

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION ON STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO CORRUPT PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the responses of Social Studies and non Social Studies students to corrupt practices in Nigeria. The sample consisted of 439 final year B.Ed. students of six selected tertiary institutions covering the four geo-political zones in Nigeria. The major instruments employed were an unstructured interview and a set of questionnaire whose items covered the following areas: giving and taking of bribes, fraudulent practices, election and examination mal-practices, and reporting of lost and found properties to the appropriate authorities. Frequency counts, percentages and T- test were used to analyze the data. The result revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in their tendency toward corrupt practices. One of the recommendations was the need to integrate citizenship education into the Social Studies curriculum at all levels of education. Anti – corruption clubs should be established in all schools to help in curbing corrupt tendencies of students.

Keyword: Corruption, Social Studies, Education.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption has become a serious threat to the moral, religious, social, economic and political foundations of Nigeria as a nation. Indeed, it is at the root of the presentation of Nigeria as a failed state by the international community. Nigeria has consecutively been put on top of the ladder of corruption rating by the Transparency International based on the transparency index from 1997-2003. Though an improvement was observed from 2004 – 2007, Nigeria still ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The increasing number of corruption cases and the inability of the anti – graft agencies to cope with the avalanche have become disturbing and of great concern not only to the federal government but

also to all peace loving Nigerians. It appears the main anti – graft bodies have become overwhelmed by the worsening incidence of corruption and its rapid spread.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Corruption

The concept of corruption, according to Abdullahi (1982), is "simple "bribery", whereby you could not get another Nigerian to perform his duty without receiving a material gratification". This is rather a narrow definition of corruption, for there are other practices apart from bribery that make up corruption. From a broader perspective, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition) defines corruption as dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour espe-

cially from someone with power. The Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reform (MAMSER, 1989) sees corruption as "when people try to get what they do not deserve by using money, tribe, ethnic connections, religion, family name, threats, harassment and other bad influences".

Transparency International (TI) defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Expanding on this definition, the Wikipedia free encyclopedia describes corruption as a general concept describing any organized, interdependent system in which part of the system is either not performing duties it was originally intended to, or performing them in an improper way, to the detriment of the system's original purpose. Examples are decomposition, political corruption, data corruption, linguistic corruption and so on. This paper is concerned with the political corruption. Political corruption refers to dysfunctions of a political system or institution in which government officials use their powers for illegitimate private gain through actions such as bribery, graft, embezzlement nepotism, extortion and so on.

It is clear from the various definitions, that employing immoral or impure means and procedures to satisfy one's needs or wants is corruption. Political corruption in Nigeria encompasses the use of official power and government resources for sordid and disreputable private gain.

Historical Trend of Corruption in Nigeria

Political corruption is not a recent development in Nigeria. Since the creation of modern public administration in the country, there have been cases of official mis-use of resources for personal enrichment. The rise

of public administration and the discovery of oil are two major events usually blamed for corrupt practices in the country. Over the years, the country has seen its wealth withered with little to show in living conditions of the common man in spite of the efforts put in place to curb it.

The first Republic, which lasted for six years (1960-1966), was terminated by military intervention because of the excesses of corrupt politicians. It is instructive to note that virtually every military regime, on coming to power, has justified its coup d'etat by accusing its predecessor of corruption and abuse of office. For, according to General Sani Abacha, on October 1, 1995:

"... Today, it is our generation that is trying to facilitate the political regeneration of our country after several failures and misdirection... We cannot achieve a stable democratic polity in the midst of dishonesty and corruption. These vices have crippled our various institutions which otherwise would be viable assets to our economic recovery. I gave the pledge of this administration that we would set the example by our own endeavours that we were prepared to travel any distance, bear any burden and seek every valid avenue in our undertaking to lay the bedrock of a lasting democracy for our country." (Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria, 1999).

The above is a big irony as Abacha's regime (1993-1998) has been rightly described by millions of Nigerians as the most corrupt since Nigeria attained independence with Abacha himself as the worst corruptionist. Not only did he tolerate and promote corruption among his lieutenants and friends so as to make them loyal to him, he also directly paid large sums of money to those who were not in public positions to support the regime's plan to perpetrate itself (CBCN, 1999).

Anti - Corruption Programmes

It is worthy of note that various administrations put certain programmes in place to curb corruption. These included the Ethical Revolution of the Shagari administration, War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of the Buhari-Idiagbon administration, Mass Mobilization for The Economic Recovery and Social Justice (MAMSER) of the Babangida administration, the National Orientation Programme of the Abacha administration. The coming to power of Obasanjo administration in 1999, ushered in a new commitment and determination to fight corruption. The establishment of Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) gave Obasanjo administration's programme a uniqueness and a hedge over the previous ones. The two agencies have investigated, convicted and brought to book many corrupt officers since inception. In spite of the legal backing however corruption is still endemic in the society.

Eyanro (1999) rightly observed that "they are not only corrupt but preach one thing and do another, could not lead by example and so many citizens do not take them serious". Ogundare (2001) argued that the problem of exemplary leadership for this country derives from lack of citizenship education which could provide in them behavioral characteristics of an effective citizen such as honesty, forbearance, fairplay and genuine loyalty to national ideals among others. Onifade (2002) also argued that many leaders are more interested in what they can get out of Nigeria in terms of material wealth rather than what they can contribute to the country. Moreover, their efforts could not succeed because there was probably (apart from political propaganda

and publicity), no effort to integrate such programmes into the school curriculum, and especially, Social Studies whose focus is citizenship education.

Effects of Corruption

The 2006 corruption perception index (CPI) by the Transparency International (TI) points to a strong correlation between corruption and poverty, with a concentration of impoverished states at the bottom of the ranking. The CPI scores countries on a scale from zero to ten, with zero indicating high level of perceived corrupt and ten indicating low level of perceived corrupt. The 2007 rating of Nigeria stood at 2.2 indicating the country is still one of the most corrupt in the world. According to the United Nation Development Programme Operative in Nigeria, corruption in government increases poverty by diverting resources to the rich people who can afford to pay bribes while such resources are taken away from the poor who cannot afford to pay bribe (UNDP Report, 1998). Philip (1999), saw this as an explanation for the plight of the poor in Nigeria which appears not to have been significantly influenced by the various poverty alleviation programmes due to lack of proper implementation which results in the benefits of such programmes being hijacked by the elites and rich in the society.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (1999) identified some of the effects of corruption on Nigeria: it reduced the degree of dedication and commitment of workers to duty, increased poverty level, made the economy to become distressed thereby getting people discouraged from investing, lowered moral and ethical standards and that it has given Nigeria and Nigerians a bad image in the eye of the international community. The above findings are confirmation of some other studies including those of Niyi (1998)

and Aderogba (1998).

Some scholars would have us believe that there are positive consequences of corruption. According to Odekunle (1984), corruption could provoke resentment and revolution beneficial to society and in the long run, may produce efficiency in production through competitive bidding and payment of high bribes by businessmen and provides a chance for groups other than political parties to articulate their interest. It should, however, be noted that these advantages which analysts would have us believe, are largely the unintended consequences of aberrant and depraved activities - corrupt practices.

The economic gains made cannot offset the grave social costs especially for the underprivileged whose welfare would be improved by a better or proper spending of scarce economic resources. Corruption poses a social problem which should be properly addressed so as not to bring about the demise of the nation. According to section 15, subsection (5) - Political Objectives - of the Nigerian 1979 Constitution, "The state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power".

The Concept of Social Studies

Educational Research Council (1971), views Social Studies as "a way of life, a way of seeing, viewing, conceptualizing and appreciating things and issues with special regards to their proper place and function in the recording and management of man's total natural, social and technological environment".

DuBey and Barth, (1980) viewed Social Studies as a process of education which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose

of giving children the opportunity to practice solving problems of crucial importance both for the individual and the society. They maintained that the knowledge, attitudes and skills obtained in this process of study have transferred value to the lives of children so that the decision they make as mature citizen will be useful to them and to their society.

As varied as these definitions are, there seems to be a basic agreement among scholars that Social Studies deal with how man lives, works and interacts with both his physical and social environment. This implies that Social Studies education is to produce effective citizens. Ololobou (1998) affirms that Social Studies education attempts to produce for the society an effective citizenry through the promotion of "integrated cognition, functional skills and development-oriented attitude and actions". According to Joof (1992), effective citizens are those who understand and respect the individuality of others and willing to accommodate the view points of others. Okam (1992) rightly pointed out that Social Studies serves as an avenue for inculcating the skills of human relationships in the young, provides students with insight into knowledge structure with processes through which people live, work and play together and develops them into active citizens, capable of making positive contributions to nation building.

The National Policy on Education (2003) reaffirmed this stance when it recommended that education in Nigeria should aim at raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feeling of others, respect the dignity of labour and appreciate national goals as good citizens. Important considerations with respect to effective citizenship include the production of individuals who are proud and conscious of

the nation, self-reliant, disciplined, loyal and patriotic. The pioneers of Social Studies in Nigeria are of the view that properly planned and implemented Social Studies, is the best means of developing good citizens, because its ultimate goal is the development of desirable socio-civic and personal behaviour. Corrupt practices are definitely against these values and ideals. An effective citizen is expected to think more in terms of what he can do for his country, not what he will steal from her.

The main objective of this study, which focused attention on the influence of Social Studies on the responses of students, draws inspiration from the above view of the pioneers of Social Studies. The question is, do the Social Studies students tend less toward corrupt practices than their colleagues who do not offer the subject?

METHODS

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the Social Studies students and non Social Studies students of Nigerian tertiary institutions in their views regarding corrupt practices.

Research Design

The research design used for this study was a survey whose aim was to ascertain as well as compare the attitudes of Social Studies students and non Social Studies students of tertiary institutions towards corrupt practices in Nigeria.

Subjects

The stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The sample consisted of 439{201 Social Studies students and 238 non- Social Studies stu-

dents} B.Ed. students randomly selected from six tertiary institutions spread over four geo-political zones of Nigeria viz- the North, West, East and South-South. The subjects were final year students all of who were between the age range of 20 and 40 years with about 90% of them falling between 20 – 29 years. Most of the institutions had covered at least ninety percent of their Social Studies curriculum.

Research Instrument

The two major instruments employed for this study were: unstructured interview and a set of questionnaire whose items covered the following areas: giving and taking of bribes, fraudulent practices, election and examination mal-practices, forgery and reporting of lost and found properties to the appropriate authorities.

Validity and reliability of Instrument

The content and face validation of the instrument were done by the scrutiny and input of experts in the respective departments of Political Science and History of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The content validation was ensured by making sure that all items pertaining to giving and taking of bribes, fraudulent practices, election and examination mal-practices, forgery and reporting of lost and found properties to the appropriate authorities were covered based on table of specification.

The instrument was pre tested and the reliability was 0.60 using Spearman Brown split-half reliability co-efficient.

Procedure

450 copies of the questionnaire were produced and distributed among Social Studies and non Social Studies students in the various institutions. Four hundred and thirty

nine were found usable and subjected to testing. The items were scored in line with the Likert Scale. All the items were pooled together to form the corruption scale and the t-test was used to test the significance of difference between the two groups' responses to the corrupt practices scale. The result, summarized in Table 1, shows the frequency counts and percentages of students' responses to the six categories/ items contained in the questionnaire while Table 2 shows the result of the t-test for the difference between responses of the two groups at 0.05 level of significance.

The Table revealed that 64.6% of Social Studies and 72.7% of non-Social Studies students believe things could be workable in Nigeria without offering bribes. With respect to the problem of cheating and other examination mal-practices, about 65% of those who offered Social Studies and 69% of those who did not offer it would not be involved, while 62% of the former as against 59% of the latter group would discontinue their relationship if they discovered their friend was a drug pusher. On the other hand, a larger proportion of the respondents (76.6 and 73%, respectively) would be mindful of how their successful friends get to their positions. About 63% of the Social Studies students as against 53% of the non Social Studies students would not spend the large sum of money found on their way. On election malpractices, close to half of those who offered Social Studies (48%) would not hesitate to rig election and about 52% of them would not do such a thing. For the non-Social Studies students, about 72% of them would not rig elections. It could be asserted that both groups did not tend too highly toward corrupt practices, although there were some differences observed on certain items.

The data was further subjected to t – test to ascertain the significance of the difference in the responses of the two groups. The result is shown in Table 2 below.

Null Hypothesis There is no significant difference between Social Studies and non-Social Studies students of Nigerian tertiary institutions in their views regarding corrupt practices.

As shown in the Table 2 above, the mean score of Social Studies students was not significantly different from those of the non-Social Studies students. The null hypothesis was therefore upheld. By implication, the non-Social Studies students did not tend more towards corrupt practices than the Social Studies students in their views.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the research questions that this study attempted to answer was whether or not the Social Studies students tended less towards corrupt practices than the non-Social Studies students. This was based on the assumption that Social Studies helped to produce in students the values of honesty, and truthfulness (Joof, 1992; and Adeyoyin, 1979).

The finding of this study was that both groups, Social Studies and none Social Studies students, were equal in their tendency,

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Students' Response to Corrupt Practices

Item	Social Studies Students				Non Social Studies Students				
	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %	Freq %
You feel nothing can be made workable in Nigeria without "buying one's way out.	71 35.3	130 64.6	Nil	58 24.4	173 72.7	7 2.9			
You feel unconcerned if someone copies your answers during an examination.	63 31.4	130 64.7	8 4.0	67 28.1	165 69.3	6 2.5			
You will not discontinue your relationship if you discover your friend is a drug pusher	69 34.3	124 61.7	8 4.0	94 39.5	140 58.8	4 1.7			
You like to befriend a highly successful person not minding how he got to his position	44 21.9	154 76.6	3 1.5	62 26.1	174 73.1	2 0.9			
If you found a large sum of money on your way and nobody saw you while picking it you would thank God for finally answering your prayer to become rich and spend the money	72 35.5	126 62.7	3 1.5	106 44.5	127 53.4	5 2.1			
If you discover that your opponent is planning to rig the election, you will not hesitate to do the same.	97 48.2	104 51.8	Nil	61 25.6	171 71.9	6 2.5			

Table 2: t-Test for Difference in Students' Attitude to Corrupt Practices

Group	N	X	SD	t-value	DF	P	DEC
Non- Social Studies students	238	31.51	7.63	0.78	437	0.43	NS
Social Studies students	201	30.97	6.74				

T-critical = 1.96, P >0.05 (NS)

and/but did not tend too highly toward corrupt practices, although there were some differences which when tested with the t-test were found to be scientifically insignificant. Thus the null hypothesis was retained- i.e., that there was no significant difference between the two groups in their attitudes toward corrupt practices. The explanation for this equality in response could be because both operated within, and were influenced by the larger society. This explanation was supported by the findings of Eyanro, (1998) and Niyi (1998) where they discovered that corruption pervaded the Nigerian Society. However, contrary to their findings, it was discovered that the respondents used in this study were not as highly corrupt as Eyanro (1998) and Niyi (1998) would have us believe. The picture usually painted was like "everybody in Nigeria is corrupt, no exemption". Probably, the result might be different if the test was conducted on those who had graduated and were already working. That notwithstanding however, a situation where about 35% of a group believed that nothing can be workable in Nigeria without giving bribe, in spite of the efforts of anti-graft agencies, is of great concern. This paper is of the view that explanation for the failed attempts at curtailing corruption in Nigeria could, perhaps, be found in the fact

that the leaders (who mounted the programmes against corruption) were/are themselves found wanting of corrupt practices. The recent investigations into the activities of some government organizations embarked upon by the legislative arm of government lend credence to this view. The investigations reveal that many leaders in these organizations were found guilty of corrupt practices.

However, there were some differences observed on certain items. One of the surprise findings was on election mal-practice where about half of the Social Studies students indicated they would rig elections while about three-quarter of the non-Social Studies students indicated they would not get involved in such. An explanation for this could be the absence or lack of adequate citizenship education in the Social Studies curriculum. For example, while most tertiary institutions now have citizenship education in their curriculum, corruption is not properly addressed, a situation that calls for attention. By implication much work still needed to be done concerning the transmission of value of honesty for Social Studies to fully achieve its objectives in this regard. This, notwithstanding, the percentage of both groups who would not hesitate to rig election is of great concern to this paper. It can be seen as a testimony of many Nigerian's insatiable love for power for

their selfish motive. It is also a confirmation of the result of the 2007 election into various posts in the country. The various election tribunals set up to investigate the exercise annulled the election of some governors and members of the legislative houses based on election malpractices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The saying "prevention is better than cure" holds true for the menace of corruption in Nigeria. Corruption preventive mechanism should be put in place in order to have a lasting impact and save the nation the huge cost of investigation and prosecution of corrupt cases. Thus, efforts should be made to integrate anti-corruption programmes into the school curriculum especially Social Studies whose focus is on citizenship education. This advocacy is based on the core status of Social Studies in the National Policy on Education, the nature and similarity of focus of Social Studies Curriculum and the general trend of citizenship education programme in the international system.

The populace should be educated through public enlightenment campaign that corruption threatens the national security and as such people should join hands with the efforts of the government to curb the menace.

The sensitization of the civil servants, about the ills of corruption, by the Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Transparency Unit of the Court of Appeal in Abuja and the inauguration of Anti-Corruption Club in some secondary schools in Abuja, are right steps in the right direction. This effort should not be limited to a handful of schools as it is now, but should be extended

to all levels of educational institutions in the country.

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