

Synthesis of Solutions to Corruption in Primary Education in Delta State of Nigeria

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Abstract

This survey of primary school teachers in Delta State of Nigeria, was undertaken to evolve actionable strategies for providing solution to corruption in the primary school system. Three research questions were drawn up to establish the opinions of the respondents (teachers) on ways to achieve a corruption-free primary education, tackle fraud in the schools and institutionalise transparency and accountability in them. The data obtained from open-ended questionnaires administered on primary school teachers showed that among several opinions, the provision of adequate school facilities, care for the welfare of teachers, combating of examination malpractices, reward for good behaviour and hard work and punishment for established cases of corruption, were suggested by them. Other suggestions include expanding the provision of modern school infrastructure and equipment which should be securely protected by host communities, appointment of internal and external auditors to check school account records regularly, were offered. Committees made up of local government officials as well as Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) should equally be set up to tackle all forms of malpractices in the schools.

Keywords: Corruption, primary education, institutional transparency.

Background

The utmost desire of most Nigerians is to combat corruption in the country as it has adversely affected the economic and socio-political systems of the country. The education sector of the economy must be involved in this crusade, not only in words but mainly by visible and positive actions. For this reason efforts must be made to tackle corruption in primary schools, the hair root that initiates nourishment in academics.

In a previous study, primary school teachers in Delta State of Nigeria decried the prevalence of corrupt practices in that level of education system; they also enumerated some of the evils it has done to primary education. To a great extent, this is a good indication of their willingness to be part of the solution to the problem.

The primary school teachers must be requested to offer possible solutions to the corruption problem. Transparency, account ability and the transcendental virtue of fear of God must be added and integrated in the crusade against corruption if we are to succeed. It is expected that the teachers would provide specific and effective suggestions from their wealth of experience that will be realistic for implementation. The primary schools cannot be allowed to be breeding nursery for corruption in Nigeria.

There is a wave of corrupt practices in the school system in Nigeria. Since corruption is an enemy to educational pursuit, strategies to expose and exterminate it must be devised. It is this search light that was beamed on primary education segment in Delta State of Nigeria in this research. In summary, the problem of this investigation is to identify implementable options to achieve a corruption-free primary education and how to institute transparency and accountability in the system.

Research Questions

1. What strategies can be adopted to achieve a corruption-free primary education in Delta State of Nigeria?
2. How can fraud be tackled in primary education?
3. How can transparency and accountability be instituted in primary schools in Nigeria?

Review of Literature

While proposing remedies during Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda (ACCU) week (2006), the participants recommended an improvement for civil society monitoring of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and that it should include both teachers and parents. In other words, Parents-Teachers-Associations should be mandated to introduce Corruption Integrity Packs to enable them verify teacher conduct, quality of educational materials, infrastructure and services under the UPE programme. And to Tanaka (2001), the first step in checking corruption is to identify physical space where corruption may occur and locating teachers and offices with monopolistic powers. The political will of senior staff would then be needed to stimulate teachers and staff morale. He advised that those who shun corruption even though they work in corrupted setting, should be identified and adequately compensated.

In the opinion of Mindphiles (2006), a monitoring team is needed to reduce government employment to realistic size for realistic salaries. In addition, anti-corruption measures should include, privatisation of the execution of public services and the use of general government computer network to speed up financial reporting. In an Anti-Corruption Day Youth Camp in Moldova (2004), the measures proposed to reduce corruption in schools included financial support from government, increasing the punishment on people involved in corruption and increasing transparency of admissions and examinations. And in Cambodia (2004), civic education and home economics were identified as primary school subjects suitable for anti-corruption teaching. Stories and illustrations that address values and friction between personal ambitions and needs of the community may also produce good results.

Mthiyane (2015) was strongly inspired by the declaration of David Chonco which emphasized the policy of zero corruption in the public sector in Zululand. In this regard, he wondered why food meant for pupils should be pilfered, class desks and chairs be carried away for household use and school's grass cutting machine be used for commercial purposes. Mthiyane then opined that primary schools are in poor state for lack of maintenance by appointed financial committees as there was no accountability of how money was spent.

The corruption scandal in Sichuan schools was presented by Wikipedia (2008) to show how corruption adversely affected the quality of construction of school buildings in China. It was strongly alleged that the poor quality of the school buildings caused their collapse at the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Wikipedia quoted Caijing as saying, "earthquake intensity exceeding the designed resistance does not mean that buildings built to quality specifications will definitely collapse. Even if they collapse, there are different ways in which they collapse and variation within building design. Such collapses should not necessarily lead to heavy human casualties".

Methodology

The reasoning behind this investigation is to obtain from the primary school teachers their suggested strategies to stop corrupt practices in primary schools. They had earlier identified corrupt practices in the schools and the evils which corruption has on primary education.

Respondents were randomly chosen from 18 primary schools in the three senatorial districts in Delta State. The pupils were excluded as they were too young to give useful information.

Of the 360 teachers that were given the open-ended questionnaire to complete, 349 or 96.94% returned theirs. The responses of the teachers were collated to answer the research questions. The 14 research assistants did a nice job.

Presentation of Data

The responses obtained from the questionnaires are tabulated in frequencies and presented in decreasing order with corresponding percentages. It is observed with dismay that some of the teachers could not express themselves properly in writing.

Q₁: What strategies can be adopted to achieve corruption-free primary education in Nigeria?

Table 1

Strategies to Achieve Corruption-Free Primary Education in Nigeria

S/No	Strategies	c.f	%
1.	Provide standard teaching materials and infrastructure	60	20.20
2.	Proper school supervision	42	14.14
3.	Pay teachers regularly and at the end of each month	36	12.12
4.	Enforce rules and regulations /examination ethics	21	7.07
5.	Punish/sack those found to be corrupt	18	6.06
6.	Provide incentives/good conditions of service to teachers	15	5.05
7.	Government to look at the welfare of teachers	15	5.05
8.	Prompt up teachers to be serious with their jobs	15	5.05
9.	Good governance	12	4.04
10.	Combat examination malpractice to extinction	12	4.04
11.	Encourage pupils to be self-reliant	9	3.03
12.	Improve moral education/reward good morals	9	3.03
13.	Federal Government should implement Teacher Salary Structure	6	2.02
14.	Provide free primary education	6	2.02
15.	Ensure completion of Scheme of Work by teachers	6	2.02
16.	Verify properly the credentials of teachers	3	1.01
17.	Employ only qualified teachers	3	1.01
18.	Assign jobs to teachers on the basis of their specialization	3	1.01
19.	Educationists should be in charge of distributions to schools	3	1.01
20.	Appoint Headteachers based on merit	2	0.67
21.	Committee of PTA to monitor school activities	1	0.34
	Total	297	100.00

In Table 1, the teachers strongly opine that the best ways to arrest corruption in primary education include the provision of instructional materials and infrastructure in schools, proper school supervision, regular payment of teachers' salaries and enforcement of rules and regulations on examination ethics.

To the teachers, those proven to be corrupt should be punished/sacked. Also prominent in their suggestions are the implementation of good conditions of service to teachers, encouragement of good governance and a total war on examination malpractice.

Q₂: How can fraud be tackled in primary education?

Table 2

Ways to Tackle Fraud in Primary Schools

S/No.	Options on Tackling Fraud	C.f	%
1.	Prosecute corrupt teachers	42	18.67
2.	Pay teachers as at when due	33	14.67
3.	Frequent school inspection	30	13.33
4.	Give incentives to teachers	15	6.67
5.	PTA to be vigilant	15	6.67
6.	Provide adequate instructional materials	15	6.67
7.	Children should be well taught	15	6.67
8.	Teachers should be continually screened	12	5.33
9.	Pay teachers all their benefits	9	4.00
10.	Cleaning should start with NUT and Government officials	6	2.67
11.	Execution of projects to be faithfully monitored	6	2.67
12.	Honesty should be rewarded	6	2.67
13.	Fight examination malpractice using EFCC	6	2.67
14.	Wage war against illegal collections	6	2.67
15.	Make laws against corruption	3	1.33
16.	Schools should be adequately funded	3	1.33
17.	No pass, no promotion	3	1.33
	Total	225	100.00

Fraud in primary education, according to the respondents, can be tackled through prosecution of corrupt ones, paying teachers well and as at when due, regular supervision, effective activation of the works of the PTA and proper teaching of pupils.

The teachers themselves opine that they should be constantly screened. They suggested war against examination malpractice and illegal collections of money from students by teachers. The principle of no pass, no promotion, should be adhered to.

Q₃ How can transparency and accountability be instituted in primary schools in Nigeria?

Table 3

Ways to Institute Transparency and Accountability in Primary Schools

S/No	Suggested Ways	C.f	%
1.	Teachers to live by good examples	18	12.86
2.	Eradicate all forms of malpractice	12	8.57
3.	Appointments should be based on merit	12	8.57
4.	There should be reward for hardwork	12	8.57
5.	Use Religious Scriptures for daily Moral Instruction	9	6.43
6.	Government officials should show good examples	9	6.43
7.	Set audit panel to visit schools	9	6.43
8.	Pay teachers well	9	6.43
9.	Schools should be properly funded	9	6.43
10.	Good accounting system/records keeping in schools	8	5.71
11.	Encourage good leadership	6	4.29
12.	Appoint truthful and honest people to head schools	6	4.29
13.	Establish good rapport among teachers	3	2.14
14.	Restrict teachers from credit buying in schools	3	2.14
15.	Advocate for discipline among teachers and pupils	3	2.14
16.	Parents to show good examples to children	3	2.14
17.	Reward honesty and truthfulness	3	2.14
18.	No favouritism, no sacred cow	2	1.43
19.	Pay retired teachers their dues regularly	2	1.43
20.	Teachers should be made to defend their certificates	1	0.71
21.	Government should return all mission schools to the Missions	1	0.71
	Total	140	100.00

The third question is on how to institute transparency and accountability in primary schools. The suggestions of the teachers in this are shown on Table 3. At the top of the Table are the good examples to be shown by teachers, eradication of malpractices, employment of head teachers on merit, reward for hard work and the use of God's word to impart Moral Instruction. To the teachers, the establishment of good accounting system in schools that is subjected to regular auditing by government and appointment of honest and faithful school heads to ensure good leadership were also suggested.

It is also interesting to note that teachers appealed that they should be discouraged from the habit of credit purchases and that retired teachers' benefits should be promptly paid to them.

Summary of Findings

The information in this study has shown the findings below.

1. Corruption menace in primary schools can be solved, among other ways, by the provision of adequate and quality teaching materials, infrastructure, good school supervision and adequate payment and improved condition of service for teachers, the enforcement of existing rules and regulations, punishment of offenders and above all, the inculcation of the fear of God in the minds of all and sundry.
2. Fraudulent practices could be tackled by prompt payment of teachers, the prosecution and punishment of proven cases and regular school inspection. Parent-Teacher-Association is to keep vigilance on the business in school activities.
3. Answerability in primary schools could be fostered by good examples from teachers who must be appointed on merit, eradication of examination malpractice and reward for good behaviour and hard work.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that the problem of corruption in primary school in Delta State of Nigeria could be solved, among other strategies, by:

1. providing and maintaining instructional materials and ensuring adequate provision for teacher welfare;
2. proper sanctioning of corrupt teachers under the watchful eyes of government and Parent-Teacher-Association, P.T.A.;
3. encouraging proper moral upbringing of pupils and reward for good headship, honest hard work and behaviour; and
4. inculcating and entrenching the fear of God in the minds of proprietors, management, teachers and pupils is indispensable in the fight against corruption. Without the fear of God, the strategies identified cannot eradicate corruption in the education sector in Nigeria.

Implication for Educational Planning

Based on the findings in this study, the devises below were offered.

- i. Government and proprietors of primary schools should provide adequate school infrastructures and modern teaching materials in schools.
- ii. Good internal and external auditors be mandatorily put in place to check school accounts in schools.
- iii. Result-oriented and regular school supervision by the Local Primary Authority should be evolved and sustained.
- iv. Effective disciplinary/corrective measures should be applied without fear or favour on corrupt teachers.

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