Curbing Corruption and Immorality in Nigeria Educational System: A Historical Paradigm

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Abstract: Nigeria is acknowledged as the giant of Africa due to her richly endowed human and material resources. To galvanize the resources for socio-economic development of the nation, education has been perceived as the most critical sector hence high premium given to it by successive governments. However, the sector came to be challenged by corruption and immorality which succinctly affected the quality and quantity of graduates of Nigeria education and Nigerian society. The fulcrum of the paper is on arresting corruption and immorality in Nigeria education as a means of taming their effect on the larger society. The paper made use of reconnaissance survey and published materials to obtained information. The data collected were analysed using content and descriptive methods. The paper concluded that corruption and immorality has eating into the system but could be salvaged as suggested in the paper.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth and development of individuals, society and any nation depended much on its level of educational development, irrespective of its endowed material and human resources. Education is thus seen as a major weapon of social mobility that could bring about equal social, economic and political opportunity for every Nigerian citizen. This made governments at all levels to pay attention to education in order to increase access, equity and quality, hence its placement on the concurrent legislative list of the constitution. Due to increase in demand for education, government has also allowed private organizations and individuals to participate in the provision of education in an effort to increase access and quality. Despite this, access, equity, quality and quantity to and of education remained a far cry to the expectation.

Nigerian with a landmass area of 923,768km² is richly endowed with material resources that included large expanse of agricultural land, varieties of mineral resources, water and its rich resources and potentials and forest resources. The land is also home to an estimated human population of 188,978,999. The exploitation and utilization of these material resources depended much on the development of human capital; the development of which school system is a critical factor. The educational sector like other social sectors has been plagued by a catalogue of problems of which corruption and immorality is one. In fact corruption and immorality is not only greatest obstacle to educational development but to the society as a whole. The level of corruption and immorality in educational sector is not limited to any level but permeates across all levels and involving all the stakeholders either as individual, group or institution.

History has shown that no nation developed and maintained stability without much attention being paid to education sector. This is because growth and development in all human endeavor; economy, social and political are bye-products of education. The increasingly invasion of the sector by corruption and immorality in Nigeria and the resultant outcome informed the study.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The essence of concept clarification is to explain key words used in the research in clear terms and to improve understanding. Some of these are explained below.
Corruption

Corruption that is as old as human existence has no acceptable universal definition. This made the term to be defined by different people depending on their perception and purpose it is meant to serve. For instance, World Bank and Transparency International defined it from political angle as the abuse of public office for gains for the benefit of the holder of the office or a third party. Kouassi in agreement with the above definition added that almost all over the world, it is accepted to mean the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. The focus of this definition was on good governance and sustainable development.

But, corruption goes beyond the whim and caprices of public office holder to include negative action of individuals or group outside official duty either it affect the society positively or negatively. In general terms therefore, corruption is any act that gives undue advantage of any sort to the parties involved.

Immorality

Since when man took to sedentary life, human actions either as individuals or group came to be guided by certain rules. These rules categories human actions to be either good or bad, morally right or wrong. Thus, Kant described morality as binding laws which (ought to or) govern human actions. It determines what is right or wrong as accepted in the society. Immorality on the other hand, connotes unacceptable behavior or action of man as individuals or social being in the society. The unaccepted act may have positive or negative, noticed or not and immediate or long terms effect on the society. Whatever the level of its impact may be, immorality need to be eliminated in the lives of an individual, group or community.

Educational System

Education according to Ali and Salahu is firstly, a method of transmitting societal knowledge, culture and values from one generation to another; and to individual, it is the process by which people learn facts, acquire skills and develops abilities and attitudes necessary for the work place. These made education a societal responsibility that must not only be encouraged but reinforced. Thus, every society irrespective of level of development put in place a system of educating its citizenry. Educational system is therefore an entire process of providing different categories of learners' opportunity to be educated. This system ranges from the lowest level of pre-primary to tertiary education level. In Nigeria, the educational system run through from primary, secondary to tertiary that ranges from colleges of education, polytechnic (and allied) to university.

3. NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN PERSPECTIVE

Education is as old as human existence that began from human interaction with his environment on one hand and with or as a social being on the other. The continuous growth of human society and its complexity led to the two forms of education i.e formal and non-formal. Though the non-formal is older the ability of formal education or western education to meet the exigency of the time brought about its dominance over the former. This informed the quest for western education all over the world.
In Nigeria, three system or terms of education exist side by side. The first is non-formal or traditional education. This form aimed at training the individual towards effective citizenship through acquisition of physical and intellectual skills and acceptable behavioral patterns. Though methodology of imparting knowledge and molding of character differs from one society to another, the education of the child began at infancy stage. The good thing about this education type is open to all irrespective of age, social status and educational level.8

The second education form is the Islamic or Muslim education. This come with the spread of Islam into Nigeria area as early as the 10th and 11th century.9 From Borno and other routes it reached Hausaland and neighboring areas in the 14th Century.10 By 19th century it spread to more areas following the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio.11 Since then, it has gain more acceptance and widely spread. The aim of Islamic education is to produce morally sound individuals in his conduct and character.

Western education or formal education was the last to reach Nigeria. The first being indigenous, the second came through Arabs and Muslim clergymen from the North and the third came through European Christian Missionaries, who operated from the coastal area. The first attempt was made by the Portuguese adventurist in the 15th Century when they landed at the court of Oba of Benin. This was overtaken by trade in human being (slave trade) that lasted over three centuries.

In the 19th century, a new chapter was open in the history of western education through the activities of Christian missionaries. This began with the establishment of schools at Badagry, Abeokuta, Onitsha and other towns by Methodist and C.M.S mission from 1850.12 The spread of western education gradually build up from coastal area into the interior in the 20th century when colonial government began to participate in the provision of Western education.13 By the time Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the structure of her educational system became clear considering levels of education. These structures are from Primary to Grammar/Comprehensive (secondary) schools and then tertiary education represented by Yaba Higher College formerly Government Survey School established in 1932 and University College, Ibadan (1948) now University of Ibadan13.

Education being seen as the source of economic empowerment and social mobility of an individual and indeed development of a nation has led to its quest since 1960. This has led to the establishment of all categories of schools from primary to university level. More so, provision of education is not limited to the monopoly of government and its agencies but open to individuals and corporate organizations.

To give western education a proper sense of direction being “fulcrum of development”14 through seminars and conferences, a National Policy on Education was published in 1977. The policy has been reviewed and updated in 1981, 1998 and 2004 respectively.14

4. NATURE AND DIMENSION OF CORRUPTION AND IMMORALITY IN NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Corruption has been described as any act contrary to the established norms that gives undue advantage to the actors while immorality is the unacceptable behavior by an individual or group as dictated by the societal laws, norm and culture. Both corruption and immorality have great consequences on individuals, groups and the society, as they retard human and societal development. Education being a critical sector and engine room for development as epitomized by Mayor that:

If we do not invest all our resources of energy and will in education, the race with catastrophe will be lost and the balance between man and nature will be re-established by disasters that are not only unthinkable but also avoidable. The choice is ours and the time is now.16

This was further collaborated by Tony Blair as quoted by Mahadi when eulogizing the importance of education to human and national development and the role of government. He said;

Success will go to those countries which are swift complain, open and willing to change. The task of modern government is to ensure that our countries rise to the challenge. More immortally than ever, they need sustained investment in science education and lifelong learning to make the most of the skills and talents of all their people to create a true knowledge economy.17
However, in Nigeria, educational development comes to be challenged by inability of successive government to sustained investment, (as paltry 8% is allocated by Federal Government to education) over population, corruption and immorality. These problems collectively have put to question competency of graduates of Nigeria education. For want of time and space corruption and immorality shall be the focus in this section.

5. CORRUPTION AND IMMORALITY AT PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY EDUCATION SECTION

Education is the major lubricant to human development and catalyst to stable and sustainable growth of nations with heavy investment in it. This invariably means that level of development of any nation or human society is tied to its educational development. However, the growth and development of any nations’ education cannot be divorced from effective foundation lay at the primary education level. In Nigeria the primary school is the foundation level of education. This is usually meant for children age 5 – 7 years as new entrance. Upon graduation from primary school, the graduating pupils are expected to be admitted into post-primary or secondary schools to consolidate on the gains attained so far. This level of education prepares the learners for tertiary education. This made primary and post-primary education more of a critical level of education on it laid the foundations for the future of individual learners and the society in general.

Corruption at primary and post primary education level began with the recruitment of unqualified individuals as teachers. At the primary school level, secondary school certificate holders are employed while at the secondary school level non-professionally diploma and university graduates are employed. These employment were made out of favoritism or in an effort to meet up with the required number of teachers. The compromise made in recruitment exercise is corruption and set the stage for lowering of standard.

Attitudinal behaviour of teachers at work place depicts corruption and moral ineptitude. Due to poor renumeration for teachers and in most cases delay for months has made the teachers to result to trading in work place.\(^{20}\) Many bought sachet water, sobo, kunuzaki, softdrink, and other materials for sell in work place.\(^{21}\) They thus paid more attention to their trading wares than preparing lesson plan and teaching. Many others became truant or come to school late.

In urban center schools are over populated by teachers most especially female teachers who hardly live up to their teaching responsibility. Many of these categories of teachers could not even be caution by their head teachers or principals because of their status of their spouses. Few who have the courage to question such teachers got rebuked by being transfer to remote rural areas.\(^{23}\)

The neglect of education at this level and its gradual commercialization, led to the emergence of private schools. Many of the proprietors of the private schools were driven into business not for the interest but because of sharp corrupt practices. Thus, Otubela commented that government neglect of education; has brought in mushroom schools, unqualified teachers and proprietors who have come into education for material gain and not passion\(^ {23}\).

Apart from bribery, extortions, forging, examination malpractice, embezzlement, lateness among others that are common forms of corruption in educational system, the issue of immorality is becoming virile. The most common is raping and sexual exchange among secondary schools. Teachers, students and school administrators are all involved. Of recent, a daily newspaper reported a case of a school teacher who raped a 14 years old girl entrusted to him by her parents on 23\(^{rd}\) of November, 2016 in Yobe State.\(^ {24}\)

Parents are also involved in corrupt and immoral practices in the system. The illegal removal of school attending children from schools and sent to hawk is a common practices among poor and illiterate parents. The withdrawn students are expose to not only vehicle dangers but immoral members of the society who may take advantage of them.

6. CORRUPTION AND IMMORALITY AT TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary education refers to all educational institutions offering post-secondary school certificate, diploma and degree that include universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and research institutions.\(^ {25}\) Adeyanju in his
definition  sees tertiary education as level of education as level of education that enable the individual to acquire knowledge, skills and attitude that enables him fit into national work force efficiently. 26 Tertiary education level as institutions of learning, are where individuals realized their dreams in career choice through specialization in training and skill acquisition while the nation develops as manpower needed are being met. 27 Asobie, distinguished university from other tertiary institutions not only as centre of teaching and research but through promotion of the intellectual and moral development of both the community of scholars (the university) and the secondary environment (the society). 28 Irrespective of the designation (college, polytechnic or university), the essence is to produce intellectual individual as manpower to serve the nation.

This goal of tertiary education is being threatened by increasing level of corruption and immorality in the system worldwide. In a 2013 report devoted to the education sector, Transparency International not only indicted all level of education but specifically identified the following among others as forms of corruption at higher education;

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<th>Sexual violence and sexual abuse; embezzlement of public fund mean our education;</th>
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<td>illicit payments in respect of personnel recruitment and students admissions; nepotism in filling tenured positions; bribery in allocating on campus accommodation and the grading of students scripts or general performance; political and corporate undue influence in research. Others are: plagiarism especially in producing theses; ghost authorship and editorial misconduct in academic journals, purchase and sale of honourary degrees; use of commercial consultants to score post-graduate admission and to carry out research projects for doctoral degrees; teachers absenteeism; and academic capitalism, induced by globalization. 29</td>
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No doubt, all the aforementioned forms of corruption are perpetrated in Nigeria education system most especially at tertiary level. It is more pervasive at this level because higher education is perceived as the basis of economic empowerment and social mobility in the society. The resultant effect being deterioration in the standard and desecration of the value in the system. 30

7. CAUSES OF CORRUPTION AND IMMORALITY IN NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Many factors could be attributed to be the causes of corruption and moral decadence in the education system. Few of these could be discussed as follows;

i. Desire for educational certificate

Since the attainment of independence and most especially from the late 1970s when Nigerian economy began to experience difficulties people began to turn to education as a survival instinct to acquire better job. This becomes more so, with the believe that with advocating possibility of moving out of hardship and social mobility is more open. 31 The certificates obtained from the educational institution thus become meal ticket and licence for the mobility. This made struggle to acquire certificates became more intense at secondary school level as preparation for university education while university education and certificate for better job prospect. In the process, standards and established norms are compromised at different stages.

ii. Poor funding and quest for material wellbeing

Education is a capital intensive project which required continuous and sustainable investment for its survival and maintainance of standard. This made UNESCO to recommend that 26% of a nation’s budget be allocated to education. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with Nigeria where budgetary allocation has been dwindling. This situation has made it difficult to maintain infrastructure, pay staff salaries, and recruit enough qualified staff. This has led to the proliferation of private schools where members of the public are exploited, irregular payment of salaries that has turned many teachers to hawkers of goods in schools while lecturers at tertiary education have become academic prostitutes by moving from one institution to another as visiting lecturers without giving their best.

iii. Breakdown in cultural and value system

Culture is seen as the total way of man’s life which the right type of education enhances. However, the bookish nature of Nigeria education and the influence of westernization and globalization has increasingly led to the
breakdown of family ties and value system most especially in the urban centres. This has led to individualistic life and crave for material things acquired through social vices such as corruption, dishonesty, crimes, violence and other forms of immoral act. The educational system being component of the society is not left out of this as modern education is disarticulated from the traditional education that aimed at;

Integrating the youth into the entire social production, exchange and distribution of where we act, wear, and seller, the whole system of organizing wealth of a given country. Thus education is part of culture and culture is part of education. They run into each other and are many of looking at education is a process of integrating a people into the dominant culture of the community.33

Apart from these factors discussed, corruption and immorality in Nigeria education system could be traced to faulty education system, recruited and appointment into positions, unnecessary political and bureaucratic procedures, unlawful implementation of educational policy which have affected maintenance of standard and quality assurance.34

8. CORRUPTION, IMMORALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

History has shown that there is nexus between education and development which society, communities and nations of world do continuously invest much of their resources in provision of education. However sustainability of the provision of education in the right quantity and quality has been challenged by growing cases of corruption, immorality and other vices. Thus, it is generally agreed that corruption in education has not only affected the sector but the entire fabric of nation’s life.

Poor funding has been the major clog in the provision and sustainability of Nigeria education. The little voted for education due to corruption end up being misappropriated in the construction of university gates, school fencing purchase official cars and honourarium for visiting dignitaries.

A major index for development of any nation is the quality of its education. Though priority is said to be given by successive government on education emphasis is placed on quantity rather than quality. The resultant effect of this is for government to contend with so many schools, hence growing decay of infrastructure and establishment of mushroom schools across all levels of education. The inadequacy of infrastructure such as library, laboratories, enough class room, proper power and water supply affected teaching-learning process. This subsequently impinch in the quality of graduate of Nigeria education system.

The proliferation of private schools from nursery to university is direct consequence of neglect of public education and corruption and immorality that goes with it. The private schools are not also much better than the public schools because of recruitment of non-qualified teachers and survival on part time teacher and lecturers. The patronage of private schools became overshadow by people mostly corrupt government officials by sending their children to Ghana, South Africa, Togo, Benin Republic for the so-called quality education.

Education and economy of any nation are interwoven. Education lubricate the economy through provision of quality manpower with the right skills and values while economy provides the wealth that keeps the wheel of education rolling.

Thus, Akpote cited in Akajagbor some up the relationship as;

there is a linkage between education and development which involve a symbiotic relationship. In the first place education reflectThe socio economic structures of the societies in which they are Operated and tend to perspective, reinforces and reproduce that Economic and social structure and secondly when new educational Refigurce are introduced there is the tendency that economic reforms will be attend in the entire nation.35

This for Nigeria has not been the case as most of Nigerian graduate learnt on the job in addition to many that are unemployable. This account for high level of unemployment of youth graduates in Nigeria who lack capacity to think and initiate new things or ways to create wealth.
In summary, corruption and immorality has eroded the gains of Nigeria educational system in the first 25-30 years of independent where standard and quality were of global standards and attracted staff and students across globe.  

9. HISTORICAL STUDIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND IMMORALITY IN EDUCATION  

Corruption, immorality and history are as old as man existence on earth. While corruption and immorality connotes contrary action and behavior of individuals or groups to the established norms, value systems and standard of a given society, history is the memory or record of human action and interaction with his fellow man on one hand and with his environment on the other. While corruption and immorality are anti-social behavior that are capable of destroying the very existence of a nation, history on the other hand is the totality of the past experience of man, a living phenomenon that is constantly created hence give human society an eternal life.  

History as a record, a mirror of the past action and a store house of human existence and activities while on earth has been a subject of study from time immemorial. Beginning from a mere story telling it becomes a major component of non-formal education of every community in her stage of development. With the advent of formal education and it spread across the globe, it became one of the disciplines taught and learnt. In the ancient Greece and Rome history was taught to future political leaders to prepare them for the future challenge of leadership.  

In the first two decades of Nigeria's Independence, history features in the curriculum, but the neglect and its gradual relegation cannot be separated from the social vices that plagued the nation including the education sector. The mere fact that no discipline captured man action and mirrored it to the populace for correction rather than history which has been in commatose led to the institutionalization of corruption even in the university, which is expected to be the custodian of truth.  

History being a store house of human activities provides the much needed facts and evidences that shaped and has continued to shape the Nigeria society. The understanding of the present rest squarely on understanding of the past which prepares one for the future. The neglect of history brought about the low web of morality and corruption in the society. History thus inculcates moral values, character training and lay the foundation for development.  

The survival and development of any nation depends much on the citizens consciousness of their civil responsibilities, loyalty and commitment to the social, political and economic development and growth of their state. This consciousness is derived from the study of the past that made them understand and appreciate their background, culture and belief when they learn about past heroes who sacrificed their lifes for the development of their societies.  

The economic crisis the world is going through and pervasive nature of corrupt leadership in Nigeria has, has eroded the resources, fracture the economy, killed the vision and destabilized the nation education through misappropriation of fund. This has affected all the reforms in the education sector due to inability to implement policies unfaithfully. To arrest the situation is to go back to history to retrace the mistake and effect the correction for prosperity.  

10. CONCLUSION  

In this paper, it is established that growth and development of human society depends much on the level of educational development and corresponding investment. It is also observed that no matter the level of investment and resources available in the education sector and society at large corruption and immorality can lead to unsustainability in the provision of quality education. The paper shows that decayed in the infrastructure, inadequate manpower, poor emolument of staff, examination malpractice and low standard became the resultant effect of corruption, immorality, indiscipline and dishonesty in the education sector.  

Despite the high level of corruption and other anti-social behavior in the education sector that has affected growth and development of the nation, the inculcation of morals, good value, character development and reconscientisation of Nigeria through the imbibement of lesson of history, corruption can be curtailed and decadence arrested for growth and development.
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[19] This is common in private schools

[20] This is common in urban schools and involved female teachers

[21] The teachers also used pupils/students to sale their products during breakfast as sometime even in the course of teaching

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