
CORRUPTION IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY: THE NEXUS.

By

GODFREY OGHUAN EBOHON

*Department of English,
Federal College of Education,
Kontagora,
Niger State.*

Abstract

Governments of the past and present in Nigeria have not been sincere in the management of the national resources of the country and this has snow – balled into colossal loss of lives and opportunities for sustainable development. Corruption in all facets of the lives of Nigeria has led to the country facing the challenges of insecurity. Insecurity has assumed great dimensions in recent times. The costs are far beyond human imagination. Human lives are continually wasted while properties difficult to estimate are destroyed. A greater effect is that majority of the citizens live in fear. This paper focused on corruption, the role of the society, education and technology in the escalation of this evil vice in the country by examining these factors in the lives of an average Nigerian. The paper went further to recommend among others that since some values are universal, achievement through hard work should be considered to be good; while failure through laziness should be abhorred.

Keywords: Corruption, Society, Technology and Education.

Corruption is something that is spiritually and morally impure or anything that deviates from an ideal way. Corruption can also be seen as an action to secretly provide goods or services to a third party so that there is an influence of certain actions that will benefit a part or both that are involved in the action. According to Ige (2000),“Corruption may be identified in terms of public office, public sector or

institutional corruption – a term defined as the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity”. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of our national life. What is so surprising about the whole issue is that Nigeria seems to have practically surrendered and accepted corruption as a way of life. In Nwaze (2012) submission:

Corruption is, perhaps, the most troubling issue in Nigeria as of today not because it is new but because it has refused to yield to all manner of medication. Many say that it has become malignant because the right therapy has not yet been administered. Others say that it might not respond to normal medication because of its malignancy.

Corruption in Nigeria cannot be wished away by more rhetoric that it is evil, or that it hampers the progress and development of the people. Corruption has exerted greater costs on the development process of Nigeria in these ways: one, it weakens the institutional capacities of the state by eroding public confidence and promoting inefficiency. Two, it causes severe distortion in the efficient allocation of resources and often manifests as a form of re – distribution of money from the poor to the rich.

The extent of collateral damages and patent despair inflicted on the psyche of the average Nigerian through organized and unorganized greed, perfidy and infamy orchestrated against themselves and the country is what is the concern of this paper, corruption in the society, the role of education and technology the connecting factor why it has become an alarming trend that must be stopped.

This presentation cannot start tracing the origin of corruption, but as much as it is obvious that due to the apparent dominance of corrupt practices over transparency in all facets of the life of an average Nigerian, which has resulted into the nation not really making progress. It will be better if one casts a glance at the 1970s from where an alarming upsurge in corruption had been traced to the oil boom, and consequent upswing in economic and government activities. The rise of public administration and the discovery of petroleum and natural gas are two major events seen to have led to a literary of ignoble corrupt practices in the country. Over the years, the nation has seen its wealth withered with little to show in the living conditions of the average human being. Obafemi Awolowo of blessed memory once said “ that since independence, Nigerian governments have been a matter of few holding the cow for the strongest and the most cunning to milk, under those circumstances everybody runs over everybody to make good at the expense of the others. According to Kessington (2005), in the Nigerian sense of the word:

Corruption is the more accurate name for bulldozing one’s way through to get whatever one is pursuing. Thus, when a corrupt person who has lost all senses of decency and self-discipline is determined to gain anything, be it money, power, prestige or position he is always time conscious because there are many other things he wants

Corruption in Nigerian Society, Education and Technology: The Nexus -- Godfrey Oghuan Ebohon

to acquire for his self-glory. As is the saying in Nigeria he will bulldoze his way, he will coerce, intimidate, manipulate, bribe lobby and settle.

The word corruption is a filthy, illegal, dishonest, insatiable, wicked passion for want of more of anything than a person needs or deserves. It is an anti – social behaviour expressed to achieve ones goals.

Obiechina (1993) adduced that “materialism may and often lead to corruption in African societies” it can therefore be said that the act of corruption in the Nigerian society is not just rearing up its head; it has been noted with her since Nigeria attained her independence. Ogunyemi(1998) is of the view that Nigeria picked up this problem from the manner in which the colonialist handed over power in the late fifties to early sixties”. According to him it was obvious that colonialists had preferred to install a puppet weak leadership before leaving the shores of the country. Their game plan was to ensure the continuous plundering of the country’s economy to the advantage of their home government.

Today this evil has become the epitome of whatever is right particularly in the public sector, corruption is now synonymous with Nigerianess. People are greedy; they want more and more of everything. They are in a hurry to achieve those things as quickly as possible so as to have time to pursue the acquisition of other things and by this they employ all sorts of dishonest and impure methods to satisfy their selfish ends. Petty corruption is reportedly wide spread and surveys indicate that it is very hard to do business in Nigeria without having to pay facilitation payments to public officials. This was why Aina(1987) poses the following questions: “why does the police officer stop the driver on the highway, only to collect his due? Why does a commissioner or minister receive back money before he will perform?; why does an electorate demand money before he will exercise his civic duties? Why does an ethnic group see itself as superior to others in the same country? According to Nwaze (2012):

Although this heavy joke called corruption which is the bane of Nigeria has been with us for quite some time, the intensity of agony in my mind reached a crescendo, since the return of civil rule in 1999. That was when it became obvious to well – meaning Nigerians, including myself, that whoever had any meaningful contribution to make in his lifetime had no reason to wait.

He went further to posit that the intellectual perspective of corruption took shape in 2007 by which time the cancerous disease had dug a much bigger hole in the super structure of the Nigerian corporate existence, including the democratic institutions. No wonder a former attorney – general of the federation and minister of justice Prince Bola Ajibola (SAN) once said that in our acquisitive society many people are rated in terms of what they own and not what they are. Social climbing based on illicit wealth is not frowned upon. Public office is regarded as a vehicle for acquiring wealth and unbridled influence and not as merited avenue for rendering invaluable service to the nation for the collective good.

Corruption stifles economic growth as a country's position on the corruption table is closely correlated to its poverty ranking. Nigeria as a nation is among the poorest countries in the world, even as the 6th largest producer of crude oil in the world without a functioning refinery. Resources meant for the basic social amenities that would have benefited the masses have been stolen by a handful of Nigerians through corrupt acts and this stultifies development. Corruption has now reached a dangerously alarming dimension manifesting itself in all facets of Nigerians. The history of Nigeria from independence to date reveals that electoral malpractices have been one of the major causes of corruption in the society. Since political victory at the polls seems to be a gate way to public wealth, posts and positions and political office seekers could go to any length to achieve victory.

According to Sheshi (1999) "successive military governments in Nigeria have always found corruption a major cause for their intervention in the nation's politics". General Abdulsalami Abubakar former head of state of Nigeria in one of his broadcast bemoaned corruption in Nigeria thus: the administration is concerned about the level of corruption in our national life. Such concern emanates from lapses in the management of public funds. We are determined to put in place all necessary measures to breathe into the conduct of government a fresh air of openness and accountability. I therefore enjoin police officers to demonstrate transparency uprightness and honesty in the conduct of government. Machinery will be established in due course to ensure the compliance of public officers to the principle of transparency particularly in the management of public funds. The irony of the whole thing is that the declaration was followed more in breach than in observance.

At this juncture, one may ask; what then is the cause of corruption in Nigeria? Was Nigeria ever a good country free from corruption? When did all these social evils wrap up Nigeria and is there any hope for a better Nigeria?

The Role of the Society, Education and Technology in the State of Corruption in Nigeria.

The magnitude of the course and effects of the evil called corruption, the place of the society, education, technology and how it has brought about insecurity to the nations is the concern of this paper. Today the entity called Nigeria is enveloped in corrupt practices. This is so because the society has failed itself. A society is supposed to be the coming together of individuals with interpersonal relationship among members of human group found in a particular geographical area with shared characteristics, culture, mutual interest, values, norms and traditions above all Nigerians are no longer their brother's keepers. In- equality in Nigeria remains a characteristic of government with the belief that some are born to rule while others are born to be ruled and to remain in perpetual penny. In a capitalist society like Nigeria, the government, instead of proffering solutions to class conflict among members of the

Corruption in Nigerian Society, Education and Technology: The Nexus -- Godfrey Oghuan Ebohon

society, they rather worsen it through corruption. Instead of bridging the gap between the poor and the rich, they have designed laws that will favour them at the expense of the poor masses, some of them climb the social ladder either by hook or crook and by so doing aid wicked stratification in the society through the style of the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer. In the 60s to about early 80s Nigeria had lower, middle and upper class strata but today the middle class has been erased from Nigeria. It has now become a big struggle to get out of the lower class into the upper cadre. This has resulted into people making it by all means. Sellers inflate the prices of commodities. Apart from staggering profits they make, some engage in the sale of inferior or adulterated goods for the sake of profit maximization, contractors will have to bribe their ways through, pay some percentages and at the end for those that are into construction, they resist to the use of inferior materials for their buildings, the end result will be building collapses while others will not even execute the project at all.

The civil service is not free from this evil act, there is hardly any transaction without greasing of palm or settlement or kolanut before you can see a senior officer to get one's file in the ministry or to get a job. In the Nigerian society of today corruption is no longer treated as a sin. In fact Nigerians have developed a new set of vocabulary to weaken the concept of sin. When one takes money that does not belong to him by altering figures, Nigerians will be said that he falsified figures or defrauded, when he spends money on something that is different from what the money is meant for he is said to have misappropriated. Both actions come under the sin of stealing. The Bible says "Thou shall not steal". If a man finds himself in a position of authority and he wants to protect his integrity the society says the person does not understand; and he or she will be in poverty. Education is a universal practice or phenomenon engaged in by societies at all stages of development. It describes the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, valuable skills developed and faculties trained.

According to Nwaka (2012) "Education is a process whereby one acquires positive changes in the behavior geared towards contributing to positive development of one's self and the society in which one lives" education and society are inseparable. Society equips education with the value to be transmitted while education exposes each generation of young people to the existing beliefs norms and values of their culture. But today, the school where this transmission should take place is now a major ground for corrupt practices. Examination malpractices and secret cults are now the order of the day in place of teaching and learning. Specifically students, teachers, invigilators, markers, parents, law enforcement agents, staff of examination bodies and the general public are all involved in examination malpractices. At the school internal examination, students have so much perfected the art of cheating in texts and examinations, some parents even go as far as buying common entrance examination questions and even helping their children inside examination halls. Other cases of examination malpractices include the rush of students to register in "hide out" centres call "miracle centres". Oguntona (1998) identifies some methods perpetuated by students

culminating in examination malpractices, they include “knee socks method; local syndicate; stampede method; seminary pad method; nutric acid method; giraffe method; master script method; notes on laps methods; false socks under locker method; to mention but a few”. Recently students now use phones and in most cases supported by their teachers and parents to purchase papers and certificates and all these are through result falsification. Teachers in some schools both private and public encourage and permit cooperate cheating in examination halls and even engage in dictating answers to students when writing examination as well as the invigilators.

Apart from examination malpractices, secret cult is another area that aids the breeding of corruption in the school and the society. Secret cults in schools are a reflection of what goes on in the larger society. Teachers are also members of some of this secret cult where corruption is the order of the day: therefore, it is not unexpected that they have also been afflicted by the contagious disease called ‘corruption’. All aforementioned facts have been of immense effect on the students, labour force, and the society at large. Students with falsified results find it difficult to cope with further education. At the end of the day half – baked but highly certificated professionals are displayed at the labour market. These are dangerous people, if they are lawyers, they become expert crooks, and if they are medical doctors they are potential killers. The society then stands to lose more than it stands to gain.

Technology has being an interdisciplinary area covering the broader conceptual framework of scientific, managerial and engineering aspect of knowledge has made the world today to be seen as a global village. Today there are different methods of acquiring and developing technology for the growth of any given nation. Technology in Nigeria today whether indigenous, transferred or acquired is supposed to help the nation come out of the poor situation in which she found herself. Technology is what should have been put into use to better the lives of Nigerians, but today it has become a way of facilitating corrupt acts. Instead of using it positively Nigerian have devised means by which they manipulate technology to achieve negative images and results for the country. Positive results achieved through the employment of technology in the western world do not seem to work when it is introduced in Nigeria. Integrity is very necessary for any system and institution to work. But in the case of Nigeria, technology is now being applied to falsify documents, manipulate records and this is not helping the system. According to Momah (1999) “the transfer of technology is passive, acquisition of technology is active and the adaptation of technology based on copy, adaptation and indigenous in order to gain time, generate employments and utilize the abundant human and material resources”. The society and education have affected the introduction of technology to better the lots of Nigeria and with the wheels of the bureaucracy running at the whims and caprices of corrupt public officers. What this means is that the effectiveness of governance is weakened because nothing works until people are “settled”. This, again brings to the fore why technology is now been applied

Corruption in Nigerian Society, Education and Technology: The Nexus -- Godfrey Oghuan Ebohon

or used to manipulate things to the favour of those corrupt officers and to the detriment of the nation.

The Nexus

This paper has shown that corruption, education society and technology have been mixed together to give the nation a name that is not her's. While this paper used corruption to embrace all forms of social improprieties in Nigeria such as bribery, dishonesty, cheating, as well as various forms of malpractices like election rigging and perversion of justice, inflation of contracts, embezzlement, ostentatious living, outer disregard for values. Any society that is endemic of all these acts is by all means a corrupt society, for all these acts mentioned above contribute nothing but immorality in its highest order to the society.

The complicated link between these issues being addressed in this paper is that it has made criminality difficult to tackle in Nigeria. Take the terrorist activities in Nigeria for example, they all started with the idea of environmental activities, ethnic and religious emancipations, but today they have now metamorphosed into armed robbers, kidnappers, oil bunkers, suicide bombers, murders assassins etc. they operate with high level of intelligence, making it difficult for security operatives to hunt them down and destroy their activities. Knowledge acquired through the society, education and technology is now put into negative use so as to get rich quick, because the society today has no place for the poor.

Conclusion

The general increase in criminality in the country is among other things the increase in social vices among students at all level of educational system. Government must as a matter of fact intervene in order to arrest this dangerous trend, by reducing the cost of governance and huge allowances paid to political office holders. There must be total negation of ostentatious living; the society should not emphasize wealth. Those who display wealth should take into consideration the interest of the average man on the street, society should abandon materialism and embrace simple way of life in order to bring a stop to the rate of corruption in the society.

Recommendations

- The family needs to re – orient children by giving them proper guidance and advice in order to curb this problem.
- Federal, state and local governments should introduce moral instruction to enable impressionable young ones to imbibe the values of high moral standard and practice them.
- Since every school curriculum content contains set of values expected to be transmitted to the younger ones through education, such curriculum contents in the public and private schools should reflect more on the current values needed

for national transformation and development such as peace promotion, security, honesty, transparency, accountability, tolerance etc.

- The government at all levels should do everything humanly possible to create jobs to get the teeming youths off the streets. There should be provision of the necessary amenities that will improve the living conditions of the people. This can be done through improved governance and leadership.

References

- Aina, F. (1982). *Social Studies: A Book on Methodology*. Ibadan: Evans Brothers Publishers Limited.
- Ige, B (2000). An address in a stakeholders summit on fighting corruption and sharp practices in the port's system organized by Nigerian ports authority between 24th – 26th October, 2000.
- Kessington, P. (2005). Corruption and the society: A study of Chinkwuemeka Ike's. "The search and IfeomaOkoye's men without ears". A project work submitted for NCE programme English Department F. C. E. Kontagora.
- Momah, S. (1999). *Technology is Power*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Nwaka, N. G. (2012). The state of tertiary education in meeting the needs of the modern Nigerian society in Ibeneme, Ojo, Alumode B & Usoro H (eds). *The State of Education in Nigeria*. Lagos: West & Solomon publishing Coy Ltd.
- Nwaze C (2012). *Corruption in Nigeria Exposed with Cases, Scams, Laws and Preventive Measures*. Lagos: Control & Surveillance Associates (C& SA)
- Obiechina, E. (1993). *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Ogunyemi, F. (1998). How Corruption Destroyed Nigeria in *Nigeria Tribune*. 13th September.
- Sheshi, S. (1999). Institutionalized corruption in Nigeria: The challenges of citizen Education in the next millennium. A paper presented at the 4th national conference of F.C.E Kontagora 7th – 10th September, 1999.