

# COMBATING CORRUPTION ON DAY ONE

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✘ **Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Ph.D.**, Los Angeles, 29 May 2016

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Armenia doesn't have the luxury of time to get its act together. Urgent action is required to erase the corruption plague so as to improve life in the country and be stronger to face the enemy.

Armenia has to deal with corruption in a multidimensional way combining short- and long-term solutions. The government has to manage short-term solutions while I propose here long-term

solutions through a change in Armenian children's attitude toward corruption.

Most decisions we make are either preference based or principle based. Decisions stemming from preference based or self-interest (convenience, profitability, acceptance, subjective feelings and attitudes) inevitably result in a corrupt society and lead a nation and individuals astray. Meanwhile deciding action based on principle allows us to behave according to universally accepted ethics.

They lead us to fair and impartial decisions.

The root of most evil in a society seems to be preference-based decisions. Acts of corruption such as theft, deception, bribery, nepotism, to cite a few, eventually debilitate a nation to such extent that they cause its downfall.

According to the International Transparency Organization report (2014), Armenia stood 94 among 174 countries and territories in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). It was better standing than most of its neighbors. However, in 2015 it regressed slightly: Armenia ranked 95 among 168 countries evaluated in Transparency International's 2015 CPI.

### **Principle vs. Preference Decision-Making Effects on Corruption**



Like most other developing countries, Armenia is plagued by such practices as bribery and nepotism. How would it be possible to tackle such a Herculean task within a short period of time? What kind of initiative can the government take to satisfy or at least impress the EU delegation next year and perhaps earn some of the EU \$17 million offer?

The government cannot eradicate corruption in a few years. Since considerable abatement of corruption in the short-run would be impossible, the search for a fundamental solution should focus on a long-run corrective approach.

Armenia was the first country to make teaching chess to children compulsory in order to sharpen the intellect of its population at an early age. The move made international headlines. To nip corruption in the bud, our new generation should be taught early on in school to base decision on universally accepted principles--for the sake of their future well-being as well as for the benefit of civil society and for the integrity of the state.

Establishing an exemplary curriculum innovation like that would also impress international corruption watchdogs. Fairness and impartiality in decision making can be woven into fables and animal stories for children including modern day situations requiring decision making to teach the right choice of selecting principle-based rather than preference-based decisions.

Since our future is in the hands of our children and grandchildren, our first and foremost priority should be the nurturing and education of the malleable minds of Armenian youth. Anti-corruption attitude and behavior can be instilled in the new generation easier than treating corruption addiction in adults.

Armenia could follow a multidimensional integrative approach in coping with and in treating corruption in the short- and long-run at the same time by focusing on causal factors running the gamut of psychological, emotional, social/interpersonal, and especially developmental influences on our next generation.

## CURRICULUM PROPOSAL

The consensus of the scientific community is that a child at age three attains the foundational development of its future life. So, we should talk, read, and sing for our children during these crucial formative years.

To achieve wholesome development, children especially need the love of parents. Although verbal expressions of love are important, actions need to back the words. Arguably, children need good parental and teacher example.

Children need moral guidance, principles by which to live. And they need these from their tender years on. Next to the holy books of every religion, the best principles that can be found anywhere are those found in everyday decent life based on human rights and the rule of law. Instruction based on a school curriculum has unique advantages. Through such programs, children come to realize that what they are being told is not only what parents say, but also what their teacher says. This gives the counsel strength that cannot be equaled.

Developmental psychology encourages parents to work hard to impress correct principles on the minds of the children. As children grow, however, parents often find it difficult to talk with them about things that matter the most. A new curriculum on principle-based decision making would be designed to help prevent such a situation from developing. It will provide the teacher and the children with material to read alone or together. But more than that, it should stimulate conversation between young ones and those who read this book with them.

It should be noted that the proposed book must call for a response on the part of children. Many well-placed questions about fairness and impartiality must be provided in the printed material to pause and encourage the children to express themselves. Children like to be involved; without that involvement, a child will quickly lose interest. More important, though, these questions will help the teacher to learn what is on the child's mind. Granted, the child may come out with answers that are not correct. But the printed material that follows each question should be designed to help the child to develop wholesome patterns of thinking.

The book should be amply illustrated. Most must have captions that call for a response from the child, based on what he sees and had read. Therefore, the teacher should review the pictures with the child. They can be a fine teaching aid that will drive home the lessons being taught.

When the child learns to read, parents and teachers should encourage him to read the book together as well as to himself. The more he reads it, the more its good counsel will be impressed on his mind and heart. But to strengthen the bonds of affection and respect between the parent or the teacher and the child, the book should be read together and done regularly. The role of the kindergarten teacher is more important and influential on the minds of children during their formative years than later a professor's influence on university students.

What seemed almost unimaginable a few decades ago (children exposed to illicit sex, spiritism, and other degrading practices) has come to pass. So they need protection, which this book will help to provide in a dignified and straightforward manner. Moreover, children especially need to be directed to the wisdom of the principles. I hope that this proposed book will help the family and the teacher mold the children's lives to be righteous and devoid of temptations which will lead to corrupt practices when they become adults. As a consequence, Armenia will rise to serve as a model for other nations to admire and to emulate.

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***For further assistance in such a book project, contact Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian through Keghart.com. The author, who has had extensive experience in curriculum development, will help any project dedicated to producing a professionally prepared textbook.***

