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## Combating Corruption and Unethical Conduct through Education

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### **Abstract:**

*Research has shown that corruption adversely cripples development, destroys the integrity fibre of a society, denies its citizens access to education and other social services, acts as a stumbling block to peace and justice and increases the cost of doing business. Corruption also undermines good governance, democracy and a country's competitiveness and revenue base. The sad effect of corruption is when our children grow up believing falsely that personal effort, hard work and merit do not count and that success comes through manipulation, favoritism and bribery. Kenya like other developing economies has continued to experience high levels of corruption despite the Government's significant investment in legal, policy and other institutional reforms over the recent past. To address the disastrous effects of corruption, diverse strategies have been employed. Kenya has adopted a three pronged strategy namely: Law enforcement, Public education and Prevention. This paper focuses on education as a strategy in combating corruption and unethical conduct. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the meaning and purpose of education. The second part of the paper highlights the meaning of the term corruption and unethical conduct and the various anti-corruption strategies employed in combating corruption. Part three of the paper discourses on various ways in which education can serve as a tool in combating corruption and unethical conduct. The paper ends with a short conclusion.*

**Keywords:** Education, Corruption, Ethics, Integrity, Unethical conduct

### **1. Introduction**

Many countries of the world and especially the developing economies are reeling under the weight of corruption, poor governance and weak morals. Research has shown that corruption adversely cripples development, destroys the integrity fibre of a society, denies its citizens access to education and other social services, acts as a stumbling block to peace and justice and increases the cost of doing business. Corruption also undermines good governance, democracy and a country's competitiveness and revenue base. The sad effect of corruption is when our children grow up believing falsely that personal effort, hard work and merit do not count and that success comes through manipulation, favoritism and bribery. Kenya like other developing economies has continued to experience high levels of corruption despite the Government's significant investment in legal, policy and other institutional reforms over the recent past.

The UN Secretary-General in his 2009 statement for the International Anti-Corruption Day stated that:

*"When public money is stolen for private gain, it means fewer resources to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities. Corruption enables fake or substandard medicines to be dumped on the market, and hazardous waste to be dumped in landfill sites and in oceans. The vulnerable suffer first and worst. "When foreign aid is diverted into private bank accounts, major infrastructure projects come to a halt.*

In 2009, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Southern Africa Representative Jonathan Lucas labelled corruption as "a crime against development, democracy, education, prosperity, public health and justice - what many would consider the pillars of social well-being. "This dent in integrity urgently calls for re-engineering of our value system. Education is the instrument that re-engineer's social values, attitudes and skills in the interest of the public good. This paper focuses on education as a strategy in combating corruption and unethical conduct.

### **2. Definition of the Term Education**

There are many definitions of the term education as there are people. The word education is derived from a Latin word "educare" which means to 'raise', 'to bring up', 'to train' and 'to rear'. Indira Gandhi defined education as *the process of training the various faculties of a person to enable him to achieve harmony between them and to become more keenly conscious of his/her responsibility to their country and to humanity as a whole.* He argued that, it is not merely what you learn but how you use your knowledge. According to Plato education is the process by which an individual gains knowledge, or insights or develops attitudes and skills. Julius Nyerere (1968) and Plato (1955) viewed education as the transmission from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge habits and aspirations of the society with a view of preparing the young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation and its maintenance or development.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) posits that the purpose of education is fourfold namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. In the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005, *A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research*, the philosophy of Education in Kenya is clearly spelt out as follows:

"Education and Training for Social Cohesion as well as Human and Economic Development". The focus of various sub-sectors of education will be on the acquisition of life-skills and life-long learning. Emphasis will be on the provision of holistic quality education and training that promotes education that involves both cognitive and affective domains. Instilling values such as patriotism, equality, peace, security, honesty, humility, love, respect, tolerance, cooperation and democracy through education and training will be critical. Quality and relevant education and training for Kenya must also address emerging challenges such as respect for human rights, drug and substance abuse, corruption, violence and social exclusion.'

A cursory review of the literature indicates that the purpose of education is to: cultivate human minds with values and principles that help to distinguish between wrong and right; develop individual capabilities and maximize an individual's potential for own growth and self-realization; and the development of society by equipping the young people to become responsible, thoughtful, productive and enterprising for the development and prosperity of humanity is future. In essence then, education aims at producing a complete person one who has developed intellectually, morally, aesthetically, spiritually, emotionally, socially and physically for the formation of a developed society. It also aims at transmitting knowledge from one generation to another to enable learners function well in society and to support learners develop good character to help them become good citizens. This involves influencing attitude formation, development of skills, imparting and inculcating positive values and practices, developing pride in work, feelings of self-worth and self-respect, and achieving social transformation.

This paper therefore upholds that education does not only deal with acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies but also on guiding a child to learn a culture of a society, molding behavior in the ways of that society and guiding a child towards his/her eventual role in society (citizenship). In other words, it has a lot to do with what one becomes and how one lives with other people and his/her contribution to that society. Education prepares one to be ready to be sent to the world to serve not themselves but their country and their people and not to be mere observers.

This paper raises fundamental questions with regard to the current purpose of education in view of the prevailing corrupt practices and declining moral and ethical standards in the world. Is our education today seeking to develop a man or woman who will offer to life and society through their thought and action? *Is our system emphasizing on getting and not giving for the greater good?* Concern for and cooperation with others and feeling responsible for corporate welfare has been comparatively neglected. The other fundamental questions that come to mind is whether our education system is teaching our children how to live and how to make a living- an honest living. A former US President- John Adams stated that -there are two types of education: one teaches us how to make a living, and the other how to live. Of greater concern is when the education system itself is corrupt, can children ever learn the values that must underlie a transparent and accountable society? Can children ever learn to serve, not just themselves, but their country and humanity as a whole? 'When money counts more than knowledge in the quest for a diploma, studying and learning lose their purpose. 'We need to pause and ask: what is the problem? Is it the national objectives of education, or is it the curriculum or is it that the pedagogical methods are wrong?

### 3. What is Corruption?

In this paper, corruption is defined broadly as 'the abuse or misuse of office or position of trust for private profit'. The office can be public office, private office or any other position of power. The systematic use of office or position of power for private benefit results in a reduction in the quality or availability of public goods and services.

There exist, however, much finer definitions, depending on what context, what point of view, and in what connections corruption is interpreted. The World Bank and Transparency International (TI) define corruption as '*the abuse of public office for personal gain or the misuse of entrusted power.*' *The World Bank procurement guidelines define a corrupt practice as 'the offering, giving, receiving, extorting, or soliciting, directly or indirectly anything of value to influence the action of a public official in the procurement process or in contract execution.'* Klitgaard (1988) defines corruption as '*behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding (personal, close family or private clique)*' The Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1983) defines corruption as '*impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle.*' And other English dictionaries define corruption as "morally degraded", "debased in character", or "the perversion of an original state of purity."

What is consistent in all the definitions is that corruption is wrong and is a deviation from right moral conduct. In a corrupt act; there is a party that gains and a party that loses or is disadvantaged; in a corrupt act personal interest override common interests. The corrupt gain need not be financial, it could be political power, gain in status, assurance of personal safety, sexual favours and exploitation, favours in promotion, recruitment, or trips all which are procured through illicit exchanges. The gain may not be limited to a personal one; it may apply to a political party, clan or ethnic group or family. *Corruption involves both the public and private realm* and that corruption comes in various forms such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, conflict of interest, coercive practices, deceiving the principal, speed money, pilferage, falsification of records, evasion of taxes, abuse of office, breach of trust, nepotism, graft, theft, kickbacks, influence peddling, among others (The Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act of 2003, Klitgaard, 1988).

Corruption is influenced by a person's mind set (negative thoughts, evil desires, wrong attitudes, and perceptions) and the environment which provides opportunities for corruption which includes poor procedures, weak systems, inadequate regulations, weak leadership, and lack of supervision. Thus, a person's inclination coupled by the opportunity to be corrupt easily lenders one to be corrupt. This paper posits that corruption is a behavioural problem caused by weak moral values, wrong attitudes and desires; therefore, to affect the state of corruption in Kenya and any other nation, one must address the mindset of individual citizens and the

prevalent attitude towards corruption. There must be a call to a change in heart, mind and way of doing things. This is possible through long term education. Stevenson, in his speech in Albuquerque, New Mexico, September 12, (1952), observed that ‘those who corrupt the public mind are just as evil as those who still the public purse.’

#### 4. Ethical and Unethical Conduct

Ethics deals with what is good, right, proper and just versus what is bad, wrong and unjust. At the heart of ethics is a concern about something or someone other than oneself. So ethics is concerned with conduct, relationships, decision making process that take into account other people and societal interests. Therefore, ethical behavior would refer to acting in ways that are consistent with what society and individuals typically think are good values. Unethical behavior is an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for a person, a profession or an industry. Unethical behavior can also be said to be floating moral norms and rules. Individuals can behave unethically, as can businesses, professionals and politicians. Examples of unethical conduct could include cheating, stealing, use of abusive language, bad mouthing or slandering others, cutting corners, deceit, calling in sick, failure to honour promises and or commitments, sabotaging others, lateness to work or appointments, absenteeism, infighting, deliberate delay in provision of service among others.

Integrity connotes a deep commitment to do the right thing for the right reason even when no one is seeing you or when you have reason to think that no one is likely to know what you have done. It also involves displaying honest behavior at all times. A person of integrity is the same on the outside as he/ she is on the inside- in other words, there is no discrepancy between what he/she says and does. His /her walks are in congruence. A person of integrity is characterized by such qualities as honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, respectfulness, honor, reliability, ability to keep promises and principled behaviour. Omar Nelson Bradley expressed concern for the diminishing level of ethics when he stated ‘the world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience; A world of nuclear giants but ethical infants’.

#### 5. Anti-Corruption Strategies

Corruption is a resilient crime which when entrenched in society, calls for robust and pro-active counter measures, strategies and resources. Across the globe, diverse strategies have been adopted in efforts to combat corruption. These include legislative and regulatory frameworks, the strengthening of control mechanisms and systems reviews, the establishment of reward and penalty systems, economic reforms, reduced discretionary powers, citizens’ voice, forging of networks and partnerships against corruption, development and enforcement of codes of conduct, professional codes of ethics, training on ethics, standards and best practices, reforming the civil service and administrative actions among other strategies. Interestingly, literature review indicates that increasing the number of legislation, controls and bureaucracy can also paralyze the administration and foster new varieties of corrupt practices. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of Kenya has adopted a three pronged strategy in the fight against corruption: Enforcement of the law against corruption, Prevention of corruption and Educating the public about and against corruption. However, in spite of the many legal and institutional frameworks put in place in Kenya, corruption remains a serious challenge to contend with. Empirical studies indicate that strong ex-ante or preventive measures have better results in fighting corruption in the long term than ex-post or curative measures (Kaufman 1997). However, preventive measures are a hard sell to the public.

##### 5.1. Education as a Strategy in Combating Corruption

Having noted that corruption is influenced to a large extent by a personal inclination (mind-set) and prevailing systemic opportunities and weaknesses in the work, social, economic and political environment, education remains a key strategy in the fight against corruption. It is by educating against corruption that we can hopefully return our countries and economies to the framework of honour and trust.

Transparency International notes that “education is central to preventing corruption;” clear laws and regulations as well as well-designed institutions will not be able to prevent corruption unless citizens are educated, to demand accountability from government and institutions.” It further notes that if the fight against corruption is to be successful, youth must grow up believing that their talent, effort and merit count more than favoritism, manipulation and bribery (HallackandPoisson, 2007). Nyaga (2015) in his study established that civil education was given the highest priority as very effective strategy for reducing corruption followed by prevention and investigation strategy. Kaufman (1997) cites an anti-corruption public education or information campaign as the reason for some success in the anti-corruption agenda in Bolivia, Uganda and Poland among others.

However, for education to successfully serve as a tool against corruption, it must address itself to the following: *who is to be educated; what is to be taught; how is it to be done- in other words what methodologies and what medium.*

In educating against corruption, *both the general public and the youth* must be reached with the anti-corruption message. In other words, the success of education against corruption must be hinged to a large extent on education of the *public and the youth* on the dangers of corruption. *The fundamental idea in the education of the young is the fact that it is through the younger generations that society successfully rebuilds itself; therefore, the primary concern of society is to teach the youth.* The public (public officers, professional bodies, business community, religious and civil society members and general public) must be educated on the causes and debilitating effects of corruption to enable them appreciate that corruption dehumanizes them by denying them their fair dues in society; it denies them justice and rewards the unjust; it robs them of the fruits of their labour by diverting taxes to unscrupulous individuals and syndicates. Through education the public will learn to own, identify with and participate in the process of combating corruption.

### 5.2. What is to be Taught?

The anti-corruption content, objectives and approach is group specific, but in all anti-corruption educational programmes focus is on corruption as a social phenomenon, Transparency and accountability, anti-corruption strategies and the role of the individual in the fight against corruption. The anti-corruption education strategy for the youth based on ethical education aimed at re-instilling values, a sense of accountability, respect for systems and integrity is certainly the way to go. Educating the young citizens in the values of integrity, citizenship, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, respect for the rule of law and democratic institutions and even the consequences individual and collective regarding corrupt act. A study by the Inter-American Development Bank (2015) focusing on 3,000 students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in six countries in Latin America showed that students with more civic education are less permissive of corrupt practices and less likely to violate the law.

One of the national goals of education in Kenya is the development of the individual not only in knowledge, skills and abilities but also in values, attitudes and emotions. The challenge that we have in the society today is that the teaching of moral values and principles that are essential to prepare an individual for a purposeful journey in life has always held a low priority in schools compared to focus on the development of academic excellence. This paper advocates that educators ought to pay more attention to the three domains of education: the cognitive (acquisition of knowledge); the psycho motor (acquisition of skills) and the affective domain (acquisition of values, attitudes, feelings and beliefs). Academic excellence alone is not adequate in the education of a child. Definitely children need a sound value base to evaluate information, choices, decisions while weighing risks and reward. President Theodore Roosevelt held that *'to educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate menace in society.'* Our children will be as good as the education that we give them, and our society will be as good as our children. Rudyard Kipling said- Can the planet earth survive if education fails to bring about a symphony of "self, society and nature"?

To ensure this, learning institutions- schools, colleges and universities should always ask themselves the following questions: What is the quality of education in the institutions we are? What is the quality of products we give out to the society? Is there neglect of some aspects of education, could that explain the reason for the unethical behavior and corruption in Kenya?

*Role-modelling* by parents, teachers and significant others is critical for any meaningful anti-corruption education. Bandura's Social Learning Theory acknowledges role modelling as one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, competencies and behaviours. Role modelling education is not concerned with the imparting of knowledge and information, as one might expect from an educational context. Rather, its aim is to expose its target groups to specific attitudes, lifestyles and outlooks. For this reason, the conduct and character of any messenger of anti- corruption should agree with the message being propagated.

The question that comes to mind is: what do our children see us do or hear us say while in public and in private? We tell them that corruption is wrong, but do they see us corrupt a government official to get their admission to school/college, or for the official to overlook our failures? We tell them to be courteous to one another but are we courteous on the roads? We tell them to be respectful and honest but we do the very opposite of what we say. What behaviours, perceptions and attitudes do they develop from what they see and hear us do? We need to remember that ethical values are transmitted to children through their environment and their formal and informal education. No printed word or spoken can teach young minds what they should be. Not all the books on all the shelves – but what the parents and teachers are themselves-

Alongside role-modelling, parents should deliberately and consciously play their role in instilling moral values among their children. It is as an accepted fact that education and ethical training begins at home and that parents are a child's first teacher. Parents socialize the child on values, attitudes and interpersonal relations. Children learn more from what they see their parents do. The old adage: 'Bend a tress while it is still young' remains true even today. If we are to educate against corruption, we must to teach our young child from an early age about values such as honesty, integrity, generosity, charity, sharing, hard work and respect for other people and respect for property. It is important to address issues relating to moral behavior during the formative years. The earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects. The teaching of values, ethics and integrity should start early in life at family level and in early years of schooling.

*Curriculum intervention:* This could be accomplished through mainstreaming ethics, integrity, citizenship and anti-corruption content into school, colleges and universities curricula as a stand -alone subject or infusion and integration of anti-corruption content and messages into carrier subjects in the taught curricula and non-formal curricula such as establishment of integrity clubs or Integrity championships, music, drama, sports, lecturers and other non-formal engagements. The aim is to influence attitude and behavior formation and transformation. The challenge with integration and infusion has been that limited content on ethics, integrity and anti-corruption can be included in the syllabus; moreover, teachers have no training on how to infuse. Curriculum overload has made it difficult to have a stand -alone subject on citizenship and anti-corruption.

Building the capacity of teachers on issues of ethics and integrity is a must if education is to influence and impart values. The Chinese have a saying that 'teachers are the engineers of the soul, moreover, teachers are said to influence eternity and teachers form one of the main pillars of a sound and progressive society. Teachers pass on knowledge and values to children. Teachers teach the difference between right and wrong, highlight the standards expected and have the opportunity to guide, correct and reprimand those behaviours that seem to disregard integrity. Sometimes people engage in bad and immoral behavior and in such circumstances teachers may have to use negative reinforcement. This too is a form of teaching. Teachers too have the opportunity to recognise, reward, praise and encourage good behaviour and mannerism that show integrity. For this reason, teachers should be trained on ethics, integrity, values and the importance of good governance.

The importance of using the media cannot be gainsaid. The use of print, electronic media serves the purpose of passing information with a view to change attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards our social worlds. Using Radio as a means to reach the masses could be used to warn against corruption; educate on the causes and effects of corruption and the benefits of fighting corruption. The

National Ethics and Corruption Survey 2015 indicated that 91.5% of respondents rated radio as the main source of information followed by television (59.45) and newspapers (39.4). Use of Vernacular and National Radio Stations to propagate messages on ethics, integrity and anti-corruption is critical.

Sensitization of all education stakeholders such as the parents, teachers, sponsors and students on the effects of corruption and the role of every individual in combating corruption should be emphasized. The purpose will be to enhance the capacity of every individual to resist participation in corrupt conduct. One of the key recommendations of the National Ethics and Corruption Survey 2015, was that awareness creation should be intensified to ensure that all acts of corruption and unethical conduct are reported to the relevant government agency and to contribute to culture change. The process of sensitization should involve show casing of success stories.

In conclusion, to cause cultural and moral re-engineering and to strengthen the capacity of the public to demand accountability, transparency, responsibility, uniformity and responsiveness from service providers and to proactively participate in the governance process, all people must be educated of what constitutes corruption and what role they can play in combating it. Education will therefore seek to, persuade and encourage people to see corruption as an evil, persuade them to shun and avoid it and play an active role in defeating it. Such education should aim at not just giving information, but facilitating positive behaviour change in the anti-corruption direction. It should also aim at imparting skills and building consensus for anti-corruption drives and associated reforms. Integrity is not a given factor in everyone's life. It is a result of self-discipline, conscientious effort, practice and a decision to be relentlessly honest in all situations. If the fight against corruption is to be successful, right values and attitudes must be taught and the minds and hearts of people be oriented and re-oriented to see corruption as the enemy of development. The education sector, which is home for many young people whose minds are still impressionable, is the sector that can be made use of to instill ideas of integrity and aversion to all forms of corrupt behaviour. It is recognised that changes in people's attitudes and behaviour is a long term process, and therefore the impact of anti-corruption education will only be felt over a long period of time. When all is said and done, moral education must be accompanied by legal enactment and enforcement.

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