

# Ethics in African Education and Governance

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## Abstract

As Africans grapple with consequences of an ethical professionalism in governance, appropriate historical and social context are less emphasized as opposed to contemporary ethics in modernized African education an orientation which lacks the cultural character of Africans, as evidenced in all post-colonial African nations today. My work seeks to address these ethical contradictions approached through five sections, firstly the co-existence as stressed in the section, “Afrocentric verses Eurocentric ethics in education; an analysis of mixed moral values of ethics in African education process.” Second, the ethics in African education process geared to good governance professionals”. Thirdly, formal African education, graduates and professionalism in governance of contemporary African institutions fourthly, Justification for ethics in ethno cultural Education as a determinant of good governance in Africa”, and finally a Conclusive review of ethics in informal African education and its relevance in contemporary ethics in formal African professionalism targeting good governance.

**Keywords:** Education; Ethics; Governance

## 1. Introduction

During colonial experience of Africa which is a historical reality for Africa, colonial masters began a process of uprooting African culture and ethics from its “natural habitat,” and infusing its own. Though colonialism strongly impinged on the African traditional ethical nurturing through informal education and indeed shook the African traditional ethical development, in exchange for colonial master’s formal education, a new system of ethical orientation of professions for sustainability and integration of African states in the international community where introduced. However, this did not completely erode the sense of Africanity that was, in fact, the fundamental motivating factor of self-governance for independence struggle. We may note here that the two traditions (African and European) do not only exist in a single social unity, but were fundamental opposites. The sense of Africanity continues to have a strong impact on the African psyche and is bound to continue into the future through generational inheritance, though there is need for sensitization to it through integrating ethics in African

### **1.1 Definition of terms**

**Governance;** is a process and institutions both formal and informal that guide and restrain the collective activities of the group [1].

**Ethics;** is the study of morals, referred to as moral philosophy concerned with the purpose of determining what type of activity is good, right, to be done as well as determining if it's bad, wrong and if to be avoided so that man may leave well [2].

**Education;** The act or process of educating; the result of educating, as determined by the knowledge skill, or discipline of character, acquired or act process of training by a prescribed or customary course of study [3].

**Africans;** a member or descendant of any of the peoples of Africa, especially a Black person [5.]

**Africanity;** refers to the composite of the institutions social thought, livelihoods and cultural values and practices that are distinctive of indigenous or native to Africa [4: 16-17].

**Education;** both formal and informal for professionalism in promoting good governance in Africa [4: 16-17].

## **2. Afrocentric verses Eurocentric ethics in education; an analysis of mixed moral values of ethics in African education process**

The foundations of ethics in African education traverse to the contemporary African governance of private and public entities, informal or formal virtues at all levels of Africa's communities and vices right and wrong, honor and shame exist in all cultural diversity of Africa in two generic orientations namely individual tailored and duty centered interpersonal morality which defers from the Eurocentric individually focused morality from the formal education that frames and gives content to ethics in education with in Africa. Furthermore contemporary ethics in African education is attempted to move trainees forward without accepting or worse yet without awareness of ethical or moral codes of their ethno cultural circumstances, this has continuously cause blindness and inability to see and value Africa's ethno cultural morality with a practices that disregard the moral context and ethical realities in African Governance.

According to author in [4: 20-21], he argues that, the overlay of these two systems of morality in the same, students and community's further complicates the ethics education field in Africa. He suggested that, ethics educators should listen keenly and learn from the African world view by visualizing a holistic and integrated universe and its moral code clarifying that this would shape ethics in education and morality in a new way that would meet the need to search for culturally grounded and contextually appropriate ethics for training professionals for effective service. He further argued that,

*„,In order to reach Africans in there subjection to two sets of moral the relational ethical values in obtained through informal education and the formal imported individualistic moral demands ethics in African education more fittingly must bridge the two moral worlds, Accordingly ethics in African education is being called to help*

*Africans consolidate the cultural roots that give them identity and dignity and guide them transition without guild and excessive conflict to new perceptions of themselves, the ethical judgments and moral life prompts””.*

In conclusion he argues that since we are aware of the challenges posted by paradoxical demands and hybrid cultural context, opting for a pedagogy of the generation curriculum in form of generative andragogy would be an innovative project by which Africa can make not only a respectable and influential contribution to the fields of ethics by integration of its rights and keep in harmony the wrongs of ethics in its education as well as enriching and extending disciplinary frontiers Through students and peer collaboration in extracting and disseminating the concepts from formal ethic in African education. In agreement with Nsamenang additionally, I believe a perfect blend of informal ethic in education and formal ethics obtained from African contemporary formal education would help create a solution to the problem of having a mixture of conflicting indigenous and imported factors and ethical imperatives such as the indigenous ethical codes and moral ideals as fundamental ethical elements in contradiction toward moral development in Africa.

### **3. The ethics in African education process geared to good governance professionals**

According to Author in [5]; he states that governance is a process and institutions both formal and informal that guide and restrain the collective activities of the group. He furthermore added that it can be a generic understanding of governance as management of resources and policy-making as a means of exercising authority (power). Thus, entailing all instruments through which different policy stakeholders exercise legal rights with the aim to achieve political, economic, and social objectives. In this sense, the term “governance” appears to be more and more used in order to denote a complex set of structures and processes (at the public as well as at the private level across all communities), though in my work it is generally associated with national administration. However, its definitions offer a rather broad horizon of interpretation. In agreement with author in [4 : 6-8] he argues that ethics integration in the education process for positive professionals in governance, he proposed education means that could enrich professional ethics in African education with respective ethical code of conduct for good governance at all levels in the community to be inclusive of the following;

*„„Pre-empting students belief and knowledge or misconceptions about ethics and reflect on the challenge of opposing belief can/will pose and how to handle them, Sensitizing students into understanding own values and moral life, their implications for professional practice, Providing resources opportunities, guidance and supervision that enable students to acquire the requisite knowledge skills and attitudes required to judge and act from an informed ethical position, Incorporating and integrating ethical concerns and issues into all phases of professional education, Teaching focusing on cognitive skills behavioral skills and character development Ethics contribute to high quality patient care and professional behavior , Skills development concentrating on all the three domains of personality psycho -motor, cognitive, and effective to ensure whole some character development”” as argued by author in [ 4:15-17].*

Which all if ensured can pave way for ethics development in professionals for efficiency in governance practices in order to avoid going against the standard norms or principles set for good governance such as rule of law, transparency of decision making or openness, accountability, predictability or coherence, and effectiveness.

With equal participation by all members of society as the key ethical element of good governance, an active role in the process of decision-making and ensuring the rule of law maintained through the impartiality and effectiveness of the legal system. Rule of law which further more means the protection of human rights (particularly those of minorities), independent judiciary and impartial and incorruptible law enforcement agencies which involves a variety of conditions, being strongly connected to good administration of justice, good legal framework, verified dispute mechanisms, equal access to justice, and the independence of judiciary workers (lawyers, judges). Ethical governance is also based on the transparency of the decision-making process, which ensures that information is freely available and accessible to those involved or affected by the decisions taken.

Transparency furthermore ensures free access to information. Last, but not least, accountability and responsibility with all of the participants in the political and economic processes being accountable for their decisions to each other as well as ensuring regulation of operations from bad governance associated with Leadership and Institutional failure in Africa caused by unethical acts like Corruption which in according to author[6], he defines it as “an act in which the power of *public* office is unethically used for personal gain in a manner that contravenes the rules of the game” reinforcing dictatorial leadership and bad governance which according to author in [7], he argued that it is associated with unethical control of all relevant branches of their economy, civil service, electoral commission, judiciary, media, security forces, and the central bank particularly the judiciary systems, which provide the ethical checks and balances that curbed leadership excessive powers cutting across micro to macro management level of African governance.

#### **4. Ethics in African formal education relationship with graduates and professionalism in governance of contemporary African institutions**

At macro level that is state governance, Eurocentric literature and formal education generally has developed graduate skills associated with individualism spirit rejecting the vales of ethno cultural African communitarian (normative) right and wrong in lure of administrators or state apparatus, public service administration, private sector and mainly the state constitution obedience for citizenship which is a common tool of implementation and manipulation to unethically govern and provide public service in modern states of Africa. Due to this, communal ethical codes are rejected by formal education which places a great deal of emphasis on human welfare in the whole community. Since orientation of African ethics takes its impulse, undoubtedly, from the humanistic outlook that characterizes traditional African life and thought and the natural sociality or rationality of the human being that prescribe social ethic, it also prescribes the ethic of duty which involves individual in some social and moral roles in the form of obligations, commitments, and duties to other members of his or her community which the individual must fulfill through demonstrating concern for the interests of others through ethical values of compassion, solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, interdependence, and social well-being counted among the principles of the communitarian morality, primarily impose duties on the individual with respect to the community and its members. All these considerations elevate the notion of duties to a status different to that given to the notion of rights in current formal education which is western oriented ethics.

According to author in [4: 20-22], he argues that ethic in African education is missing the lack of evidence decadence compelling moral education in general and moral education for service delivery in particular, Knowledge of ethics which he argues that it has continuously reduced the chances of trainees to become better practitioners, he however comment that profession is based on empirical and scientific principles but the relationship between the professional practitioner and service consumer is profoundly human endeavors despite the split of one self-personality, anxieties and depressions over a contradiction of the ethno cultural ethics and Eurocentric ethics during practice which engender moral issues and consideration to produce graduates who have administrative ethical responsibilities. The term administrative ethical responsibility is used as collective term for the ideal values that people will to see in their society, organization or government and judged as right norms of administrative practice in governance. While neither being exhaustive nor definitive these value that people find as morally right from the graduates professional include the following;

Responsibility; refers to the prompt acquiescence by an organization to popular demands of ethical policy change. It can also mean that graduates and professionals do more than merely react to popular demands. In some cases it can mean that government takes the initiative in the proposal of solutions for problems and even in the definition of problems for the people it represents

Fairness; to ensure that citizens (people) have the chance to present their cases and be heard fairly agencies follow the principle of due process. This concerns both procedures and results as implemented by the produced graduates and professionals of the formal education system in Africa

Flexibility of graduates and professionals in the formulation and implementation of policy, who do not ignore individual, groups, local concerns or situational differences

Honesty; implies graduates or professionals telling the truth and avoiding corrupt practices in all spheres of their life. This can be malfeasance, the performance by public officials of deeds forbidden by laws and moral standards, misfeasance, the improper performance of lawful duties, nonfeasance, and the failure of public officials to perform required duties

Accountability; are graduates and professionals being liable responsible and answerable. An organization must be answerable to someone or something outside itself. When things go wrong, someone must be responsible. Competence obligation of graduates and professionals to be well trained and know their job as well as knowing how to treat individuals, the laws, manage, and take responsibility for actions in an ethical manner that would all promote good governance in Africa

##### **5. Justification for ethics in ethno-cultural education as a determinant of good governance in Africa**

The state and society and dilemmas for human conditions are obliged to have a deep reflection and critical concern with socialization of humane values in general and moral nurturing and ethics education in Africa. This implies that every human culture possesses its own folk curriculum in form of informal education, which its adults and mentors endeavor to transmit to next generations to prepare their growth in to competent members of

cultural community normatively in Africa. According to author [4: 19-20], he argues that at a time when trainees and professional are expected to grapple with the challenges of global realities in local practice there is a growing mismatch between professional preparation of citizens into preconceived professional mind-set and complex ethical challenges associated to good governance.

Due to the euro-western inventions which have been imported in to Africa among with their attitudinal orientations to governance, the African landscape continuously has caused a paradox in value orientations and guiding moral codes embedded in Africanity and westernization since African in addition, author in [8] added that African People developed ethical codes as participants in their cultural communities where their development was understood only in the light of cultural practices and circumstances of their communities which change with in the indigenous cultures of Africa. Author in [9] also adds that, educational ideas and practices where embedded in family traditions, daily routines, and social and community life, where Africans play a critical role in their own moral development.

The African desire to be what we were originally yet, at the same time, a desire to embrace change that is identification with two contrasting governance realities of localization and globalization by deriving what is positive in traditional ethics in African education and in the infusion of these ethics across traditions, thus a possibility of each enriching the other. The aesthetic and moral richness of human relationships in the African culture would be some of the elements contributed by the traditional ethics in Africans transformation. Furthermore before colonialism of Africa, governance of the chiefdoms and kingdoms promoted moral concepts in the African moral language and thought. The informal traditional education (ethno-cultural) contributed efforts in orienting all people concepts of good, bad (or, evil), right and wrong feature prominently in African moral thought, as they do in the moral systems of other peoples and cultures.

African ethics in leadership was, thus, a character-based ethics that maintained that the quality of the individual's character as most fundamental in moral life of all chosen leaders which was developed in African societies through telling morally-freighted proverbs and folktales to its younger members. Though having moral knowledge being made aware of the moral principles and rules of the society is one thing and being able to lead a life consonant with the moral principles is quite another. African individuals knew and even accept moral rules where by going against them was considered wrong to cheat the customs than is the case for current governance of state based on professionalism from Eurocentric education. However some who failed to apply these customs to effect the transition from knowledge to action, to carry out the implications of his moral belief led to guilt feelings which all was based community rejection. With this, according to Author in [10] suggest that If governance was rooted from the people due to their royalty to respective traditional leaders and informal education that reinforced norms and loyalty to them starting from family socialization and society interaction which equipped individuals with obligations that transformed one from the it-status of early child-hood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense an ethical maturity without which personhood was conceived as eluding one for values confirmed to be wright and punished those coded to be wrong creating full socialization that aided leadership with the notion of the common good features manifestly in African ethics.

The common good was not a surrogate for the sum of the various individual goods, never consist of, or derive from, the goods and preferences of particular individuals. It was that which was essentially good for human beings such as embracing the needs that are *basic* to the enjoyment and fulfillment of the life of each individual as a whole of the community with a claim that there was no human being who did not desire peace, security, freedom, dignity, respect, justice, equality, and satisfaction. The institution of government or legal system was surely based on a common understanding of the need for societal values of social order and social peace. It was, thus, pretty clear that the common good was that which inspires the creation of a moral, social, political, or legal system for enhancing the well-being of people in a community as well as promoting humanity, sisterhood and brotherhood, feature prominently in African social and moral thought and practice. They are among the moral or human values that have always constituted the basic perhaps the ultimate criteria that not only motivate but also justify human actions that affect other human beings and as referring to an association of men and/or women with common aims and interests which all enhanced unity, participation, obedience in support of good governance in Africa during the pre-colonial times when informal education (ethno-cultural) was at its pick however this has been mixed with ethical values of professions derived from formal education with only aims of sustaining the colonial systems of governance over people but not rooted from people as was in pre-colonial Africa this has led to continuous violent and latent ethnic and civil conflicts against the foreign moral mismatch to African way of life as evident on the continent today.

## 6. Conclusion

As most African countries gained independence post 1960s and 1970s, the struggle for political leadership and the desires to retain governance power for life became the overriding objectives of many African leaders. According to author in [11] encyclopaedic coverage of the persistent problems of inept leadership, institutional failure, and pandemic corruption in Africa, all these problems intensified with the incursion of several thuggish dictatorial leaders upon gaining independence. In his words,

*“The simplest way to explain Africa’s Governance is that it has never known good governance which is a notion of ethic practice” and that “no other continent has experienced such prolonged dictatorships.” [12]*

Author [7 ] argues that the un ethical corruption epidemic in African countries owes its existence to the long-term tenure of their dictators who spend their entire careers enriching themselves, intimidating political opponents, avoiding all but the merest trappings of democracy, actively frustrating ethical movements toward constitutional rule, and thumbing their noses sometimes subtly, other times blatantly at the international community ending up ruling like kings and drew no distinction between their own property and that of the state, in addition, Author in [23] clarify that they owe their successes to their un ethical control through corruption and embezzlement funds as well as manipulation of the main branches of government civil service, judiciary, electoral commission, security forces (may include the military), media, and the central bank work with no transparency and accountability to the general public which is managed by un ethical practitioners educated through the formal education type that promotes individualism than integration of ethno-cultural ethics in professions to groom the spirit of brotherhood or sisterhood, character of notion, sense of personhood which are major features of African people but lacking in professions training and practice in governance Africa. In [4] the

author argues that, ethics values and moral codes are elements of ethno cultural realities that expectedly professionals must learn and with which they are supposed to make sense of life and services they receive or produce, however a contradiction of these values continue to appear interrupting the ethno cultural realities leading to incompetent unethical professionals associated with bad governance styles in Africa. Contemporary African world view is a very different frame of reference from the western, which supplies the moral codes and ethical principles on which professional curricula are mounted this has forced Africans today to neglect their Ideas for instance the social capital that flows from Africa's perception of ethics vis-à-vis the universal focuses on individual as connected to the group. In spite of African's cultural life emitting care and exchange values that are channeled through relational norms and obligations to contrast that of individualism as being promoted, Africa's social capital and caring ethic has been little explored for positive input into its Governance due to a mixture of indigenous and imposed imported factors and ethical imperatives such as the indigenous ethical codes and moral ideals with continuing lack of efficient blend for relevance of both. All this has forced the continent to adjust to foreign frame of reference and value systems rather than undertaking to understand and enhance its own indigenous systems of ethic in education and Governance, It should be noted that, there is need to have a prior understanding and tackling of these many dichotomies of ethics in African education today in order for us to achieve the progress required for good governance rooted from the people in all formal and informal communities across African.

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