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EDITORIAL DESK

The Centre for General Nigerian Studies has continued to be a frontier for knowledge dissemination through her series of publications, among other activities being performed by the directorate.

This volume 5 journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy of March 2025 housed a total of 18 well researched articles from scholars across the geographical boundaries of the Africa sub region. The team of experienced editors subjected the articles to peer review, and their plagiarism checks have satisfied the guild of editors.

The journal is recommended to researchers, scholars, lecturers, and students to read, and the planners can leverage on recommendations as panacea to the doldrums confronting the socio-economic and educational spheres of the Sub Sahara Africa nations

I wish all the contributors and readers Barka Eid Fitri and Easter in advance

Prof. M.O.B Mohammed FNAEAP
Lead Editor

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ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND GHANA

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Abstract

Ethical leadership and good governance play a crucial role in shaping the quality and effectiveness of educational systems in Africa. This study provides a comparative analysis of ethical leadership and governance in Nigeria and Ghana's educational sectors, examining their impact on policy implementation, educational outcomes, and institutional integrity. Using qualitative and quantitative data, the study explores the ethical challenges faced by educational leaders, including corruption, lack of accountability, and political interference. Findings reveal that while both countries have policies promoting ethical leadership in education, their implementation varies significantly due to differences in governance structures, cultural influences, and enforcement mechanisms. In Ghana, stronger institutional frameworks and relatively higher levels of accountability have contributed to more stable educational governance. Conversely, Nigeria continues to struggle with systemic corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which hinder the effectiveness of its educational leadership. The study recommends strengthening institutional oversight, promoting transparency, and integrating ethics-focused leadership training for education administrators in both countries. By adopting best practices in governance and fostering a culture of integrity, Nigeria and Ghana can enhance their educational systems' efficiency and long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Governance, Education, Nigeria, Ghana, Corruption, Accountability, Policy Implementation.

Introduction

Ethical leadership and governance have been central issues in the development of African educational systems, particularly in Nigeria and Ghana. Both countries have made significant strides toward improving their education sectors; however, they continue to face challenges related to leadership, accountability, and resource management. Ethical leadership, which is characterized by integrity, fairness, and accountability, is pivotal in shaping educational policies and ensuring that institutions serve the public interest effectively (Aniche & Falola, 2021). Governance, on the other hand, involves the systems and structures that facilitate the management of educational institutions, ensuring that they operate efficiently and in line with national development goals.

Nigeria and Ghana, as two prominent West African nations, share common historical and socio-political legacies that have shaped their educational landscapes. Both countries have undergone various reforms aimed at expanding access to education and improving quality, yet they continue to grapple with governance challenges that stem from leadership inadequacies and systemic corruption. Studies have shown that governance issues in these countries have often hindered the effective implementation of educational policies, thereby affecting educational outcomes (Bush & Glover, 2013; Osifo, 2012). The presence of strong ethical governance mechanisms, such as transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness, has been associated with better educational outcomes in Ghana compared to Nigeria, where leadership deficits continue to impede progress (Osifo, 2012).

In the context of educational systems, ethical leadership is crucial for fostering trust and accountability among stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and policymakers. Ethical governance, particularly in the fight against corruption, has also been recognized as a determinant of public trust in educational institutions (Aniche & Falola, 2021). Ghana, for instance, has implemented anti-corruption policies that align more closely with ethical governance standards, resulting in higher levels of public trust and better performance in the education sector compared to Nigeria (Osifo, 2012).

This study seeks to explore the role of ethical leadership and governance in the educational systems of Nigeria and Ghana, highlighting the key differences in their approaches to leadership and governance. Examining the policies and practices in these two countries will provide insights into how ethical leadership and governance contribute to the effectiveness of educational systems, with the aim of offering recommendations for improving governance structures and leadership practices in African educational institutions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories namely, Ethical Leadership Theory by Brown et al (2005) and Good Governance Theory by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997).

Ethical Leadership Theory by Brown et al (2005)

Brown et al. (2005) defined ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions, relationships, and the promotion of ethical behaviour among followers through communication, decision-making, and reinforcement. Ethical leadership plays a significant role in organizational contexts by establishing ethical standards and behaviour that can influence broader governance structures. This is particularly relevant in African educational systems, where leadership integrity can influence policies, institutional cultures, and the overall effectiveness of educational governance.

Ethical leadership in the educational systems of Nigeria and Ghana is pivotal in shaping transparency, accountability, and institutional trust. In countries where corruption and mismanagement are prevalent, ethical leadership provides a pathway to restore public confidence and improve governance outcomes. In Nigeria, leadership failures in educational governance often result in poor performance and resource misallocation, while Ghana's educational governance is relatively more effective due to the implementation of ethical leadership standards that align with broader governance reforms (Shakeel, Krueger, & Van Thiel, 2019). Thus, ethical leadership

theory helps explain the impact of leadership integrity on the governance of educational institutions in both countries.

Good Governance Theory by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997)

The Good Governance Theory, as proposed by the UNDP, focuses on the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in managing a country's affairs. Good governance is characterized by principles such as participation, transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. In the educational sector, good governance ensures that resources are equitably distributed, policies are effectively implemented, and institutions are held accountable for their performance.

The application of good governance principles is essential in addressing the governance challenges in the educational systems of Nigeria and Ghana. As Adejumo-Ayibiowu (2015) argues, good governance reforms, including decentralization and accountability mechanisms, are critical for improving institutional performance in African contexts. In Ghana, educational governance has benefited from reforms that promote decentralization and stakeholder participation, contributing to better educational outcomes. In contrast, Nigeria's governance challenges, such as corruption and ineffective decentralization, continue to undermine educational quality. The Good Governance Theory provides a framework for understanding how governance structures and reforms can influence educational policies and outcomes in both countries.

Principles of Ethical Leadership in Education

1. **Integrity and Honesty** – Ethical educational leaders uphold honesty and transparency in their dealings, ensuring that their actions align with their words.
2. **Fairness and Justice** – They treat students and staff equitably, promoting equal opportunities and discouraging favoritism or discrimination.
3. **Accountability** – Ethical leaders take responsibility for their actions and decisions, acknowledging mistakes and taking steps to rectify them.
4. **Empathy and Compassion** – They consider the needs and well-being of students, teachers, and parents, creating a supportive learning environment.

Importance of Ethical Leadership in Education

1. **promotes a Positive Learning Environment** – Ethical leadership fosters a culture of trust and respect, which enhances collaboration and student engagement.
2. **Reduces Corruption and Mismanagement** – By upholding ethical standards, leaders prevent financial mismanagement, favoritism, and other unethical practices.
3. **Enhances Teacher and Student Morale** – When leaders act ethically, they build confidence and motivation among teachers and students, leading to improved performance.
4. **Encourages Ethical Behavior in Students** – Leaders serve as role models, inspiring students to develop integrity and moral responsibility.

Challenges to Ethical Leadership in Education

1. **Political and Financial Pressures** – Leaders may face challenges balancing ethical principles with external influences from government policies or funding bodies.
2. **Corruption and Nepotism** – Some educational systems struggle with favoritism, bribery, and other unethical practices that hinder ethical leadership.
3. **Resistance to Change** – Implementing ethical reforms may face opposition from individuals benefiting from the status quo.

Strategies for Promoting Ethical Leadership in Education

1. **Training and Development** – Providing ethics-based leadership training to school administrators and teachers.
2. **Transparent Policies** – Establishing clear rules and regulations that promote accountability and fairness.
3. **Encouraging Stakeholder Participation** – Engaging teachers, students, and parents in decision-making processes.
4. **Implementing Anti-Corruption Measures** – Strengthening mechanisms to detect and address unethical behavior.

Definitions of Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership refers to the practice of guiding and influencing others based on moral principles, integrity, and fairness. It involves making decisions that are just, transparent, and beneficial to all stakeholders while upholding ethical standards. Ethical leaders demonstrate honesty, accountability, and a commitment to doing what is right, even in difficult situations.

Several scholars and organizations define ethical leadership in various ways:

Brown et al. (2005): Ethical leadership is “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.”

Northouse (2016): Ethical leadership is “concerned with the moral dimension of leadership, focusing on what is right and just for individuals and organizations.”

Treviño et al. (2003): Ethical leaders influence others by role modeling ethical behavior and enforcing ethical standards in their organizations.

Characteristics of Ethical Leadership

1. **Integrity** – Ethical leaders act honestly and consistently uphold their values, setting a strong example for others.
2. **Transparency** – They communicate openly and ensure that decision-making processes are clear and justifiable.
3. **Fairness and Justice** – They treat all individuals equally, making unbiased decisions without favoritism or discrimination.
4. **Accountability** – Ethical leaders take responsibility for their actions and encourage accountability within their organizations.
5. **Empathy and Compassion** – They show genuine concern for the well-being of others, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

Importance of Ethical Leadership in Educational Institutions

Ethical leadership in educational institutions plays a crucial role in shaping the values, culture, and overall effectiveness of schools, colleges, and universities. Leaders who uphold ethical principles ensure a fair, transparent, and inclusive learning environment that benefits students, teachers, and society at large.

1. **Promotes a Positive Learning Environment:** Ethical leadership fosters trust, respect, and fairness within educational institutions, creating a safe and supportive atmosphere for both students and staff. This encourages open communication, cooperation, and academic success.

2. Encourages Moral and Ethical Development in Students: Educational leaders serve as role models for students, demonstrating values such as honesty, integrity, and accountability. This helps students develop strong ethical principles that guide them in their academic and personal lives.

3. Enhances Institutional Reputation and Credibility: Institutions with ethical leadership gain the trust and respect of students, parents, educators, and the community. This attracts high-quality educators and students while strengthening partnerships with stakeholders, including government agencies and donors.

4. Reduces Corruption and Mismanagement: Ethical leaders prevent unethical practices such as bribery, favoritism, and financial mismanagement. By implementing transparent policies and holding individuals accountable, they ensure the institution operates with integrity.

5. Improves Teacher Morale and Productivity: When educational leaders treat teachers fairly and recognize their contributions, it enhances job satisfaction and motivation. This, in turn, improves teaching quality and student outcomes.

Educational Governance in Nigeria

Educational governance in Nigeria refers to the policies, structures, and processes that regulate and oversee the country’s education system. It involves the roles of government agencies, private institutions, and other stakeholders in ensuring quality education, equitable access, and institutional accountability. Governance is guided by national policies, legal frameworks, and international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative.

Structure of Educational Governance in Ghana

Educational governance in Ghana is structured across different levels of government, from the national to the local level, ensuring efficient management, regulation, and policy implementation. The system is overseen by the Ministry of Education (MoE), various agencies, and local education authorities to promote access, quality, and equity in education.

Differences in Educational Governance between Nigeria and Ghana

Aspect	Nigeria	Ghana
Governance Structure	Federal System- Education is managed at Federal, State, and local levels.	Unitary system – Education is managed centrally, with implementation at the Regional and District levels.
Policy Education Funding	States have autonomy to implement education policies differently. Some states perform better than others.	Policies are uniformly implemented nationwide under strict MOE and GES supervision.
Basic Education Funding	The Universal Basic Education Fund (UBEF) finances education, with federal and state governments co-funding.	The Capitation Grant System funds free basic education, directly supporting schools with running costs.

Free Senior Secondary Education	Education is not fully free at the Senior Secondary Level; some states offer scholarships.	Free Senior High School (Free SHS policy 2017) ensures government covers full tuition costs.
Teacher Training and Licensing	Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) oversees licensing but enforcement is weak.	National Training Council (NTC) strictly enforces licensing and continuous professional development.
Technical & Vocational Education	NBTE regulates vocational training but TVET is underfunded and undervalued.	CTVET actively promotes vocational training, with better integration into mainstream education.
Higher Education Regulator	National Universities Commission (NUC) regulates universities but has been criticized for poor quality control.	GTEC enforces strict accreditation and quality assurance for all tertiary institutions.
Public-Private Partnership	The government relies more on private universities and school to fill education gaps.	The government plays a stronger role in direct funding and regulation, with fewer private universities.

Conclusion

Both Nigeria and Ghana have similar governance structures but differ in policy implementation, funding strategies, and decentralization. While Nigeria's system allows state-level flexibility, it sometimes leads to disparities in education quality. Ghana's system ensures uniformity, but it is highly centralized. Combining the best practices from both countries—such as Ghana's Free SHS and teacher licensing with Nigeria's decentralized flexibility and private sector engagement—can improve educational governance in both nations.

Recommendations for Strengthening Ethical Leadership for Nigeria

- 1. Strengthen Enforcement of Anti-Corruption Policies** – Ensure stricter monitoring of school funds and university admissions.
- 2. Reduce Political Influence in Education** – Appoint school and university leaders based on merit, not political connections.

For Ghana

- 1. Enhance Transparency in Free SHS Funding** – Implement real-time tracking of resource allocation in secondary schools.
- 2. Ensure Merit-Based Teacher Recruitment** – Enforce strict hiring policies to prevent favoritism.

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