

Curtailing Corruption Practices Using Information and Communication Technology Tools in Educational Sector in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Corruption has taken over the Nigeria society in almost all fields of endeavour, the educational sector is the worst of it all. It has been described as a bane to growth and development of any society that indulges in the act, thereby affecting the economic growth and development negatively. However, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools or gadgetry that are becoming indispensable platforms, seen to be very useful in curtailing corrupt practices in our all-round endeavours, educational sector inclusive. Thus, this paper adopts narrative review methodology to x-ray existing knowledge published in journal articles, conference proceedings and textbooks of corrupt practices in school setting and how to harness potentials of ICT in tackling corruption in our schools. Research opinion solutions like: federal government should enforce e-transaction on all schools' procurements at local, state and federal levels; training and re-training of teachers in our various schools on the use of ICT tools should be organized and encouraged from time to time so as to eliminate phobia of its usage were provided as a way forward to eliminate or reduce corrupt practices in educational sector in Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, Education, Information Communication Technology,

Introduction

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in all facets of human endeavour cannot be over-emphasized. Jimoh and Oladimeji (2012), assert that ICT has become an indispensable tool, which government of many developed and developing countries invest upon to harness its potentialities. Its

versatility has been found in fields such as Health, Agriculture, Education, Religion, Economy, and Security amongst others. In the opinion of Viitanen (2003), ICT plays a major role in all aspects of human lives; such as in politics, economic, social and cultural development. Ndukwe (2007), observes that ICT has been widely established that the economic development of a nation can be accelerated by improvements in a country's ICT infrastructure. Thus, ICT provides the veritable platform for development across economic and other sectors, if well harnessed. Beside, the roles ICT plays in health sector have been well documented (Healthcote, 2000; Ndukwe, 2004; Sawyer & Williams, 2005). For instance, the development of mobile communications, teleconferencing facilities, multi-media capabilities of telecommunications and the internet has immense benefits to health care delivery (Ndukwe 2004). Thus, ICT tools are used in monitoring and for information sharing on diseases and other vital issues in health related problems. The paper cannot exhaust discussion on the versatility of ICT gadgets in various sectors; it has impact on corruption as well.

Corruption, on the other hand has really penetrated Nigerian society generally and at all levels of engagements. Corruption is not happening in Nigeria alone; it is a phenomenon that is common to many African countries and beyond. For instance, Meerabai (2015), lamented over corruption in India as follows;

“Corruption has become a major obstacle in human progress and the foremost challenge in the progress of India in specific. The nation has come a long way from awareness campaigns against corruption and now our current duty is to revamp public service delivery mechanism such that the public can go through procedures in a corruption free manner”.

Nigerian government has made tremendous improvement in the past as to eliminate corrupt practices in public sectors. Such efforts include establishment of Public Complaints Commission (PCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and related offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) approved Cashless Policy introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria, Public Procurement Policy, SERVICOM etc, but prosecution of offenders is something still not very commendable for corrupt practices in Nigerian society.

The Concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Researchers have defined the concept of ICT in different ways. Amongst them is Tinio (2002) as cited in Mohammed (2012) defines ICT as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to create, disseminate store and manage information and these includes computers, the internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and T/V) and telephony. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2005) described Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as technology that includes computers, audio-visual systems, broadcast receiving and telecommunication systems, compact discs and video discs, computers, Internet, virtual learning equipment, local and wide area networks (wired and wireless),

instructional software, television, voice mail, e-mail, satellite communication, video cassette recorders (VCRs), cable television, conventional and interactive radios.

ICT represents the convergence of Information Technology (IT) and Communication Technology (CT). ICT is the combination of networks, hardwares and softwares as well as the means of communication, collaboration and engagement that enable the processing, management and exchange of data, information and knowledge (The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2005).

From the aforementioned definitions, ICT tools or gadgets are not limited to computers, its peripherals and telecommunication gadgets (both mobile and fixed electronic machines), it includes all forms of tools that can be used in creating, storing, sharing transmitting, and receiving information from one location to another. United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization –UNESCO (2006) describes ICT as a form of technology that is used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information. This broad definition of ICT includes such technologies as radio, television, video, DVD, telephone (both fixed line and mobile phones), satellite systems, computers, Internet, hardware and software as well as the equipment and services associated with these technologies such as video conferencing, electronic mail, online banking, electronic commerce and so on.

Today, many services are accomplished with the aid of ICT tools together with associated software; these include airline reservation, e-learning/ distance learning, m- learning, researching, information sharing and distribution to the grassroots via mobile phone, social media, voice on internet protocol (VoIP), video conferencing.

The Concept of Corruption and Corrupt Practices in Educational Sector

The word “corruption” comes from the latin verb “corruptus”, which means “to break” (Ayoola, 2013). Transparency International (TI) defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power by political leaders or a bureaucracy for personal gain or specific group or interest. The United Nations (UN) points out that corruption can take many forms that vary in degree, from the minor use of influence to institutionalized bribery, and that “this can mean not only financial gain but also non-financial advantages” (UN, 2010 in Grönlund; Heacock; Sasaki Hellström and Al-Saqaf; 2010). Thus, from the above definition, corruption can be said to be a bane to any developmental process. Grönlund et al (2010) further see corruption as a function of both the opportunity to request/ receive bribes and the risk of detection. The existence of corruption in all sectors of the society damages societal growth and development; increase costs for firms and discourage both foreign and domestic investments. Therefore, corruption is a growing challenge for the business sector both in the developing and industrialized countries.

Similarly, Bitarabeho as cited in Avoola (2013) sees corruption as a cankerworm that has affected the social, political and economic fabrics of development and requires the involvement of every citizen to combat it. In opinion of Adamu (2015):

“Corruption occurs among many groups of actors from policy makers at the Government level to providers of education at the school level, such as teachers and principals. Corrupt practices in the educational sector can include bribes, admission racketeering, examination frauds, preferential promotions and placements for teachers and charging students a fee for tutoring services to cover the curriculum needed to pass mandatory examinations that should have been taught in the classroom, unauthorized text-books procurements, meal provision and infrastructure contracting high cost and so on (p.21).”

Application of ICT Tools in Tackling Corrupt Practices in Schools System

This section of the paper discusses the application of ICT tools and gadgets in tackling those malpractices earlier discussed. The authors specifically highlight the role or application of ICT devices in tacking or curtailing corrupt practices as follows:

- Giving and accepting bribes by parents/visitors and teachers: Installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras or surveillance within the school environment, such as classrooms/lecture halls, principal office, staff rooms, school library, laboratories, etc can help greatly to minimize if not totally eradicate all corrupt practices in schools.
- Illegal admission and examination fees as well as examination malpractices: Websites can be designed to report cases of illegal corrupt practices by schools to authority concerned so as to prosecute the offenders. Admission and registration process can be automated to curtail such acts.
- Examination fraud, e.g. special/magic centers where examination malpractices take place: Examination complaints websites can be developed purposely for that to capture all reported cases of those centers involved in such practices so that appropriate sanctions can be placed on the schools involved.
- Impersonation during examination: To eradicate examination impersonation; computerized examination card readers can be introduced by all examination bodies that capture the students' photograph, fingerprints, Examination Identity Number – (EIN) on the card.
- Preferential promotions and placements for teachers: Appointments, promotions and placement of employees can be done electronically using Personnel Promotion Appraisal Software (PPAS) with a good security mechanism so as to deny intruders or unauthorized access to the database and the site.
- Illegal charging of students for tutoring services to cover the curriculum needed to pass the mandatory examination that should have been taught in the classroom: These practices can be curbed or reduced in a process of reporting the cases to authority concerned using dedicated websites with

special informant tasked with that responsibility. And all forms of legal payments can be electronic with account provided by the school authority.

- Illegal textbooks procurement, illegal increase in meal funds and infrastructure contracting: Procurement of infrastructure, textbook, food stuffs must be done by governments following due process and procurement rules. Electronic transaction platform can be helpful to achieve the procurement. Any administrator at any level of authority will not be allowed to have access to raw cash.
- Misuse or abuse of attendance registers (i. e appending of signatures for colleague while he/she is actually absent): The Computerized Attendance Register System (CARS) can be provided by school administrators.
- Illegal relationship between teachers and female students /sexual harassment: With the use of mobile phones, students can tactically record the voice of teacher blow the whistle whenever he makes attempt to demand any sexual gratification or report the case to the complaints website for prosecution.

Challenges of ICT Tools Usage in Nigeria Context

The implementation of the aforementioned ICT tools has some bottlenecks as many policies are paper-based only without proper implementation. Thus, the following are the major challenges according to Yaki (2005) and Jimoh & Kazeem (2014) that may hinder the implementation of the above discussed points:

- i. Inadequate ICT infrastructures
- ii. Inadequate manpower/ technical know-how
- iii. Phobia for use of computers and its peripherals, on the part of teachers and students resulting in poor utilization of the facilities.
- iv. Irregular electricity supply
- v. Problems of poor funding/budgeting for educational sector.

Conclusion

Corruption is a phenomenon that has taken over the Nigerian society. It has been a problem over the year that hinders economic growth and development of the nation. Federal Government had made several efforts by establishing different agencies or commissions in curtailing this phenomenon but lack the will power in prosecuting offenders. This paper has discussed the concept of corruption; ICT and the roles that ICT could play in tacking the corrupt practices in education system.

Way Forward

1. Federal Government should enforce e-transaction on all schools' procurements at local, state and Federal levels
1. The use of cash in all transactions should be discouraged. The Treasury Single Account (TSA) introduced by the present Government is highly commendable.
2. There should be increase in budgetary allocation for education sector as recommended by UNESCO at 25% percent minimum.

3. Training and re-training of teachers in our various schools on the use of ICT tools should be organized and enforced from time to time so as to eliminate +phobia of its usage.
4. There should be constant power supply so as to have access to the systems at different platforms, solar panel as alternative source of energy should be provided at all levels of schools.
5. Qualified technical personnel should be employed to design and implement the various areas of ICT mentioned in this paper

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