

## Development of vocational education in Nigeria: The impact of corruption

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### Abstract

This paper is a conceptual paper aimed at examining the effect of corruption on the development of vocational education in Nigeria. The paper reviews the relevant literature such as the concept, different levels, forms and origin of corruption. The concept of vocational education, the relationship between vocational education and corruption and the consequences of corruption on the development of vocational education in Nigeria are also examined. Some strategies for combating corruption and some of the efforts of the government to fight corruption were also looked at. In conclusion, a direct link between corruption and vocational education is established; some recommendations were suggested, which include that in order to reduce corruption, the government must have the political will to initiate and sustain the fight against corruption.

**Keywords:** Corruption practices, education, vocational education, Nigeria, development.

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## 1. Introduction

Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon that has been in all kinds of societies throughout history as a global crime. It is a universal phenomenon which presents itself in different colourations and dimensions, depending on where it rears its ugly head (Egbefo, 2012). It is a worldwide phenomenon in developing countries. In Nigeria, corruption is so rampant that it manifests itself in virtually all aspects of the economy (Ekwesili, 2004). This is because corruption, like a deadly virus, attacks the vital structure that makes for society progressive functioning, thus putting its very existence into serious peril. This is particularly true for developing countries where limited but valuable funds and resources that are initially budgeted for industries, hospitals, education and other infrastructures are either out rightly embezzled, misappropriated or otherwise severely depleted through kickbacks and new invoicing by agents of government. Corruption is not a Nigerian or African word; it is as old as humanity. Biblically, when Adam was commanded by God in the garden that he could eat of all the fruits in the garden except one and he and Eve ate the forbidden apple, they were condemned and could be described as corrupt (Genesis 3 verse 1–12).

## 2. Concept of corruption

Corruption refers to illegal, immoral or dishonest behaviour. This type of behaviour is mainly related to people in positions of power. Corruption is a common phenomenon in Nigeria which has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria (Egbefo, 2012). Onwuka (2009) describes corruption as an anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal or moral norms, and which undermines the authority to improve the living conditions of the people. Corruption is an illegitimate way of acquiring wealth by individuals in the society. The word corruption means the destruction, ruining or spoiling of a society or a nation. Egbefo (2012) explained corruption as inducement or persuasion to influence people to do things that are contrary to laid down rules or norms and values of the society. Corruption is also a behaviour that deviates from the normal moral role that one is expected to display as a result of undue influence. According to Ekwesili (2004), corruption or corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. Corruption can also be seen as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private benefit (Olunloyo, 2002).

## 3. Forms of corruption

According to Bayart (1997), the different forms of corruption include:

1. Bribery: this is payment in money and that is taken or given in corrupt relationships. Examples include kickbacks, pay-off, sweeteners and greasy palms.
2. Fraud: this involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit, counterfeit, racketing, smuggling and forgery.
3. Embezzlement: this is theft of public resources by public officials. It is when a state official steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed.
4. Extortion: this is money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or threats to use force. The police and custom officers are the main culprits in Nigeria.
5. Nepotism: this is a special form of favouritism in which an officer prefers his/her kinfolk and family members. Nepotism occurs when one is exempted from the application of certain laws and regulations or given undue preferences in the allocation of scarce resources.

Corruption also comes in the form of embezzlement, bribery, deceit and extortion to mention a few. Corruption can be seen in every area of our society. In the home, public office, market places, religious organisations, educational institutions, government institutions, parastatals, armed forces and so on. Onwuka (2009) discussed how corrupt practices show up in each level.

1. In the home: parents encourage their children to tell lies. For example, telling children to say 'tell him I am not at home' when actually they are at home. Indirectly, the parents are teaching the children how to tell lies, thereby sowing seeds of dishonesty in their homes. Other corrupt practices in the home include parents who give money or material gifts to their children so that they can run errands for them. Parents who neither scold nor discipline their children whenever they come home with strange (stolen) items.
2. In the market place: hoarding of goods and selling of inferior goods, excessive increment in the prices of goods, and adjusting and reducing of measuring utensils.
3. Corruption among non-governmental organisations: diversion of organisation funds to personal use; for example, using funds in support of motherless babies to provide water for the community.
4. In religious organisations: illegal and unofficial diversion of money, embezzling mosque or church funds, appointment of influential members to head positions to chair committees without considering their spiritual values.
5. In educational institutions: buying admission letters, examination results and certificates and lecturers engaging in illicit affairs with female students with the aim of assisting the female students to pass by upgrading their marks.
6. In government institutions and parastatals: bribery in the award of contracts, embezzlements of public funds by officials, misappropriation of public funds, upfront payment of contract awarded without execution of such contracts and the demands of 10% from contractors by officials.
7. In the armed forces: recruitment and promotion of officers based on connection or ethnic consideration rather than on merit.
8. In politics: bribery of the electorate to influence votes and gain an upper hand over opponents, bribery of electoral officers to rig election and falsification of election results to favour a particular candidate.

#### **4. Vocational education**

Technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term in the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN, 2004). Momoh (2012) defines vocational education as a form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognised occupation. In the same vein, he defines technical education as a post-secondary vocational training programme whose major purpose is the production of technicians.

The terms technical education and vocational education are often used interchangeably but they are separate. Vocational education refers to skill-based programmes which are designed for skill acquisition at lower level of education. Vocational education programmes focus on specific vocations for entry into a defined workplace. Technical education, on the other hand, is not designed for any particular vocation, but provides general technical knowledge. This type of education prepares people for entry into recognised occupations at a higher level but usually lower than the first degree. In fact, technical and vocational education is usually a merger of technical education and vocational education, i.e., the inclusion of basic technical and scientific knowledge with the skill-based vocational programme.

According to Uwaifo (2009), technical education is the training of technically oriented personnel who are to be the initiators, facilitators and implementers of technologically development of a nation. In his opinion, this training of its citizens on the need to be technologically literate would eventually lead to self-reliance and sustainability. He observed that technical education, more than any other profession, has a direct impact on the development of the country. In most countries of the world, the vocation and technical education schemes are developed to make underprivileged citizens believe that they have a future.

## **5. Vocational education and corruption**

Corruption in education is the pervasion of the expected standard of behaviour by those in authority in the educational system for their own personal gain and to the detriment of others and the system in its pursuit of quality manpower and development. Corruption in the system has made it easy for some scholars to describe that schools are no longer institutions of learning, but instead money exchange departments to help students pass examination and gain admission into higher institutions. Onwuka (2009) stated that corruption in the political life of a nation is a tragedy, while corruption in the educational sector is a double tragedy. This is due to the fact that the educational sector has tremendous capacity to set in motion an uncontrollable reproductive process of corruption in the larger society and can thereby mar the development structures.

### **5.1. Consequences of corruption on the development of vocational education**

Technical and vocational education cannot contribute greatly to the reduction of abject poverty, hunger and unemployment because it is handicapped by numerous challenges (Eze, 2013). Oranu (2004) observed that the good intentions of successive Nigerian governments with regard to TVE programmes are still fraught with a lot of challenges.

#### **5.1.1. Inadequate funding of technical and vocational education**

No doubt, vocational and technical education has made some notable impact on the Nigerian society, especially in respect to the products of the training programme that are contributing their quota to the economic growth and development of the nation through various industrial establishments (Odu, 2013). Inadequate funding of vocational institutions has caused the turning out of half-baked graduates because there is no fund to build and maintain workshops, laboratories or even purchase modern equipment (Agbenta, 1985). Staffing of vocational technical education is generally inadequate because of poor funding. Experienced and skilful teachers may not be employed. Those who are employed because of poor remuneration do not stay long in the teaching profession, but drift to some other more lucrative jobs, especially in the industries and abroad. Consequently, inexperienced and unqualified technical teachers are employed, thereby lowering academic standard and resulting in the wastage of the achievement of technical education goals (Agbionu, 2003). Inadequate funding of vocational technical institutions has often caused a lot of difficulties in the payment of staff salaries. It has also resulted in the retrenchment of teachers or retirement of teachers at an early age. Furthermore, Momoh (2012) observed that the government's lack of commitment to technical education and inadequate funding has weakened the technical education in Nigeria. A direct consequence of this is that while the number of technical education institution is dwindling, that of general education is growing in bounds (Momoh, 2012).

#### **5.1.2. Inadequate facilities**

Most technical education departments in Nigerian Universities do not have laboratories or workshop space, let alone usable equipment, and where they exist, they are grossly inadequate, as the workshops only have items or equipment that were provided when the departments were first established, of which most of them are already obsolete or grounded (Ojimba, 2012). It is quite unfortunate, and surprising too, to know that most technical education departments still depend on engineering workshops and lecturers to teach technical education concepts in this 21st century. The available facilities and programmes as of today are inadequate quantitatively and qualitatively; besides, they are outdated. Oryem-Origa (2005) opined that only 40% of the institutions of higher education in Nigeria have a laboratory or workshop space for technical education programmes. The remaining 60% do not have a laboratory or workshop space and this has resulted to the low quality of technology programmes in our higher institutions. He also observed that the few schools which have laboratories experience acute shortage of laboratory equipment and supplies. The conclusion is that the situation is partly the reason it has been very difficult to carryout experiments effectively for

students. This has also made teaching and research in science and technology difficult, and therefore the country was producing insufficient and ill-prepared technical education graduates for driving the technological and socio-economic development of Nigeria. The shabby performance of technical education graduate is no longer news as very important projects in the country, particularly the construction industry, is now run by technicians and craftsmen from the neighbouring West African countries (Nworlu-Elechi, 2013).

#### **5.1.3. Brain drain**

This refers to the movement of technical teachers and lecturers of technical education which is very much needed for the socio-economic and technological development of Nigeria from one university to the other or to other professions which they feel will offer better conditions of service. According to Bassi (2004), about 45% of all Nigerian professionals including technical educators have left the Nigerian shores over the years. Between 1997 and 2007 alone, Nigeria lost over 10,000 middle-level and high-level managers to the Western economies. About 500 lecturers from Nigerian tertiary institutions continue to migrate each year, particularly to Europe, America and other African countries.

#### **5.1.4. Staff training and retention**

Training of academic staff is a continuous exercise to ensure consistent improvement in the quality of their products. The training can be acquired either locally or overseas. Usually, local training within the country is cheaper than overseas training, but it is more strenuous because of inadequate facilities, literature and distractions rising from the need to meet the necessary demands. Overseas training requires a lot of foreign exchange, but the enabling environment exists to achieve success in a record time. However, overtime, it has always been difficult to get the trainees back to their respective countries after the completion of their study. The salary and service benefits paid to technical education teachers in Nigeria is about the lowest in the world (Ojimba, 2012). This leads them to migrate to other countries for better pay.

#### **5.1.5. Curriculum of technical education**

The curriculum of a subject with practical content is generally organised into an average of 67% for the theoretical classes and 33% for practical classes. Olunloyo (2002) noted that one of the issues confronting the design of appropriate curriculum for technical education is preparing students for the shift from the Fordist to information communication and technology paradigm in technology practice.

The slow pace of industrialisation and technological growth in Nigeria can be attributed to the widening gap between science and technology as a result of the inability of technical education to adequately utilise the scientific ideas to promote technology. This suggests the need to overhaul the technical education curricula in Nigeria. The overhauling of the curricula may not necessarily translate to the production of highly literate technical education experts of ready-made graduates for the industry which may result in rapid industrialisation or economic growth of the nation unless solutions are proffered to some constraints that may militate against positive outcomes, but will adequately equip our youth with the relevant skills needed for their daily living. Ojimba (2012) identified six problems associated with the current curricula in Nigeria. They are as follows:

- i. The curricula are based on foreign model which has evolved under ideal conditions (staff, equipment, infrastructure, training opportunities, etc.) that are not easily duplicated in developing countries.
- ii. There is a basic lack of textbooks in the area and most of the available textbooks have foreign backgrounds and are often illustrated with examples from outside the local environment.
- iii. There is usually a shortage of highly competent indigenous teaching and support staff with sufficient practical experience of technology.

- iv. The curricula are adjudged to be too academic and overloaded with intellectual content in pure science and mathematics at the expense of basic engineering and technology.
- v. Inadequate provision of humanities, social sciences, business management concepts and entrepreneurial skills development. Because of the inadequate preparations of the students for the industry, some employers retain the graduates to make them productive in their organisations.
- vi. The teaching approach follows the conventional method of transferring knowledge from the lecturer reading out to the students, who would then take down notes. The educational system continues to place considerable value on this method of teaching.

#### **5.1.6. Apathy of policy holders/law makers**

Education, generally including technical and vocational education programme, has been grossly neglected in Nigeria. Technical educators have the greatest challenge of convincing the law makers on the reason they should give priority attention to the programme in resources allocation. Many options of getting positive results have been advocated at different forums, namely lobbying, participation of technical educators in governance, wooing etc., yet the government is still showing a lopsided attitude towards the proper development of the programme in Nigeria.

Therefore, Nigeria will ever remain a technologically backward and dependent nation, if this negative attitude and trend is not reversed.

#### **5.1.7. Nigerian value system**

In Nigeria today, too much emphasis is placed on university qualifications, not minding whether the holder possesses the required knowledge and skill. But in advanced societies, these with technical degrees are highly regarded. In fact, the value system in those countries depends on the person's skills and knowledge, and not on the stack of academic degrees one has. In public service, graduates of technical education are often discriminated against and their career prospect. For this reason, secondary school leavers and parents prefer university education to technical education (Nworlu-Elechi, 2013).

### **5.2. Strategies for combating corruption**

Corruption is dynamic and can occur in different dimensions. Therefore, the most appropriate approach must be dynamic and holistic. So many authorities have suggested ways to combat corruption. According to Onwuka (2009), the best way to curb corruption is through ethical re-orientation. Olunloyo (2002) referred to it as moral renovation. They suggested that the people need to change their values and instil positive values. We must develop ourselves to the level where each one of us sees corruption as bad. This is why the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and everyone see corruption as the mother of all crimes and evil.

Bayart (1997) stated that 200 years ago corruption was widespread in Europe and Holland. It took improved governance and a firming of moral standards, especially among the higher echelons of their civil service as well as pay reforms to curb the rot. This shows that curbing corruption is a gradual process and all efforts must be consistent and persistent.

## **6. Efforts by the government to fight corruption in Nigeria**

The former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanyo, devoted a good part of his inaugural address on 29 May 1999 by declaring a war against corruption (Akanbi, 2005). As a starting point, he turned to many international organisations, including transparency international (TI), for assistance in curbing corruption.

Successful anti-corruption efforts depend on political will. This concludes both the political will to initiate the fight against corruption in the first place and, subsequently, the will to sustain the battle



over time until results are achieved (Jubrin, 2003). The Nigerian government has been able to fulfil the first part of the political will by

1. Clarifying and streamlining laws in ways that reduce official discretion. One of the instruments that have been established to attract honest foreign investors and put an end to corruption is the due process certification (Ekwesili, 2004).
2. Strengthening the mechanism for monitoring and punishment of corrupted people. In this regard, independent watchdog institutions that are part of government structure have been set up to fight corruption.

In a bid by the administration to fight corruption, the Independent Corruption Practices and other related offences commission (ICPC) were established by the Obasanyo government. The Commission (ICPC) Act of 2002, section 17(1) states that any person who corruptly attempts to obtain gratification from any person for himself is illegal, extortion is illegal, all forms of bribery in any official capacity no matter where or who is involved is a crime. In addition, Obasanyo also created the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to fight advanced free fraud, popularly known as 419 frauds. There is also the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (Due Process Office) charged with ensuring transparency and accountability (Magaji, 2005).

The second part of the political will is the sustainability of these anti-corruption agencies. This will depend on their efficiency and effectiveness. National anti-corruption agencies which could be a vital force in preventing corruption are frequently so politicised that they are ineffective. Research by TI suggests that to operate successfully, an anti-corruption agency must have the following:

1. They must be given considerable political independence so that they cannot be removed at the whim of enraged political elite.
2. They must command public respect and be credible, transparent and fearless.
3. They must be subject to review by a free press and by civil society.
4. They must be open as possible to the press and that it publishes frequent reports on its activities.
5. They must have access to documentation and the power to question witness.

Aanbi (2005) suggest that a successful agency needs to have a charter that provides for the involvement of a wide range of people and interests in the formulation of preventive policies and their execution. In this way, various stakeholders become involved and their own institutions can be mobilised in support of the agency efforts.

## **7. Recommendations**

Based on this paper, the following are recommended that

1. Government should have the political will to fight corruption.
2. The sustainability of these anti-corruption agencies should be paramount.
3. Development of vocational programmes in accordance with the national needs.
4. The government should strengthen the capacity of institutions and their sustainability in order to provide quality education in selected field of study to meet global competition.

## **8. Conclusion**

The main thrust of this paper was directed at examining the consequences of corruption on the development of vocation education in Nigeria. This paper has established that there is a direct link between corruption and vocational education. Corruption was defined as an inducement or persuasion to influence people to do things that are contrary to laid down rules or norms and values of a society. Also, how corruption have affected the development of vocational education in Nigeria.

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