An Examination of Part One of the Fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria in Relation to Service Ethics

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Abstract: The objectives of this paper is to highlight the imperative of ethics and sound ethical conduct as a basis for effective service delivery in the Nigerian public sector. Much has been demonstrated in this paper with heavy reliance on the utilitarian theory, secondary sources of data backed by the analytical method. The paper concluded that the march towards an ethical based public service must continue and be regarded as series of "work in progress". The paper recommended among others that there is an urgent and continuous need to remold the thought and conduct of civil/public servants and officials of government through the development of ethics and value reorientation that is anchored on accountability and transparency in public service. It further recommended strong commitment to implementation of laws, enforcement of sanctions and strengthening of institutions of governance on a continuous basis.

Keywords: Ethics, Public Sector, Governance, Values, Morals

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I. Introduction

The whole idea of ethics in public administration started not quite long among scholars and practitioners in the field of public administration; though there are ways and methods of measuring maladministration in Nigeria administrative settings before discussion of ethics come on board. Gow (2005) posited that the study of ethics is relatively a recent phenomenon in public administration. Henry (1999, 399) observed that "prior to the abandonment of politics/administration dichotomy and the principle of administration, the public administrator needed morality no more than a hotel clerk carrying out his or her daily duties". He queried the use of morality to bureaucrat who did no more than execute the will of the state according to scientific principles. In his view, morality is embedded in the effective and prudent (economic use of resources) discharge of their duties.

From the works of Ikeanyibe (2009, 234), it is observable that laws or rules represented by the classical contributions of Max Weber to bureaucracy cannot guarantee moral behaviour. Ikeanyibe (2009) posited further that these rules are meant to ensure accountability, and "can hardly be effective when the conduct of public officials is not controlled internally by certain ethical values and standards personally cherished and admitted". He submitted conclusively that "it is this personal moral conviction that can guarantee right actions even in an environment of reduced supervision and bureaucratic control".

In the face of widespread unaccountability (which bureaucratic rules ought to address), pervasive unethical conduct and corrupt practices, the entrenchment of sound ethical practices must underscore development initiative/efforts, if Nigeria must get it right, especially in the 21st century. The ethical conduct of the Nigeria public servants is enshrined in the fifth schedules of Nigeria 1999 constitution and these include:

- 1. A public officer shall not put himself in a position where his personal interest conflicts with his duties and responsibilities.
- 2. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing paragraph, a public officer shall not 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
- 3. 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 Houses 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.
- 4. A public officer shall not, after his retirement from public service and while receiving pension from public funds, accept more than one remuneration position as chairman, director or employee of a company owned or controlled by the government; or any public authority. 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.
- 5. Retired public officers who have held offices to which this paragraph applies are prohibited from service or employment in foreign companies or foreign enterprises. This paragraph applies to the offices of President, Vice-President, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Governor and Deputy Governor of a State.
- 6. 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. For the purposes of sub-paragraph 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. 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.
- 7. The President or Vice-President, Governor or Deputy Governor, Minister of the 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 loan, except from government or its agencies, a bank, building society, mortgage institution or other financial institution recognized by law,; and any benefit of whatever nature from any company, contractor, or businessman, or the nominee or agent of such person: Provided that the head of a 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.
- 8. No persons 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.
- 9. 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 act is unlawful or contrary to any government policy.
- 10. 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.
- 11. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every public officer shall within three months after the coming into force of this Code of Conduct or immediately after taking office and thereafter, at the end of every four years; and at the end of his term of office, submit to the Code of Conduct Bureau a written declaration of all his properties, assets, and liabilities and those of his unmarried children under the age of eighteen years. Any statement in such declaration that is found to be false by any authority or person authorized in that behalf to verify it shall be deemed to be a breach of this Code. Any property or assets acquired by a public officer after any declaration required under this Constitution and which is not fairly attributable to income, gift, or loan approved by this Code shall be deemed to have been acquired in breach of this Code unless the contrary is proved.
- 12. Any allegation that a public officer has committed a breach of or has not complied with the provisions of this Code shall be made to the Code of Conduct Bureau.
- 13. A public officer who does any act prohibited by this Code through a nominee, trustee, or other agent shall be deemed ipso facto to have committed a breach of this Code,
- 14. In its application to public officers, Members of legislative houses shall be exempt from the provisions of paragraph 4 of this Code; and the National Assembly may by law exempt any cadre of public officers from the provisions of paragraphs 4 and 11 of this Code if it appears to it that their position in the public service is below the rank which it considers appropriate for the application of those provisions.
- 15. There shall be established a tribunal to be known as Code of Conduct Tribunal which shall consist of a Chairman and two other persons. The Chairman shall be a person who has held or is qualified to hold office as a Judge of a Court of record in Nigeria and shall receive such remuneration as may be prescribed by law. The Chairman and members of the Code of Conduct Tribunal shall be appointed by the President in accordance with the recommendation of the National Judicial Council. The National Assembly may by law confer on the Code of Conduct Tribunal such additional powers as may appear to it to necessary to enable it more effectively to discharge the functions conferred on it in this Schedule.
- 16. The tenure of office of the staff of the Code of Conduct Tribunal shall, subject to the provisions of this Code, be the same as that provided for in respect of officers in the civil service of the Federation. The power to appoint the staff of the Code of Conduct Tribunal and to exercise disciplinary control over them shall vest in the members of the Code of Conduct Tribunal and shall be exercisable in accordance with the 4 provisions of an Act of the National Assembly enacted in that behalf.

- 17. Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, a person holding the office of Chairman or member of the Code of Conduct Tribunal shall vacate his office when he attains the age of seventy years. A person who has held office as Chairman or member of the Code of Conduct Tribunal for a period of not less than ten years shall, if he retires at the age of seventy years, be entitled to pension for life at a rate equivalent to his last annual salary in addition to other retirement benefits to which he may be entitled. A person holding the office of Chairman or member of the Code of Conduct Tribunal shall not be removed from his office or appointment by the President except upon an address supported by two-thirds majority of each House of the National Assembly praying that he be so removed for inability to discharge the functions of the office in question (whether arising from infirmity of mind or body) or for misconduct or for contravention of this Code. A person holding the office of Chairman or member of the Code of Conduct Tribunal shall not be removed from office before retiring age saves in accordance with the provisions of this Code.
- 18. Where the Code of Conduct Tribunal finds a public officer guilty of contravention of any of the provisions of this Code it shall impose upon that officer any of the punishments specified under sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph and such other punishment as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

The punishment which the Code of Conduct Tribunal may impose shall include any of the followings;

- a. Vacation of office or seat in any legislative house, as the case may be;
- b. Disqualification from membership of a legislative house and from the holding of any public office for a period not exceeding ten years; and
- c. Seizure and forfeiture to the State of any property acquired in abuse or corruption of office.

The sanctions mentioned in sub-paragraph (2) hereof shall be without prejudice to the penalties that may be imposed by any law where the conduct is also a criminal offence. Where the Code of Conduct Tribunal gives a decision as to whether or not a person is guilty of a contravention of any of the provisions of this Code, an appeal shall lie as of right from such decision or from any punishment imposed on such person to the Court of Appeal at the instance of any party to the proceedings. Any right of appeal to the Court of Appeal from the decisions of the Code of Conduct Tribunal conferred by sub-paragraph (4) hereof shall be exercised in accordance with the provisions of an Act of the National Assembly and rules of court for the time being in force regulating the powers, practice and procedure of the Court of Appeal. Nothing in this paragraph shall prejudice the prosecution of a public officer punished under this paragraph or preclude such officer from being prosecuted or punished for an offence in a court of law. The provisions of this Constitution relating to prerogative of mercy shall not apply to any punishment imposed in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph.

In this Code, unless the context otherwise requires -"assets" includes any property, movable and immovable and incomes owned by a person;"business" means any profession, vocation, trade, or any adventure or concern in the nature of trade and excludes farming; "child" includes a step-child, a lawfully adopted child, a child born out of wedlock and any child to whom any individual stands in place of a parent; "emolument" means any salary, wage, over-time or leave pay, commission, fee, bonus, gratuity, benefit, advantage (whether or not that advantage is capable of being turned into money or money's worth), allowance, pension or annuity paid, given or granted in respect of any employment or office; "foreign companies" or "foreign enterprises" means companies or enterprises in which the Government, its agencies or citizens of Nigeria or whose policies are determined by persons or organizations outside Nigeria; "liabilities" includes responsibilities according to law to satisfy a debt, duty or obligation quantifiable in monetary value, instant and contingent; "misconduct" means breach of the Oath of Allegiance or oath of office of a member or breach of the provisions of this Constitution or a misconduct of such nature as amounts to bribery or corruption or false declaration of assets and liabilities; "public office" means a person holding any of the offices specified in Part II of this Schedule; and "public office" shall not include the chairmanship or membership of ad hoc tribunals, commissions or committees. But all this ethical conduct of the public servants have being affected by bribery, undue advancement, political Godfathers or political interference, lackadaisical attitude and sociological factor .e.g. false declaration of age by many public servants in Nigeria so as to increase their service years, false declaration of assets by some of Nigeria Politicians. Hence, the objectives of this paper are to examine the content of the constitutional provision of ethical conduct, its practicability and the factors that mitigate against its practicability and functions. The followings questions were developed; what are the content of the constitutional provision of ethical conduct, how it being practiced and what are the factors that affect its practicability.

II. Literature Review

Ethics derives from the Greek word "ethikos" meaning custom. This Greek word has a Latin Synonym or equivalent known as "mors" which translates to custom or more. The mores of a particular place or group of people are the customs and behaviour that are typically found in that place or group. As a field of inquiry, ethics

developed as a branch of philosophy, and this explains why it is referred to as moral philosophy or taken as being synonymous with morality.

Ikeanyibe (2009, 194) posited that ethics as a branch of philosophy deals with the analysis and evaluation of human conduct to determine the fundamental principle that makes it good or bad, right or wrong. He corroborated that early philosophers have taken this aspect of philosophy to handle questions on how humans ought to behave. What is good life for man? How do we determine which actions are rightly or wrongly performed? How do we arrive at a decision that certain actions are right or wrong? Upon what criterion or standards are such judgments made?

Deriving from the above questions, ethics can be conceived as a science of morals (meta-ethics), and as a system of morals which defines or states the code or set of principles by which men live. As a science of morals, it investigates the nature, sources and fundamental principles that should guide human actions. Seen this way, it is a normative science that aims at stating the way human beings ought to behave, rather than empirical science which attempts to describe the way things are, (and) the way things behave (Ekennia, 2003 and Eboh, 2005 in Ikeanyibe, 2009: 194-195).

Lacey in Ezeani (2006:380) converges with Ekennia (2003) in defining ethics "as an inquiry into how men ought to act in general, not as a means to a given end, but as an end in itself". Scholars like Macham (1977); Walkings (1956); Hornby (2000); Uduigwomen (2001) and (2003) all in Ezeani (2006, 380) Invigorated the moral foundations and underpinnings as guides to human behaviour in their conceptualisation of ethics.

The focus of this paper is the Public Sector, which implies that attention should be given to actions or behaviour of bureaucrats/administrators. This inevitably leads us to ask: what is Administrative Ethics?

Administrative ethics may refer to moral values (such as honesty, justice, professionalism) that are either present or absent in a worker, official or bureaucrat or in an organisation. Alternatively, it can denote "a set of characteristics that is assumed to be present, or which may take different forms" (Ajuogu in Ezeani, 2006, 381). Thus, organizations are perceived as always ethical, differing only in the form that ethics are presented. To this extent, an administrator could be regarded as unethical if he/she deviates from the moral norms or codes of the organisation.

Thompson (1985) sees administrative ethics as involving the application of moral principles to the conduct of official responsibilities and duties. Agara and Olarinmoye (2009, 12) on the other hand, focused his definition of ethics on the civil service. To him ethics is the application of moral standards in the course of official work. In essence, civil servants are expected to bring to bear in the discharge of their duties, certain ethical considerations especially where they are to make value judgment which may have a direct relationship with their professional standing. In another work Thompson (1993) he christened unethical behaviour as mediated corruption which involves the use of public office for private purposes in a manner that subverts the democratic process. Maesschalck (2004) sees ethics as a proposed lever to restore trust in government. He also discussed ethics under two approaches- compliance and integrity. Compliance implies that an individual can choose to follow rules which he called ethical or refuse to follow the rule which he described as unethical. Integrity focuses on internal control (self-control) exercise by each public servant. He concluded by suggesting group grid theory. Grid represents the extent to which individuals are constrained by rules, laws, and procedures. And group represents the extent to which individuals are embedded into social units. Swanton (2001) examines virtue ethics as the basis for determining the rightness of an action. Thompson (1980) in discussing the moral responsibility of public officials averred that because different officials make contributions to decisions and policies of government, it is difficult to identify who is morally responsible for political outcomes. This he called the problem of many hands. He therefore, came up with a model through which an official can be held responsible for the outcomes of their actions.

Our working definition of administrative ethics refers to moral values or characteristics that are present in an organization or are exhibited by its employees and certain codes of conduct / morals that are upheld within an organization or a particular administrative system (Ezeani, 2006, 381).

III. Theoretical Framework

The utilitarian ethical theory by Jeremy Bentham (1789) is founded on the ability to predict the consequences of an action. To a utilitarian, the choice that yields the greatest benefit to the most people is the choice that is ethically correct. One benefit of this ethical theory is that the utilitarian can compare similar predicted solutions and use a point system to determine which choice is more beneficial for more people. This point system provides a logical and rationale argument for each decision and allows a person to use it on a case-by-case context.

There are two types of utilitarianism, act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism adheres exactly to the definition of utilitarianism as described in the above section. In Act utilitarianism, a person performs the acts that benefit the most people, regardless of personal feelings or the societal constraints such as laws. Rule utilitarianism, however, takes into account the law and is concerned with fairness. A rule

utilitarian seeks to benefit the most people but through the fairest and most just means available. Therefore, added benefits of rule utilitarianism are that it values justice and includes beneficence at the same time.

As with all ethical theories, however, both act and rule utilitarianism contains numerous flaws. Inherent in both are the flaws associated with predicting the future. Although people can use their life experiences to attempt to predict outcomes, no human being can be certain that his predictions will be true. This uncertainty can lead to unexpected results making the utilitarian look unethical as time passes because his choice did not benefit the most people as he predicted. For example, if a person lights a fire in a fireplace in order to warm his friends, and then the fire burns down the house because the soot in the chimney caught on fire, then the utilitarian now seems to have chosen an unethical decision. The unexpected house fire is judged as unethical because it did not benefit his friends.

Another assumption that a utilitarian must make is that he has the ability to compare the various types of consequences against each other on a similar scale. However, comparing material gains such as money against intangible gains such as happiness is impossible since their qualities differ to such a large extent.

A third failing found in utilitarianism is that it does not allow for the existence of supererogation or heroes. In other words, people are obligated to constantly behave so that the most people benefit regardless of the danger associated with an act. For instance, a utilitarian who sacrifices her life to save a train full of people is actually fulfilling an obligation to society rather than performing a selfless and laudable act.

As explained above, act utilitarianism is solely concerned with achieving the maximum good. According to this theory an individual's rights may be infringed upon in order to benefit a greater population. In other words, act utilitarianism is not always concerned with justice, beneficence or autonomy for an individual if oppressing the individual leads to the solution that benefits a majority of people. Another source of instability within act utilitarianism is apparent when a utilitarian faces one set of variable conditions and then suddenly experiences a change in those variables that causes her to change her original decision. This means that an act utilitarian could be nice to you one moment and then dislike you the next moment because the variables have changed, and you are no longer beneficial to the most people.

Rule utilitarianism also contains a source of instability that inhibits its usefulness. In rule utilitarianism, there is the possibility of conflicting rules. Let us revisit the example of a person running late for his meeting. While a rule utilitarian who just happens to be a state governor may believe that it is ethically correct to arrive at important meetings on time because the members of the state government will benefit from this decision, he may encounter conflicting ideas about what is ethically correct if he is running late. As a rule utilitarian, he believes that he should follow the law because this benefits an entire society, but at the same time, he believes that it is ethically correct to be on time for his meeting because it is a state government meeting that also benefits the society. There appears to be no ethically correct answer for this scenario.

The virtue ethical theory judges a person by his character rather than by an action that may deviate from his normal behavior. It takes the person's morals, reputation and motivation into account when rating an unusual and irregular behavior that is considered unethical. For instance, if a person plagiarized a passage that was later detected by a peer, the peer who knows the person well will understand the person's character and will be able to judge the friend. If the plagiarizer normally follows the rules and has good standing amongst his colleagues, the peer who encounters the plagiarized passage may be able to judge his friend more leniently. Perhaps the researcher had a late night and simply forgot to credit his or her source appropriately. Conversely, a person who has a reputation for scientific misconduct is more likely to be judged harshly for plagiarizing because of his consistent past of unethical behavior.

One weakness of this ethical theory is that it does not take into consideration a person's change in moral character. For example, a scientist who may have made mistakes in the past may honestly have the same late night story as the scientist in good standing. Neither of these scientists intentionally plagiarized, but the act was still committed. On the other hand, a researcher may have a sudden change from moral to immoral character may go unnoticed until a significant amount of evidence mounts up against him or her.

Ethical theories and principles bring significant characteristics to the decision-making process. Although all of the ethical theories attempt to follow the ethical principles in order to be applicable and valid by themselves, each theory falls short with complex flaws and failings. However, these ethical theories can be used in combination in order to obtain the most ethically correct answer possible for each scenario. For example, a utilitarian may use the casuistic theory and compare similar situations to his real life situation in order to determine the choice that will benefit the most people. The deontologist and the rule utilitarian governor who are running late for their meeting may use the rights ethical theory when deciding whether or not to speed to make it to the meeting on time. Instead of speeding, they would slow down because the law in the rights theory is given the highest priority, even if it means that the most people may not benefit from the decision to drive the speed limit. By using ethical theories in combination, one is able to use a variety of ways to analyze a situation in order to reach the most ethically correct decision possible.

We are fortunate to have a variety of ethical theories that provide a substantial framework when trying to make ethically correct answers. Each ethical theory attempts to adhere to the ethical principles that lead to success when trying to reach the best decision. When one understands each individual theory, including its strengths and weaknesses, one can make the most informed decision when trying to achieve an ethically correct answer to a dilemma.

Ethics in the Nigerian Public Sector:

Attempts at cultivating ethical conduct in the Nigerian public sector have found overt manifestations in the Public Service Rules (as instruction manual for civil/public servants), Financial Regulations; Due Process Act and ancillary enactments that seek to guide and regulate the activities of public officials in the discharge of their duties. The profoundest and perhaps the most laudable of effort at instilling ethical behaviour is contained in the Code of Conduct for Public Officers as spelt out in the fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Part 1 of dealing with general provisions encapsulates the following: conflict of interest with duty; restrictions on specified officers; prohibition of foreign accounts; prohibition of retired public officer from accepting more than one remunerative position as chairman, director or employee of any public authority or government owned / controlled enterprises; prohibition of retired public officers from service or employment in foreign companies or enterprises; restriction on loans, gifts or benefit in kind / cash to certain public officers; bribery of public officers; abuse of powers; membership of cults/secret societies is prohibited for public officers; declaration of assets by public officer; allegation of breach of these codes shall be made to the code of Conduct Bureau.

The constitution also established the Code of Conduct Tribunal which shall consist of a Chairman and two other persons. Tenure of staff, Chairman and other members of the Tribunal, powers of the Tribunal are Spelt out in the Constitution. Part II of the fifth Schedule defined/listed Public Officers for the purpose of the Code of Conduct.

As lofty as the above mentioned intentions are, there are reports of unethical behaviours in the Nigerian Public Sector.

IV. Conclusion

Attention has been drawn in this research work to the modest results achieved through the efforts aimed at arresting the decay and collapse of the ethical behaviours in the Civil Service systems among the Public servants. The central message of this article is the disgusting menace of unethical behaviour among public servants in the Public sector and the need for the country to embark on implementing some of the proposed remedial measures and a segment or department in the government or Public sector to act as a watch dog on both the Federal Civil Service Commission and the State Civil Service Commission to bring to book and justice the breakers of the ethics meant to regulate and guide the commissions.

V. Recommendations

There is an assertion that when nations, societies and other forms of organization, lose their sense of purpose and significance, then confusion, frustration, discouragement, corporate suicide, set in. There are approaches suggested for promoting ethical behaviors: Sanctions and punishments, Impositions of heavy punishment on both individuals and organizations that breach business and societal ethics. The sanction must be heavy and prompt so as to serve as a deterrent to other offenders. If offenders are not punished, it tends to encourage other people who have potentials in crime committing. Strict sanction could be sufficient to discourage and curb unethical behaviour and make people obey instructions, customs or laws. Strict sanctions was exemplified during the Buhari/Idiagbon regime 1983-1985 in Nigeria, people were fearful of breaking laws, rules, regulations, e.t.c. that were designed for the good of all.

- Moral campaign: This method helps in inaugurating massive propaganda and campaign calling for disciplined behaviour and practices of moral values among public sectors. It is a moral evangelism of what is currently in place. This deadly disease of moral decadence should be addressed in public, private and governmental organizations. The dangers inherent in perpetration of unethical conducts should be emphasized.
- 2. Reward of outstanding ethical behaviour: In a situation or instances when an individual display an outstanding act of discipline behaviour such behaviour should be rewarded in status, cash and kind.
- 3. Enlightenment: Massive education, training and development in schools, colleges and universities. Ethics should be made a compulsory subject cutting across all the various disciplines. As we all know education is the bedrock of all development of any society, education kills the blight of diseases, ignorance, superstitions, poverty and fear.
- 4. Revival of culture of excellence: Values, Ethics and Cultures should be restored for instance;

- 5. Professional development of ethical codes: To restore and gain sanity and to earn respectability from outside world and prospective foreign investors, private, public and governmental organizations need to fashion out codes of ethics. It is to be noted that professional bodies, e.g. medicine, engineering, law, e.t.c. have ethical codes of conduct. A serious problem requires an equally serious solution
- 6. Religiosity: This is the application of doctrines enshrined in a particular religion as the only permissible framework for ascertainment of right and wrong.

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