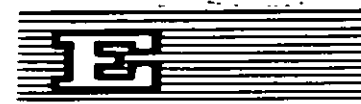


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**PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS IN AFRICA: EMERGING  
TRENDS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The socio-economic crisis which African countries have been experiencing since the early 1980s has inspired leaders from all walks of life to search for solutions, among other things, through studies and reports on various critical issues of public management and administration. From time immemorial, the public service has been regarded as the custodian, trustee, co-ordinator, controller and pacesetter for the management of resources and national economic development in almost all African countries. Therefore, it should be obvious that the widespread concern for the moral integrity and professional rectitude of public servants has been engendered both by the deteriorating social and economic conditions of the population and the legendary role of the public service as the pivot and the linchpin of the socio-economic advancement of African countries after independence from colonial rule. The growing disenchantment with the performance of African economies and the concomitant decline in the respect for public servants are not a source of comfort to all those who have genuine interest in the sustainable development and transformation of African societies.

### A. Rationale of the report

2. Whereas private sector services are not insulated from the predicaments of ethics, nonetheless, it could be argued that public servants, as the repository of statutory and discretionary powers of the state, are expected to demonstrate the highest level of impeccable conduct as an example to the rest of society. Public servants are, in effect, much more vulnerable to public scrutiny and criticism than other employees and self-employed persons in society. Their conduct, professional efficiency, expertise and motivation are expected to set the pace for participation in economic development activities by other members of society. There is also the more important consideration that public servants are basically human beings in their private and public life. They are an integral part of society and are exposed to social and economic hardship like anybody else in society. The dilemma for public servants therefore boils down to how to reconcile their personal circumstances with normative ethos and the expectations of the public for exemplary leadership in good moral values and public service integrity.

3. This report is intended, among other things, to:

(a) Highlight the predicaments of maintaining and sustaining public perceptions of ethics in the public services in the face of increasing economic hardships and the sophistication of organizational and societal demands for more and more goods and services;

(b) Revive and strengthen the interest of public servants and the whole society in the wholesomeness of ethics in rapid economic recovery and development;

(c) Underline the fact that in Africa, like elsewhere, public servants have been and can still be a positive force for ethical government service against all temptations from unscrupulous individuals; and

(d) Underline the fact that the ethical mettle of public servants has not only been under test since independence but the normative dimensions of public duties

must also be reconsidered against the realities of the worsening economic conditions of public and non-public officials.

4. The renaissance of public concern for ethics in government service and the renewed commitment of public service personnel to the normative dimensions of the ethics of public duties would restore confidence in government institutions and speed up the sustainable development of African countries. This report should therefore stimulate rewarding debates and studies on the issue of public service ethics and economic development in all African countries.

#### B. Definition of concepts

5. It is essential to define the main terms and expressions in the theme of this report in order to encourage a common understanding and appreciation of the issues in their proper context. The sheer heterogeneity of African countries in terms of population size and diversity; cultural ethos; ecology; occupational patterns; and the legacy of the colonial past, compels the articulation of concepts which may erroneously be assumed to be obvious. An attempt has, therefore, been made in the ensuing paragraphs to briefly explain the usage of terminology such as public service; ethics; responsibility; and accountability. The latter two terms have not been explicitly stated in the theme of the report but are of essence in the analysis and appreciation of the trends and implications of ethics and development.

##### (a) Public service

6. Public service should be viewed from the perspective of location of employees. The latter are regarded as public servants or workers if they are engaged in the carrying out of public policy programmes of any nature in the public interest. They are government employees. Public service is therefore synonymous with government service. In the same vein the concept of public interest connotes the requirement that government/public employees must serve every person in society humanely and without any form of discrimination nor self-interest.

7. The expression "public service/government employee" raises the question of whether or not elected officials and those who have assumed political power through non-electoral processes such as coups d'Etat or dynastic succession should be regarded as public service employees. In the context of ethics the answer to this question should be in the affirmative. In this connection Glenn Stahl asserts that the civil servant and politician must think and behave in terms of the overall welfare of the whole society and eschew the temptation to serve special and personal interests and demagoguery. It is argued that although there is a tendency for overt corruption to attract overt public attention, the most subtle issue in public service ethics is how to find, attain and sustain objective and genuine service to the whole population. <sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> O. Glenn Stahl, "Public Service Ethics in the United States" in Kenneth Kernaghan and O.P. Dwivedi (eds.) Ethics in the Public Service: Comparative Perspectives (Brussels, International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration, 1983), p.18.

On the basis of this latter perspective, it is tenable to assert that a society-wide approach to the study of ethics would capture the extent to which the society itself may be responsible for the indifference to ethical considerations in government service.

(b) Ethics

8. Whereas academicians would debate endlessly on the meaning of ethics, individuals and those whose professions have a code of ethics should not have much difficulty in understanding the practical meaning and applications of ethics. In its report, the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) Study Group on Ethics explained that "a problem of ethics in the public service may be said to exist whenever public servants, individually or collectively, use positions, or give the appearance of doing so, in a way which compromises public confidence and trust because of conflict of loyalties or values or as a result of attempts to achieve some form of private gain at the expense of public welfare or common good." This explanation, does not define ethics but deals with actions that could be considered unethical. It reflects the definitional problems that could be encountered in practical situations and the subjective facets of ethics.

9. In both singular and plural usage, ethics connotes moral values of human behaviour in given situations. Ethics could be defined as the values attached to right or wrong by a person or group that sets standards as to what is good or bad, or right or wrong in a person's conduct. Thus, ethics are concerned with judgement of "what is right" and "what is wrong" and inferences drawn on "what ought to be" instead of "what is" in the circumstances. <sup>2/</sup> Increased public exposure of public servants, new social expectations, and increased social responsibility on issues such as the protection of the environment vis-à-vis the survival imperatives of starving populations are all sources of judgement on public service ethics. In the circumstances the definition of ethics becomes more complex. Ethical behaviour could, as such be labelled "good" and unethical behaviour as "bad" behaviour. This does not, however, remove the subjective hurdle of individuals or groups whose idea of "good" or "bad" may not be shared universally. Nevertheless, in the form of a formula, <sup>3/</sup> ethical behaviour equal to legal behaviour (as per agreed code of ethics or State laws and regulations) plus something else (depending on the situation or normative ethos or prevailing norms and values of the society).

10. In the light of the foregoing definition of ethics, it could be inferred that whereas there is apparent universal consensus on the importance of ethics in development, there are differences of interpretation and practice of ethics and ethical behaviour. This is the dilemma in which some public servants find themselves in

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<sup>2/</sup> Basil C.F. Lokko, "Public Service Ethics in Ghana" in Kenneth Kernaghan and O.P.Dwivedi (eds.), op. cit., p.111.

<sup>3/</sup> John R. Shermerhorn Jr., Management for Productivity (USA, John Wiley and Sons, 1989), p.604.

reconciling the virtues of public interest with the public temptations of public officials and personnel. A way out of this predicament has been suggested. A government servant who is unable to quickly determine the ethics of his/her conduct should ask an introspective question such as: "If I am publicly criticized, will I still feel that this is what I should have done, and the way I should have done, and the way I should have decided to do it?" 4/ The public servant is always vulnerable to criticism on ethics. In the circumstances, the basic source and ultimate responsibility for ethical considerations must be traced to the moral values and integrity of the individual public servant.

(c) Authority, responsibility, accountability and myth of neutrality

11. Public service ethics are invariably an integral part of the authority, responsibility, accountability and the myth of the neutrality of the bureaucracy. Pejorative connotations generally tend to be associated with the usage of the word "bureaucracy" because of the processes and attitudes of public servants. The problem is not with bureaucracy as an organigram but with the officials who are expected to carry out public policy directives within a given organizational framework and socio-economic environment. Indifference to the standards and qualities of ethics generally reflects a crisis in the quality of authority, responsibility and accountability relationships in organizations. A bureaucracy that is staffed by people with brains in their heads and the lofty ideals of the public interest in their hearts will not be indifferent or neutral to public service ethics. Such a bureaucracy would be positively responsive to the challenges and the needs of society. In a functioning bureaucracy there is a place for everything and everything in its place. This Weberian description of the ideal bureaucracy provides the framework within which to define the organizational relationships which could enhance public service ethics in Africa. The overriding question is "what is the status of accountability in public service in African countries?" To prepare the foundation for answers to this question an attempt has been made in the ensuing paragraphs to define accountability and related concepts.

12. Authority refers to the power or right which one person has to give orders to other persons and expect the latter to obey and implement. The authority parameters usually include discretionary powers such as those given to customs officials to levy or not to levy duties on some goods. The use of authority creates responsibility and accountability relationships between superiors and subordinates. The organization or institutional structure depicts the hierarchy of authority in both private and public sector services. The authority-responsibility principle requires that authority should be commensurate with responsibility when a superior delegates assignments to a subordinate. Public service authority is derived from the whole population or public at large.

13. Responsibility, therefore, flows from authority and refers to the obligation to perform accepted tasks or assignments or a commitment on the part of the subordinate to carry out assigned duties in accordance with the directives of the superior official.

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4/ Op. cit., Kenneth Kernaghan and G.P. Dwivedi, p.19.

It is not unusual for the public to hold some public servants responsible for duties over which they do not have authority as defined in the preceding paragraph.

14. Accountability refers to the obligation required of a subordinate to be answerable to the superior for the results achieved in the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities. In effect, it could be argued that since the public service derives its authority from the general public, and its responsibilities and duties from the public interest, it must be answerable or accountable to the general public through the official representatives of the population. In the African context, this hierarchy of authority - responsibility - accountability relationships are blurred by a number of intervening factors including the circumstances under which some countries attained their independence (through armed struggle versus peaceful means) and an assortment of military-political regimes. In essence, high standards of ethics can be maintained if individuals maintain high personal moral standards and integrity, on the one hand, and on the other hand, accountability, responsibility and authority relationships are clearly defined and respected so as to diminish the opportunities of human frailties to fall prey to unethical conduct at the first flush of economic hardship. The problems of accountability to self and to society would seem to be central to the issue of public service ethics in Africa. The apparently muddled accountability scenario has tended also to cloud the notion of public interest <sup>5/</sup> requirements in individual African countries.

15. The question of neutrality of civil servants in the performance of their duties and responsibilities is also important for the analysis and evaluation of public service ethics. Public service neutrality is said to be a myth because the impression is created that the public servant is dehumanized in the discharge of public duties or that, like a robot, a public servant is impersonal. Contrary to these erroneous impressions, public servants "are not expected to be neutral or impartial, as between government and opposition but are required to serve the government of the day, whatever its political identity". If the government changes overnight, public servants are expected to serve the new government of the day as loyally and efficiently as they did its predecessor. <sup>6/</sup> As political chameleons, not political competitors, public servants must provide objective information and advice to ministers to enable them win the next election. The dexterity to switch loyalties and orientations from one government to the other poses a challenge to public servants as human beings with their own views and family considerations. In some societies strict rules of ethics assist the public servant to observe the requirements of political neutrality. In other societies the objective advice of public servants to incumbent governments is misconstrued as sabotage and the public servant victimized. The challenge for the public servant is how to be neutral on questions of the ethics of ministers, other

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<sup>5/</sup> E.M. McLeay, "Building Societies: A Question of Accountability", in Public Administration Vol. 62, 1984 (Basil Blackwell, U.K. The Royal Institute of Public Administration), pp.148-150.

<sup>6/</sup> Ann Robinson et. al., "Symposium on Ministerial Responsibility", in Public Administration Vol. 65, 1987 (Royal Institute of Public Administration), pp.74-78.

political leaders and senior colleagues whose conduct is not in harmony with the public interest.

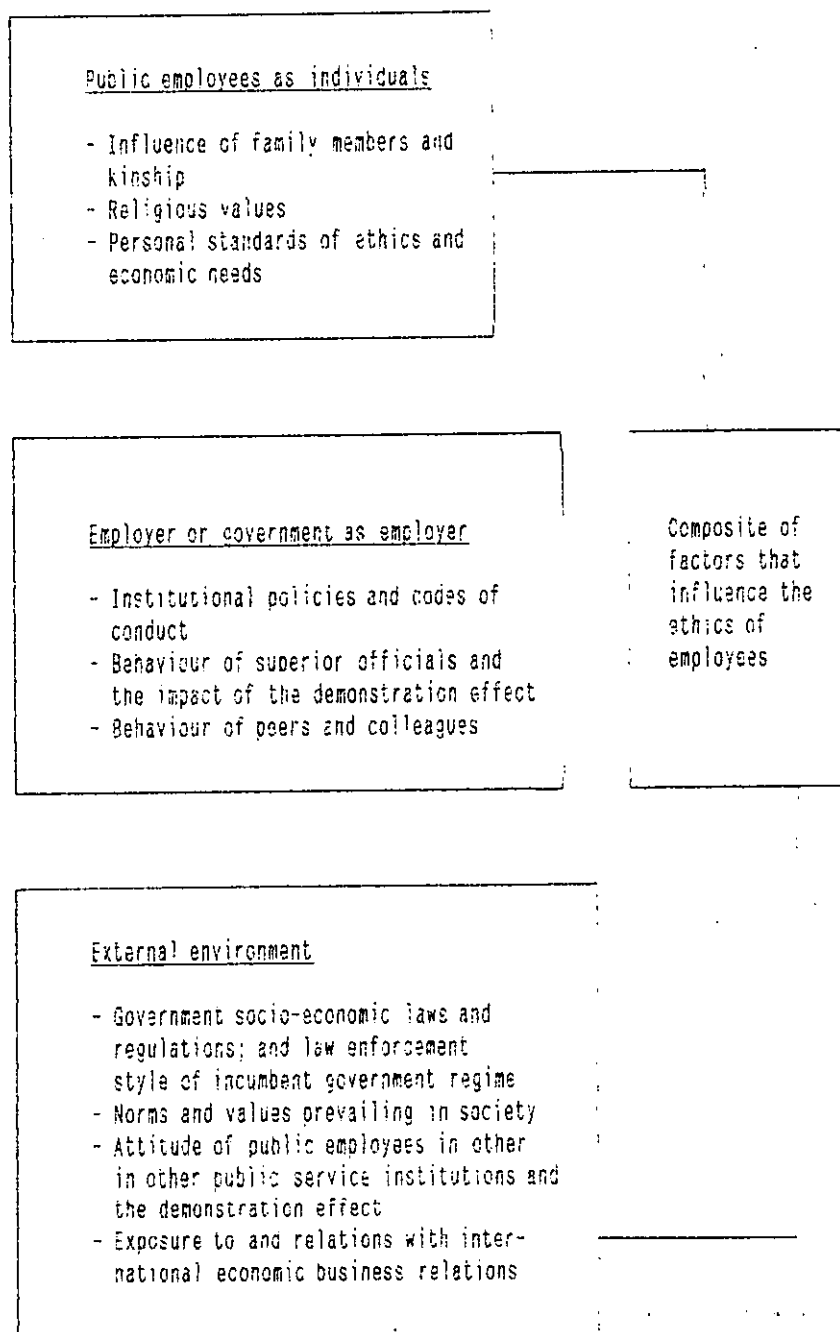
## II. PERSPECTIVES OF ETHICS BEFORE AND AFTER THE ATTAINMENT OF INDEPENDENCE FROM COLONIAL RULE

16. The normative ethos of people in all societies are shaped, among other things, by environmental factors including the dynamics of social interaction within each society and the exposure to external influences. In the same vein it could be argued that certain factors tend to influence the ethical attitude and behaviour <sup>7/</sup> of public service employees. Some of these factors could be summarized as in fig. 1.

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<sup>7/</sup> John R. Shermerhorn, Jr., Management for Productivity, op.cit.

Fig. 1: Factors that influence the attitude of public service employees to public service ethics



17. In fig. 1, the personal convictions of public employees as individuals could be considered as the most important determinant of the trend of public service ethics. Persons who have innate inclination of indifference to ethics are the most vulnerable



to the negative influences of the employing organization and exposure to the abundance of temptations in the external environment. The magnitude and ramifications of these influences would depend on the time frame and the socio-economic development levels of the society. In the case of African countries factors such as ethnicity, colonial experiences with English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and other alien cultures have more or less added more dimensions to the factors that could impinge on the contemporary public service ethics in African countries.

#### Approaches to the perspectives of public service ethics

18. From the conceptual perspective, public service ethics may be approached from a dynamic or behavioural perspective in which human development and improvement are regarded as the motive force for positive attitudes to ethics in the public service. The basic aim of this approach is to humanize the public service and make it easier for public employees to resolve the ethical dilemmas in which they find themselves in the cause of duty. This approach to ethics has been referred to as the "ethics of equity" as against the "ethics of efficiency" approach which deals with the essence of efficiency and effectiveness in the utilization of public resources. These two perspectives are, nonetheless, intermingled. In terms of the focus of concern, a micro-ethical approach would emphasize the conduct or behaviour of individual public employees while the macro-ethical approach would subordinate the feelings and desires of individual public employees to the broader concerns of the public interest and the society. 8/ The trend of public service ethics would further be affected by the resource endowments, production frontier and level of science and technology of the society.

19. A political perspective on ethics argues that both democratic ideals and effective bureaucratic ideals constitute the ethos of and out to be integrated in public service ethics. It is true that public employees necessarily work within the political system, using skills in political judgement, persuasion, and compromise to effect change. The political perspective can be tied to ethics and democratic ideals and not to the undesirable approaches of politics. The development of skills is required in exercising political judgement and persuasion, as well as developing a systematic interaction and understanding of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and the general public. To approach public service ethics from the political perspective should be seen as the process of heightening the awareness of the essence of ethics in political processes, politics and political behaviour. 9/

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8/ Jeremy F. Plant and Harold F. Gortner, "Ethics, Personnel Management and Civil Service Reform" in Public Personnel Management, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1981 (International Personnel Management Association, 1991), p.4.

9/ Kathryn G. Denhardt, "The management of ideals: A political perspective on ethics", Public Administration Review March/April 1989, op.cit., p.187.

20. An evolutionary perspective on ethics stresses the fact that ethics are rooted in the changing traits of society. The concepts of state, government, economic organization, ownership and production relations have been in a state of flux in Africa. Besides the heterogeneity of the normative ethos of African countries and the commonly shared characteristics of the underdevelopment of productive forces, events preceding and accompanying the colonization and subsequent decolonization of African countries have had uneven impact on public service ethics. It is, therefore, only but logical that the trend of ethics should be explored during the period prior to independence; soon after independence; and from the onset of the current socio-economic crisis which does not show any signs of abating.

(a). Public service ethics prior to independence

21. It is common knowledge that African countries attained their independence from colonial rule on different dates and years. While Ghana attained its independence in 1957, Namibia joined the family of independent African nations in March 1990. Countries like Liberia and Ethiopia are reputed not to have experienced the hegemony of colonial rule. Some countries attained their nationhood through the balancing of the barrel of the gun and diplomatic negotiations while other countries did not shed blood on a large scale to achieve independence.

22. An attempt to explore the scenario of public service ethics in Africa was made, even though incidentally, as a background to the articulation of the public service crisis in independent African countries at a time when, except for Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia and the Sudan, the other countries had experienced less than 20 years of independence. <sup>10/</sup> A much more focused attempt to analyse issues that are relevant to public service ethics was made in a paper titled: "Promoting a More Responsible Administrative Conduct" <sup>11/</sup> in Africa with particular reference to the Ghanaian experience. Even though the definition of administrative responsibility in the latter study differs from the connotation in this report, there is considerable similarity in the analysis of the value systems as applicable to public employees as individuals and public expectations of higher moral standards from public employees than from the private business community.

23. The trend of public service ethics prior to the independence of most Africa countries could be subdivided broadly into the period from the fifteenth century, when Europeans first arrived in Africa, up to 1884 when European colonialists balkanized Africa at the infamous Berlin Conference; and from 1884 to 1960 during which Europe exploited Africa and sowed the seeds of underdevelopment.

24. During the period from the fifteenth century up to 1884 the normative ethos were based more on ethnicity and the limited division of labour due, in part, to the

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<sup>10/</sup> African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), African Public Service: Challenges and a Profile for the Future (Addis Ababa, AAPAM, 1984), pp.2-6.

<sup>11/</sup> Ibid., pp.205-216.

limited functions of the society. There was communal attitude to the welfare of all the members of the ethnic group and social interaction across tribal or ethnic lines was constrained by lack of transport and communications as well as language differences. It is true that before the advent of Europeans, Africa had empires like the Ghana Empire, the Songhai Empire, the Fulani Empire of Northern Nigeria, the Kingdoms in Uganda, the Democratic Elders' Councils in Kenya, the Ethiopian Empire, and chiefdoms and monarchies in other parts of Africa. However, these traditional empires and chiefdoms had limited administrative functions and public service ethics were more or less identical with the society's ethics. Economic activities were limited to farming, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, some metal works with copper, iron and steel and other handicrafts, social services and other less complex tasks to meet limited individual and societal demands. With the intensification of the European scramble for Africa and the emergence of international slave trade African societies began to be exposed to one another and to aliens from Europe. Native standards of ethics began to intermingle with standards from both other African societies and from European culture.

25. On the eve of the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884, the traditional perspectives on ethics were compelled to co-exist with those of other African tribes and the alien culture and traditions of the British, the French, the German, the Portuguese or the Italian. Africa was balkanized and shared among colonialists who proceeded to shape the ethics of the colonized and the traditional administrative systems in accordance with the economic development requirements of the metropolises. In so far as the traditional ethics were not an obstacle to the economic interests of the colonizers, such ethics were left intact and sometimes encouraged.

26. The entrenchment of colonial rule in Africa after 1884 could be considered as a watershed in the concerted underdevelopment of the continent. It is common knowledge that African societies resisted colonial exploitation and in fact sacrificed the lives of their people to extricate themselves from the clutches of colonizers but to no avail due to sophisticated fire-power of the invaders. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the ethics of benevolence, the customary-gift syndrome and the ethics of hospitality which were inherent in the communal characteristics of African societies and the weakness of traditional administrative systems exposed the continent to the ruthless exploitation and greed of colonial hegemony. The imposition of colonial ethics on traditional norms as well as the selective perpetuation of local ethics that were advantageous to colonial administration did not, in the final analysis, augur well for the national development of African countries. The realization by African nationalists that the African people were being hoodwinked by the paltry trappings of colonial ethics, galvanized the people to fight for independence from colonial rule. Africans, therefore, considered it unethical to be subjugated and exploited.

(b) Public service ethics soon after the attainment of independence

27. Notwithstanding the fact that African nations achieved independence on different dates from 1957 to 1990 and through dissimilar strategies, these nations share common experiences of colonial legacies. In the context of public service ethics, the erstwhile colonialists bequeathed to the nascent nations independence constitutions which perpetuate divisive ethno-cultural development, linguistic, religious and political differences. They also entrenched public services with structures, processes,

procedures, conditions of service, tradition and attitudes that were not primarily designed to serve the aspirations and goals of the newly, independent states. Staggering socio-economic underdevelopment structures and extremely weak private sectors and public enterprises were bequeathed to the pioneers of African independence and inexperienced and unskilled public employees. These legacies coupled with the post-independence development expectations of the population and the daunting requirements of nation-building exerted pressures on public service ethics.

28. The reorientation of the public service on independence in virtually all African countries has more often than not placed public service ethics at the top of the agenda of administrative reforms or included them implicitly in the terms of reference for reforms. Administrative deficiencies identified at seminars on Urgent Administrative Problems in Africa held in 1963 and 1968 under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa included problems of rigid organization structure and hierarchical relationships; recruitment, remuneration, promotion and job evaluation; poor mobility; inter-class conflict; strained relationships between politicians and senior civil servants; weak administrative leadership; over-centralization; corruption and tribalism; poor staff development and training arrangements; anachronistic administrative management practices; lack of effective co-ordination; lack of clarity of the objectives of public corporations and political interference in their management.

29. The imposed system of local government and field administration was a bottleneck to grassroots development. Local authorities were short of fiscal resources and trained human resources while their personnel practices were riddled with patronage, nepotism and jobbery, low salaries and insecurity of employment. 12/ On the whole, therefore, paucity of resources including shortage of qualified human resources, unethical practices such as nepotism and jobbery, and preference for the status quo inherited from former colonialists did not seem to contribute positively to the improvement of public service ethics soon after independence. This trend has been replicated from country to country since 1957 when Ghana attained its nationhood. One explanation is that the few public service elites who succeeded colonial administrators found it to their own advantage to retain the salary scales and other conditions of service which the erstwhile colonialists had tailor-made for expatriate colonial employees without regard to the development priorities of the occupied colonies. Thus, the trend of ethics soon after independence was guided more by the greed to retain and perpetuate the sumptuous emoluments and perks which were bequeathed to the pioneer public service elites and the politicians of the incumbent government. The implications of this trend will be elaborated in the third section of this report.

30. After the euphoria of independence festivities is over, the general public usually expects the political and other public service leaders to keep the pre-independence promises of a better life on independence. If the promised goods and services are not

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12/ Adebayo Adedeji, "Strategy and Tactics for Administrative Reform in Africa" in A Decade of Public Administration in Africa. (AAPAM, Addis Ababa, 1975).

forthcoming or are being monopolized by public service elites, then the public is impelled to scrutinize the lifestyles and question the ethical behaviour of all public service employees irrespective of category. In response even junior public service employees are tempted to join in the scourge of spoils and before long the standards of public service ethics would deteriorate.

31. Some African countries have not been oblivious of this flux in public service ethics. Examples of corrective measures could be taken from Ghana (Independent in 1957), Nigeria (independent in 1960) and Namibia (independent in 1990). In the case of Ghana a new charter for the civil service was formulated. The principles governing the relations between civil servants and ministers as well as the position of civil servants in the community were spelt out. The public service charter noted that tradition and convention, to a large extent, transcend the written codes and provide an unwritten code of ethics and conduct for which the most effective sanction is the opinion of the public. Experience has shown, however, that in Ghanaian society, like in most African societies, family, local and ethnics loyalties tend to compete with and sometimes take precedence over loyalties to the nation.<sup>13/</sup> Today it is difficult to assert that this charter has improved the public service ethics situation.

32. Nigeria, like Ghana, inserted stringent moral and professional codes of conduct in the 1979 constitution. <sup>14/</sup> Public officers were not to put themselves in a position where their personal interest conflicts with duties and responsibilities nor ask or accept any property or benefits of any kind for themselves or any other person on account of anything done or omitted to be done by them in the discharge of duties. A public officer was not to be associated with any society, the membership of which may be incompatible with the functions or dignity of the public service. In addition, every public officer was mandatorily required, within three months of taking office, and at the end of every four years while in service, and the end of his term of office, to submit to a code of conduct Bureau a declaration of all property or assets and liabilities owed including those of the spouse and child under the age of 21. Since Moral values and integrity are situational and cannot be divorced from the cultural milieu, the Nigerian code of ethics cited here must be evaluated against the background of the realities in the nation.

33. The independence experience of Namibia is barely one year and as such it would be unrealistic to evaluate the post independence trend. Nevertheless, because of the unusually long and ruthless exploitation of the indigenous population, the experience of the years immediately preceding independence was used to guard against a possible worsening of public service ethics. Prior to independence in March 1990, a South African appointed Commission of Enquiry, the Thirion Commission, chastised the public service to be inherited at independence as corrupt, incompetent, wasteful and an unbearable burden and among the world's most irresponsible. The independence

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<sup>13/</sup> Basil C.F. Lokko, "Public Service Ethics in Ghana" in Kenneth Kernaghan and O.P. Dwivedi, op. cit., p.111.

<sup>14/</sup> AAPAM, African Public Services, 1984, op. cit., p.208.

constitution therefore made provision for an Ombudsman system to ensure the impeccable conduct of public service personnel.

C. Public service ethics since the onset of the ongoing economic crisis in the early 1980s

34. The enforcement of the codes of conduct in most African countries has been affected by various factors including the political instability that has bedeviled the continent during the last three decades and the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the population since the early 1980s. Public service ethics have, therefore, been under extreme stress not only because of the cumulative effects of the pre- and immediate post-independence periods but also because of the diminishing opportunities for employment, savings against the rainy day, the education of children and medical care; the low ebb of confidence in governmental institutions; and doubts in the efficacy of the public service in overcoming the challenges of the current economic crisis.

35. The progress in the enforcement of public service codes of conduct has ranged from the complete acquiescence of the breach of the canons of ethics to the enforcement of legal action in the courts of law in some cases of overt corruption and embezzlement of public funds. In some countries, the promulgated codes of conduct are regarded as platitudes for public consumption. Some finance ministries have become nationally known as supermarkets at which public service personnel and members of the public literally purchase their financial entitlements and documents from incumbent officers. In other government institutions members of the public must give bribes in the form of money to public officials to obtain their signature on official documents. Some customs personnel, traffic police officers, airways personnel, and public service staff who are in daily touch with the public have tended to surrender their moral principles and professional integrity to the epidemic of bribery, corruption, moonlighting and other clandestine activities in order to acquire the basic human needs required for survival. In the higher echelons of the public service, a breach of professional ethics is on the increase. In desperation, some governments have recruited European expatriates to key managerial positions in economic institutions such as central banks, planning ministries and development corporations as if these expatriates do not have even more serious problems of public service ethics in their home countries in Europe and North America.

36. The more subtle forms of unethical conduct are also on the ascendancy. Dereliction of duty through absenteeism, lateness, insubordination and moonlighting has become more rampant since the onset of the current economic crisis. Other unethical activities which have been intensified, include patronage, nepotism, conflict of interest, influence peddling, seeking pleasure at the expense of the public through the use of one's official position, favours to relatives and friends at the expense of public funds, misuse of privileged government information and public assets and engaging in disruptive political activities, <sup>15/</sup> insensitivity to the problems of members of the

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<sup>15/</sup> O.P. Dwivedi, Public Service Ethics: Report of the Study Group on Ethics in the Public Service (Brussels, International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration, 1978).

public and other callous behaviour which could be attributed to the economic squeeze brought about by the economic malaise of the 1980s.

37. It is becoming more and more evident that codes of conduct which were formulated to bring about some uniform understanding of the ethics expected of public servants have all but been relegated to the statute books. Criminal activities such as embezzlement of funds or theft of public property are still enforceable under the penal code or criminal laws of each country. In some African countries, anti-corruption agencies are still active but personnel of these agencies are not exempt from the pernicious consequences of the economic crisis. Economic liberalization measures have, in some cases, made it easier for public service employees to share in the windfall profits of private business since most business people who survive the economic crisis are in a position to share some of their profits with public service officials. In effect, both the general public and public sector officials seem to complain bitterly about the deteriorating trend of public service ethics but at the same time participate in making the situation more desperate in the face of excruciating economic crisis.

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS TRENDS

38. The analysis of public service ethics tends to boil down to the isolated discussion of the behaviour of public officials in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities. While this concentration on individuals in public service positions is understandable, it is instructive to note from fig. 1 of this report that a whole range of factors could impinge upon the good judgement of a public servant in any situation. What are ethics, for instance, to a starving and morally principled civil servant who is given a free meal and some money to feed himself and his starving wife and children because he has not received his salary for several months or the salary is too meagre to make both ends meet? What are ethics to a person who can be saved from the gas chamber if he bribes his jailer? What are ethics to subordinate public officials during economic crisis if political, military and other public leaders and senior public service personnel are enjoying conspicuous consumption lifestyles but persuading the general public to tighten belts because of the negative externalities of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs)?

39. Can there be popular participation in development if decisions that affect the everyday life of the people are made by public officials who are not accountable to the public but accountable to themselves and their collaborators in the scourge of spoils? Can personal freedom and spontaneous initiatives of individuals be enhanced to contribute to the general well-being of society if public service institutions divide and discriminate personnel on the basis of status and sumptuous privileges, power and influence as well as enforce repressive measures to muzzle free expression and dissent? These and similar introspective questions are essential for the evaluation of the implications of the emerging trends of public service ethics in African countries. The appraisal could be undertaken within: (a) the framework of the dynamic socio-

economic relations in African economies; and (b) the future role of public service ethics in socio-economic development.

A. Implications within the framework of dynamic socio-economic relations

40. As already mooted, the study of public service ethics in any society is important, among other things, because of the implications they have for the morale, productivity and development of the population. Public service personnel in Africa have since about the fifteenth century been caught between the ethics of traditional societies and those of the culture of European colonizers vis-à-vis property ownership, production and consumption relations in society. In essence, therefore, economic and non-economic factors seem to have influenced the trend of public service ethics in virtually all African countries. The question is: how have socio-economic factors affected the ethical behaviour of public servants over the years and how has this behaviour affected the performance of the public service in the provision of the goods and services which the governed expect from the government? Answers to this multi-dimensional question could be attempted within corresponding ethics trends from about the fifteenth century to 1884; from 1884 to about the 1960s; from the 1960s, when most African countries achieved their independence, to about the early 1980s, the onset of the current economic crisis; and from the 1980s to the 1990s and beyond. Socio-economic development is not a discrete but a continuous process. Therefore, the periods mentioned here must be seen as indicative rather than mutually exclusive. If anything, the issues actually overlap.

(a) Implications from the fifteenth century to 1884

41. From the fifteenth century to the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884 it could be argued that public service ethics were identical with the ethics of the individual, the clan, tribe or ethnic group. Services were communal, participation voluntary and the welfare of the individual was the concern of the other members of the group. Given the heterogeneity of the ethno-cultural configuration of different communities in Africa it could be inferred that perceptions and practical norms of ethics varied from one community to another. The communal nature of economic activities and human welfare probably ensured that there was equity in the enforcement of sanctions for the breach of community ethics. Economic activities were rudimentary, limited as they were, to hunting, animal husbandry, marginal food cultivation, and little interaction with other communities until the advent of Europeans and the onset of the notorious slave trade which itself put community ethics to the test. Individually, therefore, each ethnic group tended to regard its own norms of ethics as the best vis-à-vis the economic activities and the welfare requirements of its own people. Thus, given the low level of economic activities, the cohesion of ethnic groups, the communal nature of concern for the welfare of the individual and the intimate relationship between individual and community ethics, it could be asserted that the standard of public service ethics were in consonance with the socio-economic expectations of various communities which existed prior to the balkanization of Africa in 1884.

42. The community-wide self-help norms which the pre-1884 traditional administrative ethics had engendered in various tribes and communities were interrupted by the European scramble and colonial sharing of the continent into European scramble and colonial sharing of the continent into European areas of influence without regard to



the ethnic affinity of the populations. Thus, colonial boundaries cut across tribes and brought about an admixture of standards of traditional ethics which were in some cases incompatible because of tribal differences. In addition, the colonizers imposed alien shades of ethics which were in the best interest of the colonialists. Although the British, French, Germans, Portuguese, Italians and Spaniards did not transplant the metropolitan ethics to Africa they nevertheless designed economic policies of occupation on the basis of tailor-made ethics of exploitation.

43. Wherever traditional norms of ethics were in conflict with the ethics of exploitation the colonialist would disregard the traditional norms. The British policy of indirect rule and the general colonial policy of divide-and-rule, for instance, encouraged local ethics which entrenched the infallibility and supremacy of Europeans vis-à-vis African officials. The customary gift ethics of traditional African society was exploited to include gift of farmland to Europeans in return for petty favours such as bottles of whisky and chieftancy titles. Under the policy of indirect rule, the British strengthened and entrenched the native systems of one ethnic group over the other groups, giving rise to feelings of superiority and to demands for federal constitutions at independence as was the case in Nigeria and Uganda. Where direct rule was practised as in Kenya and many francophone countries, the colonialists appointed chiefs and "headmen" in complete disregard of native systems. 16/ In effect, the colonial ethics of occupation and exploitation not only diluted the traditional norms of ethics but also sowed the seeds of perpetual disunity and disintegration of the economies of African countries, deprived Africans of productive assets especially farmland, syphoned the mineral wealth of the continent for the enrichment of Europe and degraded human labour through the payment of starvation wages. Thus, from 1884 to independence each and every African country experienced the ruthless exploitation of natural resources, the degradation of labour and the encouragement of educational programmes that were attuned to the ethics of colonial exploitation.

(b) Implications on the eve of independence

44. The structure of the public service on the eve of independence further illustrates the magnitude of the disruption which colonial occupation inflicted on the African development paradigm. The preoccupation of colonialists with the maintenance of law and order was intended to protect the interests of white settlers, for example, in countries like Kenya, the then Rhodesia, and South West Africa (now Namibia) as well as to create a conducive climate for the exploitation of natural resources. Similarly public enterprises, especially Produce Marketing Boards, were established specifically to serve the interests of European farmers. 17/ The crops themselves were selected to meet the industrial requirements of the metropolis. The colonial occupation regimes had the prerogative to appoint Board Members on the basis of patronage and support for colonial motives. Colonialists did not find it unethical to

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16/ AAPAM, African Public Services, op. cit., p.4.

17/ Goran Hyden et. al. (eds.), Development Administration: The Kenyan Experience (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1970), p.17.

pay uneconomic prices to peasants through marketing boards and with the connivance of Board Members who claimed to be protecting the interests of local farmers whereas their loyalty was to European administrators. The post independence problems of public enterprises such as marketing boards were created before independence. The establishment of these boards contributed to the worsening of the standards of ethics in the public service of many African countries.

45. In the sphere of local government and field administration, Europeans sought to make themselves demigods. Traditional African administrative systems were all but discarded. Agreements with colonial invaders by local traditional leadership were regarded by colonial governments as no more than terms of surrender. Any attempt by Africans to reassert the terms of agreements was futile. The reaction of colonial regimes to African grievances for breach of ethics was brutal and repressive. For once, African traditional leadership realized that Europeans had hoodwinked them to enter into agreements that were not worth the paper on which they were written. Local government leaders were hand picked by the colonial regime and did not therefore inspire popular support from the people they were supposed to represent. Thus, the grassroots population regarded most councillors or members of local authorities as supporters and spokesmen of the colonial administration.

46. The situation became more desperate when there was loss of tribal land to white settlers and humiliating legislation enacted against all development activities of the indigenous population. <sup>18/</sup> This further illustrates the extent to which colonial administrations disregarded all norms of ethics as perceived and practised by traditional African societies. The result was that African economies remained largely underdeveloped and most Africans began to lose confidence in the public service ethics of colonial administration. In the circumstance, resistance movements sprouted across the length and breadth of Africa. The spontaneous emergence of freedom movements could be seen as a reaction not only to the subjugation and inhuman treatment inherent in colonial occupation but also an expression of serious doubts in the ethical norms of colonial administration. This disillusionment with the quality of colonial public service ethics has continued to influence the overall trend of ethics and socio-economic development in independent African countries.

(c) Implications during the early phase of independence

47. Each African country inherited colonial legacies which have continued to influence the pattern and trend of public service ethics. In some countries the standard of ethics has deteriorated faster than in other countries. Nonetheless, as Machiavelli asserted in "The Prince", "There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more difficult of success, nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all who profit by the old order and only lukewarm defenders in those who would profit by the new order."<sup>19/</sup>

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<sup>18/</sup> Ibid., p.235.

<sup>19/</sup> AAPAM, African Public Services, op. cit., p.222.

48. There was a crisis of expectations soon after independence. The few Africans who were in place at independence and those who benefited from rapid Africanization of certain public service posts disregarded the inequities of the erstwhile colonial ethics and argued convincingly to inherit and even improve upon the salary scales and service conditions of the outgoing colonial public servants. The political leaders who rightly deserved the credit as the Founding Fathers of the new nations not only championed the cause of localization of the public service but also had a say in virtually all aspects of national life including decisions on employment in the public service. In addition, political leaders were accountable to the general public for the pre-independence promises to bring about an improvement in the quality of the life of every person in society. As individual human beings, however, politicians themselves could not be expected to make personal sacrifices indefinitely. They had to reconcile their own personal interests with those of their families, their followers, the general public, the erstwhile colonialists, and the nation. It became obvious that all these dilemmas were a challenge to public service ethics.

49. For one thing, sovereignty conferred unfettered powers onto political leaders and civil servants. For another thing, the outgoing colonialists had realized that business interests from the metropolis could make more profits through flatter and corruption of the inexperienced public service personnel of the newly independent countries. In addition, the traditional norms of ethics had undergone considerable transformation and had all but disintegrated at independence. Through subtle indoctrination colonial occupation also succeeded in inculcating European consumption but not production habits in African public servants. Foreign investors took advantage of the apparently confused standard of public service ethics and enriched themselves through unscrupulous project ideas and programmes on development. The pressure of the population, the enthusiasm of public servants to acquire property and to sustain colonial lifestyles as well as the encouragement of foreign investors and financiers who sensed the availability of profitable opportunities in countries that just emerged from many years of colonial rule led to the subtle but definite deterioration in the quality of ethics in some African countries soon after independence. The scenario has been one of unsound development projects in all sectors of the economy: procurement for industrial machinery, trucks and other equipment for development projects was rigged. Used and reconditioned equipment from Europe and other countries found a dumping ground in African countries. Factories were stabilised in partnership with national governments based on hunches and falsified feasibility studies.

50. From very small beginning at independence, the deterioration in the moral and professional integrity of the public service has continued unabated. The consequences for the socio-economic development of African countries are not a source of comfort. Country after country gradually became the victim of unscrupulous investors who, through government-sponsored overoptimistic market studies; no competitive bidding; grossly inflated cost of investments; and bad government, have become partners in the breach of public service ethics. Socially useless projects were financed and the protection of foreign governments through Export Risk Guarantee Schemes for investors from the metropolis has brought the economies of some African countries to near bankruptcy. It is evident in most African countries that corruption on the part of the public service, an aggressive sales policy by foreign business and state supports offered by both the African governments as well as the export promoting

industrialized countries have in their combined effect <sup>20/</sup> contributed to the economic, especially the debt crisis, in which most African countries found themselves in the early 1980s.

(d) Implications for the onset and progress of current socio-economic crisis

51. The current socio-economic crisis confronting most African countries could be attributed to a plethora of endogenous and exogenous factors which survived independence and became more complex on the emergence of new social and economic demands by the population after the independence euphoria. Prior to the onset of the current economic crisis in the early 1980s, African countries had embarked on several courses of action to arrest the deteriorating standards of ethics. Some of the remedial actions taken to bring back some sanity into public service ethics included:

(a) Code of ethics: how have they fared in stemming the downward trend in public service ethics?

(b) Military coups d'Etat: a noose or lifeline for public service ethics?

(c) Anti-corruption commissions and revival of ombudsman (*mediateur* and *conseil d'Etat*) systems; are they succeeding in reconciling self-interest with the virtue of public service inherent in the public interest?

The sheer size of this report and the heterogeneity of experiences in various African countries make it necessary to barely touch on answers to the foregoing questions.

52. It must be reiterated that virtually all governments in Africa have, at some point in the process of nationhood building, express concern at the quality of societal ethics. The formulation of codes of ethics for the public service is, therefore, widespread in African countries. The codification of ethical rules to guide and control human behaviour in the service of the public stems from both the dissatisfaction with the conduct of public servants and the need to have a common reference to enable individual public officials subordinate their innate conceptions of ethics to the expected ethics of the public service as an organization for the commonweal. Codes of ethics failed to stem the deterioration of ethical values partly because the whole society contributed to the worsening situation and individual public servants failed to reconcile their self-interest with the ill-defined virtues of the public interest in the post independence realities of African economies.

53. Coup d'Etat and armed conflict have been used in some African countries as remedies for the poor performance of the implementation of codes of ethics by civilian governments. The argument for military coups d'Etat has tended to be similar everywhere. It is argued, for instance, that the armed forces are interested in giving a lifeline to the public which was being exploited through corruption and victimization by the civilian government. It is common knowledge that the armed forces are the

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<sup>20/</sup> Richard Gerster, "How to ruin a country: the case of Togo" in IFDA Dossier, May/June 1989.

integral arm of the law-and-order enforcement instrument of any government. When this instrument becomes the government itself, it must of necessity be expected to shoulder the triple functions of governing; maintenance of law-and-order; planning and management of socio-economic development policies, strategies and programmes. The military would, of necessity, enlist the co-operation and collaboration of civilian public servants in the daunting responsibilities of nation-building and national economic development management. This new partnership between the armed forces and civilian officials could lead to the reassertion of the supremacy of ethics as the hallmark of an excellent public service. On the other hand, the new partnership could lead to a collapse of professional integrity and moral values not only in the public service but also in the whole society. If this latter implication prevails, then the society would come to regard coups d'Etat as a noose rather than a lifeline.

54. Anti-corruption commissions and the revival of ombudsman systems have also featured in the remedial actions which some African countries have adopted to address the predicaments of ethics in the ever changing socio-economic environment in Africa, in particular, and in the international economic outlook in general. The aim is to invoke the public interest aspects of the civic responsibility of the citizenry and to reconcile it with the self-interest of the individual in both official and private life. In this regard Machiavelli cautions that "there's such a difference between the way we really live and the way we ought to live that the man who neglects the real to study the ideal will learn to accomplish his ruin, not his salvation." <sup>21/</sup> The performance of ethics watchdog institutions depends on the personal integrity of those charged with the responsibility for their success in achieving the goals of a clean public service and the public integrity of each society. In general, the apparent decline of public confidence in the capacity of governments to deliver the goods and services which society requires and to avert persistent economic crisis has not enhanced the performance of ethics watchdog institutions established in the midst of the current socio-economic crisis.

55. The deteriorating trend of public service ethics in Africa has had cumulative implications for socio-economic development with particular reference to the following areas:

(a) Loss of confidence and increased cynicism in government policy declarations and the capability and commitment to implement and carry them through in the national as against personal interest: this has tended to stifle initiative and the desire to participate in economic recovery and development;

(b) Destruction of work ethics is commonplace: dereliction of duty has become more of the rule than an exception and public service officials have become less responsive and more insensitive to public demands for improved attitude to public service and members of the public;

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<sup>21/</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, Robert M. Adams, ed. and trans. (New York, W.W. Norton, 1977) cited in J. Patrick Dobel, "Integrity in the Public Service", Public Administration Review, May/June 1990, Vol.50, No.3 (Washington D.C., American Society for Public Administration, 1990), p.36.

(c) Unemployment and poverty have become endemic in the midst of untapped resources in land for arable agriculture; neglect of the informal sector; ill-fated factories due to corrupt practices in project studies and technology procurement, and staffing practices that are both nepotistic and give preference to expatriate staff whose qualifications and experience may be comparable with those of local personnel;

(d) Distortion of the determination of development priorities and the consequential sub-optimal allocation of borrowed and internally generated financial resources: this has had the effect of increasing the debt burden of almost all African countries;

(e) Debasing of basic services such as health-care including basic sanitation, water and affordable housing; education; and poverty-alleviating public works programmes: this debasing has had debilitating effects on the human conditions in practically all societies across Africa;

(f) Depression not only of public service but also productivity in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy: depressed productivity reduces per capita and national income;

(g) Frustration of participation by genuine foreign investors in Africa's economic recovery and development: the magnitude of bribery and corruption in the public services of some African countries has reached a level which scares away foreign investors from the industrialized countries as it amounts to ruthless extortion and harassment;

(h) Enhancement of a haven for local and international frauds who collude with local public and private officials to syphon financial and material resources from African to other countries at the expense of the capital formation requirements of development;

(i) Entrenchment and perpetuation of European consumption lifestyles without corresponding assumption of respect for work ethics and production culture;

(j) Retardation of the success of economic recovery, integration, development and transformation measures underway in African countries and the worsening of the pervasive skewness in income distribution as well the marginalization of the majority of the population; and

(k) Cost overruns have become the order of the day partly because of the disregard for ethics in management activities such as subcontracting and tenders in central and local government projects and public enterprises. The result is that projects are not completed or completed at inflated costs which amount to grand larceny of the taxpayers by contractors and public sector management officials. The implications for the national budget and public debt can be devastating.

B. Public service ethics and implications for Africa's Future  
Development Challenges

56. The future role of public service ethics assumes that, notwithstanding the need to establish a viable balance between the public and private sectors of the economy, the public service sector would still be expected to play a pivotal role in the creation of a harmonious environment and climate for individual initiatives and public participation in national development. Past and present experiences which have been articulated, and future development challenges could be used as a springboard for discussions on the contours of the future role of public service ethics. An appreciation of some of the constraints which impeded the past role of ethics in public service is also essential for the recommendation of policy measures and action.

57. On attainment of independence, very little effort was made to rationalize the inherited colonial norms of ethics to match the temporal realities of post independent development. This apparent complacency with the colonial legacy could be attributed partly to the claim by some of the pioneer civil servants that they had the monopoly of knowledge about development and as such only their answers to development problems were the right ones. In time, however, it was realized that the ordinary people who had not participated in colonial administration, nevertheless, had immense capacity to contribute 22/ to the ethics of economic development after independence.

58. The training or retraining of officials was aimed at the indoctrination in Britain or France 23/ on how to sustain the erstwhile culture of the colonial administrator instead of training of government officials for the new challenges of development. This polarization of the civil servants and the populace did not promote the essence of ethics in a new development paradigm of African development but rather laid the foundation for the continued exploitation of independent African states in collusion with some African public servants.

59. The essence of codes of ethics was realized in earnest but the apparent preoccupation of some African Institutes of Public Administration 24/ led to the formulation of codes that were thought to apply exclusively to public administrators, narrowly defined to exclude lawyers, medical doctors and other professionals. The failure to appreciate the multi-disciplinary composition of the personnel who constitute the human resources of the public service has, no doubt contributed to the persistent

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22/ Hari Mohan Mathur, Administering Development in the Third World: Constraints and Choices (SAGE Publications, 1986).

23/ William Safran, The French Polity (New York, Longman Inc., 1977), p.207.

24/ See for instance, the editorial recommending the Code of Ethics for the alumni of the Ife Institute of Administration and other public servants, cited in AAPAM. A Decade of Public Administration in Africa, op.cit., p.142.

conflict and disharmony in intra-public service personnel relations to the detriment of public expectations of integrated codes of ethics for an all-embracing public service.

60. Another constraint entails the perception of ethics as rule-oriented bureaucratic processes instead of viewing them from the perspective of the highest moral principles of integrity and conscience which are required to make public servants the engine of development management. The political perspective and the public milieu of ethics are equally important.

61. The neglect of empirical research on public and private service ethics in Africa in the context of socio-economic development has not helped the public service to design and implement measures to strengthen the behaviour of public officials in resolving the predicament in which they find themselves in their daily interaction with members of the public. The knowledge gap has, therefore, contributed to the unsatisfactory record of public service ethics in African countries.

62. The emerging trend of ethics in public service indicates that the record of some Africa's development partners has been an unsatisfactory one. <sup>25/</sup> Some foreign investors have colluded with local officials to ruin the economies of some African countries through fraudulent projects, sale of reconditioned equipment as new, transfer pricing, overoptimistic and deliberately distorted feasibility studies, counter-trade transactions in which Africa's copper, cocoa, coffee, tea and hides and skins are underpriced in exchange for overpriced and unwanted military hardware. By now African public officials must be aware of the fact that foreign investors have their own standards of ethics and their own interests which are at variance with those of Africa.

63. Fraudulent investments in collaboration with foreign partners are in abundance in African countries. Foreign loans are used to finance investments whose real present value is less than a fraction of the original volume of credits. Some African countries move from one debt rescheduling to another and financial intermediaries who parade as negotiators make a kill of the fees charged for their services. The "Club of Paris" which handles matters on public loans or loans with public guarantees and the "London Club" which deals with private creditors problems are kept busy by rescheduling negotiations of Africa's debts. Academic romanticization aside, the unfolding scenario is that corruption involving local and foreign partners has contributed significantly to Africa's underdevelopment. <sup>26/</sup>

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<sup>25/</sup> Richard Gerster, *How to Ruin a Country: The Case of Togo*, op.cit.

<sup>26/</sup> Pierre Pean, L'Argent Noir: Corruption et Sous-développement (France, Librairie Artheme Fayand, 1988).



## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTED MEASURES

64. The deep concern which African leaders have for the socio-economic recovery and transformation of the continent in the 1990s and beyond underlines the determination to rid the society of any internal and external impediments to the contribution of individuals to national development. The overwhelming role of impeccable moral values and conduct in this historic responsibility cannot be overemphasized. The ensuing conclusions and recommendations are intended to highlight some of the issues already articulated in the report and to propose measures to strengthen the resolve of African countries to integrate the essence of ethics in all facets of national life and development efforts.

A. Summary conclusions

65. The following summary conclusions could be made from the foregoing analysis and articulation of the emerging trends of public service ethics in Africa and their implications for social and economic development:

(a) In practically all African societies, as in other societies, concern for the quality of moral values has been universal from time immemorial. However, there have always been differences of perceptions and practices of ethics due to factors such as culture, economic activities, level of specialization and development, exposure to external forces, organizational sophistication and the personal integrity of individuals in different environments;

(b) In spite of the apparent declining trend in public service ethics, the noble traits of communal concern for the welfare of individual members of the society have survived colonial influence and the socio-economic crisis which African countries have been experiencing. It is self-evident from the African Charter on Popular Participation in Development that everyone would like to have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to national development;

(c) The loss of confidence in the ethics of the public service began subtly during the colonial era when colonialists flouted agreements they had entered into on issues such as land ownership and mineral resources. Some unscrupulous colonialists deliberately misconstrued these agreements as evidence of surrender and used this distortion to deprive the African population of farmland. The struggle for independence could, therefore, be attributed partly to the brutalization of Africans who resisted the persistent colonial violation of the ethics of co-existence of all human races;

(d) On the eve and early phase of independence the expectations of the population for the restoration of the highest standards of ethics were very high. Political leaders and civil servants were determined to live up to the pre-independence expectations of the populations. This determination was, however, undermined by a number of morbid factors including the daunting tasks of reorientation from a colonial to a national law-and-order administration; nation-building and the kinship

contradictions; and demand for equitable social services and the expanded economic demands of the population;

(e) In time, senior public officials (politicians and civil servants, alike) were overwhelmed not only by the magnitude of resources required to meet pre-independence expectations but also by the resurgence of the erstwhile contradictions of the colonial legacies. Politicians and civil servants had the state and discretionary power but no property; civil servants had guaranteed salaries and jobs in addition to enormous power; politicians fought for Africanization to correct colonial wrongs but were themselves at the mercy of the electorate; and ex-colonialists devised new and more sophisticated methods to perpetuate their continued exploitation of independent African countries. In the circumstances, the standard of ethics in the public service began to slide downhill once again;

(f) The coups d'Etat in some African countries were intended to salvage the deteriorating standard of ethics. However, the assumption of power seems to have outgrown the goals which the pioneers may have envisaged in good faith. Thus, at the onset of the current economic crisis in the early 1980s, the decline of confidence in public service ethics was common place in Africa. The trend was no better in the industrialized countries but given the level of poverty and social deprivation in African countries, international comparison of trends of ethics must be considered as misplaced;

(g) The social and economic hardships which confronted the majority of the population worsened the standard of public service ethics. Corruption which started from the rank and file of senior public servants became endemic and pervasive. The private sector promoted unethical conduct in public services by taking advantage of the financially desperate conditions to bribe and encourage public servants to bend and break the laws. In essence, therefore, public servants and non-public servants are responsible for the current low ebb of public service ethics; and

(h) Notwithstanding the fact that public servants are expected to uphold the highest standard of moral and professional integrity because of their privileged power status, responsibility and accountability for the furtherance of the public interest, nonetheless, public service ethics must not be viewed in isolation nor divorced from the tempo of ethics in the whole society.

B. Suggested measures to restore confidence in public service ethics and governmental institutions

66. The African Alternative Framework Structural Adjustment Programme (AAF-SAP) socio-economic recovery and transformation 27/ cautions against self-denigration because it breeds a sense of inferiority and of helplessness and aggravates the vulnerability of society. The very foundation of political, economic and social development and the oil that lubricates its engine are the possession of self-confidence by a people in themselves and in their capacities to initiate and organize their own

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27/ ECA, AAF-SAP, op.cit., p.86.

concepts, policies and instruments for engineering change. The aim of all African countries must be to restore confidence in the ethics of governmental institutions and public officials who must themselves champion the restoration of the highest moral principles in the whole society. This is the premise on which the suggestions in this report are based.

(a) Averting external manipulation of African economic decisions and economic management

67. Africans need to be hard-headed enough in the 1990s and beyond, and fully accept the historic responsibility and accountability for the continent's economic destiny to avert the resilience of the external manipulation of economic policies, economic decision-making and economic management which looms alarmingly large in the decade ahead. <sup>28/</sup> Public officials must relentlessly be persuaded to appreciate the fact that it is in the best interest of Africans to resist the temptation to accept kickbacks and favours which interfere with their conscience, integrity and the pride of the people. Chairpersons of all fora on the continent should make it their duty to include issues of ethics revival on the agenda irrespective of the theme of the forum. Intensive public relations campaigns would sensitize public and private sector officials on the need to restore the confidence of the public in the institutions and people who have been charged with responsibility for the production and exchange of goods and services needed by society.

(b) Mandate to national trade unions, OATUU and NGOs

68. Trade Unions at the national level, the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be given the mandate and the financial support to adopt revival of ethics in all employments in African countries. A network of trade unions and NGOs already exists in African countries and could be used as a conduit for reinducting moral decency and impeccable behaviour in all occupations.

(c) Codes of ethics: the positive approach

69. Codes of ethics can help to strengthen the ethical conduct of public affairs in the whole society. Codes that are formulated with the full participation of employees or their duly elected representatives stand a better chance of being effectively observed than those that are imposed or those that are intended to encourage whistle-blowing. Codes of ethics are absolutely necessary because each individual perceives rightness and wrongness differently. Codes would bring some uniformity of understanding to organizational behaviour given the mosaic of ethics which are innate in individuals and the pressures of group dynamics at work.

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<sup>28/</sup> Ibid.

(d) Popular participant and democratization of development

70. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation has, among other things, articulated the requirements of democratization of political processes and enhancement of popular participation in activities that affect the lives of people in all societies. The operationalization of the Charter would strengthen the standard of ethics in the public service.

(e) Improving the motivational bases of public service

71. It is not enough to persuade public servants to improve their ethics record without giving them the wherewithal in terms of timely payment of their contractual salaries and assuring them of public succour in old age or on rainy days. The behaviour of the manager as the leader is also a crucial factor in organizational ethics. It is common knowledge that subordinates know much more about the personal integrity of their supervisors/leaders than these superiors would ever imagine.

(f) Dialogue between elected/appointed and career public officials

72. The nature of public service (requiring, for instance, the harmonization of heterogeneous demands of individuals) is such that conflict and conflict resolution among public officials should be regarded as key factors in ethical behaviour. Even though it has been indicated that individuals are ultimately responsible for their conscience and ethical integrity, the fact remains that organizations can be major agencies of social control especially if they adopt a consistently positive approach to ethical issues.

73. Dialogue between elected/appointed and career public officials would improve ethics in public service. Each African country could design and implement mechanisms for regular interaction to resolve intra-public service conflicts which may give rise to or may emanate from ethical issues.

(g) Training for improved ethics in the public service

74. It can be postulated that every adult knows the difference between right and wrong and does not therefore require any training in ethics. This report indicates, however, that inefficiency can be a source of unethical behaviour. Training in leadership qualities, organizational mission and objectives, organizational problems and prospects, and attitudinal factors in employment can contribute to the improvement of ethics. Training would not only revamp the commitment of employees but also help them to extricate themselves from the daily dilemmas of ethics in occupations in which there is enormous discretionary power and immense temptations exacerbated by the pressures of economic hardship.

(h) Empirical research on ethics and national development

75. The suggestions so far made in this report could be regarded as tentative and implemented as such depending on the seriousness of observable public opinion in each African country. For more enduring and firm action to eradicate the scourge, each country could sponsor its institutions of higher learning to undertake empirical

research on the ramifications of ethics in society and on productive strategies and measures to strengthen the societal ethics in the interest of national development. The inter-disciplinary and participatory approaches to empirical research on ethics should be considered appropriate. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), and the African Economic Association (AEA) are regional associations that could provide some support to the empirical research efforts of African Universities and other institutions of higher learning in the field of society ethics and socio-economic development and transformation in the 1990s and beyond.