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LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A CRUCIAL MEANS OF CURBING CORRUPT PRACTICES IN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the challenges posed by corrupt practices in Nigeria to the education system and the importance of language education as a potential instrument of transforming individuals and the society for a better nation. In view of this, the acquisition and success in English language learning and teaching can enhance the achievement of the national objectives of education which include the inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the progress of the individual, the society and the nation at large. Also, highlighted in the paper are the roles of language education in curbing corruption alongside recommendations as to how success in language education can be achieved in the country.

Keywords: Education, Corruption, Language, Language Education

Introduction

Education is an instrument per excellence, social mobility and bedrock of any concrete and meaningful development (NPE, 2004). Obviously, education remains the veritable tool for desirable changes in the contemporary societies and it is a medium through which traits of the society such as honesty tolerance, discipline and self-reliance are transmitted from one generation to another. After Nigeria's civil war, education was tailored towards achieving social and economic reconstruction, social and tribal integration, ethical and moral revolution. This is so, because education was identified as an agent of socialization and effective instrument of change and innovation (Ojerinda, 2011).

In addressing the issue of education as an instrument of change, all stakeholders must come to the table to work out acceptable pathways to the demands of delivering quality education in Nigeria. There is a Global consensus that relevance of knowledge generation, success in infrastructure and development is dependent on the quality of national educational system. In this view, there is the need for meaningful educational development to serve as an effective tool for constructive development and sustenance of social values which have served as foundation for every society all through history. However, quality education cannot be achieved without the use of language which functions as a medium for the transmission of knowledge, culture and values.

In this paper language education will be discussed in line with English language. For English language is the language of instruction at all levels of schools in Nigeria. And, it is a core subject when we talk about educational transition for every Nigerian child. And so, the acquisition of English as a second language has become mandatory for every Nigerian child. Therefore, there is the need to give attention to the teaching and learning of English language for quality instruction and cultivation of social values in the Nigerian child to counter the alarming growth of social ills especially corruption in the society.

Conception of Corruption

The general perception of the word 'corruption' is abuse of public power for personal gain. We could also simply put it in the context of breaking rules, norms or ethical barriers (Lemu, 2019). A broader definition of corruption according to corruptive.org (2017), is the misuse of entrusted power (by heritage, education, marriage, election, appointment or whatever else) for private gain.

There are several definitions of corruption because of the changing perception of the phenomenon. Similarly, Jibo (1996) says, what constitutes corruption varied from one cultural setting to another. It is generally agreed that corruption, whatever it is taken to be, has serious legal and socio-political implications wherever it exists. Hallack and Poisson (2002) in Lemu (2019, P 4) define corruption within the field of education as:

The systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goals and services, and has a (negative) consequence on access, quality or equity in education.

Transparency International (1993) on the other hand, describes corruption as the use of public office for private gain. And that decisions are not for public interest but for private interest alongside the fact that access to basic social rights such as education, health are jeopardized. It is against the back-drop that Mohammed Sabo Keana of the Almajiri Child Rights Initiative (ACRI) said corruption is playing a large role in keeping Nigerian children out of school. According to him, in the northern region, a lot of children wish to go to school but the schools are not available even where they are available, there are few teachers and the infrastructure is not there. The money meant for education is being diverted to other uses (Samuel, 2018).

Forms/Causes of Corrupt Practices

It is unfortunate but also appropriate to say that Nigerian educational system does not agree with the aims and objectives of Nigeria's philosophy of education. Much emphasis is attached to certificate in Nigeria, the Nigerian education is quantitative and not qualitative... education is serving as a tool for personal aggrandizement of the individual (Ngbea, 2008).

One of the researches on corruption in education is that of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011). Classified below are examples of corrupt practices in different areas of the educational sector:

- Transgressing rules/procedures
- Embezzlement of state assets
- Bypassing criteria for standard
- Students forced to buy material copyrighted by instructors
- Fraud in the appointment and deployment of teachers
- Selling examination information
- Bribes for higher grades/marks
- Sexual harassment
- Unmerited admission

Furthermore, it is worthy to note that causes of corrupt practices in education is anchored on a lot of things to include among others; parental influence, teacher factor, students' attitude, too much emphasis on certificate, government activities, moral decadence, condition of service etc.

With what has been said so far, it is clear that corrupt practices have negative effect on the development of any nation. The identified practices in this paper, form a wide range of activities that transcend in our educational system and more obvious is their negative impact on students and the quality of education in Nigeria. For quality education to be real, for corruption to be minimized, measures and tools need to be put in place. The place of language and education must be understood and the level of their impact on the issue of corruption and education also have to be appreciated and taken into account.

Basically, corruption is universal, it does not restrict itself to borders or geographical territories. It is a practice that developed, developing and under-developed countries or states share in common. The underlying effects of corruption have many dimensions related to political, economic, social and environmental.

In political sphere, corruption impedes democracy and rule of law; in economic, it leads to depletion and inequality of national wealth.

In education, corruption or corrupt practices have serious negative impact on the focal area of quality education in Nigeria. It brings about a shift from standard/norms to a make-do-with structure yardstick; diversion of educational funds/resources, undue admission, promotion, grades/marks; post a break from merit to unmerit favour, compromising code of teaching profession, misplaced sense of hard work and value. Indeed, these effects are deviations from norms and values of the society. Apart from the above, the groups whose involvements in corruption are regrettable, the teachers, the parents and the students. Most parents systematically lure people to do their bidding and, in the process, undermine rules and standards. And according to Yun (2016), students' attitude towards academic excellence changes for worse because of their parents corrupt practices. Most of them do not see the need to study hard or high academic performance and as a result, learning requirement and educational fulfillment is rejected.

Language Education

Every human activity cannot be actualized without language. The indispensability of language cannot be overemphasized. Language is for interaction, communication, instruction and empowerment. Obviously, language is the facilitator of human existence. Language whether foreign or indigenous are vital tools in the lives of a people and as viewed by Olaoye (2012), the sure way to retain and safeguard knowledge, wisdom and peoples' authentic culture is through language.

Language is the primary tool for acquiring knowledge and it is very important in learning because learning involves communication. Therefore, to pay less attention or no attention to language is to cut off the child or learner from the most potent source of conceptual experience. Language widens the child's horizon by enlarging the way he thinks about his environment and concepts are formed through language (Olaoye, 2007).

Language and culture are synonymous. All cultural groups de-emphasize and condemn all vices that are detrimental this makes it obviously clear to us that language is a set of culturally transmitted behaviour patterns shaped by a group of individuals, that is, a pure code or communication system. In view of these, language education can help imbibe and internalize the necessary values, skills and

norms needed by school aged children to manage real life situation in their day to day dealings with man.

Language education can be described as teaching and learning a language. Language education within Nigerian educational context is with reference to English language. English is the language of instruction in schools at all levels and second language to Nigerians. In view of this, the acquisition and a success in English language learning is of utmost importance and mandatory for every Nigerian child. Language education can impact positively on teaching and learning process when the child is exposed to adequate instruction and competence in the use language and imbibing of social values.

In addition, education is a lifelong process leading to bringing out the best in every human being (Agada, 2013). It is aimed at creating a change, shaping the individual for a positive outlook about life; it is an instrument of socialization. In his own contribution, Yusufu (2000:4), defines education as:

the process by which knowledge and life experiences including the values (moral, culture, economic etc) associated with the individuals or groups as well as the manner by which they (the knowledge and experiences) may be harnessed and managed to achieve, promote, and advance societal objectives as perceived, determined and/or accepted from time to time.

In summary, language cannot be separated from education. Education involves the training of the mind and this is possible through language which is the medium of instruction. Thus, language education facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and experience which makes it possible to fashion him/her into the desired kind of citizens. In other words, language across the curriculum is an indispensable tool for shaping an individual's character to make one useful to the community.

Language Education as Crucial Means of Curbing Corruption

The story of Nigeria's match towards fighting corruption started a long time ago. The efforts have been characterized by many obstacles such as indiscipline, greed, negative mindset, misplaced values, eroded moral values etc. In the context of this paper, corruption in academics brings backwardness to the growth and development of a nation. The potential of education is diminished or eliminated, mockery is made of learning, hard work is no longer valued. There is no doubt that

corruption is an act of making or process of becoming evil, wicked and dishonest. It is the greatest wrong doing on the part of an authority or powerful party through means that are ultimate. So, the potentials of language education must be harnessed to fight corruption in education in Nigeria (Lawal, 2015).

In language education, goals are usually determined by the role which a particular language is expected to play in and outside the school curriculum. The role of English language is very important in the school curriculum; it is the medium of instruction from primary education to tertiary education in Nigeria. English language across the curriculum is an indispensable tool for shaping an individual character and thinking to make him useful to himself and his community. It is the language for general education; helps the learner broaden his world's outlook; it is used for controlling behaviour through such practices as warning, advising, persuading, dissuading, encouraging, correcting, directing etc. For these reasons, the vital function of English language must be noted so that the objectives of National Policy on Education can be realized.

Since English language is used for general communication, education and/or instruction, transaction, interpersonal relations, the total development and well being of Nigerians, especially the youths can be ensured through the language. With meaningful and purposeful classroom interaction, appropriate skills, a level of competence and social abilities are developed which will enhance communicative skills and imbibing of social values. English language can help develop reading skills proficiency essential for academic success and later life outcome; for reading is one of the critical factors in developing positive mindsets. According to Egbe (2004) in Garridau (2014), reading passages that contain our values and norms can be introduced to children from primary schools to tertiary level. They will learn these values relating to life, good morals, death, entertainment, tolerance, conflict, resolution etc consciously or unconsciously. Reading passages with our cultural values and norms can be introduced for the purpose of building and moulding the child's character. As the child grows and these values are transmitted into him, knowledge of what is right and wrong in the society is developed. The point here is that, language education can develop the right values and attitudes that will invariably help to curb corruption in the society and initiate the process of change in the right direction.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to capture the place of language education in curbing corruption in education in Nigeria. Nigeria cannot make meaningful progress towards attaining its desired development with corruption in all sphere of our lives. Our educational institutions today experience a lot of problems such as bribes paid by parents to teachers to get good grades or get undue admission for their wards, embezzlement of funds allocated for education etc.

In other words, we need to refocus and restructure the fight against corruption in educational system of Nigeria; for it drains the nation of its much needed foundation, qualitative education and a sense of moral development in the people. More so, a nation where selfishness, individualism and greed are an integral part of their social set up, the issue of development becomes an illusion (Nwanegbo – Ben, 1999).

At this point, given the present circumstance of socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, ways to broaden the funding base of the educational system should be given paramount attention. And not forgetting the need to boost the morale of all the stakeholders within the system. Our institution of learning which remain a major tool for social transformation would not only enable the learners to learn but also enable the character improvement of the educated.

Recommendations

In order to curb corruption in education in Nigeria, the following should be adhered to:

i. Government at all levels must be committed to the needs of quality and functional language education through increased funding, provision of adequate infrastructure and other necessary facilities.

ii. The indispensability of language in curbing social vices cannot be over-emphasized. There is a need to ensure that only teachers trained and specialized in English language should be employed to teach the subject for actualization of the goals of language teaching.

iii. Teachers of English should endeavour to use appropriate, current and innovative techniques to teach moral uprightness. Textual literatures or reading passages whose themes are woven on sound moral values of hard work and honesty can be used as teaching materials.

iv. The parents are the first teachers of the children. Parents should endeavour to bring up their children properly and should desist from immoral

behaviour for fear of children copying from them. Fundamental things like correct values, attitude and beliefs should be exemplified by parents.

v. Government society and individuals should place less emphasis on paper qualification when people seek for jobs to reduce these corrupt practices of seeking for undue grades. Experience and practical work should be considered as well as certificate holder's skills.

vi. The remuneration of teachers should be given utmost attention by the government so that they will not use these practices as a way of making extra money to cater for their needs. Honestly, the condition of service for teachers required urgent reform so that teachers can be proud of their profession like other professionals.

vii. The school along with the teachers of English can use story books with the right moral lessons to inculcate the right values. Also, during English lessons, Book Club or Readers Club can be established in schools as a way of also teaching the right morals.

viii. General guidelines for ethical considerations to improve the functionality of the education system need to be stated by the government.

ix. All position holders in the field of education at all levels need to have defined responsibilities and appropriate behaviour expected of them (what to do and how to behave in certain circumstances) stated in plain language. This will not only allow for a robust accountability system but also a powerful tool to hold those in authority accountable.

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