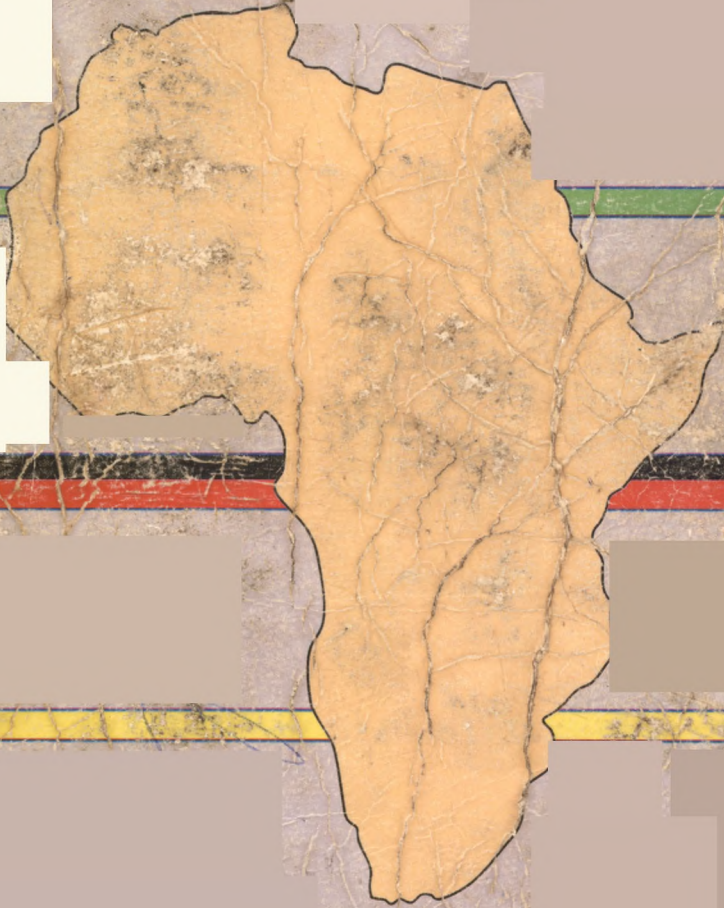


# **The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa**



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**and**

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## **Leadership and Corruption: Impact on Human Factor Development**

Dumiso Dabengwa

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### **Introduction**

It is not an exaggeration that corruption in many parts of Africa and, indeed, other parts of the world, has frustrated efforts by many governments and organizations to establish efficient administrations. The evil of corruption may exist in every facet and at almost every level of society. The main problems which we face in dealing with corruption relate to its identification and ways of stopping it. It is also necessary to explain what corruption is, noting in particular the view that we cannot understand it without examining the wider pattern of the socio-political behaviour of a wide range of members in our societies. Most important in this discussion is the impact which corruption may have on the development of the content of the Human Factor (HF) in our societies. Money or technology may be important in the development process, but without people who have the necessary and appropriate HF characteristics, money or technology fail and fall flat on their faces.

The moulding of a human being into a useful, corruption-free person largely depends on the type of training which may be given to such a person and the rest of the HF in a society.

### **Definition of corruption**

Although it is difficult to come up with a unanimous definition of corruption, we can all concur that corruption involves mostly the misuse of public office or public authority. A notable scholar, Morris Szeftel, has said in one of his books that:

corruption cannot be understood in isolation, as a discrete phenomenon, but must be located within a wider pattern of socio-political behaviour whereby State resources are diverted from public to private or group ends (1983:163).

It must, however, be noted that corruption as a vice extends to the private sector and to individual persons who may still be involved in the development of the HF — the subject of our deliberation.

Corruption, far from being a problem exclusive to the African continent, does have universal ramifications. For Zimbabwe which is part of the African experience, it carries greater import especially as regards the aspect central to the development of the HF.

### **The term Human Factor (HF)**

The concept of developing the HF, as I understand it and as defined elsewhere in this volume, is synonymous with human resource development, but with the main focus of that resource development directed on developing the character content of the human beings who carry out the economic development of their societies.

It is an unfortunate state of affairs that underdevelopment in Africa is, all too often, attributed to lack of material resources such as funds and technology. In reality, the development of the HF plays a pivotal role in ensuring that all other resources are pooled together and used in the best interests of the nation and the continent as a whole. No organization can develop if it does not have people with appropriate HF characteristics such as honesty, dedication, commitment and efficiency and, for purposes of our topic, incorruptibility.

Efforts to develop our countries and improve the HF can be seriously frustrated by the insidious effects of leadership corruption. The effects of corruption on developing the HF are two-tiered, firstly, at the primary stage of training centres and, secondly, at the level of the worker at the workplace.

When one considers training and developing the HF, one has in mind the moulding of an all round human being so that he/she can perform to professional standards which are competitive, not only in Zimbabwe or Africa, but also internationally.

This noble cause of developing the HF for social advancement may be hampered by corrupt practices in the leadership which may include, in our institutions, the recruitment of underqualified trainees while those with the appropriate training and skills are shunned; and the awarding of higher grades for reasons other than sound academic performance or, what is worse still, the hiring of staff with spurious qualifications in institutions dealing with the development of the HF itself.

If we develop a tradition or culture where merit is outweighed by other considerations, and performance is subservient to personal relationships, then we shall gradually be engulfed by the inferno of corruption. The long term effects on HF development as a resource will only be too unpleasant to fathom. It is like digging the ground under our very feet and the consequences are all too obvious.

So, where such practices manifest themselves, it is better to make a 'hue and cry' about them because the peculiar characteristic of corruption is that it assumes a new face everyday. Sometimes corrupt practice is allowed to go on and on without anyone raising a finger until it is too late. This is where we encounter the unqualified acceptance of corrupt practice punctuated thus: 'Everyone else is doing it!'. This is a situation we cannot allow to persist and it is indisputable that the legal framework by itself cannot contain the ever changing scenarios of corruption.

### **The law and control of corruption**

In *Corruption, Causes, Consequences and Control* (op.cit), Morris Szeftel highlights the limitations of the law in controlling corruption. He reiterates the words of Robert C. Brooks in *The Nature of Political Corruption*, which are as follows:

The sanctions of positive law are applied only to those more flagrant practices which past experience has shown to be so pernicious that sentiment has crystalized into statutory prohibitions and adverse judicial decisions' (165).

At the workplace, corruption also adversely affects the development of the HF and society through deliberate mispostings and denying those with the potential, the opportunity to further their academic and professional standing, and many other unorthodox professional malpractices.

One cannot discuss the subject of corruption fully without making reference to corruption in high places, such as government officialdom. If a government official diverts funds meant for the development of the HF into other activities of lesser importance or through outright embezzlement, the effects will be felt in the long run. This is a very serious form of corruption.

The following statistics would perhaps give some perspective on the dangerous trends we, in Zimbabwe, are taking towards corrupt practices, considering that each case usually involves thousands of dollars. From January to December 1995, all reported cases of corruption amounted to 237 from which there were 107 convictions. The statistics for January to June 1996 indicated a sharp escalation in instances of corruption with 170 cases reported and 54 convictions. These figures were for reported cases only, but we must bear in mind that most cases of corruption happen secretly and sometimes a victim is unwilling to report to the law enforcer. The undercutting of the revenue base through corruption, resulting in loss to government, will have a negative effect on the plans of government to develop the HF.

### **Conclusion and suggested course of action**

What, then, should be the course of action to avert the impending disaster in African economies as a result of corruption interfering with the development of the HF? No one has the answer, but only the hope that continued effort on the part of those entrusted with governance, to introduce an education system whose content is oriented towards instilling the qualities of honesty, trust, commitment, patriotism and the sense of responsibility and accountability in our systems, will go a long way to curb tendencies towards corruption in present society and especially future generations.

One should also add that corruption is not like the much dreaded pandemic, AIDS, which has no cure. Corruption can be reduced if not completely stamped out. Ministers in charge of the police, should ensure that all cases of corruption brought to the attention of the police are treated with the urgency they deserve. In addition, the police should not tire in their efforts to unearth new forms and varieties of corruption as our continent becomes more and more technologically advanced and sophisticated.

There should also be ways of improving transparency in our systems; and in the case of training institutions, this includes the recruitment systems, the evaluation systems and other aspects of our vital institutions such as the tender procedures.

It is incumbent upon all African nations and the international community at large to put together their talents, efforts, commitment and will to unravel the ever increasing and mushrooming complex forms of corruption and put, not only Zimbabwe, but the whole of Africa, back on the development trail of its all too important HF.

### **Reference**

CLARKE, M. (ed) 1983 *Corruption: Causes, Consequences and Control*, London: Frances Publishers.



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