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Contents

Code of Ethics and Public Morality in Nigeria: A Development Praxis

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Nigeria today remains rooted in poverty and underdevelopment regardless of huge promises to deliver dividends of democracy to the people and jumpstart development in sustainable manners. Unfortunately, it is possible to trace the disconnections between promises and outcomes to critical governance and development contextualities of code of ethics, public morality and accountability in the country. Thus, this article explored the contours of these contextualities and x-rayed their existences, implications for development and sustainable pathways

Introduction

The question of ethical conduct, morality and accountability in governance has received increased academic and policy attention in the last two decade or so (United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN), 2008; Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), 2003; Zajac, 1997; Gilman & Lewis, 1996; Skidmore, 1995). Public sector ethics is a global concern and it is an issue whose relevance is not diminished by differences in history or cultural peculiarities (Suzuki, 1995). For instance, Gilman and Lewis (1996) observe that there are commonalities across the world on ethical behaviours and attitudes that are equally disirable, particularly shared norms and values such as impartiality and effectiveness. They also went further to suggest that the spread of anti-corruption initiatives and government commitment to them are indications that public sector morality is of transnational concern.

In Africa especially, recent political and economic change, in terms of spread of democratic governance and free market economy, have been main drivers of this renewed interest in ethics and morality in the public domain. In a special publication released in 2001, the UN noted that the resurgent awareness about the need for ethics and accountability were due to the emergence of a consensus that good governance and sound, ethical public administration management underpin sustainable development. Also in 2003, the ECA explains that public ethics and corruption challenges are among the most difficult problems confronting civil service reform in Africa. In addition to unhelpful perception of public service as "grab-house," the report went on to associate the decline in societal value in general to the problem of diminishing values of integrity, honesty, helpfulness, impartiality, fairness and suchlike in the public sector. According to the 2012 edition of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, accountability in governance is also a serious challenge in many countries on the continent. This problem and the opportunities it offers for corrupt practices impedes economic development, undermines stability and erodes trust in public institutions (UNPAN,

2008; Mcneil & Malena, 2010). And as Zajac (1997) posits, ethical failures, in terms of corruption and other forms of wrongdoing, is equally as powerful as shortcomings of efficiency and effectiveness in explaining popular desires for reinventing or even eliminating government.

In a democratic setting, such as Nigeria, development is largely driven by the government and her agencies. The government sets agenda for growth and development and implements policies through the agencies to achieve set goals. The values exhibited in the process of pursuing these goals are as crucial as the goals themselves, and once the values are compromised for whatever reason, development is likely to become unachievable. Put differently, lack of strong code of ethics, public morality and practical accountability in government business is dangerous to all without exception. Also, unethical and unaccountable government may find it difficult to command citizens' respect and it is highly unlikely that such government will be able to earn the trust of investors and development collaborators. The link between governing with ethics and strong values and development is thus critical and symbolic and must be guarded and guided by all means. As would be shown in the cases explored in the paper, crises of ethics in public service, and public morality as a whole, affects a country's prospects for growth and sustainable development in many ways. Sadly, developing nations especially in Africa Sub-Sahara still under-estimate the development implications of these core values and their centrality to governance.

Ethics, Public Morality and Accountability in Governance

"Ethics" is one of the most widely applied concept in academic and policy discourse. From its origin in philosophy, ethics translates from the Greek word "ethos" to "character" and it is a distinct disciplinary area which deals with questions of right and wrong conducts. The primary focus of ethics is to raise issues concerning how humans should behave and it attempts to analyze how we can determine and distinguish moral actions from immoral ones. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2012), ethics covers fundamental issues of practical decision making, including the nature of ultimate value and the standards by which human actions can be judged to be right or wrong. The central aim of ethics, therefore, is to determination of nature of normative theories and the application of their principles to practical moral problems in all spheres of life (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2012).

When ethics is applied in disciplines other than philosophy, it is often used to capture a gamut of prescriptions for informing decisions and guiding actions. In science, law and social science disciplines, it is commonplace to hear people speak of "ethics of research." Here, the concept refers to a set of rules of practice which researchers ought to guide themselves by whenever a research is being conducted. These rules are largely drawn from more universal moral principles of the society. A contravention of these ethics in the case of research constitutes irresponsibility and misbehavior which may sometimes attract serious punishment, from loss of practice license to imprisonment. This is an indication that even though ethics differs in character from other forms of control, that is law in this case, a strong link continues to exist between them.

Ethics in the public sector in general shares the attributes of ethical prescriptions of those in research, at least from the viewpoint of the fact that public servants are expected to conduct themselves in ethically acceptable ways. Public sector ethics, notes the ECA (2003), describes those traditional values of the public service that emphasize a range of ideals, including equity, probity, integrity, moral conduct, political neutrality etc. In this realm, ethics is primarily geared towards fundamental issues concerning the proper or appropriate or acceptable ways of behaving among public office holders, irrespective of whether

such public officers were elected directly or indirectly by the people or mere appointees or bureaucrats. Put in another way, public sector ethics focus on the moral justifications of, and ethical basis for, decisions and actions made by public servants in their day to day duties.

To infuse and embed ethical standards in public sectors, three principal strategies are widely used, namely: codes of ethics, including laws, professional rules, and whistle-blower statutes; establishment of institutions for ethics administration to oversee ethical standards, and; cultural strategies through the creation of organizational climates conducive to good ethical behaviors (Huddleston & Sands, 1995). The paper is more concerned with the first strategy, which are the codes of ethics.

Government operations depends primary on the activities of social actors or individuals and groups who manage governance on a day to day basis. Although these actors are normal, everyday people, social expectations from public officials transcend *ordinariness*. The behaviors of public officeholders are often used to assess the character of the state itself, and the quality of governance is basically dependent on the attitudes and values held by them. Operating within the governance realm therefore requires creation and institutionalization of codes of ethics that prescribes expected behaviors for public officers. As in other domains of the society where ethical codes are applied, codes serve as control; punishing deviance while also rewarding compliance. Meanwhile, ethical codes in the public sector not only shape the corporate identity of public servants, it also aims to guide the conduct of everyday life of officers outside government. Both within and outside of government, an ethical public official is expected to display the critical characteristics of diligence, loyalty, patriotism, accountability, selflessness, honesty, morality, humility, sacrifice, knowledge, empathy, brilliance, intelligence, wisdom etc. (*see* Box 1 for an abridged version of the code of ethic for public officers in Nigeria).

Besides the general codes of ethics that applies to all government establishments and positions, some government agencies have specially designed codes of behavior for their staff. For instance, the Nigeria Police Force, as a core institution of government, has a code of conduct designed to guide the behavior of police officers. As an accountability code, the purpose of the code of conduct "is to provide all members for the Nigeria Police Force with a set of guiding principles and standards of behavior while on or off-duty. It is intended to be used by Police officers in determining what is right and proper in all their actions" (Nigeria Police Force, 2013) Prescribing the appropriate behavior befitting of an officer of the law, the code states that:

"The fundamental duties of a police officer include serving the community, safeguarding lives and property, protecting the innocent, keeping the peace and ensuring the rights of all to liberty, equality and justice…police officers shall perform all duties impartially, without favor of affection or ill will and without regard to status, sex, race, religion, political belief or aspiration. All citizens will be treated equally with courtesy, consideration and dignity…Police officer will use…discretion vested in his position…within the law."

On the treatment of offenders, use of force, and corruption, the code went further to state that:

"[A] police officer will never employ unnecessary force or violence…The use of force should be used only after discussion, negotiation and persuasion have been found to be inappropriate or ineffective… [E]very police officer will refrain from unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and will never engage in cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment of any person…[He] will not engage in acts of corruption or bribery, nor will an officer condone such acts by other police officers…officers will refuse to accept any gifts, presents, subscriptions, favours, gratuities or promises that could be interpreted as seeking to cause the officer to refrain from performing official responsibilities honestly and within the law."

It must however be noted that the public sector differs from other spheres where codes of ethics serve as guide for behaviour and action. Public establishments are largely moral entities established to order social, political and economic activities of government. Unlike private organisations or professional groups who also draw from larger ethical rules as basis for conduct, public administration/service, argues Garofalo and Geuras (2006), is fundamentally a moral enterprise which exists to uphold the values that society considers significant. Emphatically, they expressed that:

> …public administration is a fundamentally moral enterprise that exists to serve values that society considers significant enough to support. It is dedicated to the provision of goods and services that society recognizes as important enough to justify the expenditure of our collective

resources. It is committed to the creation and cultivation of…public interest. Therefore, public administration is, by definition, inherently moral, and public administrators are, again by definition, moral agents (Garofalo & Geuras, 2006, p. v).

Seen in this light, the public sector becomes an arena whose *modus operandi* must, as a matter of compulsion, embrace and embody valued ethical principles of society. From this perspective, public service exists not only as public service provider but must also exist as one that is ethical. It is within this framework that we can begin to understand why accountability is also invoked whenever issues of public governance is raised. In a sense, the essence of ethics in the public sector is to equip citizens with the set of principles with which they can use to demand accountability from public officeholders. But what do we mean by accountability?

In the public domain, accountability is an interactional process of stewardship involving public servants and the citizens that is primarily directed at ensuring that publicly-owned resources are utilized in the manner prescribed by the society. It is also a form of "obligation of public power holders to account for or take responsibility for their actions" (Mcneil & Malena, 2010, p. 4). Accountability also means the systemic ability to see through an operation or transaction of government. It is the ability to make operations easily comprehensible to stakeholders, including citizens, civil society organizations and other government agencies or the capacity of public officials to make government operations easy to understand, up-to-date, accurate and easily accessible with the aim of promote quality and fairness in the operation and discharge of government business (Akanle, 2009). Mcneil and Malena (2010) emphasize that for

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Some Codes of Ethical Conduct for Public Officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Public officers are expected to maintain a high standard of morality in the conduct of government business, and to ensure that their actions and behaviours conform to the highest standards of public morality and accountability. Violation of the codes amounts to corruption. Some of the codes are as follows:

1. A public officer shall not put himself in a position where his interest conflicts with his duties and responsibilities.
2. S/he would not receive paid emolument in more than one public office and unless on part-time employment, s/he would not engage in or run another business (except farming).
3. Publicly elected officers shall not operate bank accounts outside the country.
4. Retired public officers receiving pension from public funds will accept more than one remunerated position as Chairman, Director or employee of government owned or controlled companies. The retired officer is also not expected to receive funds from public coffer aside from his/her pension and the one remunerated government position.
5. Public officers shall not ask for or accept any property or benefit 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. This include gifts or benefits from commercial firms, business enterprises or persons who have contracts with the government. However, customary gift-giving/taking are exempted from this rule.
6. All elected public officers and appointed heads of public establishments are prohibited from accepting loans from legally unrecognised lending concerns and their representatives.
7. Persons are also prohibited from offering public officers property, gift or benefit of any kind as an inducement or bribe for the granting of any favour in the public officer's duties.
8. Public officers are also banned from arbitrary or prejudicial use of public powers.
9. Upon acceptance of public office and at the end of his/her tenure, a public officeholder is expected to submit a written, truthful declaration of all his properties, assets and liabilities and those of his spouse, or unmarried children under the age of 21 years.
10. Public officers shall also not join secret society or organisations that may influence the discharge of his/her duties or cause the public service to lose integrity.

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accountability to exist, power or public office holders must be in a situation where they may be asked to explain and justify their actions or face sanctions. Also, accountability demonstrates the extent to which an official has complied with existing codes of ethics and general rules of conduct in public service (UNPAN, 2008). An accountable public official would follow due process in his/her dealings. S/he would not engage in corrupt practices, nepotism, favoritism, tribalism, witch hunting, partisan politics, red-tapism and intentional bureaucratic bottle necks in order to induce corrupt practices. Accountable public officials are expected to follow laid down guidelines, principles, rules, laws and general codes of conduct in detail while performing their roles and duties, while also maintaining a strong sense of responsibility in relation to the society at large. Put simply, accountability in governance is being responsible for decisions and action taken in the course of carrying out the work of the state.

Mcneil and Malena (2010) observe that accountability has both demand and supply sides to it: on the demand side, the ability of citizens hold government accountable; on the supply side, there must be institutional environment that supports accountability. It was however noted that true accountability depends more on the ability of citizens to demand rather than on the government to hold itself accountable.

Accountability in governance is the hallmark of progress in government and a tool for development. In countries where the government is not accountable, not only are citizens being denied of participation in the affairs of the state, it also:

> ...results in corruption and the
> waste of precious development
> resources but also seriously

compromises the quality and effectiveness of public policy making, planning, and the provision of services to meet basic needs (Mcneil & Malena, 2010, p. 1).

The fundamental basis of codes of ethics, therefore, is to prevent excessive self-interest in governance and prevent corruption in running government businesses. As such, ethical codes of conduct and accountability are mutually reinforcing, designed to insure that government business is carried out in manners that guarantee and meet the needs of the people. Unfortunately, ethical codes of conduct and accountability have had only a narrow place in governance of Nigeria. The history of the country is replete with incidences of official frauds and grand and petty corruption (Adetula, 2008; Aluko, 2002; Eker, 1981; Osoba, 1996) while recent events show that not much is changing. In contemporary Nigeria, public officials continue to disregard ethical codes of conduct, and citizens have failed for the most part to demand accountability and hold them to high moral standards. Using the basic propositions of symbolic interactionism, attempt is made to explain the crises of ethics and morality in Nigeria's public sector in the next section, after which some recent ethical mis-behaviors of public official and their consequences for development are then examined.

The Crises Public Sector Ethics and Accountability in Nigeria: Symbolic Interactionism as Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-sociological framework or approach for understanding the patterns of individual interactions (Stolley, 2005). Although symbolic interactionism was not coined until Herbert Blumer 1937, the basic premises of the perspective had been outlined in the social psychology of George Herbert Mead and *verstehen* or interpretative

sociology of Max Weber (Brym & Lie, 2007; Ferrante, 2011; Ritzer, 2008). This perspective sees social actors as being involved in a continuous process of meaning-making as they interact on a day to day basis. Based on the assumption that humans are thinking beings, this sociological perspective maintains that people construct meanings in social situations and that the goal of social researcher is to understand what those meanings are (Strykes, 2000).

According to Brym and Lie (2007, pp. 17-18), symbolic interactionism is characterized by the following: 1) a focus on interpersonal communication in micro-level social settings, 2) an emphasis on social life as possible only because people attach meanings to things. It follows that an adequate explanation of social behavior requires understanding the subjective meanings people associate with their social circumstances, 3) stress on the notion that people help to create their social circumstances and do not merely react to them, and 4) focus on the subjective meanings people create in small social settings. Within these elements, symbolic interactionists attempt to situate social explanations in the day to day interaction of people in terms of how they interpret situations through subjective, meaning-making processes, and how they respond to others on the basis of such interpretations. The perspective draws attention to difficulties that lie in attempting to understand the society and larger social structures without, first of all, adequately capturing the under-currents of meanings, shared understandings, languages, and symbols that inhere in the processes of social interactions at the micro-level.

In line with the symbolic interactionists thinking, explaining the crises of public sector ethics and accountability in the society depends greatly on our understanding of how these *ideals* are interpreted in day to day situations. It is not enough to explain the challenges of decline in public morality or lack of accountability in governance by pointing to non-adherence to coded ethical principles or failing legal

systems. Rather, explanation must be grounded in an understanding of how people interpret or make sense of the situations leading to these crises. When attempting to explain why public servants do not comply with codes of ethics for instance, our explanation must account for how these codes are interpreted by people in interactive processes, and the circumstances of specific social situations. Based on the theoretical lenses adopted, the social behaviors of people are meaningful even when such behaviors are not in line with conventions of social expectations.

At the socio-psychological level, ethical codes of conduct in the public sector are often reinterpreted in social interaction as a form impersonal externality. Among government workers in Southwestern Nigeria, beliefs such as *ise oba ki se ise a se laagun* (You do not need to work hard in government's business) and *oga ta oga o'ta owo alaru a'pe* (Whether I work or not, wage would surely be paid) are prevalent. Comparable attitude to government work is widespread in other part of the country. The appeal of ethical codes in the face of this form of social psychology is fleeting at best. When this combine with the contextualities of harsh economic conditions and practical realities of strong attachment to kin and family members in Nigeria, people often elect to ignore a few ethics of behavior instead of upholding them all the time. In this regard, Varda Eker who analyzed the origin of corruption and irregular incentive in Nigeria is worth quoting:

> At the core of the private and the social conscience alike lies a deep and unflinching loyalty to one's family. The greatest crimes against outsiders are dwarfed into insignificance by comparison with even a mild slight towards close relatives… Extreme devotion to one's family precludes very strong morality in other spheres. (Eker, 1981, p. 175)

Eker's observation captures a wide range of attitudes and primordial commitments that influence the decision of public servants to adhere to ethical codes or not to. In social interaction, Eker (1981) further mentioned that the value of good moral conduct is eternally at odds with more deeply ingrained drive for material acquisition, which many have come to identify as the essence of social distinction.

Unethical Practices in Government Business: The Consequences

For many years, air accidents have been recurring event in Nigeria. Between 1983 and 2007, 169 air accidents were recorded and about 70% were serious, averaging 6.76 per year – with highest occurrence in 2005 (14) and least in 2007 (1) (Adebiyi, 2008). In 2005, three air disasters occurred within 49 days. To a great extent, these air disasters were influenced by unethical conduct of public servants in the industry. First, although post-crash discourse and analysis were often shrouded in counter-claims, the fact that worries were expressed at one time or another over the air worthiness of the planes involved in these accidents is rarely disputed. The plane crashes only revealed the compromised state of ethics as guide for conduct of government activities in the aviation sector. Although the affected officials readily exonerated themselves, there were allegations, and press reports of bribery and negligence on the part of public officials who permitted outdated and poorly maintained planes to operate (Edeaghe, Esosa, & Idiodi, 2006; The Punch, 2013; Thisday, 2012). The Daily Trust Newspapers of February 13, 2006 reported that task force on aviation reform that was set up after the Sosoliso air crash of 2005 found that non-professionals were imposed at managerial level in the sector (Muhammad, n.d.).

These disasters were mostly accompanied by heavy human and financial losses. Dana crash for instance took over 200 lives and an estimated billion of naira were lost. For the Sosoliso disaster, at least 108 passengers were killed including crew members. The

victims roasted to death while their relatives and airport officials watched helplessly. Rescue officials were not ready and ambulances only arrived 40 minutes after the crash-too late to be useful. Unethical practices also kill people when officials selfishly sell public drugs to themselves at cheap price to be re-sold at high prices in the open market. They also kill when public officials buy fake drugs for public dispensary or allow trial of drugs that have been proscribed abroad in the country. Cases of these behaviors abound but recent examples include the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital and Pfizer scandals. In the former case, public officers at the University of Nigeria's teaching hospital performed open heart surgeries on children using fake drugs that had been purchased in the open market.

According to the former Director of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Dora Akunyili, "Adrenalin (a heart stimulant), muscle relaxant and intravenous infusion drugs administered on the patients, both children and beneficiaries of the corrective heart surgery sponsored by the Kanu Heart Foundation, were purchased from unregistered pharmacy shops in contradiction of a directive stipulating that all drugs for government health institutions are to be procured only from the manufacturers or accredited distributors" (Ogundipe, 2003). Most of the patients died in the theatre. The Pfizer case led to the prosecution and sack of public officials following the testing of substandard drugs on children in Kano state (Klag, 2013). Hundreds of children also died while many suffered permanent brain damage. Although Pfizer settled out of court, deaths and permanent brain damage of the children remained irreversible.

Also, against the rules set out in the codes of conduct for public servants, public officials lodge public funds in private accounts for self-interests – former state governors, James Ibori and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, are good examples. When contracts are inflated for percentages and awarded to unqualified contractors, projects are poorly executed and roads as well as other facilities become death traps. This imposes serious limitations on development and slows economic growth in unimaginable ways. Similarly, when recruitment into the public sector are not based on merit, capable people are kept out while the unqualified ones are put in affairs with perverse consequences on the system. As shown in a recent survey on the recruitment pattern in Nigeria's civil service, unmeritorious practices in hiring is common, as job description and standard personnel requirements are routinely ignored in government employment, especially at the lowest cadre (Briggs, 2007).

Furthermore, many government employees skip work without due reasons while others leave wonder-off as fast as they resume office. Absent-mindedness is common and most work environment in government agencies and parastatals have been converted to shopping malls. From government hospitals to public educational institutions, employees' attitude to government job is on the whole not encouraging. All of these demonstrate that unethical practices are habitual in the public sector, and are pervasive to the extent that they are currently seen as normal. However, the behaviors are aberrant that deny citizens access to social services while at the same time contributing to inefficiency, and low productivity. Some of these unethical conducts worsen the poverty conditions of people who are denied quality health care and lead to loss of lives of individuals who may have directly or indirectly influence positive economic growth and development if the situation was better.

In many ways, undiluted avarice, selfishness and unethical means of satisfying personal ambitions put the poor in state of lack, and stolen public funds only served the advantage of the few. Seemingly, there is obvious indifference to ethics at the moment and those outside the public service are coming to believe that the manner of running government business by public officials is undermining development rather than enhancing it. Whatever change that may be expected is, therefore, dependent on the extent to which public

officials could bring themselves to work within the ethical codes, and how much accountable they become in their dealings. As demonstrated in countries such as Botswana, embracement of codes of ethics in the public service is a critical factor in repositioning the public service to contribute to national development (Selolwane, 2004). These nations have shown that government business is good business, and capable of driving development provided that public servants subscribe to ethical codes and strong, positive values in their operations.

From the foregoing, it could be observed that while some public officials are good, the general government business environments are sources of concern and largely worrisome due to unethical practices. But, the question is; are Nigerians naturally and genetically selfish, unethical and corrupt? This question is important given governance pivotal roles in driving development. Officials like every other person are socialized into norms and values that inform codes of conduct and ethics. A little historicization of the Nigerian ethics environment is in order.

The Nigerian Ethics Environments: The Present from the Past

Both within my family and the larger society down the ages, values and ethics were deeply rooted and central to societal existences. The society, socialization and ethics were fairly ordered, simple, clear and generally subscribed to in traditional societies of Nigeria and Africa especially in pre-colonial period. Although there were deviants, they were easily known and sanctioned as codes of behavior were not ambiguous or controversial. Familiarity with the ethics of the society reduced ambiguity while deterrent mechanisms prevented misbehaviors and ethical compromise. Everyone knew what was expected of him/her at every point in time in terms of ethical behaviors and the consequences unethical conducts were well-known. When ethical codes were flouted at individual or group level, the society protected them for the survival of

all. Among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, this orientation clearly explains the popular uprising against powerful chiefs like Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura and Bashorun Gaa, both of whom were collectively brought down and sanctioned following their disregard for societal norms that placed the society and community values above individual perceptions and beliefs. The chiefs exaggerated their invincibility and flouted communal ethics with impunity (Okunola & Ojo, 2012).

At family level, parents socialized children to internalize these norms of behavior and guide them to believe in, and act within, them. Fundamentally, families mirror the ethical situations of the society, and both conjointly raise children to accept approved norms as standard. If a family is found wanting in the socialization of children, the community intervened in form of *eni kan ni bi mo igba oju ni wolo n to* (see Akanle 2012a and Akanle 2012b). Socialization into the ethical codes of the society was, therefore, a joint venture. Interestingly, the domain of functions of the ethical codes in traditional societies extended into public arena as well, and those who governed or held public offices did not really need new codes of behavior or worked outside the publicly embraced ones. This era was mainly that of unflinching hard work, selflessness, honesty and ethical leadership at society and family levels: kings preferred to die than to compromise their subjects and ethics as demonstrated by the phenomenon of *oba sigba* in the old Oyo Empire.

At the individual level, subscription to ethical codes was widespread as people exhibited truthfulness in their interactions: freshly harvested farm produce were safe on desolate roads even when their owners were nowhere in sight; at markets, wares were displayed unmanned while buyers made purchases, paid correct sums, and drew appropriate value of change without being monitored. Even in urban centers, newspapers were purchased in the absence of vendors who often go for deliveries and monies were paid without foul play. These businessmen and women were not called *mumu* (or fools). Society was for all

and all were for the society as far as ethical behaviors were concerned. Interpretatively, subscription to ethical codes was a mark of honor, and people demonstrated their commitment to family integrity in the extent to which they were able to act ethically in the public domain. Again among the Yoruba, it is commonplace to hear assertions like *Oruko rere san ju wura ati fadaka lo* (Good name is better than gold and silver) and *Kini n fole se laye t mo wa* (In this life, of what use would I put theft?) (Akanle & Olutayo, 2012a; Akanle & Olutayo, 2012b).

This shows that an average Nigerian was not borne with immorality, un-accountability and recklessness. It seems therefore that unethical practices in the society are recent. But when then did this start? The possible origin of unethical codes in service and society could be traced to the advent of colonialism. With the advent of colonialism, another public was created and foreign ethical codes that were largely not compatible were introduced into the country (Ekeh, 1975; also see Olutayo and Olutayo 2009 for more discussion of this issue). To a large extent, foreign codes displaced traditional ethical codes of conduct, and old orientations began to shift to those of colonial characters, leading to contradictions in ethics and norms. As people migrated from their communities into urban centers and other epicenters of colonial activities, such as plantations and mines, the erosion of old ethical codes became rapid.

At these centers, distrust for colonial systems was rife. As interaction with foreign values and ethics increased, rebellions also emerged as one of the approaches employed by indigenous people to salvage themselves from the oppressive and exploitative ethical codes of the foreigners. An instance of such revolt was the classical *ogun agbekoya* against colonial regimes. Nevertheless, colonialism altered traditional ethical systems in definitive ways. The situation became 'to your tent O Israel' instead of the society for all and all for the society – as was the case in the pre-colonial period. Beyond the duplication and multiplication of ethical codes, introduction of foreign codes led to serious confusion and cherry-picking; in which people switch from codes to codes depending on the situation they find themselves and the benefit they hope to derive from working with specific ethical frames.

This era laid the foundation for problem of ethics in Nigeria. The situation continued with post-colonial unethical leadership in Africa and Nigeria. This era found expression mostly in military rulers who institutionalized corruptions in notions of 'national cakes' and 'have your share' (Aluko, 2002; Osoba, 1996). Unapproved public funds are spent by government officials in an attempt to perpetrate corruption, a behavior that characterized both military and civilian governments. Ethics were summarily compromised, and those attempting to comply with ethical codes today are seen as *mumu, su egbe,* SU[1] or as *muibi sonubi*. As shown above, these unethical behaviors are relatively new in the society and are basically a product of modernization, accompanied by greed and lust for wealth. In other words, the current situation is due to recent history of injection of competing ethical codes, which created contradiction and morality and accountability crises.

Statements of Conclusion

In any society where the codes of ethics are flouted in government businesses and general practices, it is certain that government structures will lack the capacity to deliver dividends of democracy. The system would also retard development. Vision 20-20-20 and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would also not be realized in such environments. It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria has continued to struggle to achieve development goals whereas some other countries have managed achieve some results (UNECA/AU/AfDB/UNDP, 2012). The main lesson from the celebrated cases of economic turnaround and positive development in Ethiopia, Ghana, Botswana and South Africa is the contribution that public sector ethics

and accountability can make towards societal progress. In making sense of this reality, existing contradictions in ethical codes must be clarified, backed by strong sensitization and re-orientation programmes.

Social researchers working in the area of the links between morality and unethical practices have recognized that unethical behaviors are conditional upon expectations at the individual and community levels. The expectations influence the social norms guiding behaviors in all spheres of the society, especially in government business environment. Pressure from families, colleagues and other social actors, and their interpretation of ethical codes of conduct, continue to predispose public officials to unethical practices. In many ways, the expectations determine what people come to accept and think about the system, and ambiguity of rewards and sanctions for ethical is a serious constraint.

This is very important in government business particularly because officials would more likely behave ethically in environments where ethical codes are less susceptible and vulnerable and the codes are well known and guarded. While it could be said that this present enlightenment programs are steps in the right direction, there is also a need for current researches into what public officials today conceive to be unethical practices. Everyone may be surprised at the real views of government officials when anonymity is guaranteed. Hence, the state particularly through the Code of Conduct Bureau should put in place mechanisms to reduce uncertainties about life after retirement. If people know that when they retire, no one would care for them and they make become poor and frustrated, the propensity to break codes may increase.

But if life after retirement is guaranteed and institutionalized, ethical practices may become more attractive. The government and the Code of Conduct Bureau with the supports of other stakeholders should institutionalize incentives for public officials to create competition for ethical conducts. Such institutionalized incentives could be in terms of rapid promotions, monetary rewards and national honors for officials who adhered strictly to codes of ethics. If the codes of ethics is for discharge of moral and professional obligations yet is being compromised by many, incentivizing adherence to codes of ethics is then necessary for ethical rebirths. If all the recommendations above are implemented appropriately and passionately, the gaps existing within governance domains against the background of the explored issues will be bridged and Nigeria will be on the path to sustainable development as against the current reversed development.

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[1] Scripture Union but the acronym was later adopted and usually used derogatorily to refer to people perceived foolish due to subscription to *honest* religious dictates instead of perpetrating sharp and dubious practices.

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