

Fight Against Corruption: Family, School and Community Partnerships

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The article “Kenya Launches Effort to Integrate Ethics into National Curriculum”, written by Richard Kamau on Feb 6th, 2025, for Nairobi Wire discusses about integration of values and morals in education to help develop character of youth. This approach would help to counter corruption in the society. Kamau mentions that the CEO of Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) Mr. Abdi Mohmud met with Prof. Charles Ochieng Ong Ondo, Director of Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to discuss various approaches to incorporate value-based education in schools. The discussion between the two directors led the agencies to develop a new curriculum which emphasized integrity as one of the major learning goals. Kamau states that both the leaders agreed that teaching ethics early leads to aware and enlightened youth who can help eliminate corruption in Kenya. While fraternization of government agencies is important in teaching values, but the complex process of value education requires more – a supportive ecosystem through partnership of the family, school and the community to which the children belong.

Community Agency

A community agency is a public or private organization that provides various services for community empowerment. These services range from health, social or environmental problems like poverty and illiteracy that affect individuals and communities in meeting their basic needs and improving their quality of life.

The article by Kamau mentions about two agencies the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) collaborating with a goal to make Kenya corruption free.

The EACC is a public body with a mandate “To combat and prevent corruption, economic crime and unethical conduct in Kenya through promotion of standards and practices of integrity, ethics and anti-corruption.” (EACC, 2025). According to the EACC website the important functions of the organization are –

- “Educate and create awareness on any matter within the commission mandate.
- Undertake preventive measures against unethical and corrupt practices.
- Conduct investigations on its own initiative or on a complaint made by any person and
- Conduct mediation, conciliation and negotiation.” (EACC, 2025).

The KICD is also a government agency focused on curriculum development, cannot be called a community agency directly, but it closely partners with human service agencies like EDUCATE! To implement community service learning (CSL) as part of their Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenyan schools (EDUCATE!, 2025). Also, KICD provides important guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement that could be adopted by Kenyan learning institutions for effective and consistent contribution of parents in the learning outcomes of their children at all levels of basic education (KICD, 2025).

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory

Human development is a complex process that involves interaction with various interconnected systems. “According to Bronfenbrenner these interactions and experiences determine the degree to which individuals can develop their abilities and realize their potential” (Berns, 2016, p. 20). Bronfenbrenner describes five systems around a child which are dynamic, interconnected and have multiple level influence on children. These systems are

- Microsystem, the immediate environment surrounding a child that includes the family, school, peer-group, media, and the community to which the child belongs.
- Mesosystem defines the linkages and interrelationships between two or more of a child's microsystem. For example, the relationship between a child's family and school.
- Exosystem is the indirect environment in which the child does not participate directly, but it influences the socialization methods of the child by impacting his/her microsystem. For example, parents' workplace.
- Macrosystem describes the social and cultural values that shape a child's values and beliefs. Macrosystem includes the culture, subculture, race or ethnicity, religion to which the child belongs, and they provide patterns of instructions which shape the children's personality. Beside these political ideology, use of science and technology are also part of macrosystem because they define the society like the democratic values of American society.
- Chronosystem addresses the temporal changes in the ecological system or with individuals producing new conditions which affect the developmental process (Berns, 2016).

The child, at the center of the ecological system, is affected by both the direct and the indirect environment around him/her. In the article, "EACC and KICD pledged to enhance collaboration on initiatives, including conducting studies on ethics education, reviewing the curriculum, and creating integrity materials suited to various learning stages. This effort aims to inspire students to prioritize integrity and ethical living" (Kamau, 2025). This initiative will

impact and will be impacted by the interactions with the immediate and secondary environment of a child.

Microsystem

Microsystem comprises of family, school, peer group, media and community of the child. Family is the first teacher of the child. To teach important values like honesty, contentment, and hard work, family plays a crucial role. As the child goes to school, he conducts himself the values he has learned from the parents and family members. Therefore, it is important to have a healthy partnership between school and family because this partnership will help reinforce the morals he learned at an early age at home.

The other structure part of microsystem is the community which has a direct impact on the child, plays its part in the bolstering of moral values. If a community ridicules moral standards, then it is challenging for the child to hold on to morality in the long run. Therefore, the trio family, school and community together can work like foundation pillars on which the structure of ethical behavior can be laid.

The fourth group of microsystem is media, whose role can by no means be diminished. Children are exposed to television and the internet through which they are exposed to various concepts. The young minds make an impression about the adult world through this exposure. These impressions can either fortify their belief in values or can uproot them from ethical and moral behavior.

The peer group in microsystem plays a similar role as media, it can either support a child's learning of morality or can belittle and digress the child from his/her uprightness. Also, since the peer group interaction of the children are generally unsupervised and children are relatively independent, this is where their learnings from family, school, and community are put

to the test. Under the competitive scenario within the peer group does the child hold on to incorruptible behavior or compromises and succeed.

Therefore, KICD and EACC efforts to combat corruption through integrity education in schools, can only be realized with strong partnership within family, school and community.

Mesosystem

“Where there is little linkage between home and school “in terms of values, experiences, objects and behavior styles,” there also tends to be little academic achievement for the child” (Berns, 2016, p. 23). Like academic learning, development of good character also requires strong interrelationships between child’s microsystems. When the linkages between school and family are many and qualitative then children can develop uprightness. Conversely, if a child gets conflicting messages from family and school, community and media, then it may cause confusion in children and the goal to cultivate integrity becomes far fetched.

Exosystem

Exosystem impacts the child’s microsystem, which in turn affects the socialization of the child. With the agenda of passing on high morality in children each microsystem works independently in its own capacity as well as in partnership with each other (mesosystem). Participants of exosystem – parental workplace environment, distribution of community resources, and government policies have a direct impact on the elements of microsystem. For example, the lives of parents, working of schools, organization of community activities, media content impacted by government decisions to distribute resources. Government decisions regarding access to quality education, healthcare and other resources can create opportunities for moral development.

Also, children's exposure to violence and other negative behaviors either in the community or through media negatively impacts their moral development. Similarly, menaces like bribery, discrimination, and sabotage in the workplace environment can force a parent to shift from high moral ideology. This shift would also be reflected in parenting directly affecting the child's moral upbringing.

Macrosystem

"I am because we are", the African principle of Ubuntu can provide help in understanding the role of interaction at macrosystem level which includes societal values, beliefs, and cultural context that shape a person. In the article by Kamau, both partnering agencies EACC and KICD are government organizations, which symbolizes the political ideology to emphasize rectitude and wholeness in character of children. The macrosystem indirectly influences moral value education by shaping the values and beliefs that are passed down through generations. The cultural values of the child's race/ethnicity can influence the moral lesson taught and behaviors encouraged in the school.

Chronosystem

The chronosystem refers to the element of time and its influence on a person's development. It comprises of personal experiences that occur over time due to change in person's life stages or social experiences due to cultural shifts and historical changes creating unique developmental experiences.

In the context of the article by Kamau, corruption poses a major challenge in Kenya. " In Kenya corruption was ranked the third most pressing problem facing the country after unemployment and poverty" (EACC National Survey Report, 2023, p.1).

Chronosystem presents a more holistic approach to understand the root causes of corruption considering historical contexts and power dynamics, and social norms. According to EACC poverty and culture are some of the leading causes of corruption in Kenya (2022).

Study of Chronosystem actors, present in Kenyan society, will help in devising effective anti-corruption reforms which are more sensitive to broader societal context and would avoid unintended consequences.

Effect of Collaboration on Families and Children

“Corruption is an evolving global threat that does far more than undermine development- it is the key cause of declining democracy, instability and human rights violation...” by Francios Valerian – chief of Transparency International. Fighting against corruption is a long term and complex one. By working with school children, educating them about ethics, moral values and celebrating life with high morals one is working at grassroot level.

“Corruption is regarded as a pattern of behavior driven by selfishness, dishonesty, injustice, unfairness and deception. An erosion of values often explains such behavior. Fighting corruption implies a change in attitude, behavior and mindset through relevant education. To be effective, this type of education must comprise knowledge, skills and moral values to ensure the “whole development” of the person since childhood.”

(Corruption Prevention and Education Division, IACC, January 2007).

On one hand it is important for agencies to work together (partnerships of EACC and KICD) develop a curriculum with integrity and morality at its core, but teaching values to children cannot fully accomplished by integrity-based curriculum. Learning values is a complex and challenging process especially in current times with external factors of media and peer pressure playing a significant role in child development. Imbibing of high morals needs sustained

monitoring of results, and correction of pedagogic approach wherever required. It also involves rewarding at every level, as an acknowledgement and celebration of high moral life.

Most children spend early years of childhood at home with families. Any changes in curriculum should take the context of the family's cultural background. "There is evidence that children probably develop a moral sense of within first two years of life..." (Halstead, J.M. & Taylor, M.J., 2000). Incorporation of family values and culture will help bridge the gap in learning and would make the children morally competent.

Besides the family, the media has huge influence on children. For example, "One classic example is the "Happy Meal" campaign by McDonalds. By pairing meals with toys featuring popular characters from movies or cartoons, McDonalds has successfully attracted children for decades. This approach leverages the power of play and entertainment, making the brand irresistible to young consumers" (Alpha Book Publisher,). If this power of media could be harnessed to teach moral values, it will provide coherence with children's learning from family and school.

Another critical aspect is community involvement. Community gives children an identity and a sense of belonging. "Community provides a setting in which children learn by doing" (Berns, R., 2016, p.22). "Participating in local events, volunteering, and engaging with diverse groups help children understand and appreciate different perspectives and the importance of contributing to the common good. These experiences reinforce lessons taught at home and school" (World Humanitarian Movement, 2023).

For any type of competence ranging from academic to emotion it is important for children to learn by observing and being part of everything (Family Partnership and Culture,

2016, p.23). By involving families, school, communities and media in moral education a coherent environment can be created in which the children receive similar instructions from all the agencies of socialization.

Conclusion

Imparting moral education to children is a challenging task which requires more than collaboration of government agencies and redesigning the school curriculum. Neither parents, nor schools can accomplish this humungous task single handedly because of external factors like media and peer pressure. Having said that, it is not a completely impossible goal to achieve. As per the article by Kamau, the collaboration of the two government agencies is a step forward in the direction of moral education. This step, in sustained support and partnership of family and community and society can help in realizing the goal of raising individuals with fortitude, who can empower the fight against corruption.

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