



ETHICS, CORRUPTION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA



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INTRODUCTION

Ethics refers to a code of conduct that guides an individual in his/her dealings with others. It has to do with personal behaviour and moral duty. It is concerned with what is right or wrong. In work situation, it is concerned with principles and practices of moral and good conducts in business life.

The challenges of ethics in Nigeria are meant to be the problems of ethical values confronting Nigeria and its relationship with the need for the development of ethical codes of conduct for organizations in Nigeria. Business organizations in Nigeria as used in this paper refers to business organizations situated in Nigeria. It could also mean engaging in business transactions with individuals and business organization located in Nigeria. Global context refers to a multidimensional concept, which emphasized the interdependence of relationship among Nations. This is expressed in terms of integration of economies all over the world with respect to trade, technology, financial matters, information network and cross cultural current and several other dimensions. For the purpose of this work, focus shall be solely on Ethics, Corruption and National Development in Nigeria,

i.e. the Nigerian experience of ethics, corruption and National Development.

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (8th edition). Corruption is defined as a dishonest or illegal behavior, especially of people in authority. Corruption is further defined as the act or effect of making somebody change from moral to immoral standards.

Encarta Dictionaries define It as the dishonest exploitation of power for personal gain... Corruption means lack of integrity or honesty according to Word Web Dictionary. Corruption according to Webster's Universal Dictionary And Thesaurus , it means physical dissolution.

National Development is the gradual growth of a Nation so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc. National Development can also be defined as a process of producing or creating something new or more advanced by a Nation (Country), E.g. Nigeria in this case.

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There is widespread lack of commitment to ethical behaviour concern for excellence and self-reliance in Nigeria and in Nigerian Organizations.

Akinyemi (2002) noted that one of the greatest social and economic problems of Nigeria and Africa in general, which must be tackled, is that of breakdown in morals, work ethics, discipline, social responsibility, and general civility among its citizens. Ogundele (1999) reported several acts of indiscipline, which had their roots in socio-cultural patterns in the; political process, economic system, psychological orientation, family background, leadership behavior, value system, legal/judicial system, modernization process, majorly due to management slacks, lack of motivation and lack of commitment to religious tenets. These had made the attainment of national development goal difficult and equally resulted in low performance of Nigerian organizations.

Ethical problems have forced various governments in Nigeria since the 1976 administration to introduce one form of legislation or the other to curb this menace. From 1997 to 2003, Nigeria had consistently been listed as one of the corrupt countries in the world by Transparency international. In its 2001 annual corruption index released by Transparency International (TI), Nigeria was second to the Asian country of Bangladesh. Rich countries topped the clean list as they had the lowest level of public corruption.

Thomas (2007), while evaluating the performance of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) reports Nigeria's movement up Transparency International's corruption perception index in 2007. Nigeria was dead last, when only 90 nations were listed in the index. In 2006 there were 13 countries ranked below Nigeria. Nevertheless, in 2007, the list runs to 163 countries and Nigeria placed 142nd on the list. This movement he credited to President Obasanjo's effort to expose and prosecute crooked politicians. The most visible effort being the EFCC, described by a western diplomat as "the most effective law enforcement agency in West Africa". Also, Eso (2007) described the anti-corruption officers of the EFCC and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) as highly disciplined persons.

Ogundele (2000) reported that other countries in Asia, at the same level of economic development as Nigeria at independence had produced entrepreneurs who responded positively to government economic policies, thus making their countries better developed than Nigeria. The relatively lower level of development in Nigeria was traced partly to acts of indiscipline which were unethical behaviours. Ogundele and Opeifa (2004) gave a comprehensive description and analysis of unethical business practices in Nigeria including electronic fraud. Earlier on, Joseph (1991)

stated that Nigeria obtained and expended \$100,000 million US dollars in the periods 1974 to 1982 in oil revenues that were available for investment purpose. Such a sum, if properly used, could have catapulted Nigeria into the rank of industrialized nations of the world. The various governmental initiatives and actions and the writing of concerned citizens were targeted at ensuring and putting in place an ethically descent society.

The present study of ethical behaviour in Nigerian organizations attempts to establish how far Nigerians and Nigerian organizations have moved towards establishing ethical behavior in the individual. Ekpo-Ufot (1990) study of ethical behavior in Lagos State among prison inmates, the seminary and the general public and Ogundele (1999) study of ethical behavior in the primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions in Lagos and Oyo State serve as benchmark for this current study.

Ekpo-Ufot (1990) found that reported frequencies of unethical behavior were high and were virtually the same among the studied groups. Ogundele (1999) findings were similar to Ekpo-Ufot (1990-) study, except that the latter study isolated the twelve factors that were responsible for ethical behavior. Leadership, which was singled out as being central in promoting corruption in Nigeria was a major factor (Eso, 2007).

ATTEMPTS BY PAST GOVERNMENTS AT CURBING

CORRUPTIN IN NIGERIA

When General Murtala Muhammed became Head of State in 1975, there were massive dismissals and compulsory retirements of people alleged to have been corrupt in one form or another. President Shehu Shagari was reported to have said %more than anything among the problems facing his administration were that of bribery, corruption and lack of dedication to duty, dishonesty and all such vices (Enaharo, 1982). In 1984, General Muhammed Buhari came up with a Decree on War Against Indiscipline (WAI), instituted to put an end to ethical behavior in both public and private Nigerian organizations. General Ibrahim Babangida terminated (WAI) in 1985 and came up with a programme housed in the Directorate of Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER). General Sani Abacha (1993) replaced MAMSER with National Orientation Agency (NOA). The objective was to ensure ethical and patriotic behaviour by individuals and organization in Nigeria. General Olusegun Obasanjo established in 2000, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission (ICPC). This was backed up by an Act of the National Assembly. Again in 2004, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

(EFCC) was established both aimed at curbing unethical behaviour in the society.

Several concerned scholars had come up with one thing or the other against the background of general indiscipline in our society (Osahon, 1981, Oji, 1982, Nwankwo, 1985, Bolaji, 1985, Ezewu, 1985, Nzeribe, 1986, Ayagi, 1990, Arene, 1990, and Ekpo-Ufot, 1990). Each of them focused on different aspects of the ethical problems. Oseni (1993) carried out an x-ray of high level forms of corruption in the Nigeria Police Force which was and is still a product of the larger society. Ogundele (2000) found that acts of indiscipline including bribery and corruption were the second most important inhibitors of the performance of two groups of indigenous entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Ike (2002) analysed the processes by which the ethical practice in an organization and its environments (internal and external). It is noted that it is important to clarify and reinforce core values and to ensure that the organizational systems, policies and procedures support and contribute to ethical conduct for investment purpose.

From the foregoing it is clear that Nigeria business organizations, with current unethical practices in their environment, are at a disadvantage in global business practices, which demand ethical behaviour.

Joseph (1991) declared that no one can conduct the affairs of any office satisfactorily whether in government, private business and even civic organization if the first, middle and the last concern of such an individual is how he or she can extract ultimate personal material benefit from routine transactions. This description typifies common practices in most private and public organizations in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it should be noted that most of the ethical, corruption and other problems facing Nigerian organizations result in part because of inconsistency in or lack of commitment to policy implementation. Therefore, faithful implementation of policy programmes and many others that can be developed is a primary condition for success. It should be noted that any set of policies designed and put in place for business and economic development must bear in mind the value system and behavioural response of the groups for which such policies are designed and put in place for business and economic development must bear in mind the value and behavioural response of the groups for which such policies are designed. The most important element of the development of any society is the development of its human personality. It is the moral development of the citizens that constitute the most important component of a country's development (Omoregbe, 1991). Ethical behaviour by Nigerians will go a long way in forestalling development in Nigeria.

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