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Anti-corruption Counselling as an Antidote to Corrupt Practices Eradication

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Abstract

The extent to which corrupt practices has disrupted the socio-economic growth of African countries cannot be adequately quantified. The threat it poses to good government and democratic rule has increased international agitation for its eradication in every facets of African system of operation. Due to its dynamic ways of manifestation, the adoption of multi-dimensional strategies is required to up it in the bud. One of such strategies which this paper focuses us attention on is the application of counselling techniques. Specifically, the paper explains how aversive therapy, self-control methods, catching oneself and rational emotive behaviour therapy could be utilized by counselling psychologists to combat corrupt enrichment tendencies. On the basis of the indispensable relevance of counselling psychologists roles and functions to corruption eradication it is recommend among others that Anti-Corruption Counselling Centre be established in all the local governments to cater for anti-corruption counselling need of all public and private officers.

Introduction

One of the usual practices of United Nations is to set goals for any plan action. Customarily, therefore, it has set again certain goals for attainment come year 2015. This is tagged Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The main aims of MDG are to:

- Halve the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day;
- Achieve universal primary education;
- Promote gender equality;
- Reduce maternal and child mortality;
- Combat chronic illnesses including AIDS; and
- Ensure environmental sustainability.

When these targeted goals are realizable come 2015 African countries would be better off. As United Nations is assiduously working hard to attain these goals it has been observed that at the present rate of development none of the goals would be achievable in Sub-Sahara Africa (International Transparency, 2005). The preventive reason is that Africa is known to be a world leader in something that cannot be proud of. This according to About (2006) is corruption. Out of the 20 most corrupt nations in the world, 12 are in Africa of which Angola, Chad, Equitorial Guinea, Kenya, and Nigeria are included according to a survey by Transparent International reported by British Broadcasting Corporation.

What then is this hydra-headed monster termed corruption (otherwise known as rent-seeking behaviour) that would not allow Africans enjoy UN development goals plan and other development plans designed by government and non government agents the world over. The Brainy Dictionary (2006) describes corruption as the act of changing, or of being changed for the worse or departs from what is pure, simple or correct. In this same

vein, Encarta Dictionary (2004) explains corruption to mean immoral and dishonest exploitation of power for personal gain. This coincides with Mauro (1998) who describes corruption as abuse of public office for private gain. From these definitions corruption is a maladaptive behaviour emitted for self gratification. As destructive as these definitions are Al-Gohari (2001) observes that:

Corruption has become a fact in many Africa communities threatening comprehensive development processes and severely resisting growth. While the level of corruption varies from country to country the political and social conditions in the continent as a whole provide an ideal environment for its spread.

The level at which corruption is being perpetrated takes diverse dimensions. There are high level, low level, well-organised and chaotic corruption. While high level corruption are perpetrated by high level officials such as the president, vice- president, governors and minister low level corruption are perpetrated junior officers like clerk, messenger, driver and so on. Well-organised corruption, according to Mauro (1998), occurs when the amount to be paid and the recipient are well known and payment of specified amount guarantees the attainment of required favour. Whereas chaotic corruption unlike well-organised corruption occurs wherein the entrepreneur would pay bribe to several officials without guarantee that further bribe would not be paid and favour demanded for be obtained.

The consequences of engaging in any of the above levels of corruption potent great danger for the growth of a nation. The cost of allowing corruption to permeate a system is too over-bearing to bear. The Transparency International (2005) observes that because corruption is hidden, it is difficult to appropriate how much money it cost. Notwithstanding, it reported that:

Worldwide, more than US \$ 1trillion dollar is paid in bribes each year, according to ongoing research at the World Bank Institute. The figure compares to a world economy worth just over US\$ 30 trillion, and does not include embezzlement of public funds or theft of public assets. The African Union estimates that corruption costs African economies more than US\$148 billion each year. This figure represents 25 per cent of Africa's GDP and to increase the cost of goods by as much as 20 per cent, deterring investment and holding back development.

Apart from the above, it maintains that corruption also increases the cost of public services, lowers their quality and can restrict public access to water, health and education, divert public resources away from social sectors and the poor, and limit development, growth and poverty reduction.

Similarly Mauro (1998) states that corruption reduce growth by lowering the quality of public infrastructures and services , decreasing tax revenue and causing talented people to engage in rent-seeking rather than productive activities and disturbing the composition of government expenditure.

The destructive effects of corrupt practices cited above have resulted into frantic

move to eradicate its damaging effects all over the world. Consequently, a number of recommendations have been made and implemented. While some of these suggestions have yielded desired result when implemented, some are marking time while some will not even work due to contingencies reasons. The mere fact that corruption is still much with us implies that we have not exhausted

practicable solutions to the eradication of the problems. Beside this, corrupt practice is an international phenomenon which a monopolistic approach would not be able to combat. The corruption in some countries is situation specific.

One major result-oriented approach which has not been explored and given due acknowledgement is the use of counselling psychological principles. The impact of psychological make-ups or dispositions of corrupt individuals have been relegated to the background from the review of literature. If counselling psychology is relevant in the eradication of corrupt practices what then is it and would the field of study combat corruption?

What is Counselling Psychology?

Counselling Psychology is a special field of psychology established in 1946 to promote personal, educational, vocational, and group adjustment in a variety of settings. (Counselling Psychology Division 17, 2006). In its broad sense, The Academy of Counselling (1994) describes counselling psychology:

As a psychological specialty the facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span with a focus on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns. Through the integration of theory, research and practices and with a sensitivity to multicultural issues, this specialty encompasses a broad range of practices that help people improve their well being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crises, and increase their ability to live more highly functioning lives.

From the foregoing counselling psychologists are professionally trained to resolve broad range of maladjustment problems of which corrupt enrichment or practices is not excluded. It is the contention of Gelso and Fretz (2001) that counselling psychologists' diverse roles could be broadly classified into remedial, preventive, and educative - developmental. Remedial practices involve working with individuals or groups with the sole purpose of remediating problems while preventive involves anticipating and preventing problems from occurrence using outreach programme or career workshop or team building. Educative-developmental on the other hand helps an individual not only to remediate problems but to foster total development.

Not only this, the above description of what counselling psychology is also points to the fact that the practitioners utilized broad range of techniques to attain the objectives of counselling. Bulus (1990) confirms this when he states that counselling consists of services that are intended to help individuals plan their lives meaningfully and solve societal problems. Corruption is a societal problem created by individual or group of individuals. If

counselling psychologist utilizes quite a number of strategies to solve personal as well as societal problems which of these techniques could be regarded as anti-corruption counselling methods capable of eradicating corruption?

Counselling Techniques for the Eradication of Corruption

Counselling Psychologists have been specifically trained to use psychological principles to solve human problems. The adoption of these principles with sole intent of resolving life crises does not imply that any of the principle could resolve all problems. The method to be adopted is most of the time dictated by the problem on ground. For the intent of eliminating maladaptive behaviour of corrupt practices or rent-seeking behaviour the following strategies are suggested:

- Aversion Therapy
- Self-Control Methods
- Catching Oneself
- Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy
- Behaviour Contract
- Modelling

Aversion Therapy

The word aversion is a word used to describe a strong feeling of hatred or dislike towards a behaviour or entity. Aversion therapy from this description is a technique that could be used to make an individual hate corruption. Masters, Burish, Hollon, and Rimm (1987) report that aversive control measures are uniquely qualified to eliminate maladaptive behaviour. It is a method of pairing the unwanted behaviour with painful or unpleasant stimuli until the undesirable behaviour is suppressed Webster's Online Dictionary (2006). It takes forms from mild application of punishment like scolding to severe as application of electric shock (Wikipedia, 2006).

There are two basic dimensions of aversive conditioning in the classification proposed by Masters, Burish, Hollon, and Rimm (1987). These are dimensions of contingency and counter conditioning. Contingent dimension is employed when the onset or the termination of an aversive stimulus is made contingent upon a particular behaviour while counterconditioning is employed when the valence or attractiveness of either behaviour or a stimulus is altered through being paired with the aversive event itself or with the termination of the aversive event. Counterconditioning is therefore capable of lowering the attractiveness or increasing the attractiveness because the termination of an aversive event is positively inclined. They however, argue that either of these dimensions should only be employed when:

- effective alternatives to aversion therapy are unavailable
- non-aversive procedures are likely to ineffective
- issues of ethics and the overall welfare of the clients have been given considerable attention.

In practical terms, the application of aversive conditioning entails the use of diverse relaxation methods to put the client in a relax frame of mind. When this has been

accomplished the client is instructed to picture a scene or imagine a scene depicting his involvement in corrupt practices. As the client is picturing this undesirable behaviour, the counselling psychologists either train him to associate this imaginative thought with unpleasant sensations or on the other hand apply unpleasant stimulus to suppress this imaginative thoughts. It is hoped that the aversive element introduced into the pictured scene would go a long way in creating a sturdy feelings of hatred for corrupt practices.

For example, a local government chairman may be conditioned to detest the act of misappropriating or embezzling monthly allocation fund of his local government when he is asked to picture himself receiving the allocation and using it for personal needs such as building houses, buying cars etc As he sees himself engaging in this he is also instructed to picture in his mind officials of Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) entering his office with handcuff arresting him for corrupt practice and directing him to enter a waiting black maria for further prosecution.

Self-Control Method

Self-control as the name implies is a technique of teaching a client the requirements that would enable him/her have total control over his/her actions and inactions rather being forced to act by environmental events. The rationale for the use of self control method is in threefold. These include the assumption that:

- some goals may be more powerfully realized when the client is given an active role in the change process (efficacy)
- clients skilled in self-management techniques can apply these skills to problems not directly approached in treatment (generality)
- changes obtained should prove more stable over time if the client can reapply change procedures as needed (stability). Golgstein & Kanfer, 1979; Karoly & Steffan, 1980 in Masters, Burish, Hollon, and Rimm (1987).

The application of self control methods hooves around the ability of the counselling psychologists to train client on principles of self-monitoring; self-evaluation; self-reinforcement; and self-punishment. Summarily, self-monitoring would enable the client use diverse devises to observe and record his behaviour with a view to obtain reliable baseline data that would lead to self evaluation or objective assessment of his behaviour. The assessment report would therefrom indicate whether he is to be reinforced (self-reinforcement) or punished (self-punishment) for his behaviour.

For instance, a vice chancellor is trained to control his acquisitive tendencies after the appointment as vice chancellor. He is trained to monitor and record his personal assets on monthly basis and evaluate same vis-à-vis his lawful monthly entitlement. Inappropriate acquisition would incur self administration of punishment while lawful acquisition would yield self reinforcement.

Catching Oneself

This is another technique that could be applied to halt the temptation to engage in corrupt practices. It is developed by Alfred Adler to eliminate undesirable behaviour. Catching oneself, as the name suggests, enables the client to become aware of certain steps

or activities that are directed towards the involvement in corrupt practices which the clues preceding the engagement in corrupt practices are made known, the client is then taught withdrawal principles that would enable him restrain himself from precursor steps or actions or inactions leading to the involvement in corrupt practices/enrichment.

For example, a governor who siphons government money whenever he travels abroad would be made to associate the travelling abroad with stealing of government fund and would also receive withdrawal principles that would enable him to restrain himself whenever those stimuli in the environment that typically give rise to corrupt practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discuss from this paper has demonstrated that counselling psychologists can help with corruption eradication because there are anti-corruption counselling strategies that could be used to eliminate undesirable behaviour of corruption in our society for this purpose it is recommended that:

- Anti-corruption counselling centres headed by a qualified counselling psychologist should be established in all local governments where all person abide privat officials would be made to receive counselling at periodic interval.
- Anti-currption centes to be established should be adequately staffed and equipped with modern counselling facilities.
- Goverment should promulgate a law that would make attendance at anti-corruption counselling centre a prerequisite for governance
- Anti-corruption counselling centres should work in collaboration with other agencies set out to eradicate corruption.
- Counselling training should involve corruption eradication.

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