ETHICS AND PERFORMANCE IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract: *The reputation and success of governance depends upon the conduct of public functionaries and what the public believe about their conduct. It is therefore of fundamental importance that public functionaries act justly and fairly to all, not only paying lip service to ethical conduct but also ensuring that these are manifestly and undoubtedly seen to be done. This paper discusses the challenges of promoting ethical behavior in Nigeria. The major causes of unethical behavior in the public sector were identified and the institutional mechanisms established by the government to curb these unethical behaviors were enumerated. It argues that these measures have failed to provide the service with the necessary ethical environment in the post-independence period due to deliberate frustration by civil servants and the government hence resulting in unethical conducts and unbridled corruption in the public bureaucracy. The paper therefore recommend among others, a comprehensive agenda on mass education campaigns on the extent and cost of corruption and unethical behavior as well as enacting, improving and effective enforcing legal instruments, code of conduct and regulations promoting ethics and performance of ethical values in the public sector would depend on the prevalence of good governance, transparency and accountable leadership.*

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INTRODUCTION

Public servants, in every nation throughout history have been under pressure to meet special expectations concerning proper patterns of behavior (Dunner, 1964). Their actions are subject to greater scrutiny than are those of persons not on a public pay roll and they are the object of folktales, rumors, suspicions, and criticism to a much greater degree. This is applicable in both democratic and non-democratic nations. In general, higher standards of honesty and morality are expected of public servants than others. Dunner (1964) also observed that many practices common in the business world are not to be tolerated in the case of government officials or employees. The occasional scandals concerning improper practices usually result, not from low standards among public servant but from the fact that the public ordinarily accepts only the highest standards of behaviours from those on the public payroll.

The discussion of ethics in public administration started not too long ago among scholars and practitioners in the field (Ibietan and Joshua, 2013). Ethics is important in modern bureaucracies and public service because ethics translates in practical terms into the use or abuse of power and legitimate authority (Lewis, 2005). Rasheed (1995) claimed that measure to enhance ethics and accountability often feature prominently as part of the agenda of civil service reform in developing and developed countries. In recent years, the debates on effort to curb ethical violations and enforce accountability have intensified in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular mainly due to increase in the incidence of unethical practices and lack of accountability in the public sector. The importance of ethics in the conduct of human affairs and public administration cannot be overemphasised. This is predicated on the fact that as a science and system of morals which define/ state the code or set of principle by which men live, human life and governance will be devoid of order without ethics (Ibietan and Joshua, 2013). Thus, the fact that unethical practice has assumed a disturbing dimension has impacted negatively on the performance of public sector employees. Oladunni (2000) argued that the prevalence of unethical behavior and lack of accountability has led to mismanagement and total economic collapse in most developing nations. He emphasized that one major reason why Nigeria's economy remains in the doldrums today, is the mismanagement of the past on the part of public sector employees.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

To establish the link between ethics, accountability and performance in the public sector demands as a prelude, an explanation of the sense in which some key concepts are used in this paper.

The etymology of the word, 'ethics', comes from the Greek *ethos,* which means 'character', so that an ethical person is one who has character. However, what constitutes 'character' is likely to be interpreted broadly. No consensus seems to exist in the literature as to the exact scope of ethics. What is clear is that the definition is rather broad. Drawing upon the work of early Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, Freakley and Burgh (2000) state that ethics can be understood as 'what we ought to do'. Thus it requires judgement and reasoning in decision making that raise questions regarding what is right, wrong, good or bad conduct, fair or just. Okediji (1981) noted that ethics generally refers to a code of conduct of people in specific situations of life. Ethics is defined in moral philosophy as "that branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to rightness or wrongness of certain actions, and to the goodness or badness of the motives and ends of such actions" (Chandler and Plano, 1982). Hasley (1984) defines ethics as the branch of philosophy that deals with values of human life in a coherent, systematic and scientific manner. It is concerned with those practices and activities that are considered right or wrong. This means that ethic can be seen as the moral science or the type of character or conduct that is adjudged good or bad, right or wrong. These two definitions according to Olojede (2001) elevate ethics to a scientific level through which all human activities should be governed.

Ananda-Das (1985) describes ethics as "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad with normal duty and obligations…" In the words of Asobie (2001), "ethics" may be conceived in two alternatives, but related ways. In one sense, it means a system of morals. As a science of morals, ethics is that branch of philosophy which is concerned with human character or human conduct examined in the light of certain ideals. For instance, what is good versus the bad. It is a systematic study of society designed to determine what is virtuous or what is vicious, what is good and what is evil. As a system of morals, on the other hand, ethics is connected with the rules of behavior. It deals with standards of conduct. In agreement with the view of Asobie, Asok (1995) sees ethics as moral principles showing the

rightness and wrongness of individual or a group action. It is about good and bad predicated on certain duties and obligations. Meanwhile, the concept of ethics is rooted in social and ethical environment which shapes individual values, norms and attitudes. Olojede (2001) also noted that the concept of ethics throws up key elements essentials for ethical conduct in all human behavior. These are uprightness, rectitude, probity and virtuous conduct. Thus, ethics remains a major conditioning factor in individual conduct and group behavior. Its importance according to Seteolu (2001) permeates all strata of life, individual, corporate or public realm. Ethics is considered from a broad perspective by Maduabum (2012) as a set of principles which guide the behavior of an individual, group of people, organization and the society in general. A further clarification is provided by Okafor and Eloagu (2002) when they define ethics as a means of dealing with good and evil and with moral principles or practice. It is a set of moral principles or values, or a theory or system of moral values.

From the foregoing discussion it is appropriate to say that the study of ethics is concerned with the moral principles that determine what is right or wrong conduct. It concerns itself with right and wrong, good and bad, duty and obligations and moral and responsibility. Thus, ethics in administration could be conceptualized as rules and regulations officials are expected to conform with in the discharge of their official obligation (Melton et al, 1952). More specifically, it has to do with the concepts of right and wrong. It recommends how someone should act; resolve the issues of right or wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice. For instance, it is unethical for people not to pay their tax; obey relevant laws and regulations; avoid cheating and be diligent. Ethics embodies the principles of integrity, persistence, hard work and honesty. All these are the hallmarks of corporate and good governance.

Ethics in the public service are therefore the broad norms that stipulate how public servants should behave and exercise judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties. Central to administrative ethics are attitudes, standards, and systems of values which have been internalized in the civil servant. Its foundation is the belief that what public officials and employees do has a central and inescapable normative component involving values, morality and ethics (Agara and Olarinmoye, 2009).

There is no doubt in the fact that government institutions are predicated on well-defined laws and rules; certain moral principles underpin the working of these institutions especially

the role players. In the light of this, ethical standards are meant to guide those who exercise authority with a view to forestalling official misconduct and guarantee ethically sound judgement. These ethical standards necessitate accountable leadership in the public sector (Asok, 1995). Common to all these various definitions given by scholars is the fact that ethics is concerned with morality and human conduct. Ethics does not set out to describe the way things are but the way they ought to be. It deals with norms or standard of human behavior.

 Ethical code is another concept central to this paper and it refers to a body of rules, regulations or laws expressed in fixed or authoritative written form clearly setting out morally based standards of behavior or conduct that society requires of its leaders in the management and administration of the society's affairs (Barlow, 2000; Ikotun, 2004). Ethical code in the opinion of Ikotun (2004) therefore refers to morally based standards of behavior required by the society of its leaders in the exercise of their powers.

Thus, codes of ethics are written rules to regulate ethical behavior of public servants. They are statements of principles and standards about the right conduct of public servants (as opposed to general ethics, statues and regulations). The form, content and administration of such codes vary among governments. In some cases public servant may be subject to more than one code of conduct (Barrows, 2003).

There is no doubt that a code of ethics is an indispensable weapon in the battle against slackness, indiscipline, corruption and abuse of office. The personal ethical conduct and behavior stems from personal beliefs and convictions of what is the right or wrong way of conducting oneself in respect of conducting public affairs, for instance, the conviction that it is wrong to dip ones hands into public treasury or to practice sectarianism or nepotism (Ikotun, 2004).

Another concept that requires clarification is performance. Performance is a concept that is difficult to define. According to Concise English Dictionary (2000), performance is the act, process or art of performing. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1979) describes performance as the act of doing a piece of work, duty etc, the performance of official duties. It can also be described as how well or badly you do a particular job or activity. However, for the purpose of this paper performance can be defined in relation to the activities of a public servant most especially in terms of his efficiency in producing

certain quantity of goods or services which his department produces in a day, week, month or year.

Takaya (1989) observed that the inhibiting factors notwithstanding, any overall assessment would show that the Nigerian Public Service performed very creditably since independence, most especially in ensuring the continuity and unity of Nigeria as an indivisible sovereignty during her most trying period of civil unrests. Between January 1966 and May 1967, the public servants constituted themselves into task forces for crisis management during the trying war period for the purpose of giving effect to the quick take off of the newly created states as well as mobilization of resources to prosecute the civil war. The public service also proved its worth in the preparation and execution of the various national development plans in the country.

Two concepts, public sector and public service must be clarified here. The word "Public Sector" according to Fapohunda (2002) is a term used to embrace all organizations that are owned, controlled and managed by the state or government. The state owned organizations are of two categories which include the Government Ministries and Extra Ministerial Departments like Judiciary and the Government Parastatals include institutions like Universities. On the other hand, the term "Public Service" loosely describes the collectivity of specialized government institutions or agencies established by law, financed by public money and staffed by professionals and career bureaucrats for the purpose of executing public policies (Caiden, 1971).

Ethics from the normative point of view can be grouped into two major theories which include; Teleological and Deontological theories. The former is derived from the Greek word *telos* which connotes purpose or end. This theory is based on the ideas of western philosophers like J.S Mills; J. Bethan; Aristotle, as well asThomas Aquinas. The teleological theory believes that those practices and activities of man that are considered right or wrong are based on the intention for which the person act. That is, the end justifies the means. Put differently, it is the end or purpose of a person's action that gives the standard of rightness or wrongness. The second theory is also premised on Greek word *deon* which means duty. A renowned authority associated with this theory is Immanuel Kant. In his opinion, people act not just for the end but for the sake of duty. The Deontologists criticized the Teleological theory which according to them is grossly inadequate and deficient in determining what is

wrong or right in human conduct because it assumes that human being tends to operate for selfish motive taking cognizance of their intellectual and rational constituents. Notwithstanding these two contradictory views, scholars are of the opinion that these two moral theories are relevant to shedding light on our understanding of human behavior.

Also, the conventional and the objective and subjective theories of administrative responsibility are considered relevant for the analysis of this discourse on ethics in the public service. The traditional or conventional theories are based on the arguments made by Carl Friedrich and Herman Finer in the 1930s and 1940s. Both contended that the source of increasing power of a bureaucracy was as a result of the expansion of government services and its regulatory function (Barrows, 2003).

Finer observes that the primary way to change the behavior required the use of controls and sanctions over public servants, members of the legislature, the judiciary, and administrative hierarchy. In his opinion, political responsibility which is the responsibility of elected officials was of paramount importance. On the other hand, Friedrich argued that public servants tended to be self directing and self regulating, which he attributed to their responsiveness to increase in technical knowledge. He contended that administrative responsibility could be elicited by the development of sound work rules and effective morale such as the granting public servants the right to bargain collectively with government (Barrows, 2003). In contrasting the views of these two scholars on the conventional theories, Finer argued that Friedrich's position on the subject can be described as that of moral responsibility, while his own opposing argument can be described as political responsibility.

The conventional theory of administrative ethics holds that administrators should carry out the orders of their superiors and policies of the agency and the government they serve (Rohr, 1978; Fleishman and Payne, 1980; Thompson, 2007). On this view, administrators are ethically neutral in the sense that they do not exercise independent moral judgement. Administrators are expected to act on any moral principles of their own, but are to give effect to whatever principles are reflected in the orders and policies they are charged with implementing (Shafritz and Hyde, 2007). Officials are morally obliged to serve the organization in this way because their acceptance of office is voluntary: it signifies consent. Officials know in advance what the duties of office will be, and if duties (or their minds) change, officials can usually leave office.

The second major theory is the objective and subjective theory of responsibility. The objective responsibility is described as the responsibility of person or organization to others besides one's self for some type of thing or action. Objective responsibility is usually connected with the concept of accountability and answerability. In this case sanction may be specified for public officials that failed to discharge their responsibility as required or stipulated by law. A good example is a situation where penalties are imposed on public servants for failure to carry out legislated procedures as required. On the other hand, in subjective responsibility which is otherwise known as personal or psychological responsibility attention is directed at what and to whom one is responsible. It is a personal responsibility (Barrows, 2003).

It important at this point to direct our attention to the main thrust of the paper which include the be codes of ethical behavior in the public service, causes of unethical behavior and its effects on the performance of public servants.

CODES OF ETHICS IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

The main reason for entrenching detailed Ethical Codes within the country's Constitution in Barlow (2000) opinion is normally because of the importance the country attaches to the proper exercise of state powers by its officers. It should be noted that before the enactment of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, there had been such a barrage of accusations of gross abuse of state powers and such extensive corruption by Government Officials that it was thought necessary to entrench the Ethical Codes into the constitutions in the hope that entrenching the code in the Constitution would impress upon the Administrators, the importance of conducting the affairs of state in an ethical manner (Barlow, 2000; Ikotun, 2004).

There have been series of enactment of codes and establishment of institutional mechanisms to enforce ethical behavior in Nigeria. These include but not limited to;

- ✓ Law enforcement agencies /law courts
- ✓ Code of Conduct Bureau
- ✓ Public Complaint Commission
- ✓ Audit Department / External Auditors
- ✓ Regulatory Agencies like Central Bank of Nigeria, NAFDAC, Security and Exchange Commission etc.

✓ Legislative Arm of Government and its various committees (Oladunni, 2000)

Their basic responsibilities include ensuring that there is accountability and enforcement of laws and regulations so as to engender ethical behaviour and promote efficient performance in the public sector.

As part of ethics in the public sector, there is a section of the of 1999 Nigerian constitution that provides for code of conduct for public officers dealing with such areas as promotion of honesty and integrity. Specifically, the Fifth Schedule, Part I of the 1999 constitution provides for code of conduct for public officers requiring public officials not to allow personal interests to conflict with their official responsibilities; not to engage in pecuniary engagements; not to operate foreign accounts, not to ask for gifts and to declare their assets immediately after taking office, every four years and at the end of their terms of office (Rasheed, 1995). It is pertinent to note that non-disclosure of assets and incomes has been a common practice in the Nigerian Public Sector. Up till now, no public officer is ready to declare his or her assets including government officials under the current civilian administration. Many of them still claimed to be ignorant of the code of conduct of public officers as contained in Part I, Fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution.

One of the basic benefits of written codes of ethics for public servants in Nigeria is that there is less room for argument regarding the content and penalties for violations. Also, they can promote public trust and confidence in the ethical behavior of public servants. Written codes of ethics can discourage unethical practices and provide punishments for them, thus enabling politicians and senior management to hold public servants more accountable. Besides, they make public servants in Nigeria to be aware of the importance and often overriding values of ethical behavior in decisions and recommendations and above all, written codes act as a catalyst to reassess other rules regarding the participation of public servants in various activities.

It is instructive that know that written codes of ethics for public servants has some weaknesses or limitations in Nigeria which include the fact that they are difficult to enforce or do not contain any provisions for enforcement or punishment. These codes are equally not a cure in themselves for preventing unethical behavior and the broad ethical principles outlined in them are often difficult to apply to specific situations. Apart from this, the broad range of government and public service activities in Nigeria makes it difficult to have a single

code that can be consistently applied to all areas. Also, the codes sometimes infringe upon the rights of public servants as private individuals in society; and certain ethical values are not amenable to management by general ethics rules such as the codes of conduct, for example, acceptable public risk levels in carrying out government policy.

In the colonial era in Nigeria, the regime was high on law and order. The few institutions that existed were strong on forcing compliance with the norms enunciated by colonial overlords. At Independence, the wealth of the nation was largely held by the Marketing Boards which the new rulers moved to control. The regional governments used part of the huge savings of the marketing board to get ahead in the race to industrialize. Corruption which was beginning to raise its head in the political firmament ensured that part of the huge savings of the marketing board ends up in the coffers of the political parties and individual politicians.

The authority and the command structure of the military rule made accountability even weaker. It was suggested that government has the right and obligation to claim the commanding heights of the economy. The commanding heights philosophy was fully enunciated by the super permanent secretaries of the early 1970's. The pace of corruption naturally accelerated. One sad defect was that the public officer lost his sensitive conscience as a result of the destructive effects of corruption. By the 1980's, corruption had not only become part of the national life but the damage in public sectors remain lessons in the study of corruption.

The indigenous political elites that succeeded the colonial rulers were not easily persuaded as to the merits of a politically neutral civil service. They viewed the concept with suspicion, if not hostility, and wasted no time in reversing or modifying it (Ikotun, 2004). According to him, political interference in public administration took various forms- ranging from the outright politicization of senior cadres of the public service to the dilution of merit principles with political loyalty criteria in the process of staff selection and promotion. Political godfatherism did an incalculable damage to morale, discipline, and professionalism in general.

At independence, the public service was highly prestigious and membership of the service not only enhanced one's social standing but also guaranteed a healthy income. The deteriorating economic situation led to a decline in the value of many African currencies

including Nigeria which reduced the purchasing power of civil servants to the extent that their take home pay was grossly inadequate to satisfy their basic needs. This development had forced many of them to dip their hands into the public treasury. Today, official conduct manifesting in form of official corruption, bribery, money laundering, contract fixing etc which were uncommon in the public service at independence have become a cankerworm that have eaten deep into the fabric of national life in Nigeria.

ETHICS AND PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: MALADIES AND REMEDIES

It may be understatement to lament that modern day public service lacks moral entitlement to service the public. There is a general agreement among scholars that there is poor adherence to ethical standards by public servant in most developing countries in particular simple rules and regulations that could enhance good ethics and performance in the public service are generally ignored. Not only that, there is absence of co-ordinated and harmonized roles, responsible for public service ethics. No wonder, Seteolu (2001) observed that official misconduct by public officials and unethical practices have assumed disturbing dimensions globally.

Attempts at cultivating ethical conduct in the Nigerian public sector have found overt manifestations in the Public Service Rules (as instruction manual for civil/public servants), Financial Regulations; Due Process Act and ancillary enactments that seek to guide and regulate the activities of public officials in the discharge of their duties. The profoundest and perhaps the most laudable of effort at instilling ethical behaviour is contained in the Code of Conduct for Public Officers as spelt out in the fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Ibietan and Joshua, 2013).

In Nigeria, however, enlightened public opinion tends to hold that career bureaucrats are greatly wanting on this count, their collective performance notwithstanding. Generally speaking, they tend to be portrayed as being rather self-seeking venal and nepotistic individual (Takaya, 1989). Ethics and accountability remains the major challenges confronting the Nigerian public service (Beetseh and Kohol, 2013). From the work of Ayanda, (2012), fraud, extortion, embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, influence peddling, bestowering of favours to friends among others are some of the unethical conducts in the public service. To Egwemi (2012), some of the manifestations of corruption include

solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly by a public official or any other person, of any goods of monetary, or other benefit, such as a (induced) gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for another person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance, of his or her public functions. The offering or granting, directly or indirectly to a public official or any other person for the purpose of illicitly obtaining benefits for himself or for a third party; to mention just a few.

Today, gross indiscipline has manifested itself in different forms. The lack of accountability, unethical behavior and corrupt practices have become so pervasive and even institutionalized norms of behavior in Nigeria to the extent that one may conveniently speak of a crisis of ethics in Nigerian Public Services (Rasheed, 1995). Among such are deliberate cheating of public properties, embezzlement, ostentatious living, disregard for such values as co-operation, tolerance, honesty, sincerity, diversion to private use of seized contrabands examination malpractices, inflation of census figures, admission and certificate racketeering among others (Arimiyah, 2000). In the same vein, Rasheed (1995) claimed that aside from bribery and corruption, patronage, nepotism, embezzlement, influence peddling, use of one's position for self-enrichment, bestowing of favours on relatives and friends, moonlighting, partiality, absenteeism, late coming to work, abuse of property, leaking and/or abuse of government information and the like are common manifestation of this plight.

All the above mentioned unethical behavior and practices appear to have been institutionalized in Nigeria today for the fact that they seem acceptable and normal to the majority. Leaders do not frown seriously at such unethical practices and its negative impact on performance in the public sector because in most cases they stand to benefit from it.

Osaghae (1993) attributed all these problems to colonial heritage. He argued that colonial heritage is a major factor responsible for ethical decay in the public sector. In the colonial days, the people are fond of stealing government money and property as a way of venting their anger and displeasures with the colonialist – an act often regarded as patriotic and heroic by the citizenry. And since the post colonial state failed to attract legitimacy from the people, the same logic that applied to colonial institutions are also presently used in dealings with the state and its institutions. It is instructive to note that as a result of lack of commitment to sound ethics in the public sector, public servants have made it a

fundamental policy to pay bribe in return for special favour granted. Receipt of bribes or gratification by public officers has become a vice in the Nigerian public service. This development, no doubt has negatively affected the performance of public servants in Nigeria.

Another major factor that is responsible for unethical behavior in the Nigerian public sector is faulty placement and promotion of people to leadership position. Mmobuosi (1984) argued that this may arise from the composition of selection and promotion panels, the parastatals and board members of which do not have the requisite skills and knowledge. ASCON Consulting Team (1983) also observed that the knowledge and skills may not be perfect in predicting effective performance but the appointment of pedestrians for the exercise can be dysfunctional in performance prediction. There is no doubt in the fact that faulty placements and promotions may also stem from other factors – ethnic discrimination for example. Because recruitment in the public service has been and is still being influenced by patronage and political factors, the loyalties, commitment and actions of public officials are often guided and shaped by their primordial loyalties rather than the requirement of impartial professionalism (Rasheed, 1995).

Odumosu (1968) observed that unnecessary political interference in the purely administrative process of government especially with respect to personnel matter – employment, deployment and promotion by politicians, undermined the integrity of the public service. Akhakpe (2001) claimed that the problem of unqualified, incompetent and poorly trained staff in the public service has in recent years come boldly to the forefront as the stumbling blocks to achieving accountable and transparent public service. This also has affected the performance in the public sector negatively. As Ayida (1987) put it, a public sector that is drained of competent skilled manpower, even with a better staffed private sector will spell doom for the country. The abuse of federal character principle as the basis of appointment into the public service has lowered the emphasis on merit, with competent and qualified Nigerians being prevented from employment in the public sector due to their state of origin.

A very dismal picture of our public sector has been portrayed but this need not make us too pessimistic. Things have not yet gone beyond the point of no return. We are still capable of setting them right. Rasheed (1995) opined that repeated attempts have been made over

the years to combat corrupt practices and unethical violations in Nigeria and other developing countries to curb unethical behavior in the public sector. Measures should therefore be put in place to prevent undue interference in appointment, postings and promotions of public servants. The autonomy of the civil servants should be provided as it is the practice in the United Kingdom. Like the army, the civil service should be encouraged to remain apolitical and not get committed to a party or leader (Birkinshaw, 1993).

Moreover, the quality of leadership in the Head of State or President and State Governors has affected the quality of leadership in other institutions and organizations in all spheres of life in Nigeria. What is happening in any society is largely a reflection of the type of leadership in that society. If we have poor leadership, the fallen out effect of this is going to be poor followership. No matter what the form of government, unless ethics and values govern our public life, there can be no real progress. The big challenge facing us is how to install a political leadership in power which has both integrity and competence and which can be looked up to by the people with regard and respect instead of disdain as at present. Politics has become a profession in which merit and ethics have largely got jettisoned (Birkinshaw, 1993). Criminal elements have now begun to take over and are getting themselves elected to the legislatures. There are instances where individuals accused of being involved in a murder case being appointed as Minister or even elected state Governors while the case against them are still lingering in the court.

Though democracy is the best form of government, it is difficult to have a functioning democracy in a country where half of the population is illiterate. It is a matter of grave concern that in the field of education in Nigeria, ethics has become a casualty. Our temples of learning have become hotbeds of politics and violence. Copying at examinations – at all levels – particularly at secondary and tertiary level has become a standard procedure. Question papers and even marks are on sale. The government must pay greater attention to education. We should strive toward having 100% literacy and the sanctity of the higher institutions of learning so mercilessly polluted by politics, corruption and criminalization must be restored.

In addition to the constitutional provision, Oladunni (2000) suggested that every public sector organization must have a code of conduct. All employees must be made to sign an undertaking that they will comply with this code of conduct. Organizations should

additionally ensure firm and consistent application of appropriate sanctions when people violate the code of conduct. It is important to apply appropriate sanctions in order to encourage people to behave ethically in their professional activities at all times. All these remedial measures are necessary if we are committed to restoring the integrity of the public service and consequently increase their level of performance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given plural nature of the Nigerian society in terms of ethnic and geographical factors, Takaya (1989) observed that the indirect politicization of the public service has the unintended effect of exposing career bureaucrats (and other public servants) to tremendous communal pressures, a good deal of which usually result in such negative outputs and unethical behavior such as sectionalism, nepotism, ethnicism, or even outright disloyalty at times. In the face of widespread unaccountability (which bureaucratic rules ought to address), pervasive unethical conduct and corrupt practices, the entrenchment of sound ethical practices must underscore development initiative/efforts, if Nigeria must get it right, especially in the 21st century (Ibietan and Joshua, 2013).

There have been numerous initiatives in promoting ethics and performance in the public sector in Nigeria. In Nigeria in 1975, the Public Complaint Commission was established to investigate complaints against public officials public Accounts Committee in 1966 to assist the legislature in overseeing the expenditure of public funds and the Code of Conduct for public officials have been instituted in the country. Many of these measures have failed because in most cases measures introduced have been partial in nature and many of the institutions established to promote ethics often lacked the resources, public visibility, impartiality and public support that are critical to success. As shown in the earlier discussions, many factors are responsible for unethical behavior among government officials and employees. These include corruption, lack of disciplined and committed leadership, unqualified, incompetent and poorly trained staff in the public service as well as low level of illiteracy and poverty among others.

No doubt the issue of ethics and accountability pose a continuing challenge to the Nigerian government. The mechanism and institutions put in place may not yet be the best or ideal in the sense that ethical and accountable behavior in the public sector is still much to be desired in Nigeria. But there is so much hope to hold and believe that there will be many

opportunities to lead and change for the best. In the light of this, we therefore recommend a comprehensive agenda to promote ethics and good performance in the Nigerian public sector. This will comprise

- ✓ Mass education campaigns on the extent and cost of corruption and unethical behavior.
- ✓ Enacting, improving and effectively enforcing legal instrument, code of conduct and regulations promoting ethics and performance.
- ✓ Fostering and promoting enabling conditions of service to enhance professional and ethical standards.
- ✓ There should be sound policies on recruitment, training and promotion of public sector employees.
- ✓ Ethics and societal norms should be taught in primary and secondary schools and should be introduced as compulsory course under General studies, Department of all higher institution in Nigeria.
- ✓ Those political office holders, who loot government treasury should be publicly humiliated and the loot recovered by a succeeding government.
- ✓ Political office holders must account for their stewardship in concrete quantifiable terms.
- ✓ Nigerian government should emphasize preventive and enforcement approach more than institutional approach in curbing ethical behavior.
- ✓ Good government and governance must be the right of all Nigerians.

The future observance of ethical values in Nigeria public realm would therefore depend on the prevalence of good governance, transparency and accountable leadership. Not only that, all on-going initiatives should be co-ordinated and supported into a coherent national strategy that would promote good public service ethics.

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