



POTENCY OF LANGUAGE IN VALUE RE-ORIENTATION: IMPLICATION FOR ERADICATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Corruption is the cancer at the heart of many of our challenges in Nigeria. It destroys jobs and holds back development, costing the country's economy billions of naira every year. It impoverishes the masses as every corrupt government siphon fund and prevents hard working people from getting the benefits that are rightfully theirs. Since language is the most effective instrument in communication in social activities, political interaction and cultural transmission, its potency in curbing corruption cannot be undermined. Consciousness of virtues, good values, integrity and honesty will only be functional, when it employs the weapon of language to meet its target audience (corrupt people). It can also re-orientate the society on its ethics and values that are useful in eradicating corruption. This paper examines the potency of language and value re-orientation in the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. It also explains the forms and the causes of corruption in Nigeria.

Keywords: Potency of language, value- re-orientation, corruption, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION.

Corruption is inimical to socio-economic development of any country, where it is practiced on any scale. This explains why all nations make effort to minimize or eradicate corruption in their economies. Nigeria has been ranked among the most corrupt nations of the World by many international anti-corruption agencies (Ademu, 2013). If other nations take measures to eradicate corruption from their economies because of its negative consequences, Nigeria cannot be an exception. Corruption has led to gross misuse of public funds in Nigeria and has caused untold hardships to citizens via non-payments of salaries and lack of provision of basic public utilities. Despite the setting up of various anti-corruption agencies, the problem still remains. Therefore, the use of language and value- re-orientation is recommended to fight corruption in Nigeria. What is language then?

LANGUAGE

Language is the source of human life and power. Language is what makes us human. We use it when we talk, play, fight, write etc. It is part of the social structure of our society. We live in a world of language. What distinguishes humans from animals is the use of language.

Sapir(1929) in Hyamas, Fromkin, & Rodman (2007) explains that human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. Olaoye (2007) describes language as a distinctive human system of communication based on oral and written symbol. It is a purely human and non-instinctive way of communicating ideas, emotion and desires, by means of voluntary produced symbols.

Language conveys information, and man does not respond to just mere sounds but to the semantic import of words. It does not carry just bare information but also carries with it

affection or emotional overtones. When we look at any community, we can say that language is the central feature of the culture. It is a reflection of thoughts, the feelings, the values, beliefs, the experiences of a community of speakers. In value-orientation which is a tool to fight corruption in Nigeria, the priceless possession of language cannot be underestimated.

VALUE RE-ORIENTATION

Every country desires growth and development. Good value can be a motive force that can derive positive development. Igbuzor (2013) defines values as the deep-seated beliefs that influence people's actions and the rules by which they make decisions within their society that determine attitude which in turn influences their behaviour. Value implies acceptable standard, idea, way of doing things and living virtuous life in society (Njoku, 2015). The core of every human culture is a mark of its fundamental value. Certain values have been fundamental in all human societies across civilization. The base of instituting values seems to be the family while collective values of society make up the societal value system. Truthfulness, honesty and friendliness are renewable virtues that increase as they are used and add flavour to life. Every society needs to define its values and engage in activities that promote the motto, social order and national ethics which underpin the activities that will sustain those set of values. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for the motto and social order; section 23 provides that national ethics shall be discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance and patriotism. (Igbuzor 2013).

The crisis of value system in Nigeria suggests that the growth and progress of the society is being retarded in many aspects through outburst of corruption. The lived experience of Nigerians is quite different from constitutional provisions on ethics and values for the country. There is a lot of indiscipline in all facets of life in the country. Integrity is no longer cherished by people. The society is characterized by high level of distrust. Suspicion and everybody have become a suspect of misplaced value.

Ebob (1994) opined "For a materialist, life is a game of haa-haa-wuu, and a gamble, scratch my back and I scratch yours. Life is give and take. Life is getting anything you want through any means, fair or foul. Life is fastness. Life in sum is '419' of various dimensions and magnitude."

There is therefore need for value re-orientation to re-position Nigerians where we ought to be in the future. There is a need for Nigeria to return to the good old days when high moral integrity, transparency in governance and accountability, were an integral part of public policy. Ezekwesili, (2014) said that Nigeria started getting it wrong when values were being debased. When we replaced integrity with acquisitive mentality, less emphasis was placed on high moral integrity, values and credibility. She added that Nigeria must re-orientate its citizens and inculcate high moral integrity and values on the citizenry. Moreover (Ogbu, 2014) shared the view that Nigeria needed value-re-orientation and high moral integrity in governance.



The re-orientation of value system in our society is a search for national culture that would re-shape national character and image. (Njoku, 2015) Therefore there should be more researches on the core values and how Nigerians can internalize the values.

CORRUPTION

The history of corruption is as old as the world because ancient civilization had traces of wide spread illegality and corruption. Lipset and Lenz (2000) in Dike (2003) noted that corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome and Greece down to the present. Corruption is also believed to be endemic in modern governments and it is not peculiar to any continent, region or ethnic group. This does not mean that the incidence and magnitude of corrupt activities are the same in every society. Some countries are obviously more corrupt, yet others have better plans in managing corrupt activities. According to the Transparency International in Ayobami (2011), Nigeria was ranked 144th out of the 146 corrupt countries of the world beating Bangladesh and Haiti to last position. An analysis of the anti-graft / anti-corruption laws in Nigeria shows that corruption will continue in spite of the laws because the perpetrators do not face any consequences.

If corruption is as old as the world, then what is corruption?

Ruzindana (1999) in Ayobami (2011) said that corruption is the problem of routine deviation from established standards and norms by public officials and parties with whom they interact. Corruption can also be seen as the abuse or misuse of power or position of trust for personal or group benefit, monetary or otherwise. World Bank (1998) defined corruption as the "use of public office for private gain." It is an anti-social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms which also undermines the authority to improve the living conditions of the people. Corruption is a behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private or state gain, or a behavior which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gain regarding influence. (Nye, 1967 in Ene, Arikpo, Arikpo, Abam, Jeftery, Williams, Albert and Dunnamah, 2013) Sorkaa (2002) viewed corruption as an unethical or deviant behavior. It is an erosion of ethics and accountability. Ethics means the proper or right way of behaving in the society.

FORMS OF CORRUPT ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

Achebe (1983) said that corruption in Nigeria ranges from budgeting abuses to political patronage, and collection of mobilization fee or full payment without executing the contract. Other forms of corruption found among Nigerians include:

Bureaucratic Corruption: it is also called petty corruption. This is bribery in connection with the implementation of existing laws, rules and regulations. It is corruption that people can experience more or less daily, in their encounter with public administration and services like hospitals, schools, local licensing authorities, police, taxing authorities etc.

Political corruption: This is when the laws and regulations are abused by the rulers, side-stepped, ignore or even tailored to fit their interest. Political corruption takes place at the

high levels of the political system, when politicians and state agents entitled to make and enforce the laws in the name of the people, are using this authority to sustain their power, status and wealth.

Electoral Corruption: It is illegal interference with the process of an election. This includes purchase of votes, intimidation and interference with freedom of election, stealing of ballot boxes, rigging, bribing of electoral officials and security men in order to have free hand to change result. (Edoh, 2003 in Ene et al, 2013).

Kickbacks: It is an official's share of misappropriated fund allocated to an organization involved in corrupt bidding. It can be contract given to a company that is not the best bidder. It is when fund is allocated to a company or individual more than they deserve, and the official receives a kickback payment (i.e. the portion of the sum of the money the company received)

Legal and Moral Corruption: This is when the law is clearly broken with impunity. When there is no strong adherence to the dictates of the rule of law and respect for values. In this form of corruption transgressors are not detected or punished. Culprits escape detention and prosecution.

Corruption in education includes the participation of parents to use unorthodox means to influence their children or wards admission to federal government secondary schools or federal or state universities. There are also expensive coaching centers that charge exorbitant fees that aid or abet cheating in the JAMB examination with the connivance of JAMB officials (Abayomi 2011). There is exam malpractices right from the primary to the university levels. Politicians are placed in apparently compromising positions because of their need to solicit financial contributions for their campaign finance, if they then appear to be acting in the interests of those parties that funded them, it could be considered corruption. Even, many politicians are taking money from the public coffers for their election campaigns to guarantee that they will continue to hold their influential and often well- paid positions.

CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is a symptom of numerous difficulties within contemporary society. It usually involves more than one party. It takes a form of an organized crime. Some of the causes of corruption are: misplaced sense of values, lack of accountability and transparency in government, greed, discrimination in wealth distribution. Lack of accountability and transparency lead to avoidable speculations and loss of confidence in the instrument of power. As a result, some of the elite have corrupted themselves and public officers have forgotten that they are accountable to the electorates. According to Okwuagbala, U. M. (2020), there are many factors that causes corruption; and among them are: "Greed, poor youth empowerment, poverty and unemployment".



Poor governance is the underlying problem of the nation. It creates an environment in which corruption flourishes. Because of poor governance, there is no transparency or accountability of the government to the public. As such, the politicians, public and private employees all get involved in corruption. Around 50 percent of the people live under poverty line and most of them are unemployed. They are unable to manage their basic needs. Honesty, morality, virtue, integrity etc. are meaningless to them. They need at least 2 meals per day. So, they do not hesitate to adopt unfair means, offer or take bribe to fulfill their needs (Rumman, 2012)

Lack of the rules of law is another cause of corruption. There is no strong adherence to the dictates of the rule of law and respect for values. The lukewarm attitude of the officers charged with enforcing the laws (judges, police and other public officials) lead to culprits off hook when they are 'settled' Dike (2003) Lack of patriotism is another vice that lead to corruption. When citizens are unpatriotic, they do not love their fatherland from the heart, do not have integrity. They would indulge in corrupt practices. Poor remuneration of civil servants is another serious factor. The government servants are paid poor salary which is not enough to maintain their families. Although the price of essentials is going up every day their salaries are not increased in proportion to the market price. Beside this, the workers in the country are not paid regularly. This makes the workers device ways to meet their family obligations even if it involves breaking the law and they indulge in unfair means. Influence of the larger society also breeds and encourages corruption. The society on one hand frowns at corruption and on the other hand encourages corruption by tacitly rewarding those who are known to be corrupt. Corrupt politicians are awarded with juicy government positions after being tried and imprisoned for various corrupt offences while in office. Corruption has taught the society wrong lesson that does not pay to be honest, hardworking and law-abiding.

Corruption has been tactically encouraged by big economy powers' like China, Russia, America and Europe who provide haven for stolen funds by Nigeria's political leaders. The multinational corporations working in Nigeria assist the people to loot resources and expropriate them. Construction and communicative giants, oil companies etc assist through contract inflation and import invoicing (Ene et al 2013.) Many people join politics to enrich their pockets with public funds and to have unchallenged power in the society. Greed and materialism make them acquire wealth at all cost. Edoh (2003) in Ene et al (2013) affirmed that power seekers in Nigeria see politics as an avenue for making money; a sort of open cheque to wealth, to be in power and to control state resources which are often converted to personal uses

THE POTENCY OF LANGUAGE AND VALUE RE- ORIENTATION IN THE ERADICATION OF CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

To eradicate corruption totally, there must be total commitment from all sectors of the society. Unwavering political support and commitment will lead itself to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to dealing with the causes of corruption in order to combat the monster. There should be behavior modification through the use of language. National

consciousness which encapsulates patriotism is a product of the inculcation of various values through language. If the citizens are patriotic to their country, corruption would be eliminated.

Language in education is an indispensable tool in shaping individual character to make him useful in his immediate environment. It inculcates moral values into the learner's various level of education. Learners would be taught to abhor corruption so that society would be developed and peaceful (Agbe, 2004 in Odia, 2004). Reading passages that deal with causes and effect of corruption on society can inculcate moral values and prevent the learners to participate in corrupt practices. Through language, people should be re-orientated on the danger in corrupt practices, danger in politics without knowledge and character etc. In a family unit, in school, in regional circles, mass media, government organization and non-government organization, the language of the environment should be used to re-orientate the society on the danger of materialistic needs and never-ending lust to earn more and more by putting in less and less effort. The society should be aware that earning money is for living a respectable life and that good a name is better than silver or gold. In the family unit, the children should be taught moral and social behaviour, obedience to rules and regulations of the society. This can help the children to deviate from corrupt practices right from their youth. This also can be done through the weapon of language.

The re-orientation process in language education system in Nigeria would lead to redemption of the people from corruption. If the school process should nurture and entrench values positively in children, corruption would be eradicated (Njoku, 2015) All schools should return to the teaching of moral education to empower children with the spirit of stewardship. Making national character re-orientation an integral part of the curriculum of teachers' education will be necessary to enable teachers internalize values that they will develop in children. The fact remains that good teachers build enduring foundation that makes children be good citizens of their nation, good citizens will abhor corruption. All these can be possible through the use of language. There should be seminars, workshops and campaign in the language of the environment to instill creativity and rewards for the patriotism, truthfulness, honesty, integrity as well to discourage indolence, examination malpractices, bribery and corruption, embezzlement etc.

Religion as a system of belief should re-orientate the people through the language of the environment by stressing the need for trust-worthiness, patience, obedience, faithfulness in the place of work at home and in society at large, love, kindness, respect for human life etc. in order to promote self-imposed discipline in the people. The media through the use of language should enlighten the general public on the overall effects of negative behavior and the need for hard- work, fair play, self-employed and to be law abiding citizens in the society. There is a need to resuscitate the old children cultural stories and songs that orientate not to steal, fight or be immoral. Judges, police officers and other public officials should attend workshops or seminars often concerning the breach of rules of law, agreement should be made and an oath taken by them to carry out their duties efficiently and impartially (without discrimination.) Lawlessness in their part should be punished accordingly.



EFCC, ICPC and NGO should campaign against corruption in the language of the environment and the punishment of culprits should be analyzed. They should reveal maximum amount of money that should be spent on party campaigning to the public. Candidates that have exceeded those limits, or even handed in misleading accounting reports, should risk having their candidacy ruled invalid, or even being prevented from running in future elections. Anti- corruption agencies should re-orientate the masses on transparency, accountability and good governance. Transparency demands that government duties and business be done in an open manner. Sorkaa (2002) says "accountability involves member of government being held answerable for their actions and administrative lapses." This is possible through the potency of language. The press (including electronic media) has an important role to play by exposing those involved in corruption. Anybody found guilty should be brought to public attention. They can only be done through the use of language. Judiciary and law enforcement agent should be up and doing. There should be speedy judgment on corrupt practices. There should be no sacred cows. They should prosecute all the known corrupt political "heavy weights" in the society because they contribute to making the nation's law inoperable. There is no verdict without the use of language.

CONCLUSION

Corruption is a disease that has come so widespread in our society that it pervades all areas of public life. It does not only threaten our economic security, it also poses a threat to our national security. There is no new way of eradicating corruption than to re-orientate the citizens on our positive values that have been abandoned. There should be justice, speedy judgment of corruption culprits, public enlightenment on integrity and good behavior, upholding our rules of law etc. There also should be re-orientation of minds and hearts of Nigerians, for them to see that corruption is the enemy of development. All these can be done successfully through the potency of language.

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