



MORAL EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE-SERVICES: PANACEA FOR REDUCING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Education is an important phenomenon in all societies as it helps to build and shape its recipients. It is essential to note that as important as it is, its aims and objectives is defeated when corruption is exhibited by recipients. Hence this paper examined the place of guidance-services and moral education in curbing corruption in the Nigerian school system. This paper argued that corruption is a major challenge in the Nigerian school system and posited that there is need to reduce corruption through counselling and moral education in the school and society. Deontological theory propounded by Immanuel Kant which prioritises moral principles and duties over personal interests or outcomes, providing a clear moral compass for decision-making both at personal and public levels was considered appropriate and applied in this article to explain how guidance-services and moral education aims to reduce corruption in the school system. It recommended that teachers, counsellors and educators should engage in teaching of life skills that are of moral standards which will help to make individuals to be morally responsible and sensitive.

Keywords: Corruption, Guidance-Services, Moral Education and Schools

Introduction

Corruption is a very destructive phenomenon in any human society or organisation. It debases humanity and brings setback on anything he engages in. Often, humans are led by personal interest. The drive to satisfy selfish desires especially when they are in public office is potentially high. Corruption comes in different shades ranging from moral bankruptcy, financial dishonesty, drug abuse to examination malpractice. Many people in Nigeria believe that the politicians exemplify corruption but the truth is that it cuts across almost all human spheres in all human societies. Osiyemi (2017) averred that the educational system and by extension, Nigeria is presently plagued by a breakdown in moral values which is seriously affecting both the individual and the society at large. In particular, indiscipline, including violent crimes, illegal use of drugs, rape, corruption, bad governance are few of the vices ravaging our campuses in particular and the country in general. This breakdown of values has greatly impacted negatively on all facets of life. Of great importance is the recognition that this decay is fast eroding our educational system. The word corruption can be described as the dishonest or fraudulent use of a position of power for private gain. Socrates and Plato agree that corruption is a vice or lack of virtue arising from lack of knowledge. For the ancient philosophers, virtue is directly related to knowledge. For them when you act virtuously, it indicates you know what is right. Ugwuogbu (2012) sees corruption as illegal, immoral or dishonest behaviour. This is mostly associated to people in power, it must be stressed that corruption is also exhibited by people on the



Nigerian street. Ikiyei (2017) also submitted that corruption, which is acquisition of prosperity without labour, has become the daily sermon of most religious/worship centres.

Corruption can be conceptualised as lack of satisfaction and contentment, lack of knowledge, act of cheating or debasement of human integrity. Ironically, while corruption cases are being treated regularly by Government agencies like EFCC, ICPC, its root keep going deeper in the society even within the educational institutions. Ikiyei (2017) affirmed that corruption has eaten deeply into all sectors of the Nigerian society in the homes, churches/mosque and even the very organ (educational institutions) that could have ordinarily been rehabilitation centre. To solve this societal problem requires educating young ones to know that corruption is a vice and cankerworm that can destroy individuals involved the society where such is prevalent.

Corruption in School Settings

Education is known to be a crucial tool for gaining self-reliance, and relevance in the society in which we live. Nevertheless, the corrupt practices within the education setting have made it difficult for the set objectives of education to be achieved as stated in the national policy on education. It is unfortunate that corruption affects the smooth running of educational settings and schools. The findings of Ibrahim and Adebayo (2021) indicated that corrupt practices negatively affected the provision of infrastructural facilities and students' enrolment in secondary schools. John, Williams-Yobo and Nwakocha (2017) submitted that the causes of corruption in secondary schools are problem of paper qualification, poor remuneration of teachers, parental influence, inadequate funding of secondary education, invigilation and supervision, and inadequate preparation/poor reading culture of students. Pacheco (2011) added that academic corruption is certainly more visible now than decades ago. This corroborates the findings of Henry (2014) which outlined that petty corruption is encountered in public administration services like hospitals and schools and so on. This is a sign that corruption occurs then the school system and this made Uzochukwu in John, William-Yobo and Nwokocha (2017) submitted that the presence of corruption in a system adds no value but increase liability, inefficiency and poor quality.

Enekeme and Torulebi (2017) supported this assertion as they stressed that the goal of the school for society in the Nigerian context has been called to question due to the evil of corruption in the system perpetuated by the operators of the school system such as teachers, lecturers, administrators among others short-changing the students and the system thereby making the products of the system to be of questionable quality which leads to the debate of the employability of Nigerian graduates. It is no doubt that corruption exists in our educational system and this can give rise to many negative occurrences such as bullying, examination malpractices, mark-buying, inadequate funding, sexual abuse, cultism among others which are unethical.

Ethical Conduct

Ethics, often described as the study of moral principles which governs human behaviour, lies at the heart of a just and functional society. It addresses itself to what is right and wrong, good and bad, and how individuals ought to act in various situations. While laws establish the minimum standards for behaviour, ethics reaches beyond legality—it appeals to conscience, character, and integrity. At its core, ethics challenges individuals to consider the consequences of their actions, not only for themselves but for others and the broader community. Philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant, and Mill have each offered distinct approaches to ethical reasoning. Aristotle emphasized virtue ethics, focusing on the development of good character traits (Osiyemi, 2017). Immanuel Kant proposed deontological ethics, which upholds duty and moral rules regardless of outcomes. In contrast, John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism measures ethical behavior by its ability to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Despite their differences, these frameworks share a common goal: guiding humanity toward moral responsibility.

In everyday life, ethics manifests in countless decisions—honesty in communication, fairness in treatment, respect for others, and accountability for one's actions. In a world increasingly shaped by technology, globalization, and social complexity, ethical thinking becomes even more essential. Questions about privacy,



environmental responsibility, and equality demand careful moral reflection. Ultimately, ethics is not a fixed set of rules but a continuous pursuit of moral wisdom. It asks individuals to act with empathy, courage, and integrity, even when doing so is difficult. A truly ethical person does not merely follow what is convenient or popular but strives to do what is right, fostering trust and harmony in human relationships. Through ethical living, humanity affirms its highest values and strengthens the moral fabric that binds society together.

An individual's morals are reflected in his ideals which represent standards toward which he strives. The ideals are manifested in the individual's overt behaviour which may not be consistent with an upheld ideal (Oluwatimilehin, 2024). When morals are lacking in a system it brings about corruption whether in the society or the school system. One of the effects of corruption on the school system is moral decadence as it expands to the society and vice-versa. Enekemi and Torubeli (2017) attributed this to the low quality of teaching and learning by teachers and lecturers due to the influence of corruption. The consequence of this on the products of the school system is the acquisition of negative values such as immorality, dishonesty, hooliganism, corruption, examination malpractices, unproductive and poor quality man power and other social vices (Enekemi & Torubeli, 2017). In order to jettison cases of undesirable behavior such as absenteeism from school, sex, drug abuse, bullying, disregard to constituted authorities, abuse of privileges, forgery, inability to take turn or queue, high level of discipline must be established and maintained in schools (Adebayo, 2022). Forcing students to engage in corrupt practices against their wish tends to make them develop poor social values. All these affect educational progress negatively in Nigerian secondary schools which can be drastically reduced through guidance-services and moral education.

Meaning and Nature of Moral Education

Moral education extends beyond the teaching of academic knowledge; it is concerned with shaping character and fostering ethical awareness. It encompasses values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, tolerance, and empathy. Moral education is not confined to religious or cultural instruction—it is a comprehensive human process that draws from philosophy, psychology, and social science. It seeks to develop both the moral reasoning and moral behavior of learners. As Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg proposed in their theories of moral development, moral education should be progressive, guiding learners from simple obedience to authority toward autonomous moral reasoning based on universal ethical principles. Moral education affords learners opportunity to reflect on her actions and how this affect others. Moral reasoning is a key tool that helps individuals to avoid selfish actions.

In the world that is full of absurdity and damaging actions, it is becoming imperative for government and schools to take the issue of moral education seriously. To moderate behaviour, there is need to assist learners to develop the tool of moral reasoning. The dangerous and vicious actions by individual across the globe is a moral and clarion call for moral education. The school is a vital institution for moral education because it serves as a structured environment where children and adolescents interact, learn, and form values. Beyond academic instruction, schools are responsible for character formation. Teachers, administrators, and curricula all play essential roles in transmitting moral values through both formal and informal means.

Formally, moral education can be integrated into subjects such as Civic Education, Religious Studies, Social Studies, and Literature, where students learn about moral principles, citizenship, and ethical dilemmas. Informally, it is conveyed through the school's culture, discipline policies, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions. The behavior of educators serves as a powerful model for students, reinforcing lessons about honesty, justice, and responsibility.

In recent years, the need for moral education has become increasingly urgent. Challenges such as corruption, violence, examination malpractice, indiscipline, and lack of respect for authority among young people highlight the moral decay in many societies. Schools therefore have the duty not only to produce intellectually competent individuals but also morally upright citizens who can make ethical choices in their personal and public lives. Moral education occupies a central place in the overall purpose of education. It complements intellectual



development by ensuring that knowledge is applied ethically and responsibly. Through moral education, schools help to build individuals of character, integrity, and compassion—qualities essential for societal progress and peaceful coexistence. Hence, any educational system that neglects moral education fails in its fundamental mission of preparing learners for meaningful and response.

Guidance-services

There is no specific definition of guidance and counselling as it has been defined by many scholars in the field. Guidance is defined as a cluster of formalized services aimed at helping an individual or group to understand themselves, including their potential (interest, abilities, attitude, physical, social characteristics and personal needs) for optimum self-development. Guidance services include orientation, appraisal, information service, placement service, follow-up, evaluation and counselling service. Counselling service is the heart of all guidance services which can be viewed to be a professional relationship between the counsellor and the counsellee(s) with aim of remediating issues burdening the counsellee(s) (Denga, 2019). The scope include personal-social, vocational and educational guidance and counselling. Within school context, guidance and counselling can be seen as the idea of bringing to the students increased understanding of his/her personal, educational, occupational and social information needed to make realistic decision (Adana, 2016).

Kantian Deontological Moral Principle and Its Implication for Secondary School Students

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), a German philosopher, is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in moral philosophy. His ethical theory, known as deontological ethics or duty-based ethics, emphasizes the importance of moral duty and intention over the consequences of actions. The word *deontology* has its roots in the Greek word *deon*, meaning “duty.” For Kant, an action is morally right not because of its outcome, but because it is done out of a sense of moral obligation and in accordance with universal moral law. At the heart of Kant’s moral philosophy is the concept of the categorical imperative, which serves as the supreme principle of morality. The categorical imperative demands that individuals act only according to maxims that they can will to become universal laws. In other words, before performing any action, one must ask: “*Can the rule guiding my action be applied universally to everyone without contradiction?*” (Kant, 1997). If the answer is yes, the action is morally permissible. If not, it is morally wrong.

Kant also insists that human beings must always be treated as ends in themselves and never merely as means to an end. This principle highlights the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, implying that people should never be used or manipulated for personal gain. Moral actions, therefore, arise from respect for the moral law and the recognition of human dignity, rather than from self-interest, fear of punishment, or desire for reward.

Implications for Secondary School Students

The Kantian moral principle has significant educational and moral implications for secondary school students. Firstly, it encourages the development of moral integrity—doing what is right simply because it is right, not because of external pressure or expectation. For instance, a student who refuses to cheat during an examination, even when no teacher is watching, demonstrates a Kantian sense of duty and respect for moral law. Secondly, Kant’s emphasis on treating others as ends in themselves promotes respect, fairness, and empathy among students. It discourages bullying, violence, exploitation, corruption, discrimination, and manipulation, and fosters a school culture where every student’s dignity is valued.

Thirdly, the principle of universality teaches students to consider the broader consequences of their actions. Before engaging in any behaviour, students can reflect: “*Would it be acceptable if everyone acted the same way?*” This reasoning process helps cultivate responsible citizenship and ethical consistency. Kantian deontological ethics provides a solid moral foundation for secondary school students by emphasizing duty, respect, and moral reasoning. It guides them to act from principle rather than convenience, and to uphold integrity



and respect for others—values that are essential for personal development, academic excellence, and social harmony.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions of the authors in this article, the following recommendations were outlined:

1. It is recommended that teacher education programme should now emphasize moral education;
2. All teachers in training must understand the place of moral behaviour and become moral model.
3. the study also recommended that counsellors and educators should engage in teaching of life skills that are of moral standards which will help individuals to be more responsible
4. Educators and Counsellors should work collaboratively to deliver professional services which will build moral virtues such as moral integrity, respect, truth telling, and fairness
5. Government should engage more Philosophers of education and Guidance-counsellors to evolve moral education programmes which can assist learners to grow morally.

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