



**CURBING CORRUPTION AS A MEANS OF
ENSURING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN
EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

As found in every sector, corruption is Nigeria's biggest challenge. Be it a small or big sector, there is every possibility of observing corrupt practices when critically examined. Corruption is a universal problem in the societies of the world. It occurs in various degrees and forms, both in public and private sectors. Analyzing a country's corruption (Nigeria) can help us to understand its deeper consolidation problems and begin to find solutions on how to tackle these problems. It is on this premise that this paper attempts to discuss curbing corruption as a means for ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian teacher training institutions. The paper focused on the concept of corruption and its genesis in Nigeria. Other issues raised include the concept of quality assurance, the need for quality assurance in education, approaches to it and constraints to quality assurance as well as strategies of curbing corruption as a means for

ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian teacher training institutions. Recommendations based on the conclusions drawn the issues raised in the paper.

Key Words: Corruption, Higher Education, Education, Quality Assurance.

Introduction

Nigeria, the most populated country in Africa, has been ranked high in corruption by Transparency International and other notable organizations that monitor corrupt practices around the world. They do not have anything good to say about Nigeria at all. High corruption rankings affect almost all Nigerians who migrate to foreign countries, as foreigners have the perception that since Nigeria is corrupt, so are all Nigerians. In the year 2000, Transparency International carried out a survey on the corruption levels of 90 countries. At the end of the ranking, Nigeria was seen as the most corrupt in that ranking because the country occupied the 90th position in terms of transparency. it was the most corrupt country in the year 2000. Similarly, in 2001, it was again ranked the second-most corrupt nation in the world out of 91 countries, falling only to Bangladesh. This shows that corruption in Nigeria improved by one step when compared with that of 2000. Still from the same source, in the year 2002, Nigeria was again ranked the second-most corrupt country in the world after the organization surveyed 102 countries. Nigeria was seen at the bottom, occupying the 101th position in terms of Confidence

Interval (CI). In 2003, it received the same ranking, making no improvements from 2003 (Minjibir, 2008).

The 2004 ranking showed a little improvement when compared to the past four years. Nigeria was ranked the third most corrupt country in the world, performing better than Bangladesh and Haiti. That year, 145 nations were surveyed. The record on the corruption in Nigeria really improved in 2005. The number of countries surveyed by Transparency International was 158. Nigeria was ranked the sixth most corrupt (Oyinola, 2011).

More countries were surveyed by Transparency International in 2006. 163 were surveyed that year. The results showed some improvement, Nigeria was ranked the 18th most corrupt country in the world. Haiti was the world's most corrupt nation that year. Among the 180 countries surveyed in 2007, Nigeria ranked 148. This result shows that Nigeria was the 32nd most corrupt country in the world (Oyinola, 2011). An analysis of the anti-graft/anti-corruption laws in Nigeria shows that corruption will continue in spite of the law, because the perpetrators do not fear any consequences. In 2012, Transparency International again deemed Nigeria one of the most corrupt nations in the world (Uzochukwu, 2013). In that year, the country ranked 139th out of the 176 surveyed countries, making it the 37th most corrupt nation.

In 2013, Nigeria ranked 144 out of 177 surveyed countries in terms of transparency. The score made it the 33rd most corrupt country in the world that year. The

result published by the organization also showed that Nigeria scored 25% out of 100 in terms of transparency. In the 2014 ranking, Nigeria is ranked 136 out of 174 surveyed countries (Transparency International 2014). The result shows that there is improvement, though things are still bad. Nigeria was the 38th most corrupt country in the world in 2014.

Nigeria failed when it came to transparency in the country. By contrast, in 2013, Denmark and New Zealand scored highest at 91% each, meaning the countries are clean and have higher Confidence Intervals than Nigeria. In the other words, Nigeria is highly corrupt. Corruption in Nigeria wears many kinds of unattractive and dirty clothes. The situation has made so many people feel a lot of pains, as the money which would have been used to reduce poverty in the country is being channeled into the pockets of a small group of persons.

Quality assurance is the process of maintaining standards in products and services through inspection or testing samples (Ramson, 2005). Okebukola (2010) noted that quality assurance is an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of inputs, process and outputs of the higher education system. In line with this, Ayodele (2007) contend that quality assurance in education entails the quality of available instructional materials for teaching, equipment, facilities, the school environment, pupils, curriculum, instructional delivery and teachers. Quality assurance is designed to prove and improve the quality of an

institution's methods, products and outcomes. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring quality assurance in education. One of the key building blocks of quality assurance in education is the development of minimum standards for the qualification of teachers, the quality of teaching in institutions, the expected educational achievement of students and the development of a more rigorous management process for education, so that the entire sector develops stronger operating policies and procedures, which are well documented and adhered to.

Every organization, including educational institutions, thrives on the platform of quality. Quality is a multidimensional concept embracing functions and activities, such as student admission, the promotion and certification process, staff recruitment and promotion, curriculum development, teaching, learning, research, infrastructural development, equipment, community development and related issues. According to Giertz (2000), without quality there is hardly an institution in the full sense of the word. Refusal to make astute regular quality assurance inspections and corrections are apt to deplete the quality of the operations in an organization.

This paper explains the concept of corruption and its genesis in Nigeria. Other issues raised include concept of quality assurance, the need for it in NTTIs, approaches and constraints to it as well as strategies of curbing corruption as a means for ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian teacher training institutions. Recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn the issues raised in the paper. It ends with a conclusion and

recommendations on curbing corruption as a means for ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian teacher training institutions.

The Concept of Corruption

Corruption is a social problem that has received varied interpretations from many scholars. For instance, Heidenheimer (1993) defines it as “a process by which the virtue of the citizen is undermined and eventually destroyed”. It can also be defined as the use of public office or the use of official position, rank or status by an office bearer for personal benefit (Myint, 2000). The Encarta Dictionary (2007) defines it as “dishonesty for personal gain” or ‘dishonest exploitation of power for personal gain’. The World Bank cited defines corruption as “the abuse of public office for private gains through rent seeking activities when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe.” Corruption or "corrupt" behavior has broadly been defined as the ‘violation of established rules for personal gain and profit" (Sen, 1999). His efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means – private gain at public expense; or the misuse of public power for private benefit (Lipset and Lenz, 2000) are all corruption. It is a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role, because of private gain (Nye, 1967).

According to Kaufmann (2005), the traditional definition of corruption as the “abuse of public office for private gain” is very narrow, as it places too much emphasis on public office and on the ostensible legality of the act.

The researcher analyzes the implications of viewing corruption as a broader phenomenon where private agents also share responsibility and where many acts, which are not ethical (and thus may be regarded as corrupt), may not necessarily be illegal. He presented empirical evidence of the extent to which many powerful private firms engage in undue influence, to shape state policies, laws and regulations for their own benefit. The researcher further highlights the extent to which they make campaign contributions, which may, in fact, be legal, but which unduly influence the rules of the game for their benefit. Moreover, the Survey results show that favoritism toward particular firms in the award of public procurement bids and contracts is widespread. Tanzi (1995) gave a more neutral definition of corruption as “the intentional noncompliance with arm's length relationship aimed at deriving some advantage from this behavior for oneself or for related individuals”.

Corruption is a symptom of numerous difficulties within contemporary societies. It usually involves more than one party. It takes the form of organized crime. At times, an organization can be established on corruption to beget corruption. Gbenga (2008) asserts that corruption is contagious. It is now dawning on the Nigerian public that the so-called private enterprise and legislators are free from scrutiny, and governors claim to be immune. Corruption is found in the award of contracts, the promotion of staff, the dispensation of justice and the misuse of public office, positions, and privileges, embezzlement of public funds, public books, publications, documents, valuable security and accounts.

Corruption can be systematic in nature and affect the whole life of an organization or society.

Corruption includes such behavior as bribery (the use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (the bestowal of patronage by reason of a relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (the illegal appropriation of public resources for private uses (Banfield, 1961). Even though some of these definitions of corruption have been around for over decades, the recent development in Nigeria where discoveries of stolen public funds run into billions of US Dollars and the Nigerian Naira make these definitions very adequate and appropriate. Corruption is probably the main means to accumulate quick wealth in Nigeria. It occurs in many forms and has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian population (Dike, 2002).

According to the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) Act (section 2), corruption includes vices like bribery and fraud and other related offences. While activities such as fraud and embezzlement can be undertaken by an official alone and without involvement of a second party, others such as bribery, extortion and influence peddling involve two parties – the giver and taker in a corrupt deal. The two-party type of corruption can arise under a variety of circumstances, such as: Government contracts, Government benefits, Government revenue, Time savings and regulatory avoidance, Influencing outcomes of legal and regulatory processes (Myint, 2000).

An Overview of Corruption in Nigeria

John Locke (undated) outlines the doctrine of the separation of powers, indicating the danger of oppressive and arbitrary rule when all the functions of government are exercised by a single person or institution. The growing corruption in Nigeria can be traced to people holding power at the federal, state and local government levels. Corruption does not involve just people in government, but also to people in both private and public positions and even traditional rulers.

In order to appreciate the magnitude of corruption in Nigeria today, it is imperative for this paper to make a comparison of the standard of living of the people now and prior to the democratic rule in 1999. In a report titled: “National Human Development Report (NHDR) 2000-2001” as cited in the Analysis Magazine reported in Minjibir (2008), it was stated that:

- i. 48.5 % of Nigerians that were below poverty line in 1998 had been revised upward to 66-70% with all the different dimensions of poverty aggravated.
- ii. There was a growing threat to the bare physical survival of the people. Ironically, this decline in living standards of the people has happened at the time when the revenue of the government increased from N154.83b in the last 6 month of 1999 to N723.92B in 2001.

The former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo presented a bill to the National Assembly on “the prohibition and punishment of bribery, corruption, and other related offences bill of 1999”. Obasanjo's regime has certainly fired the most critical shot at corruption in Nigeria in recent times. At the federal level, it cannot be business as usual. Corruption has also spread to both the state and local government levels, as well as some decentralized centers of power and authority (Minjibir, 2008).

Thomson (2004) reports on the then National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) that:

There were powerful views on the problems of corruption. ... You need tip them to get them to rectify a problem, said one, while some people in the focus group thought transformer were being vandalized by NEPA officials to warrant either replacement or repair of the transformer.

Corrupt Practices in Teacher Training Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are various forms of corruption in Educational Institutions. For instance, at the student level, the most common form is examination malpractice. Onyechere (Minjibir, 2008) opines that any nation that allows examination malpractice to thrive is giving a dangerous orientation for future leaders who may acquire education without character and learning.

Instances of corruption can be seen in different levels in NTTIs. For instance, at the teachers' level, there is the teacher-student affair, especially between male teachers and female students. Giving and taking of bribe in the form of gifts for teachers, supervisors and invigilators is also prevalent. There are Continuous Assessment malpractices where unjustifiable 'bonus marks' are awarded to undeserving students. Others are sale of the handouts by teachers, admission racketeering, doctoring results and accreditation malpractices. A whole semester's lectures are compressed into a few lectures that are not more than 20% of the time allocated for the course, thereby cheating both the students and the society at large (Minjibir, 2008).

Whawo (2015) identifies the following as corrupt practices in Nigerian Institutions:

1. Examination malpractices
2. Sex exchange for marks
3. Money for marks
4. Cultism
5. Impersonation
6. Truancy
7. False declaration of entry qualifications
8. Extortion of parents
9. Embezzlement of funds by students leadership

The Effects of Corruption on Nigeria's Education Industry

The effects of corruption on nation-building are not far-fetched. Corruption has adverse effects on social-economic development. The effects include the diversion of development resources for private gain, the misallocation of talent, lost tax revenue, negative impact on quality of infrastructure and public services and slowing economic growth. However, in relation to the education industry, as stated by Whawo (2015), the effects of corruption include the following:

- i. Production of half-baked graduates
- ii. Lowering education standard
- iii. Lack of respect for teachers
- iv. High rate of moral decadence
- v. Mediocrity
- vi. Quest for materialism instead of excellence
- vii. Inability to defend certificates
- viii. Erosion of moral values
- ix. Production of non-employable graduates
- x. Employment of unqualified staff

The Concept of Quality Assurance

The term 'quality assurance' refers to "systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement" (Vroeijenstijn, 1995). Harvey and Greenas (Watty, 2003) identify five qualities which can be summarized as follows:

- a. **Exception:** Distinctive, embodies in excellence, passing a minimum set of standards.
- b. **Perfection:** Zero defects, getting things right the first time (focus on process as opposed to inputs and outputs).
- c. **Fitness for purpose:** Relates quality to a purpose defined by the provider.
- d. **Value for money:** A focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring outputs against inputs. A populist notion of quality (government).
- e. **Transformation:** A qualitative change; education is about doing something to the student as opposed to something for the consumer. Includes concepts of enhancing and empowering.

The Need for Quality Assurance in NTTIs

The need for quality assurance in Nigerian schools is vital in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. However, the following, as stated by Ibara (2015), are the major needs of quality assurance in Nigeria's education system:

- (i) To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education,
- (ii) To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels,
- (iii) To assist in monitoring and supervision of education,
- (iv) To determine the quality of the teacher input,
- (v) To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education, and

- (vi) To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control
- (vii) It would ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

Approaches to quality assurance

Different approaches to quality that can be taken to ensure quality assurance in teacher education. Quality assurance agencies can adopt one or more of these according to different educational systems and traditions (Woodhouse, 1999). The three main approaches to quality are accreditation, assessment and audit. Accreditation and evaluation (which include assessment and audit) differ in their perspectives. Both accreditation and assessment monitor the quality of teaching and learning, while audit focuses on the internal procedures adopted in order to achieve its objectives. They are explained as follows:

a. Accreditation: Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution or programme meets a threshold standard and qualifies for a certain status. Obtaining accreditation may have implications for teacher education. The focus of accreditation is comprehensive, examining the mission, resources and procedures of a HEI or programme (Dill, 2000). The output of an accreditation is a yes/no decision, though graduations are also possible (Woodhouse, 1999). Accreditation is a widely used method in quality assurance in developed countries. In the United States, accreditation of both programmes and institutions is the main quality

assurance method (Eaton, 2004). Accreditation is used on a regular basis by about half of the European quality assurance agencies. This method is frequently used in German-speaking countries, in the associated countries, by the Dutch and also Nordic and southern agencies. The accreditation of institutions is done on a regular basis by 22% of the agencies in Europe, e.g. by German, Austrian agencies and some in the associated countries (Eaton, 2004).

b. Assessment: Assessment is an evaluation that makes graded judgements about quality. In this respect it goes beyond accreditation that makes a binary judgement (Dill, 2000). Assessment asks “How good are your outputs?” The output of an assessment is a quantitative evaluation, a grade (whether numeric, literal or descriptive) (Woodhouse, 1999). Programme and institutional assessments are widely used by European QAAs. Programme assessment is one of the most frequently used methods. It is done on a regular basis by 53% of the European agencies, mainly in the Nordic, Dutch or English-speaking countries. Focusing on programmes is particularly frequent in the non-university sector.

c. Audit: A quality audit checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own explicit or implicit objectives (Woodhouse, 2000). As cited in Woodhouse (2000), “ISO (Standards New Zealand, 1994) defines quality audit as a three-part process, checking 1) the suitability of the planned quality procedures in relation to the stated objectives; 2) the conformity of the actual quality activities with the plans; and 3) the effectiveness of the activities in achieving the stated objectives”. Audit

asks, 'Are your processes effective?' The output is a description of the extent to which the claims are correct (Woodhouse, 1999). Academic audits are carried out at the institution level. However, unlike accreditation or assessment, audits do not aim at making a comprehensive review of programme's resources and activities, nor do they directly evaluate the quality of teaching or learning. Rather audits focus on those processes implemented in order to assure and improve the quality teaching and learning (Dill, 2000). In Europe institutional audit is regularly used by 28% of the quality assurance agencies. It is used on a regular basis in Ireland and the UK and by some of the agencies in Nordic and associated countries.

The Rationale for Quality Assurance in Education

Sustained effort to develop a quality assurance culture in education is obvious for many reasons. These as stated by Ibara (2015) include:

1. In a developing nation like Nigeria, education remains a major factor for eradicating poverty and providing high level human capital for national development.
2. Universally, one of the fundamental objectives of universities is to promote national development through intellectual inquiry, and the transmission of specialized knowledge.
3. Teacher education is fundamental to the creation of a knowledge economy in all nations (World Bank, 1999).

4. In recent times, despite the increase in students' population, the quality of graduates has failed to meet labour market expectations and international competitiveness. Majority of these graduates also fail to secure jobs due to inadequate preparation for labour market and low absorptive capacity of the market (Babalola, Adedeji & Erwat, 2007).
5. Teacher education is capital intensive with huge investment that could be run as a business venture and subject to continuous demand for accountability. Prudential management and improved quality are necessary in the system to ensure it is sustainable without lowering standards. In this regard, each university should introduce its quality assurance culture to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research.
6. In the era of globalization and high competition for the global economy, Nigeria cannot afford to operate a system of education that compromises standards.
7. Emerging global trends and competitiveness underscore the need to meet and exceed students and other stakeholders changing tastes and expectations.

Constraints to Quality Assurance in Nigeria's Teacher Education

The constraints to quality assurance, as stated by Babalola (Ibara, 2015) are as follows:

- a. Tendency to increase access without much attention to quality issues.

- b. Rapid expansion without adequate strategic plan to ensure quality.
- c. Unethical practices by parents, students and staff at various stages in the process of admission, administration, instruction, examination, supervision, certification, graduation and absorption into the labour market.
- d. Poor accountability and transparency in governance.
- e. Shortage of academic staff in some fields.
- f. Double commitment by some lecturers.
- g. Lack of enforcement of sanctions.
- h. Inadequate infrastructure and infrastructural decay.
- i. Human capital flight or brain drain, and
- j. Lack of sustainable funding.

The Strategies of Curbing Corruption as a Means for Ensuring Quality Assurance in Nigerian Teacher Education

Bennett (Minjibir, 2008) proposes the measures to curb corruption as a means for ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian schools. These measures can be short-term, medium term or long term. They are discussed as follows:

Short-Term Measures

1. Enlightenment of public: To curb corruption as a tool for ensuring quality assurance, there is the need

for public awareness about the cost associated with corruption. The public need to understand that there is a direct link between corruption and the inadequate provision of educational facilities in NTTIs. Leaflets can be printed and circulated, posting bill boards adverts, organizing meetings and workshops with parents and teachers will help in converting corruption in NTTIs.

2. Raise awareness among teachers, students and parents: Teachers, students and parents need to be educated on their rights and obligations and even limitations. Teachers need to understand the expectations on them by the society.
3. Control of teachers' employment and payments by school management committees: Teachers' employment and remuneration for service should be directly controlled by school management committees. Where the performance of teachers directly affects their salary, they will be more inclined to perform according to their contractual obligations.

Medium-Term Measures

1. Access to information: Where information is freely accessible, the chances of money being diverted for personal aggrandizement and greediness will be minimized. Thus, access to information and the ability of citizens to monitor educational system are very important in the fight against corruption.

2. **Public procurement reform:** Known as ‘due process’, the public procurement act or reform aims at making sure that public goods are procured without inflating the prices or contracts. In 2001, the Federal Government Report on Public Procurement revealed that billions of naira were lost over the last two decades as a result of the flagrant abuse of procedures for the award of public contracts.
3. **Improved accountability:** These are structures that are relevant to teachers and other civil servants associated with the educational sector. These can be both internal, such as rules and regulations, dedicated agencies, such as examination bodies, and accreditation agencies and external mechanisms, such as auditors, independent anti-corruption agencies and whistle-blower protection schemes.

Long-Term Measures

1. **Good teaching:** The teaching profession is now open to everybody and thus has affected the quality of our teachers. A recent publication by Kano State Teachers Service Board for 2005 revealed that out of a total of 8097 teachers in schools in Kano State, only 4646 (57%) are professionals. The rest, 3451 (43%), are non-professional. Thus, any teacher with no knowledge of the ethics of teaching would likely commit a lot of atrocities while performing his duties.
2. **Books for students and teachers:** Lack of books and the high cost of those available are likely to cause corruption. Teachers cannot teach well when they do

not have books to prepare their lessons. Students are forced to rely on handouts from lecturers who can take advantage of their students to exploit them. A well-equipped and functional library must be available in NTTIs.

3. Integrity of schools as public institutions: It is on record that schools accreditations, inspection reports and visitation panel reports are scored on false presentations, deceit, forgeries and other forms of corrupt technicalities. Thus, to curb corruption as a tool of quality assurance every Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) in Nigeria must be able to put itself through the rigors of approval and accreditation openly and honestly. Students and teachers should begin to expose institutions that engage in accreditation and other forms of fraud.

Other strategies that can curb corruption as a means for ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian schools include:

- a. All personnel in NTTIs should undergo short courses that will expose them to ethical practices in teaching.
- b. NTTIs should prepare and publish a code of conduct accompanied by training employees to enable them tounderstand the standards and values in such code of conduct. It should contain prescribed penalties for erring academics.
- c. Teachers or lecturers should receive awards of excellence when they comply with code of conduct.
- d. Members of the general public should be educated on the negative consequences of corruption,

especially in educational institutions, where moral character is inculcated to the students. They should understand that forcing or enticing lecturers or teachers to indulge in corruption and engage in other unprofessional practices when performing their duties is disastrous and its repercussions will spilt to the next generations.

- e. Teachers or lecturers should be made to understand that corrupt practices are also morally and religiously unacceptable.
- f. A system of reporting corrupt practices should be devised in such a way that students, lecturers, heads of departments and other members of academic community can easily channel grievances to disciplinary committees handling cases of such misconduct. Students should be encouraged to report cases to their H.O.D.s or Students affairs departments in writing or verbally.

Conclusions and recommendations

Corruption in Nigeria is systematic. To address the problem, a systematic approach is needed. To curb and eventually eradicate corruption, children, youth and adults must be given the power to distinguish right from wrong. In order to prevent corruption from happening at all, Nigeria should emphasize transparency, integrity and accountability in all their private and public transactions. Based on the conclusions, the following suggestions are made:

1. All schools should introduce moral education to empower children with the spirit of stewardship, while adults live exemplary lives, reflecting truth, kindness, dignity of labour and integrity.
2. There is the need for societal re-orientation of the minds and hearts of Nigerians for them to understand that corruption stagnates a nation's developmental objectives.
3. The Anti-Corruption Law should be enforced to its fullest and without fear and favor.
4. Improvement of Sociopolitical and Economic Life is another weapon against corruption in Nigeria. The multiplying effects of this improvement will reduce the tendency of public servants to demand and take bribes and get involved in other corrupt practices.

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