Improved Public Policy Delivery in Nigeria: The role of ethics and accountability

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This paper reviews the role of ethics and accountability in ensuring improved public policy delivery in Nigeria. It reiterates that effective public policy delivery requires a consistent interlink between public organizations' internal measures of control and codes of conduct and some external measures of supervision and control. It further reiterates the obvious - that most public policies in Nigeria are elitist, hence, they mask hidden interests. The position of the paper is that most public policies are not formulated and implemented with the public interest as the focus; that even when policies are people-oriented, they face the greater hurdle of unethical conduct and behaviour, which ultimately lead to misappropriation of resources meant for the public. Thus, it recommends the need for: a stronger link between internal organizational rules and regulation measures and committed external mechanisms of supervision and control; popular participation in politics; greater involvement of professional analysts in policy designs; and for openness and transparency in government financial dealings.

Key words: Policy delivery, political officeholder, accountability, ethics, organizational control mechanism

Introduction
Politicians, bureaucrats and civil servants consistently grapple with the problems of public policies. This is due to the fact that these policies are looked upon as magic wands for solving most societal problems. The government often formulates policies in an area or sector in which a problem exists or is anticipated. Since the 1960s and 1970s, there has been an increase in the efforts by social and behavioural scientists to develop scientific tools and techniques that would facilitate the process of public policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The class of analysts in the social indicators movement, e.g. applied general systems theorists, cybernetics revolutionists, among others, uphold the view that public policy analysis, as an applied social science, can achieve the usual exactness that is characteristic of any science worth its salt in proffering solutions to social problems. They affirm that, with the development of a policy science, and through the discovery of some scientific tools for analysis, it is easy to see that 'a change in one set of specified elements of a mutually influencing network of elements (a system) can be seen to effect a specifiable change in the other elements' (Steiss, 1980:69-70). Despite the discovery of various tools for analysis, the task of public policy delivery is compounded by the increasing complexity of the subject matter – the political and socioeconomic issues involved in policy design and the neglect of some fundamental values bordering on ethics and accountability that are central to the success of public policy delivery.

Many people believe that Nigeria's problem is not policy formulation, but implementation. This,
however, is not necessarily true because, a policy may appear sound but may be unrealistic and thus, will be difficult, if not impossible, to execute. A policy may be considered unrealistic if it is elitist and does not have any benefit for the common man or if its implementation methods are not commensurate with the requirements of the expected outcome. Aside from a misconception of what the public interest is, corruption and outright subversion of public trust are of great concern in ethics and accountability (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2002) and have a significant impact on policy delivery processes.

As the problem of policy failure and its concomitant implication on development persist in Nigeria, this paper attempts to articulate the conditions for improving the process of public policy delivery. This is due to the belief that when policies are not well formulated and implemented, and are not committed to the values of ethics and accountability, they are likely to be misconceived, subverted or infested with selfish or, at best, elitist rather than public interest. The paper argues that Nigeria’s public service has little or no control over the top officials of its organizations despite the existence of numerous codes of conduct, rules and regulations; and that there would be greater success in realizing better outcomes in public policy delivery if there was more commitment to strengthening the control measures to ensure that corrupt people are not let off the hook.

The rest of this paper is organized into three sections. Following this introduction is a section on the conceptual and theoretical issues central to the paper. Section three articulates how the values of ethics and accountability could be enhanced in public policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. The final section suggests some ways for improved policy delivery, followed by the conclusion.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues
The key concepts of the paper, i.e. public policy delivery, ethics and accountability are briefly discussed in this section. The ways in which the three concepts can be interlinked to form a basis for an improved policy implementation are also examined.

Policy Delivery
The formulation and implementation of public policies require careful analysis to ensure that all factors necessary for their success are considered. Public policy, therefore, is technically linked to public policy analysis. Within the ambit of this paper, public policy analysis refers to the generation and presentation of information in a way that will improve the basis for policymakers to exercise their judgment in a policy delivery process (Steiss, 1980). Poister defines public policy analysis as ‘the analysis of the determinants, characteristics, and implications of public policies and programmes, particularly of the relationship between content of policies and programs and the substantive consequences and outcomes they produce’ (Poister, 1978). While some regard the work of policy analysis as being academic, and neutral to the actual practice of administration and policy delivery, others regard it essentially as the duty of those involved in policy formulation and implementation, since it is vital for the formulation and successful delivery of policies. This often leads to a distinction between the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of policy analysis. Steiss, however, believes that the line between description and prescription is not clear and need not even be made explicit because policy analysis has ‘the profoundest implications for the practicing analyst and the public official’ (Steiss, 1980:64). Rothwell supports this view; he suggests that policy analysis, as a process, has the potential to contribute to each of the four steps that are involved in the formulation and execution of a policy, namely: clarification of goals, exhaustive evaluation of the situation(s) to be met, selection of a course of action by weighing the probable consequences of various alternatives, and the determination of the optimum means for carrying out the action decided upon (according to Rothwell in Lerner and Lasswell, 1951).

Public policy delivery, therefore, requires that adequate and realistic policies be formulated and properly implemented to achieve the desired results. This entails that a proper analysis be made to select the best alternative to address a particular problem using the best standard operation procedures (SOP),
and that the policy is carefully implemented to achieve the desired results. The increasing complexity of the policy making process often requires that technical personnel be outsourced to ensure effective formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies.

By public policy delivery, we mean the process through which the government formulates and implements policies, in its effort to solve societal problems or provide some benefits to its citizens. Public policy is defined by Anderson (2003:2) as ‘a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern’. The concept of public policy, as given by Anderson, seems to incorporate that of ‘delivery’, for as he further explains, policies refer to what is actually done rather than what is proposed or intended by the government. Although Anderson admits that policies do not always achieve their goals, he underscores the fact that they must be pertinent and designed to produce specific results in terms of solving societal problems. Okoli and Onah (2002: 235) suggest that the way to understand the concept of public policy is to highlight some basic features underlying it. According to Okoli and Onah, ‘fundamentally, the basic elements upon which public policy is defined include that the policymakers usually choose specific political or socioeconomic problems demanding attention on the bases of priorities and that solution to each of the problems are [sic] so designed in such a way as to meet the desired goals’. They further outline some characteristics of public policy to include complexity, because of the large number of institutions and interests that a public policy seeks to harmonize; the uncertainty surrounding the objectives which a policy seeks to achieve; the need to define the standard operation procedures (SOPs), which either serve as a guide to the implementing agents or the evaluators in analysing the way a policy fares, and more importantly, the need for the policy to be in the public interest. Public policy, according to Chandler and Plano (1988), is the strategic use of resources to alleviate national problems or governmental concerns.

The notion of ‘improved policy delivery’ underscores the fact that there exist various options that can inhibit effective delivery, starting from the conception stage to that of final evaluation. These options include that:

a. Policy makers may not formulate realizable policies that are in the public interest.

b. The objectives of a formulated policy may not be realized by the prescribed methodology or standard operation procedure (SOP).

c. Those who formulate and implement policies may be concerned with their parochial interests rather than those of the public.

d. A policy may be unrealistic and ‘unimplementable’ because of inadequate resources for realizing it.

e. The public for whom a policy is designed may resist the implementation process because the policy is not in their interest or their priority.

f. There may be conflicting interests among the members of the public, and this could cause mixed feelings concerning the policy (ie, some may accept the policy while others resist it and prefer an alternative). This is common in plural societies where it is difficult to integrate all segmented interests.

g. Above all, policies may fail because of ineffective organizational structures that provide an escape route to non-compliance with the demands of ethics and accountability in the process of policy delivery.

These and many more situations can influence the realization of a public policy. Therefore, how can some of these cogs in the wheel be removed to enhance policy delivery? Most of these problems arise from the nature and complexities of issues that have to be dealt with at the policy formulation and implementation stages.

Policy process remains ‘a tortuous and complex process of claims and counterclaims, bargaining, negotiation and compromises over choices among methods, goals, interests, techniques and alternatives and the interplay between cooperating and conflicting interests, structures, resources, organizations, and public officials and political commitments’ (Ikelegbe, 2005:77-78). While admitting these difficulties, we
are inclined to believe that the commitment to the values of ethics and accountability help to achieve improved policy delivery by addressing the motive for the behaviour of public officials. Although adherence to these values do not simplify the policy process, it at least ensures that public interest remains the central objective of public policies, that resources are reasonably applied, and that necessary control and supervision are established to guide the conduct of policy officials. The emphasis on public interest in policy formulation and execution is apt because, as Ikelegbe (2005:117) observes, ‘public policies may reflect the preferences of the strategic elites rather than that of the citizenry or some characteristics of the environment’. The essence of ethical codes and accountability measures is that they strengthen institutional structures that give room for successful public policy delivery outcomes.

Ethics
Asobie (2001) avers that ethics can be conceived fundamentally in two related ways. First, it can be conceived as a science of morals, which hitherto is a major branch of philosophy. Understood this way, ethics becomes a field of study that investigates the nature, sources and fundamental principles that should guide human actions. Second, ethics is seen as a system of morals. In this sense:

*Ethics is connected with the rules of behaviour. It deals with standards of social conduct. It is in this sense that one can talk of standards of professional conduct or standards of religious conduct, standards of medical practice, standards of the scholarship professional practices, standards of administrative practice, standards of Christian or Muslim behaviour- all these come under the rubric of ethics as a system of morals.*

(Asobie, 2001:44)

These two views are not significantly different, as their relationship is that of theory and practice. While the field of study tries to rationalize and explain ethical issues, the ‘system of morals’ view, on the other hand, is concerned with practical ethical behaviour of humans in their personal, social, religious, economic, administrative, and other responsibilities. Ozumba (2001) clearly describes this interlink between the two concepts when he opines that as a field of study, ethics has an end in view. Its study relates to the fact that it has something to offer, and this marks it out as a worthwhile field of study. Such an end in view may be the wealth which it brings to mankind or intellectual excitement or what is known in philosophy as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Ethics, therefore, is primarily concerned with the determination of what is good or bad, right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, so as to mould a positive human behavioural pattern. Thus, in this paper, ethics refers to the moral rectitude that guides the conduct of one’s action. In other words, it is the practical administrative necessity that is the equivalent of Asobie’s ‘ethics as system of morals’; and is a form of self-accountability or an inner check on the conduct of public officials. It is an internal, personal self-control that manifests in the overt behaviour of people.

Ethical theorists do not agree on what should be the criterion or source of ethical principles. While some argue that there exist absolute ethical principles, others believe that ethics is subjective, relative and situational. In other words, it can be in reverence to some objective principles or social, conventional, personal, utilitarian, legal or other relativistic circumstances. Thus ethical absolutism contrasts with ethical relativism. This contrast is also reflected as ethical objectivism and ethical subjectivism. Okunna (2003) explains that the absolutist theory is based on the argument that a right action should be right in all places, at all times and in all circumstances; that is, there are moral universals. She also explains that relativist theory emphasizes contextual appropriateness in the making of ethical decisions. This means that moral standards should vary according to cultures, circumstances, times, and so on. Ozumba (2001:31) expatiates on ethical objectivism and subjectivism thus:

*Ethical objectivism is contrasted with ethical subjectivism, which holds that individual feelings are the right ethical criteria for determining ethically valid action or actions that are good and bad. But when we are talking about objectivism in*
ethics as it pertains to the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness, propriety or impropriety of our actions, decisions and judgments, we are referring to certain neutral set of criteria which weigh the issues involved in the light of the ideal merit of an action, decision or judgment. Here truth, right, wrong, good, bad and value are not dependent on the individual or group's feelings or disposition.

While there may be lack of consensus among theorists on what ethical codes should consist of, not many people would accept a great measure of ethical subjectivism in human actions that concern others, especially those relating to social and political responsibilities. The importance of having certain agreed ethical standards in a society is that it often compels government to extend laws and codes to various governmental operations, even within the personal moral rectitude of officials. The law, therefore, becomes the most significant ethical theory (which is qualified as legalism) in a world where selfishness is a central motivating factor in human behaviour.

Apart from the use of laws by the government to standardize ethical codes, practitioners of various professions also enact ethical codes and norms to regulate the behaviour of their members and regulate entrance to the profession. This is called professional ethics. While it is difficult for ethical theorists to agree on what ethical codes should consist of, members of a profession easily agree on some guiding ethical principles of the profession, for in spite of the obligations these impose, they offer some rights and privileges like the protection of the profession from 'quacks who will infiltrate and cause incalculable harm to the society and professional image' (Owan, 2005: 6-7), and also preserve the prestige of the profession. While various professions may adopt different ethical codes, certain virtues recur in most professional ethical codes. Olojede (2001:75) summarizes these as 'uprightness, rectitude, probity and virtuous conduct'. Seteolu (2001) adds to these honesty, integrity, reliability and responsible organizational conduct. The recurrence of certain principles is a confirmation of the existence of a certain transcendental ethical objectivity, for as Cicero, the great Roman jurist and philosopher wrote "There is in fact a true law, namely, right reason, which is in accordance with nature, applied to all men and is unchangeable and eternal. By its commands this law summons men to the performance of their duties, by its prohibition it restrains them from doing wrong. (Omoregbe, 1989).

Thus, even relativistic ethical principles, as encoded by social norms and values, and government laws and regulations, must, to an extent, reflect some degree of objectivity. Owan (2005) instructs that professional ethics must provide for special conduct in the workplace, always in obedience to established standards. In this way, the link between ethics and accountability becomes obvious.

Control measures such as rules, regulations, guidelines and laws are relevant in ensuring accountability, as we shall discuss shortly. These can hardly be distinguished in some cases from ethical codes and norms, which exist in the society and some organizations as laws, customs, rules and regulations. The interlink between ethics and accountability is aptly captured by Nkoma (2004: 45) when he records that:

*Beyond simple answerability, accountability is related to a substantive set of expectations reflecting one’s standing within a moral community. In contrast to account giving therefore, this accountability-as-moral-commitment reflects the existence of values, standards, relevant rules and norms associated with given roles, tasks and situations.*

While rules, regulations, guidelines, supervision, control, etc. are meant to achieve accountability, they can hardly be effective when the conduct of public officials is not controlled internally by certain ethical values and standards. Ethical codes therefore serve as a general guide to the achievement of certain behaviours. The American Society for Public Administration Code of Ethics amply demonstrates this. The codes are enunciated under five main headings:

a. to serve the public interest;
b. to respect the constitution and the law;
c. to demonstrate personal integrity;
d. to promote ethical organizations; and
e. to strive for professional excellence.

Each of these main sections contains many other directive ethical principles. Under the first section, for instance, the code prescribes that American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) members are committed to:

a. exercise discretionary authority to promote the public interest;
b. oppose all forms of discrimination and harassment, and promote affirmative action;
c. recognize and support the public's right to know the public's business;
d. involve citizens in policy decision making;
e. exercise compassion, benevolence, fairness and optimism;
f. respond to the public in ways that are complete, clear, and easy to understand; and
g. assist citizens in their dealings with government. (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2002:583-584)

The rationale for the society adopting such detailed ethical codes is that they help the society to affirm its responsibility to develop the spirit of professionalism in its members and increase public awareness of ethical principles in public service by its example. Ethics remains at the centre of acceptable human behaviour, whether as an individual or a group. It is intrinsically related to accountability, which emphasizes concrete rules and regulations in the pursuit of the same objective of virtuous behaviour in public service. Thus:

While government institutions are predicated on well-defined laws and rules, certain moral principles underpin the workings of these institutions especially the role-players. Therefore, ethical standards are meant to guide those who exercise political authority with a view to forestalling official misconduct and guarantee ethically-sound judgments. (Seteolu, 2001:132)

Accountability

Accountability simply means answerability of an officeholder to the actions and inactions of his office. Stanley (2000) defines it as being held to account, scrutinized, and being required to give explanation for one's actions. Olowu (2002: 141) defines it thus:

Accountability is the requirement that those who hold public trust account for the use of that trust to the citizens or their representatives. Public accountability underscores the superiority of the public will over private interests for those engaged in the provision and delivery of services to the general public.

The concept underscores the obligation of an officeholder to fulfill the expectations of his position. According to Laxmikanth (2001:193):

The concept of accountability connotes the obligation of the administrators to give a satisfactory account of their performance and the manner in which they have exercised powers conferred on them. Its main aim is to check wrong and arbitrary administrative actions and increase efficiency and effectiveness of administrative process.

Accountability therefore, is understood as a standard measure for the results of an officeholder's actions. Olowu pinpoints three crucial components of accountability, namely: a clear definition of responsibility; reporting mechanisms; and a system of review, rewards, and sanctions. Responsibility is explained as the obligation of an individual to carry out his duties and in terms of an administrative agency being responsive to public welfare and interest (Laxmikanth, 2001). The reporting mechanisms component presupposes that accountability can be achieved through specific methods and procedures since people are not always expected to perform their duties or act in the public interest. In this sense, accountability implies control.

It involves devising control mechanisms to keep the administration under close watch and in check. Thus the public servants are made accountable to different agencies which exercise control over them. The purpose of control is to ensure that the public servants exercise their
powers and discretion in accordance with laws, formal rules and regulations, and established procedures and conventions. (Laxmikanth, 2002: 194)

The third component — review, rewards and sanctions — completes the accountability circle. The essence of control mechanisms is to ensure compliance, hence, they can only be effective where performance is rewarded or sanctioned accordingly. The obvious implication of this is that people must be rewarded for good actions and punished for bad actions.

The importance of accountability in government administration has been noted by Rosenbloom and Kravchuk (2002:555) when they admonished that ‘public administrators must be held accountable because there are so many aspects of their jobs that can lead to misconception of the public interest, corruption, and subversion’. Often, public accountability is understood in terms of a civil servant being accountable to political officials in government. But in a democratic system, accountability is achieved in two major ways. First, the bureaucracy or administrative machinery of government, which is central to government administration, should be answerable to the elected political officials. Second, politically-elected officials should be answerable to the electorate, to whom the power of governance ultimately belongs. Thus, elected officials or politicians are not exonerated from accountability, especially as their role is more crucial to the entire process of policy delivery.

Accountability in government business is equally achieved through internal and external mechanisms. Internal control mechanisms include the budgetary system, administrative rules and regulations, hierarchical order, and professional standards, while external control is achieved through legislative oversight, executive control and supervisory agencies, the judiciary, the voice of the citizens and so on. Civil servants are required to submit to certain organizational procedures, audit, parliamentary scrutiny, openness and transparency in the conduct of their job. It is expected that these internal checks be linked to some external control mechanisms, so as to allow for more effectiveness.

Elected officials, on the other hand, are held accountable through political accountability, such as constitutional provisions, the electoral process, public opinion, and recall. Third World countries like Nigeria are still miles away from the reality of political accountability. If elected officials are not accountable to the people, how then can they hold the civil servants accountable? It is noteworthy that, with regard to accountability, ‘in both public and private sectors, the idea of being accountable is expressed almost exclusively in terms of being answerable or responsive to some entity, whether to specific officials, to stakeholders, or to the general population (in the form of voters or consumers)’ (Nkoma: 2004: 44-45). While those to be accountable are not always expected to do so, those to whom they are accountable must be ready to ensure accountability.

**Public Policy Delivery in Nigeria: The role of ethics and accountability**

Many great scholars agree that in every society, public policy is a function of many discrete and interrelated factors (Anderson, 2003; Ikeji, 2001). The case of Nigeria is not an exception. Ikeji (2001) sees public policy as deriving basically from politics and political processes. And political processes, according to him, are a function of a society’s political culture. What kind of political culture has Nigeria? Ikeji puts Nigeria under the three politico-cultural classifications of Almond and Verba (1965), as cited in Ikeji (2001), namely; the parochial, the subject, and the participant political cultures. Some of the features of the subject political culture are explained in terms of:

a. little awareness, by citizens, of the input process with themselves as participants;

b. citizens are oriented towards the political system and the output process, that is, action programmes, laws and statutes;

c. citizens have some awareness of governmental authority which they may like or dislike;

d. citizens are largely passive;
e. policies flow from rulers rather than from the citizens;
f. loss of faith in the ability of the political system to provide;
g. resentment and sense of frustration felt everywhere by citizens;
h. citizens seek change through violent means.

(Ikeji, 2001:44)

The implication of the above, which significantly describes the attitude of most Nigerians towards the policy process, no doubt, is that the necessary checks and compliance measures are not built into the process. And even when such measures exist, they are a mere formality with little enforcement. This is not all. The impact of military rule, which lasted for over thirty years, was such that it gradually destroyed the development of democratic features that enable the citizens to realize their roles and participate in governance or provide checks and balances in government processes and substitute them with viable alternatives. Apart from the incessant changes in government that were often unexpected, and the willingness of new administrations to make an impact by embarking on new programmes and abandoning those of their predecessors, there were factors that impacted negatively on public policy delivery in Nigeria.

Okoli and Onah (2002:250) summarize the major pathologies of policymaking in Nigeria to include:

a. inadequate definition of goals;
b. overambitious policy goals;
c. lack of a well-defined programme for the attainment of goals;
d. choice of inappropriate organizational structure in the implementation of policies;
e. lack of continuity in commitment to policies;
f. lack of a clear definition of responsibility;
g. political opposition during implementation;
h. compromises during implementation capable of defeating policy purposes;
i. political insensitivity to demands;
j. factors of timing in implementation;
k. corruption; and
l. lack of adequate data on which decisions are predicated.

Some of these pathologies arise as a result of the complexities of the policy process as already observed. Some are as a result of the unavailability of vital data for planning. The problem of accountability and ethics, however, seems to be very crucial because accountability is vital to effective resource mobilization and allocation. Its absence gives rise to activities that divert, for personal use, vital resources for socioeconomic and sustainable development, and encourage the making of policies that have little bearing on the needs of the public.

Since the colonial regime, several civil service reforms, restructuring, rightsizing and so on have been carried out by various administrations to ensure effective and efficient public service delivery in Nigeria. These include:

a. the Huge Foot Commission of 1948
b. the Gorsuch Commission
c. Udoji Reforms
d. the 1988 Reforms and the 1994 Ayinda Panel
e. the famous 1975 civil service purge of General Murtala Muhammed, in which the services of over ten thousand civil servants were prematurely terminated;
f. introduction of innumerable laws, most of them draconian, especially during military regimes, that often took over power on the assurance to stamp out corrupt and unethical practices in the society;

The aim of these reforms and special corruption-fighting programmes are to make the government more responsive by creating a public service that delivers prompt qualitative services to the people (Donli, 2004). Today, new concepts emphasizing the
restructuring of government – to make it smaller, stronger, better skilled, and more efficient – have emerged, thanks to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). New labels, such as SERVICOM (work ethics), ‘value reorientation’ and ‘changing the way the government does its work’ do not say anything much different.

Despite these efforts, policy delivery in Nigeria continues to decline. Eminue (2006: 15) confirms the situation:

In the past few decades, despite huge amounts injected into it, public sector investment has been ineffective and unproductive and has not produced high returns. Consequently, because of policy failures and mismanagement, public investment could not contribute significantly to rapid economic growth, employment generation and poverty-reduction. (Eminue, 2006:15)

Also, Adenuga (2001: 39) maintains that:

Virtually all the regimes are guilty of economic and financial buccaneering. Leaders have been bleeders of the national till, they have come to see public office as an avenue to get-rich-quick.

Thus, 46 years after independence, Nigeria has continued to wallow in abject poverty despite opportunities provided by her natural resources. The country has mismanaged over $300 billion earned from oil and other revenue sources (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2004). Although corruption is a global phenomenon, it seems endemic in Nigeria, as Aniwofose (2002:108) observes:

In Nigeria, corruption is a pervasive phenomenon. Corrupt practices have become synonymous with governance, and consequently has become the bane of the Nigerian society.

Of course, corruption is an antithesis to ethics and accountability. Many reasons have been adduced for this precarious situation, and these include ineffective institutions, weak rule of law, low popular participation in politics, weak protection of civil liberties, closed economic and political systems, poor remuneration for public servants, etc. While these factors cannot be overlooked, moral leadership and true commitment to the service of the nation are at the centre of the situation (Ighodalo, 2001). Often, these arise as a result of weak and ineffective public institutions. Weak institutions possess poor procedural and ineffective organizational patterns that give room for manipulation and abuse. Such organizations have a high concentration of important internal organizational roles overseen by a few decision makers, without themselves being under any control. Such structure creates organizational gaps that are not likely to guarantee accountability (Aniwofose, 2002).

The control of public organizations must necessarily possess strong checks and counterchecks that have everyone in its purview. There must not be any institutional gap that can be exploited by public officials, no matter how highly placed.

Effective control of the public organizations must be internal and external. Internally, public organizations have mechanisms that are inbuilt in the organizational structure to ensure efficiency and guarantee accountability. These include rules and regulations, the hierarchical organizational arrangement and responsibilities that enjoin strict subordination to codes of conduct and formal disciplinary systems, budgetary compliance and periodic reports and appraisals. Explaining this further, Olowu (2002: 143-144) writes:

Internal mechanisms are those that are used by organizations to ensure that those who work within the organization conform to organizational goals. One such mechanism is hierarchy, by which each unit and staff member is subordinated to another for supervision and monitoring and evaluation of work performance … Other internal mechanisms include rules and regulations (including codes of conduct), the system of performance appraisal and remuneration, and the mechanisms for meting out discipline. There are also procedures for internal organizational reviews and audits.

For public institutions to be efficient and accountable, Rosenbloom and Kravchuk (2002) opine that authority and responsibility should be clearly
assigned. The line of hierarchical authority should be clear and comprehensive; it often ends with politically appointed officials at the apex of public organizations to assist the executive to exert administrative accountability, i.e., 'to ensure that public servants exercise their powers and discretion in accordance with laws, formal rules and regulations, and established procedures and conventions' (Laxmikanth, 2002:194). However, these political officials are known to be the most perverse in terms of ethics and accountability in the Nigerian public service. Adebayo (2000) sees ministers (political appointees in charge of ministries) as corrupt and venal and also the cause of ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the entire bureaucracy. He opines:

In Nigeria since independence, most of the ministers had a misconception of their role, gave no political leadership and were ridden with corruption and venality. To the extent that these sad situations prevailed in government, it correspondingly affected efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service.

Political appointees often see themselves as masters above the bureaucratic internal mechanisms. They defy all guidelines and procedures, disregard fiscal regulations and lord it over the regular career officials in a plan to secure maximum financial benefits within their short political tenure.

It is noteworthy therefore that internal mechanisms do not always serve as effective control to the top bureaucratic hierarchy. There is also an internal check, in the form of the internal audit department, which was strengthened by the 1988 Reforms, when it set up an Audit Alarm Committee. Critics such as Farotimi (cited in Adenuga, 2001), however, have argued that this department has not been effective. Essentially, the report of the department does not have any import, as no external controlling/overseeing agency utilizes the content of the report. The internal audit department, being a sub unit of the government ministry or agency, often operates in a servant-master or employee-employer relationship to the top hierarchy of the organization's management.

Since the personnel of the unit are appointees of the minister, they do not have the boldness to call their 'benefactor' to order if his actions violate the principles of financial probity. Moreover, the minister is certain to fill the unit with his favourites, as experience in Nigeria has confirmed (Farotimi in Adenuga, 2001:1999).

Experience from the United States, however, shows that the external body that has a supervisory/control duty over a public organization coordinates the internal audit reports. The inspectors-general (IGs), as they are called in the USA, are a kind of internal policing mechanism that has the authority to engage in investigation and audit in a broad range of circumstances. They report directly to the Congress and the heads of their departments and agencies (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2002). The obvious lesson from this is that reports by the internal audit department and the external audit by the office of the accountant-general should be used as oversight instruments by external supervisory bodies. This will help keep top officials of public organizations subordinated to some form of checks, as they often manipulate the internal control measures.

On the other hand, external mechanisms of control in the public service are the supervisory systems that exist outside an organization. Olowu defines external mechanisms as those created and applied by agencies outside the formal organization of the civil service. They include executive-based compliance or enforcement systems, legislative control systems, the judiciary and even 'the voice mechanisms', i.e., opportunities available for citizens to voice their concerns about misuse of position or public resources by officials. The effectiveness of the control of government agencies or departments by external bodies greatly depends on the availability of information, the power of supervision granted to these external agencies and the moral uprightness of those in charge of the oversight agencies.

The Due Process Unit was able to save over $600 million between 2003 and 2004 (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2004) because it had the opportunity of overseeing and reappraising contracts to be awarded by federal ministries and agencies. However, most of
the regulatory and enforcement agencies like the ICPC, EFCC, and EFCC have no clear means of getting information except through petitions or the like. The level of civil participation in the use of voice mechanisms is generally low in most developing countries, including Nigeria. Hence, these agencies cannot effectively perform if they rely solely on information obtained through petitions or unofficial means. There is a need for them to be able to obtain information directly from the bodies they are expected to control/supervise and to verify the information periodically.

While the problem of collaboration cannot be ruled out between officials of a government agency and an oversight agency (as has been revealed by the Osuji/Wabara and the House Committee on Education episode (Nigerian Tribune, May 17 2007), the importance of checks and balances to ensure accountability cannot be ruled out. Corruption-fighting agencies, therefore, ought to have access to the internal audit and other reports of government ministries and agencies and conduct inspection visits to verify documents and project sites in situations where such can help to justify expenditure.

The part played by the legislature and its respective committees must also be strengthened. Effective use of audit reports by legislative committees, eg, the Public Accounts Committee, has been shown to be very useful in some countries. In our case, not much value has been derived because often, audits are perfunctorily and poorly done, while the Public Accounts Committee is weak. Britain, for instance, derives maximum benefit from this procedure by appointing a member of the opposition party as chairman of the legislative Public Accounts Committee (Kiragu; 2002).

It is also important that we mention the crucial role of the individual citizen and the civil society in general in the quest for ethical behaviour and accountability in public service delivery. While politically-elected officials and their appointees hold the civil service accountable, it is the duty of individual citizens and the civil society to hold politicians accountable. Participation in elections, access to information on government activities and the use of voice mechanisms are vital measures for ensuring accountability and ethics in the public service. Fajonyomi (2001:11) remarks that:

*It is the right of any citizen to exercise his/her franchise in the electoral process. While doing this, he/she has the absolute right to checkmate the election of those that have been found guilty of one corruption charge or the other. The electorate, to some extent, are familiar with the link of those whose source of wealth is suspect. Their penetration into office can be checkmated through the electoral process.*

Unfortunately, the Nigerian electorate has been powerless because of the manipulative system of change of government called 'elections'. Yet, this task cannot be abandoned. Good leadership at all levels is the starting point for improved public policy delivery. A leader who is ethically depraved will not be committed to controlling his immediate subordinates and, thus, cannot hope to create an impact in this direction. The choice of good leaders is the business of the entire citizenry. Each and every citizen must resolve that Nigeria needs a new beginning. If citizens play a good part individually, they should expect to benefit more from public policies.

There is also the problem of non-accessibility to information on government activities. The era of government business being shrouded in secrecy is far gone. Although most developing countries follow the path of developed countries by enacting laws guaranteeing access to information, those laws are hardly respected. The former minister of finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala tried to institutionalize the policy of publishing allocations to states and local governments by the Federal Ministry of Finance. This is an innovation worth consolidating and improving upon. Nevertheless, it is one thing to tell the public how much money was received by states and local governments and another to get information on how such monies were spent. Publication of allocation to projects and periodic expenditure made on key public projects of governments can help the public compare the level of delivery realized and the resources put in. There is no doubt that this will
encourage individual interest and enquiry and also dispel the mystery and secrecy that surround government financial dealings, which encourage widespread exploitation for the pursuit of personal interests by a few. The free flow of information on government dealings can enhance transparency and accountability, as it makes the public officials conscious of being monitored.

Finally, it should be noted that while Nigeria has been reforming, restructuring and engaging in fights against corruption, the problem of untouchables and sacred cows has not seriously been addressed. The two administrations that showed some serious inclination towards fighting unethical conducts were not allowed enough time in office. The Murtala Muhammed and the Buhari/Iddiobon regimes have often been pointed out as administrations that would have brought some sanity to the nation because they were poised to mete out punishment to both the high and the low. Other administrations have operated biased approaches to issues concerning enforcement of laws against unethical behaviour in government.

The present administration, for instance, has been accused of using the EFCC and other related bodies to witch-hunt political opponents. Although the scope of this paper does not extend to the corruption fighting tendencies of this government, it is noteworthy that Babangida did not consider it civil or necessary to answer cases against him at the Oputa Panel, while some others were probed and their loot recovered (Nnamani, 2007). It is important that laws are enforced and punishment meted out to offenders, no matter how highly placed.

Conclusion and Suggestions
The values of accountability and ethics have been underscored as being very significant in the enhancement of public policy delivery. No matter how well trained public servants are or how scientific the methods employed in policy design and formulation, success in policy delivery will continue to be a mirage if ethical concerns and accountability are not given more commitment. The realization of these values in policy delivery should not be a laissez-faire matter. Every human has the capacity to do wrong. There is a need, therefore, for increased interconnection between internal rules and regulations and committed external control and supervision of public officials. The importance of having committed leadership, the choice of which involves the entire citizenry, is a foremost prerequisite. The government, on the other hand, should emphasize openness in conducting its financial dealings and making information on such activities accessible to the public.

It must be admitted that the achievement of the goals of public policies is a serious administrative problem, even in highly efficient bureaucracies such as the USA. Nigeria can fare better if it seeks to institutionalize the values of ethics and accountability. Below are some suggestions for the achievement of this ideal:

a. strengthening the internal mechanisms of checks and balances in public organizations, not necessarily by increasing administrative rules and regulations, but by ensuring a comprehensive oversight system that excludes nobody;

b. subjecting the internal mechanisms to an external control and supervision system that not only accepts reports from public institutions but also subjects such reports to physical and on-site verification;

c. allowing a high level of transparency and openness in the conduct of government affairs, especially through the publication of financial dealings and periodic expenditure on public projects;

d. ensuring that the citizenry should participate more in politics, especially in electing good leaders, and should show interest in expressing strong public opinion on issues and join in civil actions against bad government policies;

e. involving professional analysts in the design and description of public policies through research and the exposition of most likely options to politicians to choose from;

f. developing strong professional public administration groups that can help promote relevant codes of conduct for analysts and administrators;
g. fostering greater public involvement in the design and formulation of policies, through wide publication and consultations before initiating public policies; and

h. ensuring that offenders, no matter how highly placed, are punished, so as to make rules, regulations and laws meaningful and respected.

Conclusion
This paper has attempted to show that improved public policy delivery in Nigeria cannot be a matter of incessant spineless reforms, restructuring, downsizing and rightsizing of the government administrative machinery and agencies, or replicating rules, regulations and creating powerless supervisory and regulatory bodies. The virtues of ethics and accountability hold the key to improved policy delivery, which, to a large extent, can be achieved through reforms that establish a stronger link between internal controls of administrators and committed external or political means of control.

The political controllers themselves must be watched through a more participatory civic culture which, to a large extent, guarantees the election of good leaders. Moreover, government must help to establish this civic culture by being more transparent and open in its activities and processes, and having the courage and fairness to punish all offenders, no matter their position in the society.

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