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## Research Article

### SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE OF NIGERIA

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#### ABSTRACT

This is a survey research designed to obtain from tutors and students, solutions to corrupt practices in secondary schools in Delta State of Nigeria. Secondary schools teachers and students were randomly chosen to respond to an open-ended questionnaire to obtain information for answering three research questions. The respondents were specifically demanded to suggest ways to achieve a corruption-free secondary education and to tackle fraud within the system. They were also required to propose ways to institute transparency and accountability in secondary schools. Very strong suggestions from both staff and students agreed that corrupt persons should be punished while good leadership and morals should be rewarded. Qualified teachers should be employed without bribery and should be well paid. Provision of adequate instructional facilities in schools and rules and regulation on corruption, examination malpractice and extortion of students by teachers, were also advocated. On the basis of the findings, some implications which the research outcome has for educational planning were proposed.

#### INTRODUCTION

The cry of the populace against corruption in Nigeria which inspired a former Head of State, President Olusegun Obasanjo to sponsor the bill for the Anti-Corruption Law and the setting up of the two anti-graft agencies, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, ICPC, has done Nigeria well. The clamour now is how to eradicate it from Nigeria, possibly with the speed and aggression in which Ebola virus disease was eliminated from Nigeria. In earlier investigations, it was concluded that there is corruption in Nigeria and that it has done much havoc to secondary education in Nigeria. These have opened up the zeal to synthesize strategies to provide solutions to corrupt practices in secondary schools. The staff and students in secondary schools who gladly identified the corrupt practices in the system must again be contacted to offer implementable strategies. The effort, time and resources spent to battle corruption out of the school systems is worth it; virtues/vices that thrive in the school system are propagated fast through the ever-increasing population of learners and teachers that naturally have much influence on members of the society.

#### The Problem

The mere identification of corrupt practices that plague secondary education in Nigeria does not solve the problem. Efforts must be made to evolve solutions. To ensure the effectiveness of possible solutions, they should emanate from the key players in the secondary schools. The problem of this study, therefore, is to find out if there are any feasible solutions to the problem of corruption in secondary schools. In other words, what are the solutions to the corruption problem in secondary schools in Delta State in Nigeria?

#### Research Questions

- Q<sub>1</sub>: What are the strategies to adopt to ensure corruption-free secondary education?
- Q<sub>2</sub>: In what ways can fraud in secondary education be tackled?
- Q<sub>3</sub>: How can transparency and accountability be instituted in secondary schools?

#### Related Literature

The Cambodia (2002) project undertaken by the Transparency Task Force (TTF) on integrating anti-corruption into school

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curricula, recommended the inclusion of two fundamental questions in textbooks in use in secondary schools; viz

- Where does the income of your family come from? (A. from honest work, B. from fraud of Public or State assets?)
- Why does corruption breed social vices? Explain this fact based on the content of the scene.
- In Moldova (2004), the underlisted measures to reduce corruption in schools are worthy of note:
- increasing financial support from the Government;
- increasing the punishment for people involved in corruption;
- increasing the transparency of admissions and examinations in educational institutions;
- strengthening supervision of teaching staff;
- improving the examination system, e.g. using computerised tests instead of oral examinations; and
- conduction of anti-corruption propaganda campaigns in schools and universities.

In examining education corruption, reform and growth in post-Soviet Russia, Osipian (2012) argued that high level education corruption could harm total factor productivity over time; it does so by lowering the level of human capital and slowing down the pace of its accumulation. He conjectured that corruption in education could be reduced by introducing changes in the economic structure.

And in seeking for possible ways to reduce corruption where educational aids are involved, Fritz (2008) suggested that new aids modalities be exploited instead of the usual traditional budgetary method. He opines that resorting to the use of aids modalities does not significantly affect allocation and accountability even in areas with low level of aids. Donor countries of these aids certainly require some control measures which could be absent when budgetary provisions are used.

Ogungbola (2013) lamented the Nigerian situation in corruption when he declared that incompetence in the education sector results from mismanagement of funds meant for educational projects, the appointment of corrupt politicians in Governing Councils of universities and the prevalence of poor learning environment.

In other words, he stresses that corruption has weakened the Nigeria's education sector. It may not be an overstatement that corruption has a deadly effect on all the sectors of the economy and not just education, and thus must be tackled effectively. In describing what corruption entails, Ayobamu (2011) explained that it is a form of organized crime that involves more than one party and it takes the forms of bribery, fraud and misuse or abuse of power. He proposed three (3) solutions the problem of corruption, viz:

- social transformation involving a transformation through the education sector;
- enforcement of Anti-Corruption Law to its fullest and without fear or favour; and
- improvement of socio-political and economic life.

The proposals among several authors agree on how to avoid corruption. They suggest that corrupt officers should be taken to courts of laws and possibly dismissed if found guilty and that poverty should be eradicated as it is a major cause of

corruption. They also favour an enlightenment campaign to educate the populace on how corruption negatively affects development.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a follow-up survey study that is directed at staff and students in secondary schools. It was meant to extract from them suggested strategies of providing solutions to corrupt practices in the secondary school system. All the 18 secondary schools randomly selected from the three (3) senatorial districts in an earlier study were utilised. A total of 350 tutors (150 males and 200 females) and 300 students made up of equal males and females, were randomly chosen as respondents. The 12 research assistants were able to retrieve administered questionnaires from 286 or 81.71% of the 350 tutors and 231 or 77% of the students. It was difficult to make any useful meaning from the responses of few tutors and many of the students for their inability to write good English.

### Presentation of Data

The information obtained from the open-ended questionnaires are presented in Tables to provide answers to the research questions. The responses are presented in cumulative frequencies and simple percentages in decreasing order

- Q<sub>1</sub>: What are the strategies to adopt to ensure a corruption-free secondary education?

The responses of staff and students are separated into Tables 1a and 1b, at least to highlight the zeal in them to tackle corruption in the secondary schools. To the tutors, offenders should be punished, external examinations properly supervised and improved payment to teachers who must be well qualified for the job.

**Table 1a. Strategies suggested by staff to achieve corruption-free secondary education in Nigeria**

S/No.	Suggested Corruption-Free Strategies	C.f	%
1.	Punish those caught	40	14.98
2.	Monitor external examinations properly	30	11.24
3.	Employ only qualified teachers	30	11.24
4.	Better pay for teachers	24	8.99
5.	JTF to arrest offenders and prosecuted by EFCC and ICPC	21	7.87
6.	Organize seminars to sensitize people on evils of corruption	15	5.62
7.	Strong moral education in schools	12	4.49
8.	Good leadership by examples	9	3.37
9.	Provide a good education policy	8	3.00
10.	Pay salaries on time	8	3.00
11.	Admit only qualified students	8	3.00
12.	Implement existing education ethics	6	2.25
13.	Students should write examination without assistance	6	2.25
14.	Employ enough teachers	6	2.25
15.	Parents to regularly check their children's school work	6	2.25
16.	Appoint only God-fearing persons as Principals	5	1.87
17.	Force teachers to teach their lessons	5	1.87
18.	Thorough and regular audit of school account records	4	1.50
19.	Employ teachers without taking bribes from them	4	1.50
20.	Parents to wake up on proper upbringing of children	4	1.50
21.	Revoke the certificates of offenders	3	1.12
22.	Promote people based on merit	3	1.12
23.	Effective examination supervision	3	1.12
24.	Ban the sale of irrelevant/unapproved textbooks	3	1.12
25.	Enforce objective marking of scripts	2	0.75
26.	Stop immoral dressing	1	0.37
27.	Ban cultism with severe punishment	1	0.37
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>267</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 1b. Strategies suggested by students to achieve corruption-free secondary education in Nigeria**

S/No	Suggested Corruption-Free Strategies	C.f	%
1.	Good leadership/good school management	24	16.67
2.	Punish people caught in examination malpractice	18	12.50
3.	Put security in schools, especially during periods of examination	15	10.42
4.	Avoid bribery	15	10.42
5.	Wipe out examination malpractice to improve standard	12	8.33
6.	Social justice is required	12	8.33
7.	Students should be serious with their studies	9	6.25
8.	Make law against cultism and enforce it	9	6.25
9.	Advise students to keep only good companies	6	4.17
10.	Make rules and regulations and enforce them	5	3.47
11.	Teachers should come early to school	4	2.78
12.	Teachers and Principals should show love to students	4	2.78
13.	Fear of God	3	2.08
14.	Standardize school fees	3	2.08
15.	Students should avoid sexual immorality	2	1.39
16.	Enforce punctuality to school	2	1.39
17.	Parents should monitor their children	1	0.69
TOTAL		144	100.00

The suggested use of a military Joint Task Force (JTF) to arrest offenders for prosecution by the two anti-graft bodies in Nigeria, EFCC and ICPC, shows the height of dislike of the teachers for corruption in the school system. It is interesting to note that the students opined that good leadership devoid of corruption is the best antidote to corruption in schools.

Their desire for the punishment of offenders is in agreement with that of their teachers. Students want examination malpractice to be exterminated by providing security during examinations and by meting punishment on offenders. While students should be encouraged to work hard, enforceable rules and regulations on all forms of corruption should be put in place.

**Table 2a. Ways suggested by staff to tackle fraud in secondary education**

S/No.	Ways to Tackle Fraud	C.f	%
1.	Appropriate punishment/21 years jail term for corrupt persons	61	25.00
2.	Regular auditing of school accounts/use of subvention	35	14.34
3.	Monitoring of school accounts by Government	31	12.70
4.	Improve staff salary	30	12.30
5.	Make use of EFCC and ICPC	19	7.79
6.	Constant supervision of schools	15	6.15
7.	Set up committee against fraud	8	3.28
8.	Good exemplary leadership	6	2.46
9.	Seminars on awareness on repercussions of fraud.	4	1.64
10.	Employ only qualified teachers based on want	4	1.64
11.	Adequate funding of schools	3	1.23
12.	Stop collection of illegal money	3	1.23
13.	Make law against fraud and enforce it	2	0.82
14.	Provide adequate teaching facilities	2	0.82
15.	Reduce school population	1	0.41
TOTAL		224	100.00

**Table 2b. Ways Suggested By Students To Tackle Fraud In Secondary Education**

S/No.	Ways to Tackle Fraud	C.f	%
1.	Prosecute and punish/imprison offenders	19	14.50
2.	Expose and punish bad students	15	11.45
3.	Teachers should teach effectively	15	11.45
4.	No taking of bribe/illegal money	12	9.16
5.	Only qualified teachers should be employed	11	8.40
6.	Prohibit use of cell phones by students	10	7.63
7.	Enforce law on corruption	9	6.87
8.	Warn teachers of their bad habits	6	4.58
9.	Appoint only good persons as Principals	6	4.58
10.	Government should set up group to fight corruption	4	3.05
11.	Government should reduce rate of crime in the society	4	3.04
12.	War against cultism/expel cultists	4	3.04
13.	Enforce punctuality to school	3	2.29
14.	Give orientation to staff and students	3	2.29
15.	Audit our schools monthly	2	1.53
16.	Emphasize hard work and honesty	2	1.53
17.	Frequent monitoring of staff from Ministry of Education	2	1.53
18.	All staff and students should dress properly	2	1.53
19.	Students should be independent during examinations	2	1.53
TOTAL		131	100.00

- Q<sub>2</sub>: In what ways can fraud in secondary education be tackled?

Both teachers (in Table 2a) and students (in Table 2b) agree that severe punishment should be given to those who commit fraud. Regular auditing of schools accounts, supervision of teachers and improvement of teachers' salaries are stressed by the teachers as measures for tackling fraud. The teachers also suggest setting up an enlightenment campaign committee, good leadership, provision of adequate learning facilities and a reduction of school population. The students opined that bribery and collection of illegal money from them be stopped and teachers warned against bad habits and the prohibition of cell phones by students. The call on government to wage war on cultism and to set up anti-corruption committees. All the suggestions made by teachers and students, irrespective of their cumulative frequencies, are considered in this study as important ingredients for solving the problem of corruption in the country.

- Q<sub>3</sub>: How can transparency and accountability be instituted in secondary education?

and rewarded as well. For effective results, class-sizes should be reduced and only those who pass their examinations should be promoted. It is pertinent that the students emphasized the proper training of staff and students in good morals. To them, provision of jobs to job seekers, employment of only intelligent teachers, reward of good leadership and punishment of all offenders, irrespective of status, are ways of encouraging transparency and accountability in schools. Just like their tutors, they suggested a sustained campaign to enlighten people on the evils of corruption so that it can be hated.

## RESULTS

The most prominent solutions to corruption suggested by staff and students in secondary schools are summarised below.

- Corrupt person should be punished/imprisoned without favour.
- Good leadership should be encouraged and rewarded.

**Table 3a. Staff Suggestions On Institution Of Transparency And Accountability In Secondary Education**

S/No	Suggested Measures	C.f	%
1.	Strong monitoring team from Ministry of Education	41	22.53
2.	Special auditing every three months	25	13.74
3.	Punish misconduct/dismiss proven corrupt staff	25	13.74
4.	Appoint/vote only God-fearing people into office	14	7.69
5.	Good pay/welfare package for teachers	13	7.14
6.	Teach good morals/conduct in schools/civic education	12	6.59
7.	Encourage good leadership/governance	12	6.59
8.	Provide individual files for each individual fees records	8	4.40
9.	Orientation of consequences of corruption in schools	8	4.40
10.	Always reward good leadership	7	3.85
11.	Institute good accounting system	6	3.30
12.	Proper training of all personnel in the school system	3	1.65
13.	Employ only teachers who have the fear of God	2	1.10
14.	Government to be honest/show good examples	2	1.10
15.	Change the heart through rebranding	2	1.10
16.	Reduce class-size	1	0.55
17.	No pass, no promotion policy to be maintained	1	0.55
TOTAL		182	100.00

**Table 3b. Students' Suggestions On Institution Of Transparency And Accountability In Secondary Education**

S/No.	Suggested Measures	C.f	%
1.	Train teachers and students in good behaviour/morals	21	25.00
2.	Employ only good and intelligent teachers	18	21.43
3.	Provide job opportunities	10	11.90
4.	Reward good leadership	9	10.71
5.	Punish offenders/no sacred cow	6	7.14
6.	Provide good learning environment/materials in schools	6	7.14
7.	Campaign using mass media	4	4.76
8.	Parents to give good training to their children	4	4.76
9.	Investigate schools monthly without notice	3	3.57
10.	Government to assist parents to pay their children's fees	2	2.38
11.	Pay our teachers well	1	1.19
TOTAL		84	100.00

The responses used for answering the third question are cumulatively few but very important. A total of 44 or 22.53% opined that the Ministry of Education should thoroughly monitor schools and teachers. Teachers also favour regular school auditing, punishment or dismissal of corrupt persons to promote transparency and accountability. Appointment of qualified and God-fearing persons as teachers and school heads is also advocated by them. Good leadership is to be emphasised

- Only qualified teachers should be appointed.
- Teachers should be well paid.
- Provision of adequate learning materials and reduction of class-sizes.
- Rules/laws on corruption, cultism and examination malpractice should be enforced.
- Campaign and seminars on corruption should be sustained.

- Regular supervision of teachers and auditing of school accounts.
- Strong moral education for children at home as well as in school.
- Demand of bribe for employment of teachers and illegal collection of money from students from students should be stopped.

### **Conclusion**

It may be concluded from the findings above that the antidote to corrupt practices in secondary schools in Nigeria must anchor on good and exemplary leadership, synthesis of rules and regulations that are faithfully implemented and appropriate sanctions on proven cases of corruption.

A campaign for public enlightenment on the evils of corruption in the society could produce good results.

### **Implication for Educational Planning**

- Good leadership and morals should be rewarded in schools.
- ICT should be utilised in teaching, learning and in examination to curb examination malpractice.

- Less reliance on paper qualification but more on practical ability to perform should be emphasized in employment.
- Adequate punishment should be given on proven cases of corruption.

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