noted that nearly 150 million dollars is lost to corruption in Africa on a yearly basis. This money lost ought to have been used to pilot economic development agenda. According to Akande (2017) corruption weakens delivery of public service and leads to misdirection of resources, holding back the growth required to pull people out of poverty.

Forms of corruption in the secondary school educational system

There are several corrupt practices in secondary schools, the most frightening one being examination malpractice. When school principals and teachers collect money from students few days before external examination begins, they turn blind eyes on the students and allow them to copy from text books or from each other. Some of the teachers even tip off external supervisors and write answers to examination questions on the white board for students to copy. This situation is dangerous for the students who are future leaders of tomorrow.

Illegal charges by principals, recruitment corruption, registration for external examination corruption, extortion of money from students and withholding of books allocated to schools, collection of kickbacks from contractors, favouritism, irregular movement of teachers during school hours, absenteeism by teachers, and collection of gifts from students, bribing for admission into federal government schools, and keeping files of ghost staff are all forms of corruption in the secondary school system. World Bank (2003) reported that in education, more than 67% respondents expressed that bribery is a part of everyday life. Patrinos and Ruthkagia (2007) cited in Meet and Narayan (2014) noted that teacher absenteeism is a major form of corruption in education system stressing that its effects on students is damaging and destructive. Closely related is the prevalent of ghost teachers, another education corruption that can drain a nation's economy and collapse the education system.

In Kenya & Taaliu (2017) noted that the process of recruitment, promotion and deployment of teachers is mired by corruption in the forms of ethnicity and nepotism. In addition, Taaliu, (2017) reported that some principals practice nepotism during admission by admitting their relatives, church members and tribesmen. In Brazil, Ferraz, Finan, & Moreira, (2012) reported that schools in municipalities where corrupt practices in form of missing resources and bribery were detected had few infrastructural facilities and teachers. In Rumania Baccalaureate high school final examination batches of identical answers to examination questions were distributed to students by teachers, thus encouraging mass cheating (Borcan, Lindahl and Mitrut, 2014). Aduhor (2015) found that ethical challenges confronting secondary school principals in daily school administration were examination malpractices, extortion of money by teachers from students and leakage of examination questions. Illegal collection of levy in public secondary schools and mismanagement of allocated funds for the repair of dilapidated schools buildings.

According to a report from Delta State Ministry of Information, (2013), Five principals in the state were demoted to classroom teachers for professional and financial misconduct and negligence of duty. Two of the principals disregarded the Delta State Ministry of Education directives and took their students to schools in another state to register for external examination. Five students of Zappa mixed secondary school Asaba were suspended for assault on teachers. Others received the hammer for being unable to explain the whereabouts of fifty computers, 25KVA generating plant installed in their schools by the state government (The Premium Times, 2012).

As noted by Oyadongha (2013), what is readily observable is that principals are busy extorting money through several illegal charges imposed on students and their parents in their bids to meet the financial resource needs of their schools. Worried about gross corruption in Nigeria, Odeh (2015) decried that not much visible changes have been noticed in the standard of living of citizens. Although corruption is a global phenomenon, it has to be addressed in Nigerian education system since the products of secondary education are mostly youths who would be future leaders of the country. Fighting corruption at secondary education in the country is the right thing to be pursued by all stakeholders.

Perpetrators of corruption in secondary schools

Principals are key perpetrators of corruption and they collect illegal charges from parents and their children. Whawo (2015) found that students, teachers and other staff of secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria indulge in corrupt practices. In Bayelsa state for example, registration of senior secondary year three students for external examinations like WAEC and NECO are free but some principals impose illegal charges on parents and tag it different names. Also, Ogbonnaya (2009) submits that ministry officials collected bribe from contractors handling building projects in schools. In addition, Babalola (2010) found that teachers demanded gratification from students and that this situation has led to decline in the standard of education. When fund budgeted and allocated to schools for proper management are diverted by ministry of education officials, this can lead to non maintenance of schools and non purchase of instructional materials for effective students' learning. The classrooms will be overcrowded and activities will crumble.

Effects of corruption in nigerian secondary schools

The effects or consequences of corruption are long lasting, spreading into several generations. The young citizens of the country are made to believe that the best way of making it in life is through short cuts by bribery, nepotism, and favouritism. There is this slogan they popularly say “use what you have to get what you want”. Important core morally acceptable values such as trust, hard work, responsibility, honesty, integrity, respect, due process and commitment have been jettisoned because of corruption. Corruption in secondary education lowers the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of students learning outcomes, result in poor global image of the education system, leads to overstaffing and understaffing of some schools, a stall in development, drop out from school and can result to inequality.

Ferraz, Finan & Moreira (2012) found decline in academic performance of primary school pupils in Brazil and increased dropout rates in municipalities where corruption was prevalent. In addition, Olatunde. & Obaje. (2016) to established that corruption jeopardised the realisations of objectives of education at the basic level. Appointment of teachers by taking bribe and appointment of under qualified teachers or appointing teachers who do not have a teaching certificate will spell doom for delivery of quality teaching and learning. These non professional teachers do not even know the philosophy of education and teaching methodologies. The cumulative effect is poor delivery, limited access to education and low students’ outcomes.

The ultimate strength of a nation lies in the moral and ethical foundation of the citizens and its’ economic competitiveness but because of corruption in Nigeria the strength of the nation is weak. Corruption in the educational system lowers the quality of teaching and learning, it lowers the quality of students learning outcomes and dents the public image of the institutions.

Corruption puts students from poor family at a disadvantage as they are unable to pay money demanded from teachers for better grades. Some of these students suffer bitterly in the hands of some teachers and get frustrated and eventually drop out from school. Some teachers come to school early in the morning, to write their names on the attendance register and disappear to their personal business and return back to school at closing time to sign out. This situation is very bad because the syllabus will not be covered and students will be left with little or no knowledge of the contents of the subjects.

In addition, parents are supposed to be character builders of their children and families for nation building. But they encourage corruption by taking their children and wards away from their original school to schools noted as “miracle centres” to enroll them for external examinations then curbing the dilemma of corruption becomes difficult. Even ministry of education officials and chief inspectors of education often pressurize school heads to remit money to them. The only option is for the school heads to levy illegal charges on students.

In the past students use to carry out crafts as hand work. But in the present situation public secondary school students in Nigeria no longer participate in hand works. School heads levy charges on them which they pay as hand works. The money collected, a particular percentage is remitted to chief inspectors of education and ministry of education officials.

Ways of curbing corruption in secondary schools

corruption in secondary education can be controlled by applying some administrative strategies including prompt payment of teachers’ salaries, ensuring that teachers are paid good salary commensurate with the standard of living in the society, formation of anti-corruption clubs, proper value re-orientation, character education and by check mating the movement of teachers

during school hours. Corruption in secondary schools must be curbed. A complete value re-orientation is a best practice that can be adopted in order to successfully address corruption in secondary schools in Nigeria. The teaching of moral values acceptable by the society will be the right option in the present situation to help re-direct Nigerian youths on the right way. This find corroborates that of Augusto (2014) who noted that with appropriate compensation of civil servants they would be motivated to improve performance and productivity.

Conclusion

Several forms of corruption are prevalent in secondary schools. Corruption in secondary schools impacts negatively on the quality of teaching and learning, which results to drop out, leads to understaffing of some schools and over staffing of others. Corruption in secondary schools manifest itself in different forms which include: examination malpractice, shortage of fund, increased cost of administration, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lower quality of education, lower quality of learning, poor implementation of educational policies, poor capacity development programmes, poor implementation of curriculum and ineffective supervision. Several administrative strategies can be adopted to curb corruption in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following are recommended for policy implement to help combat corruption in secondary education in Bayelsa state:

1. Public secondary school principals should encourage the formation of anti-corruption clubs in schools as a way of regularly bringing to the awareness of students and staff the dangers of corruption.
2. Principals should encourage debates and essay writings on corruption related topics in school in order to help sensitise staff and students about corruption and the evils associated with it.
3. Teachers and other stake holders should help in combating corruption in secondary schools by regularly teaching and promoting core values of integrity, hard work, responsibility, honesty and obedience.
4. Government should help schools to properly monitor examination by installing closed circuit television in secondary schools in the state.
5. Seminars and conferences on core values, corruption and ethical issues should regularly be organised in schools and experts be invited to give talks to staff and students
6. Total and complete value re-orientation of the Nigerian society could help reduce the spread of corruption in secondary education.
7. Government should rise up to its responsibility of improving the quality of education in the country.
8. Nigerian government must display transparency, honesty, probity, accountability, Purposefulness and commitment to good ideals of the society.
9. The fight against corruption should not be politicised, where those in the ruling party of the government are exonerated from prosecution even when there are clear evidence of Corrupt practices.

10. Ministries of education should judiciously utilise its allocated fund for actualisation of the stated objectives and sit up with the responsibilities of monitoring all activities in our Educational institutions
11. The moral fabrics of the Nigeria society should be strengthened through explicit examples of commitment, pragmatism, honesty, justice and fairness.
12. Reward system should be equitable enough where hard work should be adequately compensated and recognised in all facets of our national life.
13. A credible and effective system vigilance mechanism should be put in place to monitor the activities of Nigerian educational sectors

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