Improving Public Service Delivery in Nigeria through Ethics, Integrity and Professionalism

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ABSTRACT

The public service is central to the overall socio-economic development of the country since the oversight function or regulation of the activities of the public sector and other agencies falls within the ambit of the public service. Recent developments in Nigeria which saw several government agencies facing probes and many public officials standing trial for alleged misappropriation of public funds as well as the abysmal public service delivery, despite the introduction of SERVICOM, Code of Conduct Bureau etc, have shown that public personnel with integrity are in short supply. Using the utilitarian theory of ethics this paper contends that lack of adherence to ethical values, attitude and behaviour is the cause of poor public service delivery in Nigeria. The paper reiterates the need for renewed effort to improve the capacity of the Nigeria Public Service to deliver goods and services to the people of Nigeria in cost-effective, efficient and timely manner through the promotion of ethics, integrity and professionalism. The paper recommends that provision of appropriate incentives, regular training and development of personnel, strengthening of regulatory institutions, transparent decision-making process, as well as fair and equitable human resource policies are measures that can be employed to institutionalize ethics, integrity and professionalism in the Nigeria Public Service for enhanced performance.

Introduction

Attaining a high level of performance in the Nigerian Public Service is the great concern of many professionals, practitioners and commentators alike. This desire is prompted by the vital role that the Public service plays in the social, political and economic development of any given country. It advises initiates, generates, drafts and formulates a large chunk of public policies. As the major implementing agency of government, the Public Service considerably determines whether scarce public resources are efficiently and productively employed in pursuance of public programmes. Efficiency, ability and effectiveness of the public service determine how much government policies are concretized into tangible forms. Consequently, a traditional public service is expected to operate on the basis of a set of core values or code of ethics which include loyalty, integrity, impartiality, service, respect, transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, diligence, professionalism and responsiveness. In furtherance of this, every civil servant is expected to display promptness and courtesy to the public and to avoid dilatory tactics. He should not use his position or influence to secure employment or other benefits for any member of his family.

All these are values that should also govern the operations of the Nigerian Public Service. The question to ask is; can the Nigerian Public Service claim to be adhering to these ethical values? In what way(s) can the leadership in the Public Sector manage and promote ethics in the conduct of government business? The paper examines these issues and proposes strategies for managing ethics as a means of improving the performance of the Nigerian Public Service.

Methodology

The method used in this paper is descriptive method. It sought to ascertain opinions that are held on the attitude of employees in the Nigerian Public Service to ethical values and the effects of such attitude and behaviour on service delivery. Data was obtained from library sources including...
texts, journals and seminar papers, Civil Service Rules, Newspapers as well as 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Framework

**Ethics** can be said to entail principles or standards of human conduct, sometimes referred to as morals. Walkings (1956), defines ethics as “a system of moral principles”. And for Moti (2006), “Ethics is a system of moral principles that govern or influence a person’s behaviour”. Witten, (1990) conceives ethics as the written code of relational norms and guides which describe the range of appropriate behaviour in interpersonal situations. The codes prescribe the proper ways of relating to clients, the public, peers, superiors or subordinates. Ethic is means of achieving orderly and courteous conduct of a profession. This could encompass both the smoothing of intra professional contention and of the individual professional relations with the collective profession. The recognition awarded by the general public requires in return, some protection of public or client interests. Shaked and Sulton (1981) posit that the code of conduct may define the relationship between the public official and the external environment in many ways. It may serve to distinguish public service from other services in the society and may be used to support argument for public accountability. Codes describe the rules intend to guide present and future action. The function of codes is to influence the decision that individuals make so that the resulting behaviour is acceptable.

It is clear from the foregoing definitions that the primary concern of ethics is the morality of human conduct or behaviour. Morality therefore, becomes the yardstick for measuring good and bad actions. It concerns judgements about the rightness and wrongness of actions committed with the greatest amount of freedom (Uduigwomen, 2001). Ethics consists of a set of imperatives that should or ought to guide the conduct of the administrator or public servant, the conditions of his work and the uses to which it might be put. Since it directly focuses on what public servants do or ought to do, it necessarily borders on the behaviour of the public servant. Ethics therefore, define in a very broad way the rules for the conduct of the public servant (Cooks and Hunsaker, 2001). Although, governments have different cultural, political and administrative environments, they often confront similar ethical challenges.

**Integrity** simply put, connotes uprightness. It is sometimes used synonymously with morals even though; it has been argued that one could have integrity without necessarily acting morally (Shaked and Sulton, 1981). It also refers to the vitality and viability of institutions guided by codes, legal and administrative instruments capable of sustaining compliance with stated social, economic and political ideals. Such systems cannot be easily compromised. For our purpose here, it suffices that when a person is adjudged to have acted with integrity, the conduct would have been in conformity with high public morals and the law (Modibbo, 2009).

Public Service integrity is conceived to compose of two elements: the integrity of processes (decision-making, decision implementation and management of public funds), and the integrity of personnel - the representatives and public functionaries (Tsebe, 2011). The administrative capacity presupposes the correct and efficient fulfilment of duties and tasks by the representatives and public functionaries. Basically, the quality of governance is the generic term that includes all these elements discussed above: professional and stable public services, human resources selection based on meritocracy, maintenance of legality, integrity and transparency through efficient legal employees. When the quality of governance is bad, one has to deal with negative phenomena, such as lack of administrative capacity (very problematic fulfilment of tasks and duties, due to incompetence, inadequate procedures, lack of professionalism and training) or corruption, a phenomenon that receives extensive attention due to its widespread and harmful character, and which is largely conceptualized as the abuse of public power for obtaining private benefits (Murphy, 1989; Transforma, 2004).

**Professionalism** is not a straight forward concept to define. In broad terms it is said to be synonymous with occupation; especially one that requires high level training and education (Oyenuga, 2008). It is in the light of the occupation element that the word profession is today applied to a wide range of individuals as footballers and drivers. In tackling the problem of definition, this paper
considered what existing professions do, and has identified six characteristics of professionals namely;

(1) The professional has skills or expertise proceeding from a broad knowledge base.
(2) The professional provides a service based on a special relationship with those whom he or she serves. This relationship involves a special attitude of beneficence tempered with integrity. This includes fairness, honesty and a bond based on legal and ethical rights and duties authorized by the professional institution and legalized by public esteem.
(3) To the extent that the public recognizes the authority of the professional, he or she has the social function of speaking out on broad matters of public policy and justice, going beyond duties to specific clients.
(4) In order to discharge these functions, professionals must be independent of the influence of the state or commerce.
(5) The professional should be educated rather than trained. This means having a wide cognitive perspective, seeing the place of his or her skills within that perspective and continuing to develop this knowledge and skill within a framework of values.
(6) A professional should have legitimized authority. If a profession is to have credibility in the eyes of the good public, it must be orderly recognized as independent, disciplined by its professional association, actively expending its knowledge base and concerned with the education of its members. If it is widely recognized as satisfying these conditions, then it will possess moral as well as legal legitimacy, and it pronouncements will be listened to with respect (Keulers, 2004).

Service and Service Delivery

Service delivery forms the basis of all government activities. Services relate both to the provision of tangible public goods and intangible services. It involves the performance of work or duty by an official or an act of helping others, or power to control or makes use of resources, or an organization or system providing the public with something useful to meet their demands (Fox and Meyer, 1995). The act of delivery is defined as producing or performing, handing over, taking goods to the intended recipient, or producing results as promised or expected (Snellen et-al, 2002). Therefore, service delivery is concerned with the provision of a product or service by the government or government body to a community that it was promised to, or which is expected by that community. Service delivery connotes the provision of public activities, benefits or satisfactions.

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The framework of analysis in this paper is the Utilitarian model of ethics. The most prominent proponents of this theory are Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1808-1873). Utilitarian approach holds that moral behaviour produces the greatest good for the greatest number (Mill, 1863). Under this approach, a decision maker is expected to consider the effect of each decision alternative on all parties and select the one that optimizes the satisfaction for the greatest number of people. Thus an act is judged right or wrong based on its consequences - whether the consequences produce happiness or pain. If an action produces an excess of happiness over pain, then it is right; otherwise it is wrong. In order words, the greatest happiness of the greatest number determines the morality of an action (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1979; Ezeani, 2005).

Applying Utilitarian theory of ethics to analysis of the relationship between ethics and public sector performance implies that the effectiveness of a public policy or decision in Nigeria should be judged on the extent to which it has the tendency to augment the happiness of the greater number of people than it has to diminish them. According to Henry (2002), if a public policy makes everybody slightly better off, even if some individuals are left slightly worse-off in the other way as a result of that policy, then the policy is just and the public interest is served. The utilitarian ethic was the basis for the Federal Government of Nigeria’s decision in January, 2012 to increase fuel price (removal of fuel subsidy) and turn over these new revenues to build social infrastructure, industries, and boost agricultural production in the country. Even though the poor in the society would experience hardships due to hikes in transportation fares and commodities in the market under this arrangement, under the
utilitarian approach, the policy is just and in the public interest; because everyone’s net balance of social and economic standard would be increased including that of the least well-off.

Critics of the utilitarian ethic question whether the common good is squeezing the life out of the individual. The theory also, does not fully take into account the concept of justice towards the unfortunate victims, for instance, of hikes in the cost of transportation and commodities in the market resulting from removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. Despite these criticisms the theory is still considered to be relevant to the this paper because, an insight into the ideals of utilitarianism will assist public officers to overcome ethical dilemmas which allow for the right choice of professional behaviour that may not only benefit the client but the public who rely on the public servant for the fulfilment of their needs.

Ethics and Public Service Delivery

In a working environment there is an employer and the employee who keep the activities of the institution rolling in order to achieve the predetermined objectives towards an efficient and effective service delivery. In the case of public organization, the rendering of services for the general welfare of the community served is the main domain for its establishment and existence. Service delivery in the public sector follows a variety of approaches in terms of value systems, legislation, legal rules. In the execution of their daily functions, public officials cannot discharge their authority at will, but their conduct or behaviour is monitored, controlled, supervised and managed for maximum productivity, hence the code of ethics and/or ethical principles. Embodied in the principles are guidelines from the body politic (such as political supremacy, public accountability and tenets of democracy); guidelines from community values (they include religious doctrines and value systems, fairness and reasonableness, balanced decision making, thoroughness, probity and honesty, and efficiency and effectiveness); and prescribed guidelines (such as legal rules, fundamental rights and code of ethics or conduct, right to information held by the state and administrative justice).

On the contrary, it is found that public officials act in an unacceptable and unlawful (unethical) manner. Unethical conduct in government institutions comes about as a result of certain factors that have direct effect on efficient and effective delivery. It occurs because of public officials’ greed, dishonesty and to a great extent, lack of training and development (Fox et-al, 1991; Charles 2012). These factors largely result from lack of or deficient or inadequate control and accountability in a government institution. The effect of inadequate control and accountability on public service delivery has been widely acknowledged by scholars. Fox and Meyer (1995) defined accountability as the responsibility of a government and its agent towards the public to realize previously set objectives and to account for them in public, or commitment required from a public responsibility for own inaction of the obligation that a subordinate has to keep own superior informed of the execution of responsibility. Elements of accountability are responsibility conferred, obligation to report back on the degree of the responsibility, optional monitoring to ensure accountability and possible sanctions for non-performance. If there is lack or deficient or inadequate control and accountability in government institution, there would be dishonest public officials who would exploit the situation for their own benefit and interest. This in a long run will make service delivery to suffer as resources will be utilized in the wrong way than for the general welfare of the community served (Brien, 1998). Lack of accountability usually leads to inefficient standardized actions, poor planning on the part of top management and help increase malpractices and wastes towards available limited resources in meeting an ever increasing wants. The abysmal quality of public service delivery in the Nigerian Public in recent times has been partly attributed to the problem of inadequate control and accountability by institutions of government in execution of their responsibilities. When buildings are not collapsing, roads and bridges are falling apart or tankers and passenger vehicles are colliding or vehicles are skidding of the road due to pot holes or passenger and cargo planes are crashing on buildings or buses killing hundreds of innocent citizens. Building collapse for instance is due to a number of reasons including but not limited to bad design, faulty construction, and use of sub-standard materials, structural failure and a combination of so many other factors. It is clear from this instance that lack of
standard denudes and breeds unethical practice with integrity efficient service delivery being undermined.

Training and development are also elements of the public service ethics that relate significantly to service delivery. Andrews (1985) defined training as the extension of knowledge for the specific purpose of filling a given position and to effectively perform the work involved. Its aim is the practical application of knowledge as well as the development of specific behaviour patterns, attitudes and motives with a view to realizing the goals. Development is a continuation of education and training, for the purpose of gaining satisfactory experience and skills as well as the correct attitude in order to be admitted to positions (Ubeku, 1975). Public officials are by the nature of their responsibility required to selflessly seek the welfare of the people. Consequently, public officials are expected to be equipped with necessary skills and professional capacity. If this is compromised service delivery will be affected adversely. As opined by Oyadiran and Lawal (2009), ‘capacity gap’ especially at the managerial cadre, is one of the factors responsible for poor quality of public service delivery in Nigeria. According to them, the Nigerian Public Service is short of skillful employees who are capable in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in transforming developmental policies and programmes into reality. A work force described in this manner will no doubt scuttle the system or an organization from functioning optimally. On few occasions when appropriate skilled personnel are attracted into the service, due to absence of systematic training programmes at regular intervals, the skills fizzle out of the employees, and new practices are not exposed to them. Thus, when you have quack human resources, quackery services will surely be provided. This shows that a close link exist between organizational performance, ethics, integrity and professionalism. The absence of ethics, integrity and professionalism results in compromising quality service delivery.

Many management experts believe that integrity is central to the success of any organization (Oyenuga, 2008; Isa, 2010). Non-adherence to ethical conduct, lack of integrity and loss in professional practice could lead an organization into many wrongs including damaged reputation because, partners, clients and other stakeholders will be apprehensive in doing business or even recommending others. Adhering to standards (authorized practice or generally accepted as normal) equips an individual to love doing what is right and form hatred for what is bad such as fraud, greed and callous attitude toward the sufferings of others. Without standards there would be no means for determining or judging good and bad or for measuring and recognizing degree of accuracy and excellence. Accuracy and excellence are associated with achieving satisfactory results within an economy of effort and minimum waste; comparable competence within relatively short time; economy in the use of or consumption of specified resource; and providing a service that worth accepting and suitable.

**Ethical codes in the Nigerian Public Service**

In virtually every country of the world, government and organizations have created an environment that promotes ethical decision-making, by institutionalizing ethics and morals in the work place through the establishment of a code of ethics (Ezeani, 2005). In Nigeria, the Code of Conduct for Public officers as contained in the 1999 Constitution and the Public service Rules 2009 (revised edition) provide inter alia:

(i) A public officer shall not put himself in a position where his personal interest conflicts with his duties and responsibilities.

(ii) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing paragraph, a public officer shall not:

   (a) Receive or be paid the emoluments of any public office at the same time as he receives or is paid the emoluments of any other public office; or

   (b) Except where he is not employed on full time basis, engage or participate in the management or running of any private business, profession or trade but
nothing in this sub-paragraph shall prevent a public officer from engaging in farming.

(iii) The President, Vice President, Governor, Deputy Governor, Ministers of the government of the federation and Commissioners of the governments of the states, members of the National Assembly and of the House of Assembly of the states, and such other public officers or persons as the National Assembly may by law prescribe shall not maintain or operate a bank account in any country outside Nigeria.

(iv) (1) A public officer shall not, after his retirement from public service and while receiving pension from public funds accept more than one remunerative position as chairman, director or employee of (a) a company owned or controlled by the government; or (b) any public authority.

(2) A retired public servant shall not receive any other remuneration from public funds in addition to his pension and the emolument of such one remunerative position.

(v) (1) Retired public officers who have held offices to which this paragraph applies are prohibited from service or employment in foreign companies or foreign enterprises.

(2) This paragraph applies to the offices of Vice-president, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Governor and Deputy Governor of a state.

(vi) (1) A public officer shall not ask for or accept property or benefits of any kind for himself or any other person on account of anything done or omitted to be done by him in the discharge of his duties.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph, the receipt by a public officer of any gifts or benefits from commercial firms, business enterprises or persons who have contracts with the government shall be presumed to have been received in contravention of the said sub-paragraph unless the contrary is proved.

(3) A public officer shall only accept personal gifts or benefits from relatives or personal friends to such extent and on such occasions as are recognized by custom: provided that any gift or donation to a public officer on any public or ceremonial occasion shall be treated as a gift to the appropriate institution represented by the public officer, and accordingly, the mere acceptance or receipt of any such gift shall not be treated as a contravention of this provision.

(vi) The President or Vice-president, Governor or Deputy Governor, Minister of government of the Federation or Commissioner of the Government of a State, or any other public officer who holds the office of a Permanent Secretary or Head of any public corporation, university, or other parastatal organization shall not accept:

(a) A loan, except from government or its agencies, a bank, building society, mortgage institution or other financial institutions recognized by law; and

(b) Any benefit of whatever nature from any company, contractor, or businessman, or the nominee or agent of such person: provided that the head of public corporation or of a university or other parastatal organization may, subject to the rules and regulations of the body, accept a loan from such body.

(vii) No person shall offer a public officer any property, gift or benefit of any kind as an inducement or bribe for the granting of any favour or the discharge in his favour of the public officer’s duties.

(viii) A public officer shall not do or direct to be done, in abuse of his office, any arbitrary act prejudicial to the rights of any other person knowing that such an act is unlawful or contrary to any government policy.

(x) A public officer shall not be a member of, belong to, or take part in any society the membership of which is incompatible with the functions or dignity of his office.

The objective of the above provisions is to moderate the conduct of public officers and stimulate their consciousness in the performance of governmental duties. Consequently a number of a
number of measures have been adopted to ensure that these provisions are imbibed by public servants in the discharge of official duties. One of these measures is the issuance of queries to officers involved in acts considered as unethical such as lateness, absenteeism, fraud etc. Suspension is also used when allegations of indiscipline are raised against any staff to allow uninterrupted investigations. Where the allegations are proven, further disciplinary measures may be taken against such staff; but where they cannot be sustained, he may be recalled from suspension. Serious cases of indiscipline, such as fraud, embezzlement, etc. may after some other preliminary measures involve the court. In such cases, the offending officer is arraigned before the court of law and if found guilty he is punished according to the laws of the land. Other forms of control are warnings, retirements termination and dismissal of staff found wanting or who may have committed offences classified as unethical (Okege, 1994; Public Service Rules, 2009).

In recent years, efforts to curb unethical practices and enforce transparency or accountability in the Public Service and by extension the Nigerian society have led to the establishment of many institutions by the government. These institutions include:

1) **Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).** This was established under the EFCC Establishment Act 2002, with the mandate to among other things enforce all economic and financial crimes law.

2) **Code of Conduct Tribunal.** It is provided for by the fifth schedule, section 15 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and empowered by section 18(2) to punish any public officer who contravenes any of the provisions of the code.

3) **Public Complaints Commission.** This was first established under Decree 31 of 1975; now incorporated in the 1990 Laws of the Federation as Public Complaints Commission Act, Cap. 337. All the commissioners that constitute the commission are required through investigation, to ensure that administrative action by any person mentioned in Section 4(2) of the Decree does not result to any act of injustice against any citizen of Nigeria or any other person resident in Nigeria.

4) **Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).** The Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act 2000, is the enabling legal instrument of ICPC. The Commission has the mandate to prohibit and prescribe punishment for corrupt practices and other related offences.

5) **Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU).** The BMPIU is the unit charged with the responsibility of implementing Nigeria’s Public Procurement Reform Programme. It was established in the year 2001 as a measure to enforce transparency and accountability in the management of public resources (Ezeani, 2005; 1999 Constitution).

Despite the evolution of the above statutory and institutional measures there is still evidence of monumental dishonesty, unethical practices, unprofessional behaviour and inefficiency that permeates almost every facet of the Nigerian Public Service and the society at large. This is largely due to lack of political will by the political and bureaucratic leadership to effectively and faithfully entrench such values that will ensure integrity, transparency in the conduct of government business. A recent remark by Chris Ngige, a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has in part captured the scenario of ethics and integrity in the Public Service. He described Power Holding Company (PHCN) as ’’providing refuge for workers who do not even know the job, lazy and fraudulent (Punch, 2012). A workforce described in this manner will no doubt scuttle the system or an organization from functioning optimally. A critical analysis of these comments reveals that there is a close link between organizational productivity and ethics, integrity and professionalism. The absence of ethics, integrity and professionalism results in compromising quality service delivery.

In order to create a robust public service that will deliver compact service, the Federal Government came up with Service Compact Delivery called SERVICOM as a measure or remedy to better service. Unfortunately there has not been any difference. No one can sincerely argue that service quality has improved since the introduction of SERVICOM. Service delivery in virtually every
segment of Nigeria’s public sector is abysmal as the experience in other sectors despite the introduction of SERVICOM, a public sector ombudsman, several years ago (Charles, 2012). To obtain a driving license and vehicle particulars, touts stand between the issuing authorities or their personnel and members of the public. One has to be prepared to spend long hours and even days, receiving insults, if one shuns the services of the ‘executive touts’. Public hospitals, too present own headaches as patients spend long hours and, often have to bear poor services amidst insults from nurses and others who lack proper ethics.

The drugs market has also remained a dark spot in the industrial landscape of this country despite the acclaimed giant strides made by the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) in the war against fake drugs. As the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria revealed, about 52 per cent of drugs in circulation in Nigeria are fake (Charles, 2012). The food markets are hardly better as consumers are exposed to frozen fish and chicken that have been preserved with poisonous chemicals and meat uncertified as fit for consumption (Charles, 2012).

The inability of the Petroleum Prices Regulatory Agency (PPRA) to ensure that filling stations in Nigeria dispense petroleum products at the approved pomp price is another area that has exposed the lukewarm attitude to values, integrity and transparency in the Nigerian Public Service. Across Nigeria, dispensing pumps at several filling stations are adjusted to under-deliver fuel (Punch, 2012). Transporters and motorists struggling to cope with the January, 2012’s sharp increase in fuel price (from N65 to N97 per litre) are made to receive less even as they are paying so much for fuel. Worse, adulterated diesel and petrol are in circulation everywhere in the country, damaging the engines of trucks and cars as well as generators.

Consumers of Kerosene, who incidentally constitute the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder, pay between N130 and N180 per litre as against N50 per litre, which the Federal Government claims is the official pump price. Functionaries of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and some favoured oil marketers continue to cheat the people. These unfair business practices and ineffectiveness by the regulatory bodies to check fraudulent marketers is the result of not adhering to ethics, integrity and professionalism.

Sadly, low performance, lack of integrity, professionalism and proper ethical behaviour have caused this country year after year grievous moments. When buildings are not collapsing, roads and bridges are falling apart or tankers and passenger vehicles are colliding or vehicles are skidding off the road due to pot holes or passenger and cargo planes are crashing on buildings or buses killing hundreds of innocent citizens.

Within the public service itself, adherence to ethical codes that guide the day to day activities of employees is at its lowest ebb. Often times, queries are given to those who do not have god fathers and who cannot lobby their way through. Those in the good book of their bosses are treated like sacred cows and get away with acts which normally should have attracted punishment or reprimand. Queries, warnings and suspension have not been effective in checking the incidence of indiscipline in public agencies because most of the leaders or bosses themselves have not been above board (Okege, 1994; Al-Gazali, 2008). Even in glaring cases of indiscipline when subordinates are issued queries or warnings, the bosses are blackmailed by the erring officers reporting their superior officers to a senior one who may intervene and plead on behalf of such subordinates. Also a superior who is bent on disciplining an errant junior may be reported by the latter to his fellow juniors and such statements as ‘he is behaving as if the job is his father’s job’ may be the common chorus against the disciplining officer. Such superior officer may in future refuse to discipline his Staff that errs after been blackmailed, called names and having been intensively lobbied by different pressure groups. This, in itself, may encourage the junior staff in question and his colleagues to continue in acts considered as unethical.

Punishment in whatever form is meant to be corrective and serve as deterrent to others. However, most often in Nigeria, actions which ordinarily should have merited termination and dismissals are converted to warnings and retirement after much pleading using traditional rulers, Imams, and Clergies etc. to prevail on the disciplining staff. Such letters of warning later disappear...
from the files of the officers concerned. Equally, a Staff whose punishment after committing fraud or embezzlement is commuted to retirements retires to his country side mansion with all his retirement benefits and the loot stolen. He later turns a business man or a politician who buys his way to political office, or ‘rewarded’ by the same government that retired him with political appointment.

Similarly, most serious cases of indiscipline that should have been court cases are never mentioned beyond the gates of the public agencies. Again, while there is a law that forbids public office holders from maintaining personal accounts abroad, such a law merely exists on paper without any effort to enforce it perhaps because those to enforce are themselves the ones perpetuating the offence. It is clear from these facts that lack of standards denudes and breeds unethical practice with integrity being thrown to the winds or dogs.

Conclusion

Unethical conduct has permeated virtually every facet of the Nigerian Public Service. It involves the military, para-military, parastatals, departments and commissions, educational institutions etc. Enthroning proper value system for the Nigerian society should be at the core of all developmental efforts. Managers and leaders of public institutions should be at the fore-front of this crusade by virtue of their superior knowledge and exposure. Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as Vision 20:20:20 as cardinal policy objectives of the Nigerian Government will remain a mirage, if value systems are not appreciated and adhered to. Values shape human society, and every society is defined by its value system; a lack of which devalues the existence of the people.

Most countries are rich today not necessarily because of the abundance of natural resources, but due primarily to their habits, values and social capital. These countries believe in simple moral formula: efforts complemented by ethics. Value itself is a revenue earner because, it discourages corruption while creating goodwill and enhancing the confidence of investors to participate in economic development.

Recommendations

The capacity of the public bureaucracy in Nigeria to effectively discharge its onerous task of enhancing national development has in recent times, been undermined by lack of moral compass along with an increasing emphasis on materialistic goals and selfish individualism among bureaucrats, which in turn, has created a culture of greed and indifference to the feelings of others. This unfolding scenario underscores the urgent need to improve the performance of the public service in Nigeria through ethics to enable it live up to its responsibility to Nigerians and foreigners alike. In view of this fact, the following recommendations are made:

(1) **Decision-making process should be transparent and open to scrutiny.** When confronted with ethical dilemmas (a situation or problem facing an individual that involves complex and often conflicting principles of ethical behaviour), a public manager can ask such questions as: Does this decision or action meet the highest societal standards about how people should interact with each other? Does this decision or action agree with my professional values and sense of responsibility? How will I feel about myself if I do this? Do we (or I) have a rule or policy for cases like this? Would I want everyone to make the same decision and take the same action if faced with these same circumstances? What are my true motives for considering this action? Who will benefit from this course of action? How will this action create happiness and prevent harm? Finding these questions can help to guide a public manager to act in ways that lead to the greatest social good.

Appropriate reflection on the above questions requires considering the impact of decisions on all stakeholders and reaching decisions that benefit the largest number. When leaders in the Nigerian Public Service set a tone of honesty, transparency and openness with stakeholders, others in the sector are likely to be ingrained in the culture of integrity.

(2) **Strengthening of Regulatory Institutions:** The Civil Service Commission and the Code of Conduct Bureau among others should be provided with adequate finance and competent
manpower to effectively perform their duties by ensuring that appropriate procedures and sanctions are promptly applied to deal with misconduct. If an organization does not have the requisite fund and people who are good, they cannot deliver within the required time at an appropriate cost and competitive quality.

(3) **Regular training and development of personnel:** To upscale performance and improve productivity, the right people must be engaged and given the right training. The workforce must be subjected to constant training and re-training in relevant fields and sometimes other areas so they could fill the gap in times of emergency. With regard to the issues raised in this paper, there is need for value re-orientation in the Nigerian Public Service to re-awaken the consciousness of personnel to the right attitudes and behaviour that can enhance efficient and effective public service delivery. Training should focus on, but not be limited to competences that promote virtues of accountability and control. Such values as respect for individual, commitment to community, integrity, transparency, self-reliance, product excellence, hard work, and honesty should be given serious attention in all strategies designed to improve the performance of personnel in the public service. Training and re-training of an organization’s workforce is an important factor in improving organizational performance.

(4) ** Provision of appropriate incentives:** Political leadership should demonstrate and promote ethical conduct by providing appropriate incentives, adequate working conditions and effective performance assessments. Political commitment should reinforce the ethical conduct of civil servants. Among the reasons why there is ethical decay in the Public Sector today especially the civil service is poor reward. Staff members are paid their salaries at the end of the month without considering their productivity during the period. Those who work hard and those who work less receive the same amount of pay. In order not to kill the quest for hard work, there is need to package incentive schemes for exceptional performance, in addition to salaries which everybody is entitled to. Such incentives may include gifts, recognition, privileges, professional training, etc. Unless the present reward system is changed, productivity will remain low in the Nigerian Public Service.

One critical area of the reward system that needs to change is staff appraisal. The traditional process in which the superior appraises the subordinate has been found to be demotivating. Sometimes an exceptional performer will be suppressed by the immediate boss without top management knowing. To overcome this, an “Upward Appraisal” system can be adopted where superiors are appraised by their subordinates. Such appraisal system can help to draw attention to areas of potential improvement and to give a different perspective to manager-staff relationship. However, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure that the process is not abused.

(5) **Enthroning the culture of Ethics, Integrity and professionalism:** Human resources policies, procedures and practices should promote ethical values and standards, by including the merit principle, access to fair grievance system and equal opportunity for all. Adhering to standards (authorized practice or generally accepted as normal) equips an individual to love doing what is right and form hatred for what is bad such as fraud, greed and callous attitude toward the suffering of others.

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