

Role of Lifeskills Education in the Prevention of Corruption in Kenya

Njoka, J.N.and Githui, P.K.

Karatina University

Email: jnjoka@karu.ac.ke

ABSTRACT

Eradication of corruption in the public sector has remained an elusive challenge to most countries in the world especially Kenya. The menace has continued to ravage the economies, compromise service delivery to the citizens and lead to escalating levels of poverty and crime against a background of heavy taxation. Countries have responded with varied legislations and establishment of specialized institutions with the sole mandate of eradicating corruption. Kenya has enacted several anticorruption laws and established independent institutions such as the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), but the vice continues to negatively impact on the economy in unprecedented proportions. Despite these noble interventions, corruption scandals have persisted. Worse still, institutions designed to fight the menace have sometimes been accused of abetting the very vice they are supposed to fight. In light of this understanding, this article underscores the critical need of a paradigm shift that advocates for a new philosophy in the fight against corruption. The gist of this article is that if lifeskills education (LSE) is taught effectively and early in life to learners, it is a plausible deterrent to corruption. Studies indicate that when children internalize and integrate such values as integrity, honesty, responsibility, justice and personal discipline, among others, in their personality, the predisposition towards corrupt tendencies can be controlled. Lifeskills education inherently enables adoration of values and attainment of wealth in justifiable and legal ways as opposed to unrestrained voracity that is now prevalent in Kenya. The perverted philosophy that 'the end justifies the means' will have no place in a society where citizens are inculcated with moral values. This article adopts the social cognitive theory propounded by Albert Bandura as its theoretical framework. The study relied on library review of secondary data and published reports regarding corruption in Kenya. From the critical and philosophical review of literature and studies on prevention of corruption, strategies and approaches are advanced regarding how to integrate lifeskills education in fighting corruption. The article stresses the need to inculcate functional values in the personality development of children designed to make them inimical to persuasions of corruption.

Key words: *Lifeskills, Corruption prevention, Values, Personal discipline, Integrity, Justice, Personality reorganization*

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of how to effectively eradicate corruption in the world and in Kenya in particular continues to give headache to leaders and policy makers. In Kenya, the approach of legal and institutional framework through the enactment of laws and establishment of institutions such as the Ethics and Anti-Corruption commission (EACC) seems not to have yielded positive results in the war against the vice. Hence, there is need for a paradigm shift in the fight against corruption in Kenya.

The attitudes of the citizens are essential in building a responsive public administration that is averse to corrupt behaviour (Hallak & Poisson, 2008). Fostering attitudes that do not tolerate corruption should therefore be one of the priority tasks of education. This concern should not be overlooked and cannot be avoided in the design of comprehensive strategies to combat corruption.

Lifeskills education can provide a very effective panacea for the war against corruption in Kenya. The socialization of children with the objective of inculcating values of integrity and responsibility is critical in preventing and eradicating the menace of corruption in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The challenge of how to effectively prevent corruption in the world economies and Kenya in particular continues to confound political leaders and government officials heading ministries, departments, agencies and policy makers. Eradication of corruption is a long and complicated process particularly because the menace has the propensity of fighting back. This phenomenon has critically complicated the fight against corruption. Various efforts geared towards fighting corruption such as enactment of laws and relevant legislations together with establishment of institutions like Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission (EACC) have not yielded significant results in Kenya (Subedi, 2005). This indicates the necessity for a paradigm shift by developing new philosophical approaches in eradicating the vice.

The new philosophical approach is founded on a structured lifeskills education that seeks to impart and inculcate critical values of ethical behaviour and integrity that children will be equipped with through schooling from very early stage throughout their academic life (Mwangi, 2009). Education as a process of socialization is instrumental in fostering the character of zero tolerance to corruption by nurturing competencies through lifeskills education such as assertiveness, problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, creative thinking, effective communication and interpersonal relations which are essentially desirable attributes in the fight against corruption.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine how the fight against corruption can be promoted through the pathway of lifeskills education. Through effective provision of lifeskills education children are equipped with functional values such as integrity, responsibility and critical reasoning, among others, that are embedded in the personality structure of individuals in society. This is in response to the apparent ineffectiveness of legislative and institutional framework that prevails in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the social cognitive theory (SCT) propounded by Bandura (1986) as its theoretical framework. The theory explains that individuals, through the social learning process of observing, copying, imitating and identifying with other members of the society found in their environment, acquire knowledge and attitudes that shape their lives. The study relied on library review of secondary data and published reports regarding the menace of corruption and how lifeskills education can be utilized in controlling corruption.

Need for paradigm shift in corruption prevention

The fight against corruption in Kenya is conducted through establishment of institutions and enactment of legislations. It is contended that there is need for a paradigm shift that should fundamentally stress the focus of the fight against corruption from establishment of institutions and legal regime to effective socialization of children where internalization of integrity, responsibility, assertiveness, critical thinking and ethical behaviour are inculcated (Fjeldstad, 2002). Eradication of corruption is a long and complicated process that requires not only to be driven by legal mechanisms but also the development of a new philosophy in form of seeding logical reasoning and new values of free-corruption through formal education. This emerges out of the realization that corruption thrives partly because of citizens' tolerance to it arising from lack of awareness and sensitization of the need to demand ethical practice and behaviour from people (Ringera, 2007). Education is a powerful tool that can be used to mould a character of zero tolerance to corruption through acquisition of lifeskills. Functional lifeskills of integrity, honesty and ethical practice are essential attributes in the fight against corruption.

Ringera (2007) avers that to effectively curb corruption, there must be genuine political goodwill from the entire political landscape including the electorate. He argues for a strong legislative base that empowers the concerned bodies to investigate and prosecute corruption and recover the proceeds of crime. There is critical need for a clear, coherent and well-coordinated strategy that encompasses effective enforcement of laws. Effective corruption prevention requires educating the public about corruption and its effects on their socio-economic status and quality of life. Fight against corruption should involve citizens as part and parcel of the strategy with an understanding from the outset that they have a personal responsibility to fight corruption themselves. Through education and lifeskills education, citizens are empowered to understand that fighting the vice is for their own good and the good of posterity (Ringera, 2007). This implies that there is critical need for a paradigm shift to emphasize the empowerment of the people through impartation of civic education and entrenchment of public participation in fighting the menace. When the citizens are appropriately empowered with lifeskills and values for fighting corruption, it will be easy to develop a national culture that is inimical to corruption and its proceeds. This way, a culture of self-regulating individuals is entrenched in their personality structure. This results to a society that frowns at corruption hence eliminating the vice.

Lifeskills education and eradication of corruption

Lifeskills education is the type of learning that seeks to impart psychosocial values of integrity, honesty and ethical practice in regard to issues that confront people in life (Evans and Rooney, 2011, Kabiru and Njenga, 2009). Sociologists and anthropologists who dominate socio-economic perspectives of corruption argue that acts of corruption are better understood within a specific social context (Lancaster and Montinola, 2001). This implies that when children are equipped with values of integrity and responsibility very early in their socialization, they will be able to internalize the fact that the means of acquiring wealth are critically important as opposed to the end justifying the means. There is need for structuring of society to ensure individuals who interact with children as they grow impart in them the appropriate values of integrity and responsibility. Through the processes of social learning, educational institutions should be proactive in imparting values geared towards combating and preventing corruption.

Robert (2006) argues that in attempting to design the corruption prevention strategies, it is necessary to construct a set of incentives that encourage rule-abiding and discourage rule-averse behaviour among individuals who engage in corrupt practices. Similarly, an attempt to provide a universal anti-corruption strategy is unlikely to succeed and therefore there is a need to involve other stakeholders in the anti-corruption programmes (Gould, 2008). This means that the strategies must be complemented by other reforms aimed at reducing the levels of corruption. For instance, emphasis on lifeskills education should be such that individuals who exhibit desirable behaviour are rewarded while those deviating from the approved behaviour are reprimanded. This calls for the development of a national culture that stresses high values in individuals as they grow in society.

This contention implies that effective strategies need to be tailored to the social context in which corruption occurs, and is emphasized by other scholars like Alan and Riley (2009). Examples of the internationally known anti-corruption commissions that have embraced the three-pronged strategies are the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) of Hong Kong and of Australia. Quah (2003), in a symposium held in Hong Kong, explored the effectiveness of the three strategies in reducing the levels of corruption and pointed out that they are crucial in addressing the vice.

Anti-corruption strategies require a sound framework for policy analysis. Klitgaard et al. (2010) provides a framework based on an equation which demonstrates that; $\text{Corruption} = \text{Monopoly} + \text{Discretion} - \text{Accountability}$. This framework is crucial for analyzing the persistence of corruption in the country. However, it is important to link it with the influence of political and social environment prevailing in the country. This was necessitated by the fact that corruption cannot be separated from the influence of the two factors. Indeed, monopoly, discretion and accountability are variables which depend on the actions of both the principal and the agent. There are other external influences which impinge on the effectiveness of the strategies (Klitgaard, 2010). The framework provides for the centrality of lifeskills education in so far as in equipping the actors with values and ethics through the personality reengineering of the individuals. Using

the strategy of socialization, individuals are shaped and moulded with functional values and ethics from very early age in their lives. The internalized values and ethical behaviour becomes the engine that power peoples' deeds as they play their rightful roles in society.

Lifeskills education and personality development

The social cognitive theory that guided this study stressed the critical importance of the development of personality in processes that seek to shape peoples' behaviour in conformity with the expectations of society. Bandura (1986) argues that the social cognitive theory seeks to enable individuals to acquire the desirables of society through active appraisal, imitation, copying, observation, role modelling and identification with significant others in society (Wade and Tavis, 2011). The processes of social learning entail critical assessment and evaluation of the values by individuals as guided by significant others in society. The significant others include such individuals as teachers, parents and caregivers or authority figures in society. Personality refers to the dynamic organization of the psychophysical systems within the individual that enables to effectively adjust in one's environment (Coon and Mitterer, 2007). Lifeskills education seeks to inculcate individuals with values and norms that every society considers important in life. Psychologists view personality as the product of the interplay between the id, the ego and the superego which are the psychic forces that shape the character of a person (Hergenhahn, 2009). The id represents the primitive forces within an individual that functions on the pleasure principle. That is the overall behaviour of a person operating from the id impulse is to seek pleasure without regard to the protocols and conventions of society, for example, a child who yearns and cries for bread or to be provided with their needs irrespective of the circumstances. Id operates on the selfish motives of "I, me and myself" principle (Mwangi, 2009). The ego on other hand represents the values of society. The primary motive operating in such individuals is the secondary thinking process exemplified by regard to what is socially approved in society. The superego is the highest of the three forces as it represents the internalization and development of conscience in an individual. A person operating on the superego has internalized the values, conventions and norms of the society to the extent that they form part of their total conscience (Keenan, Evans, & Crowley, 2016). Hence whenever confronted by demands of life, such persons experience self-reproach whenever persuaded to engage activities that conflict with the values of society. As a result of the self-regulating conscience in themselves, persons operating from the superego are able to avoid wrongdoing or what is ethically unacceptable.

Lifeskills education is structured in such a way as to enhance proper interaction of the id, ego and the superego in the shaping of personality of individuals in society. The process of socialization is designed in such a way as to facilitate acquisition of anticorruption values that form the conscience of individuals in society (Kabiru and Njenga, 2009). Development of conscience in individuals facilitates in self-regulation and deterrence whenever a person is confronted by temptations to engage in undesirable vices of corruption.

The prevailing anticorruption framework in Kenya is heavily founded on legal frameworks and institutions such as EACC. In Kenya, the KACC is mandated by law to implement anti-corruption strategies in the country. Besides the work conducted by the commission, there are other institutions involved in the war against corruption as well as creating public awareness. The commission is mandated to investigate corrupt conduct, trace and recover corruptly acquired public property, devise corruption prevention mechanisms and educate the public on the dangers of corruption (UNCAC, 2007).

The commission has to a large extent implemented the strategies following the domestication of the anti-corruption law as per the provisions of the United Nation Convention against Corruption. The anti-corruption strategy adopted by the commission is three pronged and it is based on enforcement of the law against corruption, prevention of corruption and education of the public (Fjeldstad, 2009). It is evident that in the three prong initiative, there is little effort at shaping the personality of individuals by inculcating lifeskills such as values and integrity. The philosophical contention for shaping personality is informed by the critical need to change people from the inside by empowering them with the desirable norms of society. Just like the theological perspective of writing rules in people's hearts, the development of personality manifested in values would be instrumental in combating and preventing corruption.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored the need for a paradigm shift in the fight against corruption. There is the critical need to strengthen the teaching of lifeskills education with a view to shaping the personality of children in Kenya as a strategy in fighting corruption. When individuals acquire such values as integrity, honesty and ethical behaviour, it becomes easy for them to demand ethical practice in all private and public life in the undertakings of people. Individuals are able to demand accountability and transparency in behaviour as they participate in society. This implies that corrupt behaviour will be at variance with peoples' conscience hence it will be naturally eliminated. The emphasis is the development of superego that stresses acquisition of conscience by individuals that enhance self-reproach when individuals engage in deviant behaviour or contemplate doing what is not socially approved in society.

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