

TACKLING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA THROUGH MASS MEDIA AND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper discussed that corruption poses a serious development challenge and also undermines economic development in Nigeria. However, the paper has equally postulated that Mass Media Education could be exploited to some levels to curb the menace by public enlightenment, public education and of course public mobilization. The paper has recommended amongst others that the fight against corruption must be well funded by government. The anticorruption agencies should have their funds paid directly from the consolidated Revenue Fund, and not to be subjected to handouts from the executives to starve the agencies of funds to probe the activities of the executives itself. Consequently, the fight against corruption would be frustrated.

Introduction

Corruption is a vice that has permeated every aspect of our national life. The abysmal decay in moral values and ethics coupled with wanton waste of public funds necessitated the uncontrollable concern of the people in the academics to address this issue with seriousness of purpose to support and partner with the political class to root out the scourge from our national life. This lingering and contending albatross has become like a wild fire, which took its source from conserved gas or fuel capable of running the society to a state of disrepair. In view of this, there is a crucial need for the sensitization of the public, most especially the students who would naturally inherit the national wealth to jointly fight this monster that is plaguing and ravaging our society.

Corruption is not an omnibus but a polymorphous word, which embraces several details in the society. In view of this, a singular definition cannot suffice to explain corruption. But in the context of moral and ethics, it can be defined as deviation from the moral values and ethical

standards of the society, which breeds reversal and destruction in all spheres of our national life. This includes maladministration in all spheres, siphoning of public funds into foreign accounts and personal projects, disrespect to the rule of law looting of public funds through white elephant projects, massive erosion of the nation's morals and ethics, money laundering, bank fraud and so on. Ajere, (2006). These immoral and unethical grips are responsible for the depreciation in Naira value. Low standard of living, low per capita income, poverty, diseases, unnecessary stress, hopelessness, hunger, unemployment, infrastructure decay, wastage of human resources through untimely death of innocent souls and the like.

What is Development?

"Development" as a concept means different things to different people. In the simplest sense, development implies self-improvement, that is to say, the improvement in the quality of life of people, a number of communication scholars have put forward some definitions of development. Dissanayake (1985) cited in Adum (2009) defines development as, "the process of social change, which has as its goal the improvement of the quality of life of all or the majority of the people" Linden (1989) sees development as a "process which aims at achieving self reliance and improving living conditions for the underprivileged majority of the people. The common denominator in these definitions is that development is the process of change, this change should be for the better, this change should be for the benefit of the majority of the people".

National Development

National development could be defined as the gradual manifestation of positive changes in the economic, industrial, political, social, cultural and administration life of a country Ogai, (2003). National development entails the idea of deliberate planning in order to direct, influence, facilitate and accelerate economic, administrative, socio-political, cultural and industrial changes in a condition considered to achieve the progress of cultivation.

Agriculture in Nigeria

Agriculture is still the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. About 75 percent of our estimated population depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihood. It provides employment, income and food for the population, and provides the raw materials for agro-based industries and market for industrial goods.

Most of our farmers are subsistence, small holders, farming about 1 to 2 hectares, which are usually scattered over a wide area, employing a system of long-term rotation which involves

alternating a period of cropping with bush fallow. The length of the fallow depends on the fertility of the soil and how readily the land is available for it. The level of technology employed in the traditional system of farming is very low and consequently the productive efficiency is also low.

However, of the very good potential Nigeria has for increasing agricultural production very considerably, both by expanding the area under cultivation and improving yield from the existing area, all is not well with Nigerian agriculture. Food has been short in supply, and food prices have been rising persistently over the last decades. Supplies of agricultural products for domestic industries and for exports have been declining steadily, with the consequent adverse effects on our foreign exchange earnings. We now also have to import some foods and raw materials which we used to produce for industries.

Therefore, mass media will serve as a medium to educate farmers on innovation that will link both rural and urban farmers about improved farming technology which at the end will develop our economy and provide won only for job creation.

Mass Media

In a broad sense, a medium is the channel through which a message travels from the source to the receiver, mass communication occurs through some channels. These channels are referred to as mass communication channels or simply the mass media. We therefore talk about the mass of television, newspaper, magazine, sound recording and film. Mass media refers to the people, the policies, the organization and the technology that go into producing and distributing mass communication Dominic, (2002).

What Corruption Means

The term corruption can be traced to the Latin verb “runpere” meaning to “break” which implies something is broken. This could be a moral or social code of conduct or more commonly an administrative rule. Corruption comes in different shapes and it is often difficult to define. Jega (1993) cited in Babtunde and Popoola (2008) defines corruption as the misuse of power, authority and public office either for personal gain, monetary or for the promotion of exclusive group interest contrary to the spirit and the letter of moral requirement. Tenzi (1995) defines corruption as the intentional non-compliance with the principles of arm length relationship which states that personal or family relationship ought not to play a role in economic decisions by private economic agents of government officials.

From the above assertion to constitute corruption, the laid down rules must be clear and precise. Apart from the officer who breaks the rules, derives some recognizable benefit for himself, family, friend or any other group, a corrupt person represents one who uses unethical means to attain his selfishness at the expense of the larger societal expectation.

Forms of Corruption

The forms of corruption include the following:

Bribery: Bribery involves the promise, offering or giving of a benefit that improperly affects the actions or decisions of a public servant, another person or an entity. A variation of this manifestation occurs where a political party of government is offered, promised party or government.

Embezzlement: This involves the theft of resources by persons entrusted with the authority and control of such resources. Example, hospital staff that steals medicines and in turn sells these to private pharmacists.

Fraud: This involves actions or behaviors by a public servant, other persons or entity that fool others into providing a benefit that would normally accrue to the public servant, other persons or entity. Example, a public servant that registers a fictitious employee in order to collect the salary of that fictitious employee.

Extortion: This involves coercing a person or entity to provide a benefit to a public servant, another person or entity in exchange for acting or failing to act in a particular manner. Example, a public health official threatens to close a restaurant on the basis of fabricated health transgression unless the owner provides to public health official with regular meals.

Abuse of power: This involves a public servant using his or her vested authority to improperly benefit another public servant, person or entity (or using the vested authority discriminates against another public servant, person or entity). Example, during a tender process but before actual selection of a successful contractor, the head of department expresses his/her wish to see the contract awarded to a specific person.

Favouritism: This involves the provision of services or resources according to personal affiliations (for example ethnic, religious, political party affiliation). Example, a regional manager in a particular state ensures that only persons from the same tribe are successful in tenders for the supply of foods to the manager's geographical area of responsibility.

Nepotism: This involves a public servant ensuring that family members are appointed to public service positions or that family members receive contracts from state resources. This manifestation is similar to conflict of interests and favoritism. Example, a head of department appoints his/her nephew/niece to a position even when more suitable candidates have applied for the position (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2001).

Causes of Corruption

The causes of corruption in Nigeria include:

The breakdown of societal values: such as honesty, patriotism, loyalty, faithfulness and so on which necessitated social destruction in the society.

Bad leadership: Nigeria had witnessed in the past and present public office holders who take delight in ill-gotten wealth to the detriment of the masses.

High-level ignorance: Nigeria has not been asking questions from their leaders about the account of their stewardship to the electorate coupled with low literacy level of many Nigerians, which erodes their knowledge of fundamental rights and the exploitation of such rights.

Lawlessness: There is acute disobedience to the law of the land by top public office holders and wealthy Nigerians. The law of the country is mean only for the poor not the rich and influential people. Top government functionaries even disregard or defy orders and rulings of the law courts.

The weakness and unwholesome attitude of the law enforcement agents: That is the Police, Customs, Immigration and so on.

Effects of corruption on the society

Chaos and restiveness: There is always power tussle amongst the political class because of “national cake syndrome” people who are human assets to the country also lose their lives because of refusal to join the syndicates in siphoning the country’s hard-earned resources.

Breakdown in Governance: The ruling class loses the support loyalty and obedience of their subjects. The control of government machinery becomes difficult because of the assumption of “monkey dey work, baboon dey chop”.

Wide gap between the rich and the poor: Just few people live in affluence with majority picking crumbs from their tables. Corruption has collapsed the social class in Nigeria society into upper and lower class, rich and poor with different levels of poverty. The moment an

individual cannot live a decent life devoid of toiling and struggling in poverty, while a few live in affluence with fat untouched liquid (money) in the bank.

Marginalization and neglect of the minority groups: Those with political power use it to oppress some segments of the society with economic and human resources; to put them perpetually under bondage Ajere, (2006).

The role of electronic and print media education in curbing corruption

In the society, the media is chief in meeting certain communication needs. Think of what it would mean if we didn't have mass communication channels like newspaper, magazines, radio, television and the internet. The society yearns for information that they can use, they seek to be educated and also seek to be entertained, they want a platform for political debate, more often than not it is the media that meet these communication needs.

Functions of the mass media

Individuals in any society need to keep track of what is going on around them. Sociologists call this surveillance; they need to correlate and interpret these events and what they mean – this is the process of interpretation. They need to transmit values from one generation to another in order to maintain the society they need and want to be entertained and amused Wright, (1975). In this regard, media serves at least four important functions in the society, surveillance, interpretations, transmission of values and entertainment.

Surveillance: This refers to what we popularly call news and information role of the media Dominic, (2002). The media provides information to help people with their surveillance of the environment, weather reports, stock market trends, approaching natural disasters and so on are information that people need. This information flow is necessary for only and coherence if we live in the society of collectively.

Interpretation: Information that is not processed is useless, it can only be useful if it is processed, interpreted and correlated with. This mass media do not just supply facts and data, they also provide information on the ultimate significance of these events. Interpretation can come by way of editorial pages of newspapers comments on opinions are provided for the reader to help them gain added perspective on the news stories that had been carried on pages of newspapers.

Transmission of values: by communicating information through the mass media, we are transmitting social and cultural values which aim at sustaining the society; this function is also

called the socialization function. Socialization refers to the ways an individual comes to adopt the behavior and values of a group. The media portray the society and as people watch, listen and read, they learn how they should act and what values are important in the society.

Entertainment: The mass media entertain the public by providing emotional relaxation, intrinsic and cultural employment (i.e. provision of momentary escape from problems) and killing boredom, nothing explains why people would spend time watching television but they want some entertainment. Apart from these four specific functions, the media also function in the area of mobilization. This function of the media is very important to national development, because people are allied to pursue goal that would advance the society.

Media Effects

For the fact that the media serves some functions in the society, they invariably exert some effects on the individual and the society at large. Against this backdrop there are three levels of mass communication effects.

They include:

- **Cognition and comprehension:** In the modern world, most of what we know about our own environment and about societies around the world is brought to our notice by mass media. They create awareness in all of us.
- **Attitude and value change:** While the mass media are held to be very efficient in awareness creation and knowledge building, they are very inefficient and ineffective in ensuring attitude and value change.
- **Behavioral change:** This is the final stage/level; at which effects is usually discussed. Did you accept the message? What did you do after acceptance? The media perform both functional positive and dysfunctional (negative) roles. Whether or not the results of media messages have led to positive (pro-social) behavior or the negative (anti-social) behavior, they still qualify as effects.

The mass media no doubt do have effects on the individuals and on society. But the extent speed, quality and direction of such effects are for the most part determined by past experience, predispositions and social-cultural contexts.

Conclusion

In view of the discourse, the fact remains that corruptions has become part and parcel of the African society, nay, in Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to establish a code of conduct and to

monitor its implementation, sensitize and train public officials on matters of ethics. Success in crushing the menace of corruption would therefore require the creating of an enabling environment for the civil society and the media to hold government to the highest levels of transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs.

Recommendation

To enable the endemic corruption in Nigeria, the federal Government under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo signed into law on June 13th 2000 the corrupt practices and other related offences. The act established the Independent Corruption Practice and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Agbo, (2010).

From the responsibilities of the commission, the ICPC duties fall under three broad categories: prevention, enforcement and education. The enforcement role of the anti-corruption agency covers investigations and prosecution. By this, the commission has powers to search, seize, arrest and summon persons for examination and information gathering, including powers to demand disclosure of information even of a privileged nature.

ICPC also has a duty to educate Nigerians on and against bribery, corruption and related offences while enlisting and fostering support in combating corruption. The objective is to purge Nigerians of corruption mentally, acquaint them of the risks involved in corrupt practices and the consequences that may be suffered by the perpetrators of corruption. In spelling out the mission of ICPC, it was recognized that the war against corruption must be a collective effort involving every citizen, and thus the Act gives pride of place to the role of the individual in facilitating ICPC's function, by reporting any corrupt act to the commission in writing.

For the battle to be successful, there must be community acceptance of what you are doing. You cannot fight corruption if you do not change attitudes and culture. The first phase targeted public enlightenment, public education and public mobilization. It is important not only to make the people know and see what is wrong with corruption but also to reject and resist it. The education and public enlightenment department was created in 2002 and charged with that responsibility. The commission is particular about the younger population and in this, there is a deliberate emphasis on the youth, to quarantine the future from being infected with the corruption virus and from this pure stock nursery grows an untainted population.

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