RE-FOCUSING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY: THE NEED TO STRENGHTEN ETHICS

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ABSTRACT: *There are wide ranging accusations that public administration in recent time have failed to live up to the expectations of the growing population of Nigerians. This is in view of the persistent cases of under-performance, deepened corruption, lack of professionalism, inertia and general insensitivity to the increasing public service needs and demands of the people. Public administration in the immediate post-colonial era was perceived more disciplined, accountable and responsive and performed better. These concerns have reduced public trust and confidence on public administrators and their capacity for efficient, productive and accountable public services. This article however, acknowledges this high level of dysfunctionality and the implications on service delivery, more especially where there is the collapse of ethics in the public sector. The article is therefore, an attempt to propose for the re-focusing of public administration through ethical culture where unethical standards result in negative consequences. The public sector ethics are a set of standards that guide behaviours of public administrators. Ethical behaviour is therefore, imperative in ensuring that the administrators understand and carry out the business of governance in the most professional, efficient and accountable manner within the scope of public expectations. The paper further suggests ways of deepening and improving ethical behaviour in the country's public administration for improved service delivery.*

KEYWORDS: public administration, service delivery, ethics

INTRODUCTION

Public administration as a field of activity in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial administrative era which lasted from 1900 to 1960. However, prior to the colonial period the various ethnic groups that make up the present Nigeria had various types of political and administrative systems (Ujo, 2008:8; Ewoh 2014:2014). However, with the formal colonization of Nigeria through the Berlin Conference of 1885, the British colonialists introduced the model of Whitehallism in which colonial administrators were used to implement policies in the colonies. With the creation of regional governance structures through the Macpherson Constitution of 1946 and the adoption of federal system of government through the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, regional civil service were set up in the then three regions, namely Northern, Eastern and Western regions. The early years of independence saw the transition of public administration from the Whitehall model to the Indigenous model. Ewoh (2014:457) observes that "both the federal and regional services coalesced in advancing the establishment of career service within their jurisdictions…." While there are views that the public administration bequeathed to Nigeria at independence lacked accountability and transparency and the colonial mentality influenced citizens who assumed leadership positions then (Anazodo, Okoye & Chukwuemeka, 2012:18; Yagboyaju, 2013:77; Ewoh, 2014: 457), others insist that the then generation of public administrators were transparent, dutiful and less corrupt (Ujo, 2008:10; Shuaib, 2012:18). However, the practice of public

administration in the present seems to be influenced by a number of factors such as the socio-political and economic dynamics of the country in the years after independence, the subsequent complexities of politico-administrative leadership and other ecological factors. Adegoroye (2005) rightly captures that "the public service reflects the state of the nation and no nation has been able to advance beyond its public service".

Public administration in the country has been trailed with lots of criticisms, especially in the recent years. These criticisms arise from the ills that trail its practice. For instance, the 1995 Ayida Panel which was instituted to review past reforms in the public administration identified the following ills: "politicization of the top hierarchy of the service; lack of financial accountability and probity; perpetual breakdown of discipline; virtual institutionalization of corruption at all levels and segments of the service; disregard for rules and regulations; loss of direction; general decline of efficiency and effectiveness". These practices are a consequence of the collapse of ethical and professional standards (Agara & Olarimoye, 2009:12; Ibietan & Joshua, 2013; Bem, 2014:37). Okafor and Onuigbo (2015:334) contends that these unethical crisis have over the years compromised the basic principles of public administration. This has further translated into a weak and defective public administration continuously incapable of efficient and effective public service delivery to the teeming population. More so, attempts by successive governments to put public administration institution on the right course have resulted in the introduction of various reform measures. Often the emphasis of the reforms bother on accountability, improved conditions of service, professionalism and right shaping for a result-oriented public administration (See Abdullah, 2007:346-348; Anikeze, 2010: 157-160; Anazodo, et al., 2012:19; Magbadelo, 2016:77) for public administration reforms in Nigeria.

The existence of constitutional and institutional frameworks have also not helped in bringing to check these ethical issues. For instance, the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution (1999) stipulates the code of conduct for public officers in the country. Article 15 of the fifth schedule of the Constitution (1999) also provides for the existence of a Code of conduct Bureau Act with emphasis on maintaining high standard of morality in government business. The civil service handbook (1997) outlines the roles of the public administrator and "codes of ethics in public administration with particular emphasis on the values of uprightness, discipline, equity etc." The adoption of International Code of Conduct for Public Officials in 1996 (OECD 2000: 47-49), African Charter on public service (2001) and the African Charter on values and principles of public administration (2011) which Nigeria is a signatory to are some of these measures. However, Okafor (2018:8) laments that these measures have failed to produce positive outcomes and public administration remains "incompetent, weak and corrupt".

The concern of this article is to interrogate why public administration is not improving to address numerous service delivery challenges confronting the country despite various reform measures, the existence of constitutional, institutional and policy frameworks. Secondly, the article asks what could be done to improve performance. The article further discusses the role of ethics in refocusing public administration for improved service delivery and how ethical culture can be improved.

TRENDS FROM LITERATURE

This section reviews relevant literature on the role of ethics in re-focusing public administration for improved public service delivery. Basically, Section 169 of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and section 10 of Third Schedule (as amended) identifies public administration as encompassing the country's civil service (ministerial departments), statutory corporations or parastatals, judiciary, legislature, educational institutions, research institutions, wholly or principally owned by any of the three tiers of government, Police or Armed forces, other security agencies, and other organizations in which the federal or state governments owned controlling share or interest on. In view of the foregoing, public administration therefore, exists to deliver public services to the people and to coordinate the various national development programmes of the government (Yayale, 2004; Ademolekun, 2007; Agagu, 2008; Anazodo et al 2012; Magbadelo 2016; Okafor, 2018). This implies that public administration is the key mechanism for implementing all forms of decisions at various levels of government in the country. However, there is strong scholarly concern on the poor performance of public administration due to the erosion of public service values and principles (Obasanjo, 1999; Okotoni, 2000; Adebayo, 2011; Adeosun, 2012; Ugwuanyi & Chukwuemeka, 2013; Ozohu-Suleiman, 2013; Afinotan, 2014; Magbadelo, 2016; Apeh, 2018; Okafor, 2018). This concern shows that the low level of performance over the years have resulted in less trust and confidence in the institution. The literature survey further shows that a combination of factors (political, institutional and attitudinal) interplay to underpin and exacerbate this state.

This paper lays emphasis on strengthening ethics to rebuild trust and confidence in public administration. Gildenhuys (2006:286) defines ethics "as the science of morals in human conduct". This means that ethics basically deal with what is right or wrong (Lawton, 1999:299; Van der Waldt & Du Toit, 1999:400; Mafunisa, 2000:25). Ethics is therefore, linked to morality in the sense that it is considered what is right or wrong at any point in time. Lategan (2003:213) contends that "moral is used to refer to the current morality while ethics is used as the study of morality". This simply means that ethics "involves the use of reasoning in determining what actions are good or bad". Clapper (2014:4) concurs that ethics is the study of morality. Morality is concerned with the individual's distinction between what is right or wrong. Morality therefore, rests on the individual where he or she decides to do the right or wrong thing. Theletsane (2014:365) maintains that "moral principles and the values they present are fundamental to ethics". Thompson (1985:555) contends that ethics within the realm of public administration entails the application of morality to the official functions of public officials. Edwards (2002:78), Ezeani (2006:381), Agara &Olarinmoye (2009:17) agree that public administration ethics entail the moral principles and values that guide the public administrator in terms of what is right or wrong in the conduct of official duties. Ethics in public administration context is therefore, concerned with what the public official does and how it is done in the exercise of official duties. Gildenhuys (2004:290) insists that ethics and morality is important for public administration. The implication is that ethics matter in public administration.

There is however, strong scholarly concern that public administration in the country is mostly not practised in line with universal fundamental principles and values (Adegoroye, 2005:10; Agara & Olarinmoye, 2009:17; Ibietan & Joshua, 2013:52). These principles and values include,

professionalism, accountability, impartiality, trustworthiness, integrity, leadership etc. Public administration have been continuously indicted for failing to flow in line with these values and principles (1995; Ikejiani-Clark, 2001; Okafor, 2018; Ayida, 1995). Rather, there are constant cases of lack of ethics and professionalism in the discharge of functions, incompetence and lack of accountability, favouritism and nepotism, various forms of financial indiscipline such as over-invoicing, outright embezzlement, conversion and diversion of public funds etc. All these translate to unethical behaviours with deep damaging effect on public administration. In view of these, Bem (2014:37) argues that unethical behaviours weaken the capacity of public administration for effective service delivery. This is evidenced in the low capacity of public administration to efficiently and effectively deliver services to the people. However, Okafor and Onuigbo (2015:334) admit that the adoption of International Code of Conduct for Public Officials in 1996 (OECD 2000) and African Charter on public service (2001) are part of global efforts to address ethical issues in public administration. Gundu (2010:35) and Okafor and Okafor (2018:14) also allude to the existence of institutions established by the government to deal with ethical issues in public administration.

The foregoing acknowledges that public administration is concerned with the delivery of "public goods". This function has to be performed to maximize public interest at any point in time. Public administration ethics therefore, becomes imperative especially in Nigeria where service delivery is low due to large scale ethical misconducts of public servants.

EXISTING MECHANISMS FOR ENFORCING ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

Emphasis on ethical and good conduct in the Nigerian public administration context is as old as the institution. This section identifies various institutional, regulatory and policy mechanisms relevant for ethical public administration practice in the country.

The Constitution. The fifth schedule of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for code of conduct and work ethics for the public servant. Sections 1 to 10 of the schedule contains codes to guide the conduct of public officials with particular emphasis on how to avoid conflict of interests and other unprofessional conducts (See, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria).

The Public Service Rules. Chapter 4 of the Civil Service Handbook focuses on "Code of Ethics" in the public service. It further lays emphasis on observing the principles and values of public administration as it applies in the Nigerian context. (See, Civil Service Handbook, 2006).

Public service reforms. The history of these reforms dates back to the pre-independence era. More than fourteen commissions or committees have been established by successive governments from1960 to date. Part of the tasks have been to come up with better ways of achieving results oriented civil service imbued with ethical values. (See, Abdullah, 2007:346-348; Anikeze, 2010: 157-160; Anazodo, et al., 2012:19; Magbadelo, 2016:77)

Code of Conduct Bureau. The Code of Conduct Bureau owes its existence to section 153 of the 1999 Constitution with the aim of establishing high standard of morality and good practices in public administration through the enforcement of Code of Conduct for public officers. (See, Code of Conduct Bureau Act, 2004)

Public Complaints Commission. The Public Complaint Commission was first established under Decree 31 of 1975 and subsequently incorporated in the 1990 Laws of the Federation as Public Complaints Commission Act, Cap. 337. The commission investigates unprofessional behavious

4

brought against public officials in their discharge of official functions. (See, Public Complaints Commission Act, 1991).

Independent Corrupt Practices Commission. The commission came into effect with the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act, 2000. The Commission has the mandate to prohibit and prescribe punishment for corrupt and other related offences by public officials. (See, ICPC Act, 2000).

The Judiciary. The Judiciary interprets laws and prosecutes offenders as contained in the 1999 Constitution. (See, Section 6 of the 1999 Constitution).

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. The Commission investigates and prosecutes cases of corruption and other forms of financial crimes as contained in the EFCC Act (2000). (See, EFCC Act, 2000).

International Code of Conduct. As a member of the United Nations, Nigeria became a signatory to the International Code of Conduct for public officials (See, International Code of Conduct, 1996).

Charter for the Public Service in Africa. Nigeria is a signatory to the Charter for the Public Service in Africa which was adopted by the Third Biennial Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service in Windhoek, Namibia. The Charter is intended to consolidate rules for professional work ethics in order to accelerate the role of public administration in national development. (See, Charter for Public Service in Africa, 2001)

African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Administration. This is a follow up to the Charter for Public Service in Africa**.** Nigeria is also a signatory to this charter which was adopted during the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, held on 31 January, 2011 at Addis Ababa. It serves as a measure of sustaining the collective effort and support of African leadership to entrench codes and standards for public administration in Africa. (See Charter on Values and Principles of Public Administration, 2011).

A DEFIANT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

Former president, Olusegun Obasanjo in his inaugural speech on 29th May, 1999 lamented the level of ethical misconduct in the country's public administration. He stated thus: "*Nigerians have for long been feeling too short-changed by the quality of public services, government officials became progressively indifferent to propriety of conduct… Government and all its agencies became thoroughly corrupt and reckless. Members of the public had to bribe their way through in ministries and parastatals to get attention and one government agency had to bribe another government agency to obtain the release of their statutory allocation of funds*" (President Obasanjo, 1999).

Twenty years down the line, Nigerians feel stronger about this concern. The question is why has the public administration system failed to improve despite various reform measures by successive governments and the existence of institutional and policy mechanisms to enforce ethical conducts? To answer this question, this paper agrees with the work of Tom (2017:7) with citations from Easton (1965); Koontz, O'Donnel and Weihrich (1980) and Simon (1952). The work views public administration as a system of mutually dependent variables with input, output and feedback relationship and influence from the environment. This complex and dynamic inter-relationship involves various parts of the system such as the ministries, departments, agencies and also their

5

interactions with the organs of government, i.e. the legislature, executive and judiciary. Public administration environment in Nigeria is historical, political, social, economical and cultural in nature with influences on the system. It is thus, important to note here that these environmental factors contributes immensely in shaping the public administration system and also in determining the level of conformity to ethical behaviours at any point in time. The paper therefore, borrows from the systems theorists to create a foundation for a tripartite theoretical explanation on public administration resistance to sound ethical practices.

Firstly, public administration in Nigeria is unarguably a continuation of the colonial bureaucratic system. The system was basically constructed and structured to facilitate the extraction of resources for colonial government. It lacked accountability and transparency. It therefore, follows that the public administration system transferred to Nigerians at independence was skewed in nature and lacked broad based objectives of service centeredness and national development. Anazodo et al (2012:8) observes that administrators who took over the system imbibed the mentality of wealth acquisition and attitude of superiority at the expense of national interest. More so, the bid to hasten Nigerianization and Indigenization of the civil service also resulted in indiscriminate transfer of underqualified and inexperienced personnel from other services into the federal service to fill up the quota of the respective regions. In addition the political upheavals of the early years of independence led to the coup of 1966 and making way for military government. Balogun (1983: 87) argues that the civil war, the expanding scope of government, oil boom and absence of political class favoured early bureaucratic dominance. Adebayo (1984:83) also insists that public administration then took advantage of weak political control and converted it into a source of strength. The implication is that post-colonial public administration system, especially at the national level was marred by corruption and other unethical behaviours. This led to the 1975 purge that resulted in the retrenchment of several thousand civil servants by the military regime. The action was then intended to rid the public administration system of corruption and other unethical practices. This early experience is not without meaningful observation. Firstly, no serious effort was made at independence to reconstruct, restructure and rationalize the public administration system along local values, peculiarities and need. Secondly, the Nigerianisation and Indigenization of the public administration system was hastily done without training young administrators and institutionalizing administrative ethics.

Secondly, colonialism created two publics in Africa (Eke, 1975; Mbembe, 2001). Ekeh (1971:92) argues that this is in contrast to Western conceptions of politics where "….the monolithic public realm is bound to the private realm". Ekeh (1975) identifies two public realms with different types of moral linkages to the private realm in the post-colonial Africa. The first is the level of public realm (primordial) in which primordial groupings, ties, sentiments etc., influence the individual's behaviour; and the other public realm (civic) which is historically associated with colonial administration, such as public administration, military etc., and lacks moral linkages with private realm. Ekeh (1975) therefore, contends that individuals steal from the civic public to enrich the primordial public. Similarly, Lawuyi (2012:21) identifies two publics in the post-colonial Nigeria. These are the "sceptical public" which checks the public manager (engages on bureaucratic anomalies) and "moral public" which supervises transactions between the sceptical and the public managers. Lawuyi (2012:21) further laments the weakness of the sceptical public and "…..gradual death of moral public in Nigeria…" From the foregoing, one observes that the bid for individual

6

gain and to satisfy primary identities/attachments by public administrators aids the drive to engage in corruption and other unethical behaviours. Also, this unfettered bureaucratic behaviour also persists due to the weakness of the civic system (body of laws, institutions, governance structures, civil societies etc.).

Thirdly, resource curse exponents, notably, Auty (1993), Sachs and Warner (1997) and Ross (1999) have strongly argued that there exists an inverse relationship between natural resources and economic development. The thesis of their argument is that "the abundance of natural resources is curse rather than blessing to a country" where these resources do not translate to economic prosperity. Ross (1999) further argues that the negative correlations between resource wealth and economic growth is embedded in features, such as, irrational and poor decision making, weakness of state institutions, corruption by state officials amongst others. Nigeria falls within the resource curse (oil curse) description where over reliance on oil revenue not only fails to induce economic growth but have rather created "institutional weaknesses" and "bureaucratic recklessness". The "rentier effect" which is a negative consequence of this phenomena has over time exacerbated rent-seeking culture where oil rents provide lofty opportunities and resources for political and bureaucratic elites. These elites consistently manipulate the politico-administrative processes for selfish interests. The implications are: a deepening prebendal culture where government officials feel they have right to share and use public resources to benefit members of their primordial attachments; and the existence of a skewed public administration system with an overriding attitude of "we" versus "them".

These analysis show that the environment exerts deep influence on the public administration system. However, the complexities of the environment immensely contributes in shaping an outfit that strongly resists ethics but ostensibly relishes in unethical practices such as indiscipline, poor attitude to work, disregard for procedures, favouritism and nepotism, partisanship, lack of accountability, financial recklessness, various forms of financial fraud etc. The effect is poor quality service delivery arising from incompetence and declining productivity. Bem (2017:6) laments "*a typical Nigerian worker today, is lazy and indolent. He avoids work and responsibility but loves money, wealth and all the good things of life. The Nigerian worker is material oriented, pleasure seeking and egocentric and wants to get rich quickly*".

STRENGHTENING ETHICS

The foregoing indicates ethical crisis in the public administration milieu. This is not only damaging to the institution but spells devastating consequences for quality service delivery. This section proposes some interventions.

Political will. It is a well-known fact that political will generates political action. It therefore, follows that the differences in the success rate of different public administration systems depends on the level of political will (what is desired and the necessary actions to achieve it). Political will here entail the energy, commitment and psycho-emotive preparedness of the government to pursue a particular course of action. In the country's public administration system characterized by high level of goal displacement due to poor ethical culture, the leeway must start with the political leadership. This is because government is the repository of "ethical infrastructure". Parker, Evans,

7

Haller, Le Mire and Mortensen (2008:168) defines ethical infrastructure… "as the policies and structures that support compliance with professional conduct rules". Government here must therefore, comprise good men and women who share good vision and feel committed towards achieving it in the public interest. Political commitment as a sub-set of political will therefore, becomes imperative. Stare and Klun (2016:156) argue that political commitment is "demonstrated through setting good examples"; and "elected officials can individually and as a group promote ethical behaviour by serving as good role models". It therefore, takes integrity and commitment to institute ethical infrastructure for the public administration system. However, this is increasingly becoming an impossible task in a political system like Nigeria which is deeply tainted with corruption and other gross unethical practices. At this point, ethical leadership becomes imperative. This implies that both elected and public officials "to take ownership for professionalism, ethics and accountability in the public sector" (Edwards, 2008:85). Naidoo (2015:291) also contends that it entails "being ethical at all times and leading ethically". Experiences from transformed public administrations such as Brazil, India show how political will plays crucial role in checking unethical practices in the public administration system.

Ethical environment. The ethical environment is an offshoot of the general public administration environment. However, it has been previously noted that public administration in Nigeria functions in a rather complex and tainted environment. An environment deeply affected by continuous interplay of factors arising from the historical experience, political culture, socio-economic structures etc. In the paper context, ethical environment refers to the complex set of dynamically interrelated forces that influence public administration ethics. It then follows that public administration ethics is influenced by several contextual structures (herein, referred to as ethical environment) located within the public and private realms. It therefore, becomes imperative to create an ethical environment that positively influences ethical behaviour in the public administration system. Thus, the creation of strong ethical environment based on strong ethical cultures can positively influence and strengthen ethical behaviours. It therefore, takes a political system with strong political will to sanitize and strengthen an existing weak ethical environment. Malaysia under Mohammed Mahathir (1981-2003) and Rwanda under Paul Kagame (2000-date) are good examples of how strong political will can create sound ethical environment to support ethical behaviour in the public administration system.

Ethics courses in schools. The OECD emphasis on ethics and public integrity calls on countries to raise awareness and carry out related education initiatives. According to OECD (2018:9) "building a culture of integrity in society necessary begins with education of young people". OECD (2018) further states that "education for public integrity is about inspiring ethical behaviour and equipping young people with knowledge and skills to resist corruption". OECD position therefore, emphasizes the role of the educational system in character building for ethical behaviour in the public service. Education in itself is the process of imparting knowledge. Ethics and integrity education is therefore, a process that that has to develop through the various stages of learning from infancy to adulthood. This framework to involve the following:

- Legislative/policy change in the education curriculum at the various levels of government and for strict compliance to be enforced through education regulatory bodies. Part of the policy to include making it compulsory for all students to offer and pass ethics and character education courses at various levels;

8

- Re-designing and re-writing existing curriculum at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) to include ethics, integrity and character education;
- The use of experts to design and re-write such curriculum;
- Training existing teachers and recruitment of new ones to teach ethics and character education;
- The use of public integrity bodies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to provide training on request to schools;
- Developing short courses on ethics and character education for those already in the public service. This to involve the use of departments of Public Administration in the Universities and other public training institutions such as the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) to deliver such courses.

The foregoing is imperative in mainstreaming ethics and public integrity values through curriculum. Okafor (2018:18) stresses that the teaching of ethics courses at schools is imperative in the philosophy of "catching them young". The ethics courses must at all times focus on the values and principles of public administration in Nigeria; positively shape public administration values in line with universal public principles and values and influence the individual into maturing to be a good citizen fit for public service responsibility.

Strengthening State Institutions. State institutions in Nigeria are continually adjudged weak, corrupt and susceptible to elite manipulations. This strongly accounts for the growing institutional distrust among citizens and why over the years these institutions have proved incapable of enforcing ethics in the public administration system. Elsewhere, in both developed and developing countries State institutions such as the legislature, judiciary, police etc., play critical roles in safeguarding and enforcing ethics in the public service. Imperatively, strong and trustworthy institutions matter. North (1990:4) rightly contends that "institutions are the rules of the game in a society... the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction..." More so, former United States of America president Barack Obama in a memorable address to the Ghanaian Parliament on July 11, 2009 asserted that "Africa doesn't need strongmen; it needs strong institutions." (cited in Bratton & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016:1). He went on to refer to "strong parliaments, honest police forces, (and) independent judges" as institutions that help to ensure that governments "respect the will of their own people (and) govern by consent and not coercion**.** The simple solution therefore, lies in heeding to this advice and to urgently commence the process of strengthening public administration institutions in the country. This fundamentally requires strong political will (as mentioned earlier) to transform the institutions from weak and corrupt bodies serving selfish interests to strong and trustworthy institutions existing to protect public interests. Public administration institutions in Nigeria needs to be populated by ethically minded men and women strongly imbued with high sense of integrity, professionalism and love for the country.

Value re-orientation. The Idealistic theory holds that people's ideas influence their culture, behaviour and the organisation of their society (Nkom, 1982). Value represents an individual's belief or judgement of what is important in life. This is why the individual places premium to that which is considered important to him or her. In Nigeria, much value is placed on material wealth (money and what it can acquire) and individuals desperately want this irrespective of the source. This therefore, accounts for why public servants are deeply influenced by this prevailing value

system. Often, public officials are confronted with ethical dilemmas and the eventual compromise of ethics for unethical behaviours such as corruption. As such corruption becomes the nature of social and moral values prevailing in the society. When survival becomes the paramount value, corruption can become a way of life (United Nations, 2000). Corruption is therefore, a perversion of morality and the generally acceptable value system in the society. Corruption blurs the individual's sense of reasoning in determining what is right or wrong in the public administration practice and this has resulted in the loss of public values overtime. Magbadelo (2016:79) argues that the loss of public values could be a symptom as well as a consequence of other problems. For instance, selfish interest and greed could lead to corruption and corruption could result in the compromise of honesty and integrity. Lack of honesty and integrity results in manipulation of rules, abuse and misuse of office etc. A way out of this mess is the further use of public institutions such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to educate and re-orientate citizens on the dangers of the prevailing value system to the society. The various traditional and religious institutions can be used to play crucial roles in this process of value re-orientation. In addition, all the available agents of socialization (primary, secondary, tertiary) have to be sensitized to play critical roles in the course of societal value-reorientation.

The citizens. In every system, the citizens as recipients of public services are expected to play crucial roles as watchdogs. This means that unethical practices that harm the public interest can persist if the citizens decide to be silent or corroborative. Nigerians are guilty of both in the sense that most people are docile and unconscious of their rights while others corroborate with public officials to perpetrate unethical practices for their own selfish gains. Okafor (2018:19) laments that over the years the civil society have been suppressed to comatose by the political elites. The implication is that citizens are unconscious of their rights and public service expectations and also do nothing when their rights are denied or compromised by public officials in the course of service delivery. It is therefore, expedient to awaken public consciousness to begin to resist continuous exploitation and the short-change of citizen's interests by public servants through a process of mass enlightenment. This can be done by relevant public and private agencies such as the various civil society organisations, mass media, political and other interest groups, community associations etc. The Constitution also provides for the existence of Public Complaints Commission and National Human Rights Commission. Unfortunately, most people are ignorant of their existence and how to access their services. These bodies also don't advertise their presence for public knowledge.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper acknowledges that public administration has not functioned well to the service delivery needs and expectations of most Nigerians. However, there are two leads to this concern. The first argument is that public administration institution bequeathed to Nigerians at independence lacked transparency and accountability. They further argue that today's public administration owes its influence to the colonial past. The other side of the argument is that the first generation of public servants were well guided and performed according to laid down values and principles, however, there has been progressive degeneration of character and performance over the years. They argue that the present public administration system is a reflection of the character of Nigerian society. This means that it is rather influenced by continuous interplay of factors arising from the historical

experiences, political culture, socio-economic structures and value systems etc. In all, it is the paper's position that public administration has performed poorly due to the erosion of public service values and principles amongst other factors. The rate of ethical misconduct is so high that it has continued to attract the concern of both leadership and the citizens at various times. This is despite various reform measures by successive governments and the existence of institutional and policy mechanisms put in place to enforce ethical conducts. The situation has resulted in the citizen's loss of trust and confidence in the system. The paper strongly proposed for a number of interventions. However, of fundamental and critical importance to the intervention measures is the political will. This is because political will generates action and other conditions depend on it. Political will is a critical ingredient of leadership. If it is available the system benefits, if it is lacking the entire system suffers. The problem with Nigeria since independence in 1960 has been leadership. A rotten head definitely spells doom to the entire body and this has been the fate of public administration in the country. However, with good and transformational leadership the damaged system can be rescued from further damages and the broken parts mended. Such leadership must be enlightened and concerned enough to declare "state of emergency" in the public administration system and further acknowledge the role of ethics in refocusing public administration for improved service delivery.

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