

Factors Challenging Leadership and Nation Building and their Effects on Educational Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper looked at factors that pose challenges to leadership and nation building of Nigeria. Some of the major factors include corruption, insurgency, terrorism, university strike, brain drain and economic sabotage. In the course of the discussion, the paper identified effects of these factors on education, social and economic development of Nigeria. The most prominent challenge include palm-greasing, bribery, embezzlement, money laundering, external borrowing, diversion of government funds, wastage, revenue leakages, bunkering, crude oil theft, a multitude of fraud and other acts of criminality by officials of government and private sector which have led to huge economic losses and setback.

In effect, the education system has suffered neglect and poor funding over the years, provision of vital social services has been declined while hunger, poverty, brain drain and insecurity have risen sharply in recent time. The paper recommended that Nigeria's huge oil wealth should be used to improve the standard of living of all Nigerians, and not squandered by politicians and few privileged individuals within the corridors of power. Therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria should, as a matter of fact, create a Social Benefit Scheme for millions of unemployed citizens. This will not only reduce poverty but also reduce the temptation to engage in crime and gangsterism among the youths. Most importantly, as nation builders, teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria should be accorded the respect, honour and professional incentives they deserve in line with international and global best practices.

Keywords: Leadership, Nation building, Educational development, Corruption, Economic Sabotage, Brain drain, Terrorism.

Introduction

Leadership is the art, act, process or ability of an individual, group or organizations to influence, motivate, supervise or control the behaviour and efforts of other people with the aim of inspiring and helping them become their best selves, building their skills and achieving goals along the way. Furthermore, according to Robbins (2007), the duty of a boss or leader goes beyond delegating of tasks and supervising work. Rather leaders mandate passion, positivity, energy and help others reach their full potentials by listening to them and supporting them with the right tools and strategies which leads to amazing business and administrative outcome. Hence, that is the true importance and essence of leadership.

Educational Development refers to management and administrative activities designed to help universities and other tertiary institutions function effectively to achieve quality teaching and learning and also support institutional change. Felten et al (2007). Amundsen and Wilson (2012), Sorcinelli et al (2005). It is also the practice of helping teachers at the various levels of the educational system perform effectively through the provision of resources and other necessary incentives. It is widely acclaimed that Education is a vital ingredient and the bedrock of development not only in Nigeria but also globally and hence the quality of education naturally determines the quality of development and productivity.

Nation building on the other hand is a significant undertaking that government employ to develop political, economic, security and social institutions in line with world's best practices and emerging global trends. The fundamental aim of nation building is to achieve security, economic stability, infrastructural development and especially accountability in governance. It also includes provision of basic services such as food security, shelter, adequate healthcare and electricity, functional and quality education as well as prudent management of human and natural resources. It also aims at the unification of the people especially in multitudinal and ethno-linguistic society within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in long run. According to Wikipedia.org, the role and power of education is often believed to be a key driver in the process of nation building in democratic and non-democratic states.

Some major factors posing challenge to Leadership and nation building and their effects on educational development in Nigeria include, but not limited to the following:

Corruption

The concept of corruption is defined as deliberate abuse of entrusted power, dishonest or fraudulent conduct involving bribery, stealing, deceit, profiteering, crookedness, palm-greasing, extortion and other acts of criminality by government officials for private gain at the expense of others. According to transparency.org (2022), corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and increases poverty, inequality, social division, as well as environmental and leadership crises. Corruption can take many forms depending on the system that enables it. For instance, Nigeria is known to have experienced cyclic revenue leakages at federal, State and Local Governments, financial misappropriation, outright theft, embezzlement, money laundering, and other forms of economic and financial crimes mostly among officials of government agencies, departments, ministries and politicians either directly or indirectly.

The Treasury Single Account (TSA) was introduced by the government to check leakages in the country's revenue and resource management. However, this measure has not solved the problem. For example, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which is an agency created by the Federal Government to prosecute financial offences is currently instigating alleged stealing of about eighty two billion (₦82b) Naira by an official of the country's Federal Ministry of Accounts. This is a typical proverbial reference of a dog eating the bone on its neck. Funny enough, one also hears about official news report of pythons and other animals swallowing millions of Naira and disappearing in some Federal Government ministries, departments, agencies, boards and commissions, etc. In some cases, many of these cases are prosecuted and sometimes also they simply make headline news and then no one hears anything about them again.

In the political realm, corruption is the abuse of public power, office or resources by elected officials or their network contacts for illegitimate private benefits (wikipedia.org,

investopedia.com, 2020). For instance, recent investigation by the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) revealed that Ministries, Department, Agencies of the Nigerian government padded the 2021 budget with three hundred billion (₦300b) Naira duplicated projects and in spite of this, the Federal Government plans to borrow over ten trillion (₦10trn) Naira to fund its budget deficit, while the National Budget Office has recommended the suspension of salary increase for workers and petrol subsidy (Vanguard, September 2022). It is argued that removal of fuel subsidy will raise the pump price of petrol to over four hundred (₦400) Naira and this will likely pass the burden to the ordinary citizens, thereby worsening the level of hunger, poverty and unrest among Nigerians. Latest report (by Punch, October 2022) indicates that ₦3.92Trillion fuel subsidy topples defence, health and education budgets.

Inequality and social division as products of corruption is also seen in the disparity in the use of public funds and distribution of wages among Nigerian workers. For example, the huge salaries and allowance paid to politicians has been criticized as unfair, unjust, discriminatory and outrageous wasteful spending. While the monthly salary and allowances of a professor in Nigeria public university is about four hundred and fifty thousand (₦450,000) Naira, it is on record that a senator with perhaps an ordinary level secondary school certificate earns about ₦13.5 million as running cost which excludes ₦750,000 allowances and another ₦200 million Naira allocation for constituency contracts, projects and infrastructural development (premiumtimesng, March 2018), which are sometimes either not executed or fraudulently diverted to individual pockets. None of these funds are transparently accounted for or published by the one hundred and nine (109) Senators of the National Assembly. Thus, based on the Premium Times report, Nigerian senators may very likely be among the highest paid legislators in local currency when compared with their counterparts in advanced economies of the world. According to ripplesnigeria (Sept. 2021) legislators in these countries receive the following salaries:

Sri Lanka	RS 708,285	Malaysia	RM 110,553	Spain	€ 42,709
Saudi Arabia	RS 240,000	France	€ 66,144	South Africa	R 1,137,933
Britain	£ 62,738	Germany	€ 174,881	Canada	CA \$160,800
United States	\$ 174,000	Ghana	155,652 Ghc	Nigeria	₦29,180,160

From the statistics, Nigerian lawmakers enjoy the highest salary and allowances and according to researchgate.net (October 2018), as long as the senatorial seat remains lucrative, the elite class will do everything possible to make sure that competition to the seat is a zero-sum-game, without taking into consideration the people they swore to serve.

Unfortunately, based on the eighteen thousand (₦18,000) Naira National minimum wage, the average salary of a Nigerian worker is about two hundred and sixteen (₦216,000) Naira annually. The minimum wage was recently increased to thirty thousand (₦30,000) Naira. However, two years after that agreement between Labour and Federal Government, there is still disparity in implementation as most of the state governors have refused to honour it due to selfishness, insensitivity or poor revenue allocation from the federation account. It is believed that if all financial fraud, reckless spending and systemic leakages in Nigeria's resources management are properly and strictly harnessed, Nigeria will have more than enough to meet her revenue and expenditure targets with little or no external borrowing that have plunged the nation into debt crises in spite of the abundant oil, gas and solid mineral resources. Debt servicing within the past seven years has gulped ₦13.17Trillion Naira while other vital sectors suffer (Punch Newspaper, August 19, 2022).

Regrettably, Nigerian teachers, civil and public servants are and still remain the poorest paid in the world with little or no retirement benefits. This is why many of these “Senior Citizens” die shortly after leaving government service either because of neglect or there is nothing to sustain them. To avoid this, many falsify their age in order to stay longer on their job.

Economic Sabotage

Economic sabotage is a subvertive act of undermining the economy of a nation. According to Britannica.com, it is a deliberate plan of development with the criminal intention of damaging an economic system or weakening government of a nation. Nigeria is a leading member of OPEC and major crude oil and gas exporter with two refineries located in Port Harcourt, one in Warri and another in Kaduna. These facilities have a combined refining capacity of ₦450,000 barrels per day, enough for domestic consumption and export.

Ironically, the Nigerian government systematically abandoned these indigenous refineries and resorted to importations of fuel and other crude oil products despite being Africa largest oil producer. While billions of Naira is spent annually on staff salaries of these idle government owned refineries, the Federal Government through the Department of Petroleum Resources has given operational licence to Dangote Business Group to build and own a private petroleum refinery in Lagos which is expected to process about 650,000 barrels per day of crude oil. The refinery is over \$25billion dollars and will be the largest single-train refinery in the world covering about 2,635 hectares of land area. When completed, Dangote refinery can handle 3 billion cubic foot of gas per day and also meet 100% of Nigeria local requirement of all refined products and surplus of each of these products for export (dangote.com 2022). Therefore, one may question the economic justification why a country with a better competitive cost advantage in the production and sale of crude oil products would rather prefer to abandon her refineries or run pipelines from Niger Delta areas to transport crude oil to an African country to refine estimated twenty thousand barrels and buy a fraction of that product for Nigeria's daily requirement when indigenous refineries if put in good use have the capacity and personnel to produce many times that quantity (Olamore 2022).

The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), a major player in the Nigerian economy has been criticised for its role in the import-export arrangement of petroleum products in the country. For example, as a result of the high cost of importation of fuel, the Federal Government is reported to have spent ₦18.39Billion daily on what it calls Petroleum Subsidy (Punch, August 19, 2022). However, this claim was faulted by the House of Representatives probing alleged fraud in the petroleum industry. Subsidy is the difference paid between the pump price per litre of fuel and cost of importation per litre of the product. It was further revealed during the probe that the sum of ₦1.218Trillion was unilaterally deducted by NNPC without due authorization to pay fuel subsidy (Tribune, August 2022). It was also reported that the NNPC generated and unilaterally spent ₦2.38Trillion within six months of 2022 and remitted zero Naira to the federation account within the period. According to the ripplesNigeria (August 24, 2022), the Corporation stated that the entire revenue which came from crude oil sales was spent on maintenance of refineries and other projects. However, according to NNPC, the Nigerian government says it hopes that the Dangote Refinery will eliminate petroleum importation; and amid fears of oil glut as nations move to cleaner energy, Nigeria will still be able to sell to the privately owned refineries for at least 20 years even when Nigeria cannot find anyone else to buy her crude oil. To achieve this target, the government has locked down a right-of-first-refusal agreement to supply crude oil to the Dangote plant with NNPC owning 20% equity share in the Refinery.

(premiuntimesng.com, August 30, 2022). According to Bloomberg (2022), this giant refinery being built in Nigeria by Africa's richest person, Aliko Dangote, will finally start operations by mid-2023.

Crude oil theft and pipeline vandalization also contributed and account for 3 trillion revenue loss annually to Nigeria economy. According to NNPC, over 200,000 barrels of crude oil is either missing or stolen daily in Nigeria (Vanguard, 31 August 2022). As a result of this loss, the federal government has engaged in a pipeline surveillance contract of the Niger Delta with a former militant and indigene of the area at the cost of ₦48 Billion Naira to protect oil installations in that region (Punchng August, 2022). Critics of this contract have questioned the competence and relevance of the Military and Nigerian Navy in this very important aspect of their core constitutional responsibility to the Nigerian state and national economy.

As a matter of urgent national interest, crude oil theft should be treated as treason offence. From all indications, oil theft has more or less become an "organized crime" in Nigeria. Quoting revenue loses and outrageous figures and amount of crude stolen on daily basis are not enough. Therefore, the fight against corruption by the Nigerian administration cannot be complete if the government fails to identify these oil thieves. In case the federal government does not know who these criminals are, the presidency, NNPC and Minister of Petroleum can rely on intelligence report of the surveillance contractor in the oil-rich Niger Delta and similar locations.

While the president has repeatedly maintained that the Federal Government cannot fund education alone, the value of crude stolen per day which is about 600,000 barrels for thirty days alone could reasonably fund Education for one year at the prevailing price of crude and exchange rate of Naira to the Dollar. This amateur calculation could give an estimated total of about ₦900 billion Naira which was almost the equivalent of total allocation to entire Education sector in 2022 budget. Official figures from budget and economic planning shows there will be a deficit of ₦10.78 trillion out of ₦19.76 trillion budget approved by the National Assembly for 2023. This probably suggests that Nigeria's total income from all revenue sources including oil and gas sector will be less than ₦10 trillion in 2023.

Security report revealed that there are over 447 illegal crude oil refining camps operating in different parts of the Niger Delta area from where refined petroleum products are loaded at night with trucks. These illegal refineries or "cooking camps" are operated by economic saboteurs and well some well armed and highly connected criminals. In one of the raids carried out on these camps by security agents, over 60 million litres of AGO and DPK produced from stolen crude and ready for export were seized. There are over 3000 creeks in the Niger region where illegal refining of crude oil takes place. The crude oil in many cases are tapped from wellheads abandoned by National and International companies. These wellheads scattered all over the vast river in the Niger Delta ought to have been sealed whenever they are considered of no economic value by these IOCs and NOCs. However, because they are left unsealed either by commission or omission, the wellheads serve as national cake to oil thieves who fix underground pipes into them and siphon crude oil to their respective locations from where they are illegally refined and sold in very large quantities (Usman, Vanguardngr.com, October 10, 2022). This number, however, cannot be compared to the volume of crude oil stolen and loaded in vessels by oil cabals to various destinations where they are refined and sold with huge profits. This has made crude oil theft even more dangerous than the fuel subsidy.

Recently, the federal government pipeline surveillance contractor stated on Channels Television that Nigerian security officials are deeply involved and behind oil theft in the Niger Delta. According to the ex-militant, intelligence at his disposal suggests that most of the security agencies including the Army, Navy, police and DSS have illegal oil bunkering locations and further declared that he has a comprehensive list of these key players from Abuja and Lagos trying to bring the country's economy down through this illegal business (thenewsguru.com, October 8, 2022). The oil pipeline surveillance contractor in his submission warned that if crude oil theft is not checked, which the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission put at about 600,000 barrels every day, a time may come when there would be no money to run the county. Meanwhile, the Federal Government has announced Nigeria will borrow and sell more of the national assets to fund ₦10.78trillion Naira budget deficit for 2023.

Commenting on the volume of Nigeria revenue losses, a prominent political activist in the Niger Delta on Arise Television also revealed that oil theft bunkering is going on in a large scale with people loading their vessels directly from the well head without being stopped by the security. He argued that oil theft cannot be stopped unless the Nigerian government becomes committed to the fight to end it (oxygennews, October 2022). Similarly, according to Vanguard (October 18, 2022), in the month of September 2022 alone, Nigeria's crude oil production dropped by 24.73% as a result of oil theft.

Insurgency and Terrorism

The most devastating factor to Nigeria's development, which has also posed the biggest threat to Nigeria's leadership and established authority, is proliferation and criminal activities of multiple insurgent groups across the various geopolitical regions of the country. More than any other factor, insurgency and terrorism have caused a colossal economic damage, not only to Nigeria's human and infrastructural development but also tended to weaken and destabilize national integration and Nigeria's corporate political existence.

According to a 2022 global ranking, Nigeria is second most terrorist attacked country despite over eleven trillion (₦11trn) Naira security budgets from 2015 to 2022 (Punch, September 2, 2022). The state and level of insecurity in the country as well as the activities of terrorists, bandits, kidnappers and other criminal elements have continue unabated. Attacks on travellers, villages, churches, other places of worship and educational institutions have become too frequent in most parts of the country. The recent mass shooting and bombing at St Francis Catholic Church, in Owo, Ondo State of the Southwest on 5th June 2022 in which 41 worshippers were killed and about 70 injured is one of the too many examples of incidents that have led to incessant loss of lives of innocent citizens in the country.

Furthermore, the Kaduna/Abuja railway attack in March 2022 and similar attacks on other critical government infrastructures such as schools, police stations, judicial courts, INEC offices and maximum security prisons across the country in recent time also pose serious challenges to the constitutional and legal mandates of government in safeguarding the lives and properties of Nigerians and the institutions of the state. For instance, according to official reports released from the Ministry of Interior and the National Assembly, a total of 888 prisoners escaped from the Kuje Prison in Abuja in 2022 following terrorist attack on the prison. It was reported that about 65 armed security officers were on duty at the time this incident occurred and over 400 fleeing Kuje prison escapees are still at large (Punch Newspaper, October 4, 2022).

Following the Abuja/Kaduna train attack, the Department of State Services (DSS) announced the arrest of an aid to a popular Islamic Cleric alleged to have been involved in the negotiations for the release of persons abducted during the train attack. According to the DSS report to Federal High Court Abuja in September 2022, its preliminary investigations established that the hostage negotiator was a sponsor of terrorism, a logistic supplier of terror groups who used the cover of his profession as a journalist to aid both local and international terrorist groups. The agency may have arrived at this conclusion based on evidence which included various tactical communication devices, binoculars, laptops, 24 handsets, 3 international passports, 8 pieces of Nigerian Army uniforms, and 16 pieces of Nigerian Navy uniforms, plus items that it claimed were recovered from the suspects residence (politicsNigeria, September 17, 2022).

This arrest is a milestone in the fight against insurgency and terrorism even as the Presidency is pledging to wipe out terrorism and all forms of insecurity in Nigeria by the end of 2022. The Federal Government also confirmed the arrest of army officer attached to Buhari Military Cantonment in Abuja hiring and selling AK-47 rifles to kidnappers and terrorists.

However, it has been reported that about one hundred (100) suspected Boko Haram terrorists were allegedly released from the kirikiri prison in Lagos. This development came about two weeks after the release of remaining twenty three (23) persons kidnapped by terrorists during the Kaduna/Abuja train attack. Over N6billion Naira was allegedly paid as ransom to the terrorists to secure the release of the passengers six months after the incident (Vanguard, October 2022). According to punchng.com publication, the 101 suspected Boko Haram terrorists were secretly released from jail as part of a swap deal for the train travellers who were abducted on March 28, 2022. It was further revealed that the release of the 101 kirikiri inmates were based on negotiations and pressure the terrorist gave to the Presidency because of the fear that if they are not released before a new administration, which might not favour their tribe, they may likely not be granted amnesty (punchng.com October 10, 2022).

University Strike and Brain Drain

Brain drain is another factor challenging leadership and having impacts on national development. It is the departure of educated or professional workers from one field or country to another for favourable opportunities and higher standard of living. Julie (2021) says that when human capital is depleted from a country, it can have lasting effects on the national economy, and the effects are felt not only in the area where the brain drain occurs, but also where the brain gain takes place.

Like money laundering and other forms of capital flight, it is no longer news that Nigerian scholars and intellectuals in all fields, particularly science, medicine, ICT and some special areas, are migrating in large numbers to Europe, America and other countries notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Ghana, South Africa, Botswana and even Rwanda in search of greener pastures and supportive environment that offer competitive reward system for expertise and intellectual effort. This trend is having negative impact to Nigeria's ambition to become an active participant in the global knowledge industry. The extremely hostile work environment and meagre salary of the average Nigerian worker can hardly encourage or sustain hard work, commitment and quality assurance particularly in Nigeria's tertiary institutions most of which are begging for modern facilities and enhanced quality staff welfare attractive enough to make one stay on a job for a reasonable length of time. In Nigeria, protracted labour disagreements with government have serious negative consequences on public health and

educational system. For example, many university academics would have migrated to other countries and many would have died also as a result of hunger, sickness, boredom, frustration and psychological torture arising from unpaid salaries and no-work, no-pay policy of the Federal Government since the eight months strike. Similarly, when health institutions are shutdown as a result of unresolved labour issues, medical doctors abandon patients for nurses or move to private health care facilities. The number of medical experts and academics moving overseas has risen at exponential rate in recent time.

Since university closures have become the new norm and tradition in Nigerian education system, the government has been blamed for lack of political will and poor attitude of the leaders towards finding a permanent solution to labour crises in some of the critical areas like such as education and health. Every strike embarked upon by any labour union is a reminder of the failed promises of previous or successive regimes. With debt servicing taking over ₦13trillion Naira in the past seven years, over 18 billion Naira spent on fuel subsidy daily and about ₦11trillion Naira channelled to security, only 5.39% is allocated to education in the budget which represents ₦923.8billion Naira out of a total budget of ₦17.13trillion in 2022. The 5.39 percent was a 50 percent reduction from 10.79% allocated to education in 2015 which was the highest in 8 years, but still below 15-20 percent UNESCO benchmark (Vanguard, August 9, 2022). With this downwards trend, prospects for the country's knowledge-base economy may not be realised too soon.

Nigeria's external debt profile in March 2022 stood at \$39.69billion dollars and has risen to ₦42.84trillion as of June 2022 (punchng.com, September 20, 2022) and even as more countries that are not as wealthy and blessed as Nigeria are increasing budget allocation to their education system, public universities in Nigeria have shutdown for 8 months in 2022 and much longer than that in previous years due to neglect, poor funding and diminishing infrastructure. By international standards, academic staff of universities in Nigeria are, and still remain, among the least paid in the world. Available records from Education shows that this is the 16th time university teachers in Nigeria are striking in 23 years.

Conclusion

There is no controversy that Nigeria is a country that is exceedingly blessed with abundant natural resources and a rare breed of experts and professionals in all fields of human endeavour. However, as a result of harsh political and economic environment, many of these indigenous Nigerian professionals are scattered around the world making inputs and wonderful contributions to the development of foreign economies and societies in science, arts, business, politics, engineering, medicine, innovative technology and education. Among the major problems confronting leadership and national development of the country are financial waste, corruption, greed and too many holes through which the nation's commonwealth is siphoned, squandered and stolen in billions of Naira. This has not only increased the level of poverty, hardship, unemployment, underemployment, crime and brain drain, but has regrettably reduced Nigeria to a beggar and borrowing nation. If Nigerian government can use her brains to think out solutions to problems and come to the full realisation that education and knowledge are very vital tools for social engineering and transformation, Nigeria will be on the way to become a leading global economy. To achieve this, the country must allow her brightest minds and brains to manage the system.

Indeed, if all financial frauds, revenue leakages in resource management especially in the oil and gas sector, official corruption, embezzlement, money laundering, stealing, capital flight,

cash disappearances, misappropriation of funds and all criminal activities that constitute economic sabotage are eliminated and strictly controlled, Nigeria will become super rich to meet her revenue and expenditure targets with enough surplus to lend out as loans. World Bank foreign debt survey report of about 197 countries revealed that Nigeria was 195, meaning that the country was only able to beat two countries, Yemen and Afghanistan (Akoje, September 2022). This is unfortunate for a country that has the largest reserve of oil, gas, assorted solid mineral resources, abundant food and cash crops, a land literally flowing with milk and honey, and more so, the largest democracy in Africa. Nigeria needs an extraordinary patriotic and selfless kind of leadership to heal the bleeding economy and return the country back to her former glory. In the meantime, however, the National Assembly has approved ₦19.76 trillion total expenditure for next year and yet another ₦8.437 trillion new borrowings for 2023.

Recommendations

1. There is need for Nigeria to allocate significant percentage of her wealth to education and health in line with world's best practices. This will put a halt to brain drain and frustration arising from harsh work conditions and avoidable labour disputes currently ravaging and downgrading Nigeria's public tertiary education and health management systems. According to UNICEF, 64% of Nigerian children lack access to childhood education.
2. Nigeria's crude oil revenue and other sources of income should be very strictly monitored and utilized on vital and productive ventures that will yield returns on investment for the economy. To this effect, money laundering, diversion of government fund, embezzlement and all manner of theft by political office holders or government employees should be duly prosecuted and recovered. For example, Former Military Head of State, Late Sani Abacha's multi-billion dollar loot is still being repatriated to Nigerian government from foreign banks in Europe and America many year after he died in office. In other countries, offences of this nature are treated as crime against the state with appropriate punishment.
3. Nigeria's wealth should be well harnessed and accounted for by those in power and should be spent for the good of the citizenry, and not regarded as national cake only to be shared among politicians and few privileged individuals within the corridors of power.
4. The hundreds of billions of Naira income from excess crude oil sales which is usually distributed among the three tiers of government as bonus can be reserved. Nigeria can emulate other oil economies of the world and use that part of federation account for Social Benefit Fund for Nigerians who are either not working or unemployed. This will help to reduce poverty and hunger in the land.
5. There is also need for Nigerian government to recognize and rely on the opinion of experts and professionals while making policy decisions. Everything about government cannot be politics all the time. Key decisions in government should consider the interest of the people and the nation rather than party interest. Therefore, there is urgent need to look beyond political party affiliation when issues of national interest are discussed by the Executive and Legislature. Putting square pegs in round holes while making appointments at all levels of Nigerian government should be jettisoned by subsequent

regimes. Experts and professionals in various fields should be recognised and given political appointments even when they are not members of any political party. This will pay the nation better than appointing politicians and mediocre party loyalists as "compensation or settlement". This will help to curtail corruption in the system.

6. Most importantly, the minimum qualification for governors, presidential aspirants, legislators and other political office holders should be reviewed, upgraded and amended in the 1999 constitution from the current elementary/secondary school certificate to at least a university degree or its equivalent. Such qualification should be duly certified by awarding institution while certificate forgery by candidates for political offices both at the district, state and federal levels must also be prosecuted as criminal offences.
7. There is urgent need for a legislation prohibiting all political office holders such as president, governors, ministers, federal and state legislators, local government officials and members of their families from travelling overseas for medical treatment except on referral cases. Similarly, such laws should also prohibit these category of persons from sending their children to study in foreign universities.

Nigeria has some of the world's best brains and highly qualified, talented professionals in the universities and health care sector but many of them, (like our petroleum refineries), are poorly maintained or systematically abandoned with little or no hopes for workers. This is why many of them leave Nigeria. The case of the vice president who refused to travel abroad for surgery that was successfully done by indigenous doctors proved this point. It is the opinion of this writer that the huge capital flight accruing from unnecessary foreign medical trips can be utilized to improve the local health facilities and teaching hospitals to make them more viable and attractive.

According to Education, Central Bank of Nigeria report in May revealed that Nigerians paid about \$11.6 billion as tuition fees to foreign universities within the last 3 years. Ironically, these include schools in some poor and underdeveloped countries whose citizens used to come to Nigeria for higher education. In Britain alone, Nigerian students and their dependents contribute £1.9 billion pounds to UK economy (Punch, October 20, 2022), and according to Nigerian Medical Association report, Nigeria has only 1 doctor to 1,000 patients.

8. Nigerian government must learn to reward hard work by giving incentives to motivate teachers at all levels of the education system. Nigeria is an economy where idle and unproductive refineries recording over a combined ₦202 billion operating loss, and processing no crude, handsomely pay and give interest-free loans for cars, touring and personal needs to redundant staff amounting up to ₦4.93 billion a year (Ripplesng. October 18, 2022). The staff of Kaduna, Port Harcourt and Warri refineries which have been shut down by Nigerian government for many years should be redeployed to other sectors where they can be useful and contribute to the economy development of the nation.
9. Nigerian teachers generally are the least paid in the world and also subjected to the worst teaching and learning environments. This is why the average youths perceive a teaching job as a curse and passport to poverty. Therefore, teachers in Nigeria deserve a better, if

not the best treatment higher than that enjoyed by those in the oil, gas and other sectors, because they are nation builders.

- Specifically in 2015, senior officials of the Presidency and NNPC are reported to have sold off 48 billion barrels of stolen Nigeria crude oil to China and shared the proceeds worth \$2.5 billion US dollars based on the agreed price as at the period of sale that year. According to mynigeria.com (October 24, 2022), this transaction was exposed by a United States based journalist and Mexico registered oil and gas trading company, *Samano*. One of the officials mentioned in the deal is now late, and like General Abacha, this loot should be tracked, recovered and repatriated.

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