

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF CORRUPT LANGUAGE ON GROWING CHILDREN:
VALUE RE-ORIENTATION**

IWERIEBOR, VERONICA Department of Early
Childhood Care and Education
College Of Education, Agbor

Abstract.

This paper is focused on the effect of corrupt language on growing children and how the Nigerian value reorientation can be instilled in the Nigerian child through early childhood education curriculum. Explored were the meaning of corruption values, value system, and how we can achieve value reorientation through education. A vast amount of evidence suggests that growing up in an adverse family environment has detrimental effects on child development. Adverse family environments are a major risk factor in predicting future delinquency, antisocial behaviour is thought to develop due to lack of attachment, unsupportive parenting, improper supervision, and child neglect or abuse. As a recommendation the paper suggested that there is the need to overhaul the system in order to achieve total value reorientation.

Introduction

UNESCO (2002), defines corruption in education as "the systematic use of public office for private benefit whose impact is significant on access, quality, or equity in education." It is important to note that public office can be abused both by those holding the office and by those in a superior or inferior position who seek personal benefit from it. Transparency International (2005), opined that corruption "can happen at virtually every level, from the central ministry down to the school and classroom. It can happen any time educators operate as gatekeepers to real or assumed benefits."

Good governance and rule of law are being replaced by a culture of drugs and alcohol, corrupt practices; sexual promiscuity and immorality, marriage and family break downs; litter and graffiti; laziness and unemployment. People are fast losing sense of responsibility and obligation to oneself, family, community and the country. The critical question is, 'How do we get out of this state of corruption and social disorder?' This is a huge problem. Any plans and strategies to address must be multi-faceted. And it will take time, but we must not wait and lose time. We have to act now but first we must know what to do and where to start. We have tried policing by providing resources and funds under successive government budgets and donor funds to enable the law enforcement agencies (police, correctional services, courts, welfare services, Ombudsman Commission, leadership tribunals, Public Inquiries, to enforce the rule of law. Still we continue to complain about lack of good governance and the proper application of the rule of law. No matter how much resources are poured into law and order, social services and infrastructure, there seem to be no change for the better. The culture of corruption and social disorder is fast becoming entrenched and institutionalised even to the point where the practice appears normal and acceptable. Corruption in context is not black or white, its roots extend deep into a way of life (Silova, Johnson and Heyneman, 2007). Under the scenario, the government and the concerned people should also take a serious look at initiatives which could help overcome this culture of corruption and social disorder. And to do that it has to start from early childhood. It is easier to bend and direct a growing shoot than to do it to an overgrown branch.

Meaning of corruption:

According to Staple (2008), United Nations Convention against corruption recognized corruption as a multi-faceted, dynamic and flexible phenomenon, and therefore does not define, but describe corrupt practices.

Corruption may not be easy to define but, according to Konie, (2003), it is "generally not difficult to recognize when observed". Corrupt acts require a minimum of two individuals from one or more communities, and either exchange or the promise of an exchange of money or services takes place; typically secret, the pact benefits the dyad to the detriment of everyone else. According to Salisu (2000), the simplest definition of corruption is that it is the misapplication of public resources to private ends. For example, public officials may collect bribes for issuing passports or visa, for providing permits and licenses, for authorising passage of goods at sea/air port, for awarding contracts or for enacting regulations designed to create artificial scarcity. Macrae (1982) defined corruption as "an arrangement that involves an exchange between two parties (the demander and the supplier) which (i) has an influence on the allocation of resources either immediately or in the future; and (ii) involves the use or abuse of public or collective responsibility for private ends." Konie (2003) identified two types of corruption. These are: Vertical corruption, which involves managers and decision makers. This is more common in less developed countries and Horizontal corruption, which involves the entire official, informed, and laymen groups in the countries. The two types of corruption should be seriously addressed and eradicated if any meaningful economic or political progress is to be made.

Value Re-Orientatation

Values are deep seated beliefs that influence people's actions and the rules by which they make decisions within their society. Values determine attitudes which in turn influence behaviour. It has been documented that value ascription is a motive force that drives positive achievement (Jay, 2009). It is therefore essential that every individual, group and indeed the entire nation must have core values which serve as the driving engines of development, growth and progress.

Education is the bedrock of the development of any nation. In Nigeria it is not only a private enterprise, but a huge government venture since it has been adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria as an instrument for effecting national development (NPE, 2004). Besides, education is regarded as a vital instrument for socialization and as a means of laying a solid and formidable foundation for a strong and virile nation, leading to nation building and development. Since education has been recognized as playing a sensitive and vital role in national development, Nigeria cannot afford to toy with the education of its citizens. This is because the wealth of a nation is a function of the available human resources and not the abundance of natural resources therein. This is why education has been accepted at all levels of government in Nigeria as an instrument for achieving social, economic, political, scientific technological development and national integration. Orientation, according to the New Webster Dictionary of the English Language, is to "adjust someone or something to the surrounding or situation... to turn or guide in a specified direction". Roa (2003) sees value orientation as the process of directing the interest and passion of individuals to the desired socio-cultural values that promote societal development and good human relations. From the above, value orientation therefore is to influence people to adjust, turn to, or conform to specified values needed by the society. Every school curriculum contains set values expected to be transmitted to the younger generation: it is the education system that does the transmission. Paradoxically, some of the values that promote honesty, transparency, tolerance and peaceful coexistence have no specific methods of transmission. This does not mean that such values should not be transmitted to the growing children. A better way of disseminating the knowledge of such desired values is by creating awareness through the enlightenment and interpretation of what the values stand for. That is the orientation. There are yet to be formulated methods of teaching such values as peace, security, tolerance, sanctity of lives and peaceful coexistence. Orientation is the answer. There are a lot of jingles on radio, television and other media systems on the above but not much has been achieved.

Education is a fundamental human right and a major driver of personal and social development. All around the globe it is seen as the key to a better future, providing the tools that people need to sustain their livelihood live with dignity and contribute to society. When access to education or its quality suffers, the potential of individuals, communities and nations is squandered. Corruption in the education sector is a key reason why such waste occurs. Despite increased international and domestic investment in education over the past two decades, corruption and poor governance prevent the returns to this investment from reaching many of its intended beneficiaries. Corruption in education is among the most significant barriers to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and realising the universal right to education.

Corruption not only distorts access to education but also affects the quality of education and the reliability of academic research findings. Corruption risks can be found at every level of education and research systems, from the procurement of school resources to nepotism in the hiring of teachers or the skewing of research results for personal gain. Conversely, education serves as a means to strengthen personal integrity, and is essential for addressing corruption effectively. Schools and institutions of higher education are important settings in which young people develop values related to social relations and personal citizenship. Students learn not just from the content of instruction but also from the 'hidden curriculum'¹ - which includes Implicit rules that determine who advances and who does not (Heyneman, 2006). When these rules are not characterised by integrity, young people internalise corrupt views of what it takes to succeed in society. According to Janschewitz, (2008) the hidden nature of a corrupt 'curriculum' may provide some explanation as to why education is rarely seen as a highly corrupt sector. Children and youth rarely have the ability to question the rules of the classroom or comment on conflicts between what is espoused and what is implicit. Is it Bad for Children to Hear or Say Swear Words? The harm question for adult swearing applies to issues such as verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and discrimination. When children enter the picture, offensive language becomes a problem for parents and a basis for censorship in media and educational settings. Considering the ubiquity of this problem, it will be interesting when families or parents, teachers, the church Pastors and other religious teachers address the emergence of this behaviour in the context of development, language learning and language of preaching. Parents often wonder if this behaviour is normal and how they should respond to it. Janschewitz, (2008), observed that swearing emerges by age two and becomes adult-like by ages 11 or 12. By the time children enter school, they have a working vocabulary of 30-40 offensive words. We have yet to determine what children know about the meanings of the words they use. We do know that younger children are likely to use milder offensive words than older children and adults, whose lexicon may include more strongly offensive terms and words with more nonched social and cultural meanings. We are currently

collecting data to better understand the development of the child's swearing lexicon. I do not know exactly how children learn swear words, although this learning is an inevitable part of language learning, and it begins early in life. Whether or not children (and adults) swear, we know that they do acquire a contextually-bound swearing etiquette — the appropriate 'who, what, where, and when' of swearing. This etiquette determines the difference between the amusing and insulting and needs to be studied further. Jay (2009), is of the view that young adults report to have learned these words from parents, peers, and siblings, not from mass media.

Jay (2009), opined that considering that the consequences of children's exposure to swear words are frequently cited as the basis for censorship, psychological scientists should make an effort to describe the normal course of the development of a child's swearing lexicon and etiquette. Is it important to attempt to censor children from language they already know? This will enable children to develop using refined language at home, in the school and in the church in the mosque and the society where they find themselves.

The Teaching and Learning of Language

Language is a major cultural phenomenon in human society and therefore an important regulator of individual consciousness and social interaction. The term language? Can be analyzed or interpreted at two levels; it could be viewed either as a system of rules or as a form of behaviour. In considering language as a system of rules, we concentrate on the structural properties of language without going into the social context. Here, the concern on language is purely generative, that is, one is only interested in the grammar and how the finite resources of language are employed or channelled into infinite production/usage bordering on both the organic and dynamic creativity in human language. But in considering language as a form of behaviour, attention is shifted to varieties in language use according to . . . situations and intentions. Here too, one is tempted to look at speech (language) as a part of social process

(Omachonu2013).

Realistically speaking, it amounts to a failure of intellect when human beings in their right minds engage in any of the activities considered as threats to personal and/or national security, because with our God given ability of speech (language) and knowledge (education), we should be able to think and understand issues, and then dialogue intelligently to resolve all our differences, and even combat, in our collective resolve, other forms of security threats that are not man-made.

Effects of Corrupt Language on a Children's Education

One universal function of education is to certify the acquisition of knowledge and skills and to identify those who may deserve more specialized training. The assumption is that this process is unbiased by inscriptive characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or gender. It is common that inscriptive characteristics do in fact play a role in both of these functions, and this helps to explain why it is usually illegal to use foul language in the classroom or environment where children are being brought up. It is abnormal to ask children to pay fine so as to be helped to pass examinations either as a parent or as a teacher. Anybody who does that is trying to build a faulty foundation on such children's educational background. It is a way of making such children to become lazy and to deny the fact that there is dignity hi labour. It is embarrassing because its damaging effect is that, it closes the door of inculcating the right virtues of honesty, integrity, transparency and hard work against such growing children.

Instances abound in homes and families where corruption is a function of family influences such as a mother insisting you give your niece a good grade, parents buying and paying individuals to write external examination for their wards. Thus, you hear parents tell their wards just get to the final class by any means. I will either sent you to miracle centres or I will pay somebody to write for you. These are some of the reasons education is losing its values, children become non-chalant towards their educational pursuits. At the end, many of them at another higher level of education find it difficult to defend their certificate, find it difficult to fill simple forms, read and comprehend samples messages. In Nigeria schools, those who bought their certificates are very easy to identify. A situation where a student made A1 or B2 in mathematics and he or she is wanting to study social studies or Christian religious knowledge. If you ask why not mathematics his or her reaction will explain that those grades were not actually through his or

her personal efforts.

Whatever the rationale, the effects are profound. When education loses impartiality, it loses quality. When

education loses quality, individual and community economic returns to education investments are reduced. Those who use educational products (employers) have to allocate their own resources to make up for the reduction in educational quality. Where corruption is high, the economic rates of return to education investments may be reduced by as much as 70% and lifetime earnings of individuals might be reduced by as much as 50%. Where corruption in higher education approaches 50% (where over 50% of the students report having had experience with illegal payments), employers cannot trust what graduates will know and be able to do. Employers in Central Asia, for instance, attempt to hire new employees from universities known for a lack of corruption (foreign universities). Employees from potentially corrupt universities have to be placed in specialized training programs to test whether they had the skills required. Employers are to administer special tests to differentiate those who bought their degrees from those who achieved them legitimately. The use of these sorting devices imposes additional costs on firms, and significant costs on the applicants. For instance, applicants from universities with reputations for corruption are not considered for technical or professional jobs and are regularly screened out of jobs in international firms. Corruption imposes costs even on applicants who may not have engaged in corrupt practices. There is a negative connotation of being an applicant engineer from any country where corruption in higher education is common; many will never be considered credible in international firms with access to job applicants from all regions of the world. It is possible to think of particular areas of the world such as Azerbaijan and Central Asia which have already reached the 'tipping point,' where corruption in the education system is so pervasive that the future social cohesion is in danger (Silova, Johnson & Heyneman, 2007).

Conclusion

Much emphasis has been placed on the collapse of economic systems while little is being done to revive the collapsed value system, which had largely precipitated the economic crises in Nigeria. We worship 'money bags' in Nigeria irrespective of the source of their wealth. Corruption and other economic crimes have thrived in Nigeria because of the collapse of the value system of old, when people of questionable sources of wealth were treated with contempt and disdain. What we must understand are the elements that would make any nation great. Economic reforms are good but not good enough to change a nation. Any nation that would be great must be established upon enduring national values that bind every individual in the society.

National culture must be revisited as it influences national character and image. We always lament that corruption is the bane of development in Nigeria but we forget that it does not exist by itself. What we lack as a nation is a system of values. No matter the amount of reforms undertaken by government, Nigeria will never be great until value reorientation is pursued vigorously. Our value system today is faulty and there can be no meaningful progress until it is revisited. We place little value on the life of fellow citizens and that informs our choices as a nation. Since money is valued more than every other thing, we embezzle public funds, we steal, we kill and assassinate easily because we place little value to life. To restore Nigeria, our youths must be

taught how to value hard work, honesty, integrity and accountability over financial gains.

Recommendations

Awareness about the meaning of the use of language is an important aspect, both of children's learning from a perspective of sustainable learning, and in learning about the meaning of sustainable development. If a learning situation points towards an expressed aim and goal, then the government must:

- i. Design and implement programmes that will inculcate in the children the virtues of honesty, integrity and transparency as early as possible in the academic career.
- ii. Design policy that will encourage children to participate more actively in the on-going campaign against corruption and by so doing helping to complement the efforts of the government, especially in the area of advocacy, public enlightenment and whistle-blowing (exposing corrupt acts in their domain).
- iii. Institute an efficient scholarships/grants/Loans scheme to support students from poor background and address the issue of inadequate funding of the educational sector.
- iv. Take concrete steps to check the corrupt practices being perpetrated by the heads of educational institutions, including financial and non-financial corruption.
- v. Value cultural and linguistic diversity, especially in regard to indigenous and minority languages, and encourage the use of familiar language in ECCE and provide adequate resources as part of good teaching.
- vi. Our children, our youth should be taught the value of hard work, honesty, integrity and transparency in homes, schools, churches and mosques.

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