

The Need for Renewal of Work Ethics as the Basis for National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Human beings, acting either individually or collectively, cannot but be faced, one way or another, with issues that are suffused with ethical or moral questions. In fact, there are actions which all of us will acquiesce in or approve as commendable like honesty, truthfulness, fidelity to promises, hard work, diligence, reciprocity etc. Conversely, there are behaviours and actions, which every rational mind will adjudge as reprehensible and as such should not be tolerated or allowed to flourish in a human community. Such actions and behaviours include murder, rape, homosexuality, theft, adultery, corruption, graft, sleaze, kleptomania, embezzlement etc. The attitudes and work ethics of Nigerian workers have been a cause for concern at this time in order to encourage a change towards positive development of the work enterprise and the nation at large. The various expositions on the attitudes to work of the Nigerian workforce have painted a rather negative picture of an apathetic, uncommitted men and women who are unresponsive to traditional techniques. It is against this background that two issues become imperative in this paper. These are work ethics of Nigerian workers and the need for renewal of work ethics and attitudinal change of the workers to allow for effective utilization of every individual within a workforce.

Key Words: Ethics, workplace ethics, development, national development, Renewal.

Introduction

The work attitudes, integrity, self-discipline, teamwork, emphasis on quality, commitment and productivity of the Nigerian workers have painted a rather negative picture of an apathetic, uncommitted men and women, who are unresponsive to motivational techniques. Whichever way we look at it, the Nigerian workers are what we have; hence we must encourage them to make meaningful contribution to the development of the nation by becoming more productive. The urge to attain and maintain high level of productivity is a "sine qua non" for the development of every sector in the nation. Ethical consideration in labour management relationship is a concomitant for organizational development. Hence, for high productivity, it is important that all stakeholders observe ethical conducts in their dealings with one another. This must be openly displayed through positive attitudes, committed teamwork, high integrity and self-discipline.

One of the issues that have not received enough attention in Nigeria's quest for development is the need for renewal of work ethics among the workers. It has been observed that most workers have poor attitude to work because the impression of most of them is 'we don't need to sweat while doing government work. Invariably, most workers see government work as nobody's business. Perhaps this is why Olugbile asserted that "Nigerian worker is lazy, Indolent, unconcerned, indisciplined and unmotivated. He is corrupt and lacking in commitment to the goals of his organization and loyalty to his employer" (Olugbile, p.49). The attitudes of Nigerian workers have been a cause for concern at this time in order to encourage a change towards positive development of the work enterprise and the effective utilization of inherent potentials and capacity. The various expositions on the attitudes to work of the Nigerian workforce have painted a rather negative picture of an apathetic, uncommitted men and women who are unresponsive to traditional techniques. It is against this background that two issues become imperative in this paper. These are work ethics of Nigerian workers and the need for renewal of work ethics in the workplace as a way of contributing to national development.

Conceptualizing Ethics

The best place to begin a discussion on ethics is to attempt a conceptualization of the term. This is because what ethics is and ought to be are problematic but germane to understanding of it. The ground issue of ethics however is what is good and bad or why a piece of action is good and praiseworthy and another bad and blameworthy. Scholars have not agreed on what constitute the nature of ethics because it does not easily lend itself to a univocal definition like physics, history and biology etc. however, saying this should not be construed to mean that ethics is incapable of being defined.

Ethics comes from evolutionary process. It grows with the society and it is the nearest to common law. It provides the ways of judging social behaviour. Ethics is the systematic study of the fundamental principles of morality. It is a critical examination of values with a view of having qualitative way of living and conduct. It examines the rights and wrongs in human conduct and the society. It prescribes, instructs and exhorts human beings on what to do, and what not to do. Since man is averagely a pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding animal, since man's first instinct is self-satisfaction and perpetuation, the tendency is for man to pursue

those actions, conducts and things that would guarantee his maximum interest. Often times, it is at the expense of fellow human beings and the environment whose interest, satisfactions and self-perpetuation would necessarily collide with one another.

In order not to exist in the Hobbesian state of nature, wherein life will be nasty, brutish, chaotic, and short, in which there would be quarrelling, anger, forcefulness, violence, war of all against all, ethics serves as a conscience regulator, a check on one's insatiable want and appetites, a check on one's habit and character by reminding oneself that same interest which he has is also same interest by another. Ethics therefore is a self-regulator, a refrain on human beings to be conscious and respectful of existence, lives, values, interest and needs of other human and non-human entities in nature and to be aware that every so-called right imposes a responsibility on one to respect the right of another.

For there are many definitions or approaches to as deposed by scholars from antiquity to the contemporary period. There is the theoretical aspect as well as the practical aspect or dimension of ethics. In the former, ethics refers to the study of morality in all its forms, "it is primarily an academic exercise, an intellectual pursuit, a process of inquiry and reflection" (Olugbile, p.15). Ethics is that branch of philosophy that deals with the conduct of human beings as they make moral decisions. These decisions lead to actions which are results of judgment, and they involve the use of words known as moral predicate "ought" "should" "Right" "good" and their opposites. (Omogbe, 1990 p.149) Without unnecessarily sounding repetitive, ethics as it is stated above "investigate the principle governing human actions in terms of their goodness, badness, rightness and wrongness. As such its tasks can be expanded to include a concern with discovering the principles that should govern human conduct and with the investigation of the normative issues involving value judgment" (Omogbe 1990 p.41)

Having considered briefly the theoretical dimension of ethics, let's take up the other aspect of ethics which bother on the practical dimension of ethics which this paper is majorly concerned about. Ethics to some scholars is regarded as a practical discipline like law, medicine, journalism geography, engineering etc. In every day experience human beings, as social animals are always confronted which demand making moral judgments on the right thing to do or the appropriate course of action to take. This is so because human beings interact with other beings of their kind in various places, like market place, at work, worship centers, schools and some other social groups. In the course of these meetings and encounters, certain moral issues are generated. So the application of ethics to public life and the professions in the interest of the discourse in professional ethics, also known as work place ethics. Thus professional ethics is a moral reflection in work life, where work is simply defined as an activity resulting in products or services done for payments. (Moshood, p.115)

The word ethics is a derivative from the Greek "ethos", which means custom or practice and has to do with a manner of doing things. Ethics refer to the scientific and theoretical method that illumines a subject in a "thematic, systematic, coherent and consistent manner" (Irele, p.1) Accordingly, ethics is "the science of behaviour ... a series of rules and principles by which we act and which tell us what to do, it clarifies and classifies words and actions into things which are good and into things which are bad" (Irele, p.1) Ethics therefore prescribes rules that guides moral decisions, what ought to be done, the value of action and the judgment of action.

The kernel of this philosophical postulate of ethics is that it is a product of human rational will because man is a rational being; he must necessarily obey moral law. Moral issues are of philosophical interest. This has led to the emergence of ethics as a sub-discipline in philosophy. Ethics is concerned with philosophical inquiry about morality, moral problems and moral judgments. (Omuregbe, p.150) When, as individual, we begin to think critically and generally about moral issues, we are in the domain of ethics, when we say an issue is a moral issue, it implies that the options open to the agent will affect the welfare of others, either positively or negatively. That is, moral issues normally arise only when there are possibilities of either harm or benefit to the people. But it may be argued that moral issues are not limited to only questions about the well-being of other people. They may also arise in cases where the agent's well-being is affected.

Any issue that can be morally appraised may be classified as either morally prohibited, morally required or morally permitted. When it is said that an action is morally prohibited it means that it is regarded as morally wrong or bad. That is, something you ought not to do. For something to be morally required implies that it is morally right or good. That is, something you ought to do. If something is said to be morally permitted or acceptable, it means that it is neither morally required nor prohibited. If you do something that is morally permitted, you cannot be said to have done something good or bad.

What is Work Ethics?

Workers, whether or not at the management position often encounter an ethical dilemma when they confront a situation that requires them to make choice between two courses of action, especially if each of them is likely to serve the interests of one particular interest group to the disadvantage of the other. To make right decision, workers must weigh the competing rights or claims of the different interests. Sometimes, taking a decision is easy because some obvious standard norm or value of behaviour applies. More specifically, work ethics are the accepted principles of right or wrong governing the conduct of people in the work place. (Hill and Jones, p.24)

Workplace ethics are the set of values, moral principles, and standards that need to be followed by both employers and employees in the workplace. It is the set of rules and regulations that need to be followed by all staff of the workplace. These ethics are implemented by employers to foster both employee-employee relationship and employee-customer relationships. An organization may decide to put these ethics into writing or not—they are however meant to be followed. There exist some general workplace ethics that do not need to be defined by the employer, but are common ethical behaviours employees need to exhibit. In the same vein, some organization-specific ethics may need to be defined in a company handbook. Work ethics can also be regarded as a subset of ethics. It focuses mainly on the rules and regulations that guides the conduct of individuals as professionals. Somehow, these workers faces situations that demand making moral decisions bordering on honesty, truthfulness, care safety, trustworthiness, loyalty, solidarity etc. in the course of carrying out their duties like the relationship between a doctor and patient, employer and employee, teacher and students, lawyer and client etc. In these professions, the objective and goal is usually encapsulated in the operational guidelines, or technically referred to as codes of professional ethics. Different

professional bodies have codes of ethics for their members who are expected to aid the stipulations of the relevant provisions. Every code of ethics must not contradict the constitution of the country, or the fundamental principles of morality, because the former is the supreme law of the land whereas the latter provides the general framework, which ultimately validates the contents of whatever code of work ethics under any consideration.

Work ethics is a form of applied ethics that examines ethical principles, moral or ethical problems that arises in a work place environment. It is applied to all aspects of work conduct and is relevant to the conduct of individuals in an organization. This ethics originate from individuals, organizational statement and from the legal system. It refers to the contemporary organizational standards, principles, sets of values and norms that govern the actions and behaviours of an individual in a business organization. It is the branch of philosophy that deals the philosophical and the ethical underpinning of work place environment. Without going into too much detail, society expects its members to behave in certain ways and not behave otherwise. This brought about what is understood as moral values and moral vice or positive value and negative values respectively. Positive values which cut across every facet of man's life are manifested in acts of "honesty, discipline, dedication to duty, tolerance, justice, love, hard work, sincerity, impartiality, humility, hospitality, endurance, prudence etc".(Omogegbe,p.25) Conversely, negative value is just the opposite of positive values which are demonstrated in form of indiscipline, idleness, laziness, injustice, intolerance, arrogance, dishonesty etc. It is important to note that while the society encourages its members to adhere to positive values; It discourages them to abstain from the negative values because they debar success, sustenance, maintenance and progress of society.

In the light of the above definitions, work ethics could be defined as moral rules or a principle in relation to work; or it refers to moral rules guiding behavior of workers in relation to the work they do, upon which they can earn salaries or wages. In a broader manner, work ethics deals essentially with moral values associated with the following facet of work, worker, workplace, working condition, work experience, work force, work clothes, working implements or instruments, working practice, working hours, working relationship, working class, working day, working girl, working group, working area, workroom, work permit working order etc.(Grint, p.15) If we relate moral rules to work, it implies that work ethics demands that workers should be punctual at workplace, cooperate with co-operate with co-workers, work hard to justify their salaries, contribute their quotas to the progress of work they employed to do . In addition, workers need to be honest, straight forward and sincere in discharging their duties responsibly, they need to endure hardship when the need arises as often dictated by the nature of the work they do.

Recent incidence of unethical activity in workplace underscore the wide spread need for a better understanding of factors that contribute to ethical and unethical decisions. Individual personal moral philosophies and decision making experience may not be sufficient to guide in the work place, hence work ethics will help to identify ethical issues and recognize the approaches available to resolve them.

Work ethics exposes the major problem that leads to the decree of unethical conduct in a work place which arises from the fact that people at work are willing to do things that are not only unethical but illegal, so as to maximize their position or boost their personal ego(Bastore,

p.86) This type of reasoning has led many to conclude that “anything is possible and applicable at work” however, it is not the case because the application of work ethics comes to play which enable appropriate rule to be formulated and applied. The importance of work ethics is to ensure that, at a minimum, workers abide to all the applicable laws and regulations that guides and keeps the working relationships together making everything else more effective and efficient and also enhancing productivity. Just as morality is essential for regulating the conduct of a society, a code of ethics cannot be dispensed with if members of a given organization want to make progress in their chosen profession. Having stated this, we need to probe into the workability of work ethics in Nigeria. The question is to what extent hasan average Nigerian worker has adhered to work ethics in his or her place of work. This leads to another topical issue, which is essential to the understanding of our paper.

Assessment of Nigerian Workers Adherence to Work Ethics

The phrase Nigerian worker is ambiguous, it needs clarification. It is difficult to assess all Nigerian workers. Hence we choose to limit our assessment to civil servants. This choice is informed by research findings of Olugbile, who discover that civil servants were rated as the poorest in term of their attitude to work.(Olugbile,1997 p.50)He observes that civil servants have cold attitude to work more than other workers. Unfortunately, when it comes to Nigerian civil servants, there is an undeniable poor attitude towards work. You walk into an office and somewhere along the line, you are being treated as an enemy or, the boss is the enemy; with no regard for your physical and mental well-being. A studied view can show that most Nigerian workers and employers alike bring nothing but unprofessionalism to the table. They fall ungracefully to a place of complete lack of civility and the disturbing thing is that they are either unaware or do not mind at all.

The Nigerian workers have been described as indolent, apathetic and unresponsive to motivation and generally, not willing to put forth maximum productive efforts.(Olugbile,1997 p.50.) Most workers are not punctual, they get to work late, and they are often not dedicated to duty. A few of them who occupy important positions take bribe and engage in corruption, and embezzlement of public fund. One can hardly get anything from government secretariat without greasing the palm of those in charge of what one wants. Some of them, especially women, engage in private (business)practice such as selling of wares and domestic needs both within and outside their offices. A few men have their shops or business centers in towns to which they sometimes divert government or company properties to, like stationery and motor parts.

From observation, some Nigerian workers bring to the pellucid surface flotsam and jetsam of brazen and utter disregard for work ethics and professionalism. Pragmatic and religious observance of even common nuances, forms and rules of the work ethic manual seems to be a mountainous task for a motley depressing number of Nigerian workers. In fact, work ethics which are the pivots of workers' behaviour or principles and rules which control and influence workers' attitude are as foreign to Nigerian workers as Martian aliens are to earthlings. You are confronted with the deficiency in the work ethic and professionalism domains of some Nigerian workers when you go to some Nigerian banks. In this gamut, here is a commonplace experiential rendition. You have exhausted your cheque-book and you need a new one. It takes

seven days or more to get a new cheque-book at your bank. You dash to your bank like a bat out of hell because you need to make a substantial payment for something next week. And with the cashless policy you cannot make the payment in cash.

At 8 a.m. you are already at the bank, but you cannot enter to do your niggling business. You are ordered to stay within a certain perimeter on the premises of the bank by an eager-to-please security man. You ask him why you should be waiting since Nigerian banks open at 8 a.m. He tells you *en passant* that there is an important meeting going on. A meeting at a time when customers should be at the banking hall doing different transactions? You query inaudibly. It is 8:30 a.m. now, you are still waiting, and the number of those waiting to get into the bank has increased. That means an unfanciful struggle as Nigerians always seem to be in a hurry to nowhere.

In all of that, the morning dew moistens you. You say thank God it is not afternoon when the sun is "angry". You cannot stand waiting in the sweltering heat. Finally, at 8:50 a.m., you are let in. The security man thinks he has done you a favour, so you should reciprocate the "kind" gesture when you are on your way out. You make straight for the Customer Service Unit. There you meet a young pretty lady at her desk chewing gum at 9 a.m. Her *harum-scarum* chewing makes an annoying "tau-tau" sound. You say, "Good morning ma", although you are older than she is, "Please I need to make an application for a new cheque-book". She looks at you and presses forward to stare at her computer and fiddle with its mouse. You say again, this time in a more stupidly ingratiating way, "Please ma I need to make an application". She cuts in before you finish the sentence, "I heard you, I am not deaf". She fumbles her hand into her drawer, brings out a form that is after much drama, and haughtily hands it to you to fill out. She has done you a great favour. You still say, "Thank you" after the humiliating service. And she leaves you with a sour reply, "Don't mention it". What for? For the bad service? You question in your head. A memento it is, because it re-echoes in your ears.

After your business is done and the ego-bruising episode is gone, you want to leave the bank in a hurry. You are deflated. You approach the security door at the exit. You enter, the door opens. You take two steps out. The security man gives you a menacing after-all-the-favour look. You remember, you have not given him "something" for letting you in before a scrum of people who are on pins and needles. You dig out a sum good enough for a security man. You do not want him to add another lashing to your already beaten spirit. He is happy. He patronizes you, "Oga you too much jor!" And he leaves you with a parting expression, "Oga thank you for coming!" A memento it is too because it rings in your head long after you have left the bank. You have just been extorted.

You mull changing to another bank. But your friend Tayo tells you he gets worse treatment at his own bank. He literally grovels to bank officers to get a transaction done. He also informs you, not surprising though, that it is a Nigerian problem. Most Nigerian workers lack work ethics and professionalism. You agree it is true. You have taken enough poppy-cock to know it is true.

You go to a Nigerian federal ministry that has called for an expression of interest in a given project, and needs a competent contractor to execute the project. You know you are qualified. So you have prepared all the necessary documents to meet with the director who has been assigned to handle matters concerning the project. The Director's secretary tells you snobbishly

that you cannot see her boss. And that you have to hand in your documents to her. Without a tussle or a hassle, you give the documents (photocopies of course) to her in a file. She instructs you imperiously to come back after a week to know the progress of your file. You are enthused with that. You look beyond her repulsive attitude. You say, "Thank you", fulsomely. Nigeria is changing, you think. You did not give her "something" as you are leaving.

A week passes; you decide to go back to the Director's office after the passing of another week. It is a Monday, and it has been two weeks since you tendered your documents for scrutiny and consideration. You are there now, confident and cheerful. You believe you will get the contract. Alas! Without any show of penitence, the Secretary announces to you that your file cannot be found. She adds that the contract has been awarded to someone else already so you do not need to bring another set of documents. You are ruffled. How can that happen in just two weeks? You hide your anger. You do not want to look desperate. You know it was because you did not give her "something". You make a controlled gait to leave a last impression of pride and elegance. She mockingly leaves you with a memento, "Oga try next time".

The reality of crass disregard for professionalism, courtesy and work ethics by some Nigerian workers hits you in the face again. Defeated, you persist in eating the dung of Nigerian workers. The anecdotal analyses above are definitive pictures of the plummeting in professionalism and work ethic capital of some Nigerian workers. The individual cases are representative of many other related cases. Again, it is clear that just as professionalism and work ethics are lacking in some Nigerian workers in the private sector, the same thing can be said of some Nigerian workers in the public sector. Both sectors must as a matter of exigency train and retrain their staff in the imperatives of professionalism, work ethics and courtesy. And there should be severe reprehension for flouting the canons of these essential elements of service.

The above attitude of an average Nigerian worker is a manifestation of low adherence to work ethics. This situation produces negative consequences such as nepotism and favouritism, low productivity, lack of meaningful development, frustration and hopelessness, inefficiency, ineffective work, delay in the implementation of government policies, denial of public the right to enjoy certain facilities from the government. It indirectly inspires some to commit crimes of all sorts, the totality of which has often brought bad image to the nation. Whichever way we look at it, the Nigerian workers are what we have; hence we must encourage them to make meaningful contribution to the development of the nation by becoming more productive. The urge to attain and maintain high level of productivity is a "sine qua non" for the establishment of government corporations, commercial and business ventures which invariably transmit to national development. For this reason, there is an urgent need for to stop the situation. But before we can do this, we need to probe in both the remote and immediate causes of low attitude of Nigerian workers to work ethics.

Ethical consideration in workplace relationship is a concomitant for organizational and national development. Hence, for high productivity, it is important that all stakeholders observe ethical conducts in their dealings with one another. This must be openly displayed through positive attitudes, committed teamwork, high integrity and self-discipline.

Reasons For Low Work Ethics

Behaviour is a function of both the persons and the environment. Unethical behavior by employees can affect individuals, work teams, the organization and even the nation at large. Thus, it is expedient for individuals to act ethically. Ethical behaviour is acting in ways that are consistent with one's personal values and the commonly held values of the organization and society (Otakpor, p.67). Unethical behaviour by employees can affect individuals, work teams, the organization and even the nation. Nations and organizations thus depend on individuals to act ethically. A nation or an organization's ability to elicit ethical behaviour that goes above and beyond the call of duty can be a key asset and one that is difficult for competitors to imitate. "It's not enough to just show up at 8 o'clock each morning and say, oh, I have done a wonderful thing". Ethical behaviour in organizations is necessary because business can become unethical, and there are plenty of evidences as in today on unethical organizational practices. "Irrespective of the demands and pressures upon every organization, by virtue of its existence it is bound to be ethical, for at least two reasons: one, because whatever the business does affects its stakeholders and two, because every moment of action has paths of ethical as well as unethical paths wherein the existence of the business is justified by ethical alternatives it responsibly chooses.

Not surprisingly, there is a growing interest among organization scientists and practitioners in the patterns of and in the motivational factors affecting such behaviour, as well as in its consequences for both organizations and their members. At times, we might ask: is it possible to look at peoples' attitudes, their state of mind? Can we influence the way they think about work? If we could change their attitudes, make them more positive, would they not behave differently? Work ethics is important in all aspects of life because it is an essential part of the foundation on which a civilized society is established. An organization or society that lacks ethical principles is bound to fail sooner or later.

What then are the reasons responsible for poor or work ethics among Nigerian workers? These could be listed as follows: poor pay, poor housing, poor working condition, transportation problems, prevalence of get rich quick attitude among Nigerians, lack of motivation, poverty, lack of supervision and poor enforcement of work ethics and the group norms cultural values of the society and religious statement. We shall discuss each of this briefly as possible for reason of space. It is evident that Nigerian workers receive poor wages and salaries, which are not sufficient to feed their families and to attend to their domestic and social demands. This view is expressed in the following common parlance among workers "My take home pay cannot take me home." Another one says, "My boss is a comedian. What he pays me is a joke" Because of this development, many workers take to short cut in order to make money at the expense of their employer.

Besides, most Nigerian workers work under poor condition. For example, there is no provision for facilities that enhances good working atmosphere, such as recreation centers, personal or official vehicles to take them to work and from work. Because of non-availability of facilities and good working condition, workers remain indolent. Apart from this, it is observed also that most Nigerians are materialistic as they have been caught in the web of get rich quick syndrome. For most Nigerians believe in 'big money, little work'. It is ironical that an office

messenger wants to ride the latest car in town because of his desire for material things like other workers elsewhere, including his bosses, To achieve this selfish goal they engage in unethical practices like corruption, bribery and embezzlement of public fund.

Associated with materialism is the issue of poverty, which is a reflection of the inability of the individuals to satisfy their own material wants. The high level of poverty occasioned by the depressed economy in Nigeria gave birth to inflation which has forced some of the Nigerian workers to have poor work ethics. In the light of this Olakunle's observation is apposite as he opines that: "You cannot preach ethics to a hungry man who could do anything including robbery and thuggery to keep, body and soul together. The poor has nothing to lose but his poverty"(Olakunle, p.29)While we do advocate immorality, the fact still remains that poverty can make a worker violate moral rules associated with his work as a means of survival.

Another fundamental factor responsible for low poor ethics is the group and cultural values. These norms and values are expressed through such ties of family relationships, denominations, party affiliations, age grades, secret societies etc. All human societies have well defined strategies for social control which includes system of values, beliefs, norms and sanctions. The understanding of value prescribes what is intrinsically and extrinsically worthwhile. it also refer to traits or qualities that we consider useful, beneficial or worthwhile .It has to do with social conception of what is right and wrong and what 'ought' to be. Values are sole determinants of priorities among people's goals and objectives.

'Value' fall under a branch of philosophy called the Normative or Prescriptive philosophy. It is precisely on the account of its prescriptive nature that an ideal statement is subject to varieties of interpretation and application. The word 'value' has multiple and often complex interpretation. This is because values are usually understood within different socio-cultural context. Secondly, values relate to persons, and persons are different and unique. Values are one of the most important features that distinguish humans from brute beasts; they are the things that define who we are and what we believe. In the same way, our values are usually the basis for our personal ethics and beliefs(Ukpokolo,p.49).

In the words of Joseph Agbakoba, "the notion of value readily goes with preference because a thing or idea has more or less worth in relation to other things and ideas"(Agbakoba, p.30) Families, groups or cultures have values that are largely shared by members. The values a group subscribes to identify the objects, conditions or characteristics that members of the group count to be important or worth pursuing. Individuals also have personal values that are unique to them. For example, some workers because they belong to a particular group engage in nepotism and favouritism for their colleague at the expense of the work ethics. For any meaningful development to take place, there is need for renewal of work ethics, this shall form the basis of our discussion in the next section.

Renewal of Work Ethics and its Connection to National Development

Work ethics is dialectically linked to national development. It is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development. It becomes imperative that work ethics creates sustainable development; it creates an environment that sustains and promotes the process of development by being responsive to the basic needs of employer's goals and aspirations together with that of the employees. Ethics is concerned with the well-

being of a people without neglecting the rights of the people. It interrogates and investigates the economic and social policies instituted by the owners of business organizations. It examines the extent of accountability, transparency and the sincerity of employers; it also suggests ways to improve corporate governance neither by the reconstruction of the guiding principles and values, or the replacement of some. Since decision making is paramount to any good and effective organization. A search for work ethics or organization-wide ethical standards, calls for an alternate structural approach to the reformation of the people in the organization. This, in the view of the traditional pragmatic framework, is an attempt to connect behaviour and experience in order to “strengthen the foundations of our knowledge and our actions” Human beings are seen as actors and players who create and give purpose to institutions and organizations through dynamic activity to ensure well-being and progress. Also, humans are creatures of habit. Once an act or attitude is imbibed, it takes a lot of effort and resistance to correct the situation. It is thus sensible to say that the values of cooperation and involvement should be imbibed for every human within the organization to be well utilized.

The knowledge of work ethics makes sure the principles and values guiding the governance of any nation are such that make the process of decision making and implementation to be transparent and open to public criticism. Knowing the governance invariably involves the employers and employees; ethical knowledge and moral values in the work place makes it an imperative that the process of decision-making and implementation is sensitive to the needs of every individual within the public and private organizations.

We must engage the idea of ethics in the workplace from a more theoretical perspective that examines the nature of right and wrong; while at the same time emphasize the axiological and justice dimension of work ethics. The essence of ethics according to Perry is Man's endeavour to harmonise conflicting interests, to play the role of an arbiter, and to secure the greatest possible general good. (Perry, 1974:374) if this is true, work ethics is an injunction against harming others and protecting others in the work place. It is also an attempt to unleash the fullest of values and the potentials of the power of responsible knowledge.

Morality demands that workers should work hard to justify what they earn as salaries and wages without which they are bound to fail in their endeavor if we are to go by an African proverb that says “whatever gain we not labour for does not last and that it is what we earnestly labour for that lasts” this proverbial sayings express African opinion about dignity of labour. The Africans believe in hard work, dedication to duty, honesty and sincerity in places of work. Dedication to work and not idleness produces success in earthly endeavour, Dignity of labour brings honour, nobility, respect, glory, praise and grandeur. It is on this ground that De George established a relation between work and ethics which, according to this could be manifested in worker loyalty, dedication to duty and obedience. He opines that when a worker accepts a position, morality demands that he or she should do what the position requires including what those above he or she tell him or her to do and he or she is therefore credited for doing so.

In the same line of thinking, workers should be given adequate security and his appointment should not be terminated for any unjust reason for workers are also human beings who like other members of the society deserve respect, honour and fair play. Workers are not objects to be discarded or replaced at whim. There should be better provision to protect workers from arbitrary and unfair treatment.

It is our belief that development depend on the content of work ethics in a particular organization. Policies that would translate to visible human and material development require practical commitment on the part of the employees and the employers. This singular action raises questions of religiosity and moral values (such as honesty, patriotism, selflessness, duty responsibility, accountability, culpability and liability) which have implications for development. Invocation and proper articulation of work ethics among the workers would go a long way in stemming the tide of financial fraud, bias, injustice and laziness, etc. which are inimical to national development.

The task of work ethics in our contemporary time is to ask epistemic and existential questions in order to arrive at answers that can positively influence the people's choices and actions for the realizations of their well-being and that of their work place. For the enhancement of work ethics, there is a need to check if the implementations of policies and codes of conduct are fair, just and inclusive and task cognizance of the needs of the most vulnerable people in the work place.

Conclusion

It must be emphasized that the challenge of ethical behaviour must be met by organizations if they are truly concerned about survival uprightness, integrity, and competitiveness. What is needed in today's complicated times is for more organization to step forward and operate with strong, positive and ethical cultures. Organizations must ensure that their employees know how to deal with ethical issues in their everyday work lives (De George, p.45) As a result, when the ethical climate is clear and positive, everyone will know what is expected of him or her when the inevitable ethical dilemmas occur. This will definitely give employees the confidence to be on the lookout for unwanted unethical behaviour and act with the understanding that what they are doing is correct and will be supported by top management of the organization. If human beings were morally perfect, there would be no need for the evolution of moral principles, to guide their behaviour because they would have been acting all the time strictly according to the fundamental moral principles known to them by intuition-perhaps. Unfortunately, human beings are far from being morally perfect. The existential situation in which man finds himself is such that he has capacity to act immorally. Man's recurrent failure to live to ethical standards at work or any other sphere of human endeavour necessitates continuous interrogation of the complex issues which arise from the asymmetry between the stipulations of conscience and actual behaviour.

The achievement of the intentions of any organisation regarded as workplace requires the establishment of a structure that ensures proper definition of rules and responsibility to provide the basis for corporate performance through effective utilization of human potentials and capacity. The set objective cannot be achieved unless the employers and employees demonstrate the appropriate ethical behaviour in the execution of assigned duties, ultimately enhancing the corporate image of the organisation's outfit in the environment where it operates. This becomes essential for the strategies developed to operate and stimulate patronage. Employees who demonstrate unethical behaviour do not promote the fortunes and the well-being of the organisation.

Implanting work ethics is a call for dutifulness and hard work that must be the major conditions for reward and promotion to greater heights irrespective of who is affected. The critical condition for success will be based on merit and enterprise, distinction and competence. These criteria ought to be impartial and geared toward the primary goal of optimal performance of the organisation. Only recourse to the highest level of excellence as seen in the pursuit of diligence, entrepreneurial expertise and organisational capacity will count in the pursuit of organisational ethical standards. These advantages will be directed towards spectra gains and corporate responsibility. The result of implanting work ethics on the organisation will drive a robust sense of strong loyalty, commitment, and selflessness on the part of the individual that will altogether enhance his or her capacity utilization.

The point then is that the demand and supply, conception and application of talent, good conduct and excellence are reciprocal between the worker and the organisation. Work ethics ought to be upheld so as to ensure the normative revitalization of our workplaces and the release of human potentials for urgently needed development and stability. Good work ethic is definitely one of the very important factors that improve productivity. Therefore, for the productivity of Nigerian workers to increase employers must put strategies in place to improve work ethic. The strategies most include information about what medications that would lead to positive outcome on work ethic, identification of action levers that lead to increases in productivity and quality of working life, identifying the context of the organization and the way workers react to work improvements and the general re-orientation of Nigerian workers ethic towards their job.

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