

BUILDING MORAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: THE NIGERIAN SURVEYORS' EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

- ☞ The paper analyses the activities of SURCON & NIS – the two institutions that checkmate unethical practices in Nigeria, in the last 10 years
- ☞ The Paper found their Institutional laws and regulations inadequate in addressing the problems of unethical practices
- ☞ The paper believes that integrity and ethics must be built from within, reserving the use of law and regulations as last choices only.

The paper proposes a new professional ethics based on two ethical principles- *the Golden Rule* and *Hippocratic Oath*.

- ☞ Based on these two principles, a more pragmatic, positive ethical behaviour was proposed where the professional sees himself highly obligated to his society, employers & funders, his profession & professional colleagues



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DEFINITIONS & MEANINGS

- ☞ **Ethics** is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the "Science of morals; moral principles or code".
- ☞ **Morals** is defined as that which is concerned with goodness or badness of human character or behaviour, or with the distinction between right and wrong.
- ☞ **Professional Ethics**
- ☞ Professional Ethics concerns one's conduct of behaviour and practice when carrying out professional work



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Morals vs. Professional Ethics

Morality usually implies a set of internally held values, quite often (but not necessarily) deontological, or deity-based. It like an internal barometer by which an individual may guide his personal beliefs and actions.

Professional Ethics are commonly held set of guidelines as to how their fellow professionals can reasonably be expected to act in the same or similar conditions.

It is expected that each professional will be guided by his/her internal morals as well as external codes of ethics



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FACTORS THAT DETERMINE PROFESSIONAL ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

- ☞ The personal ethics of the professional
- ☞ The influence of the professional's role models
- ☞ The Laws and Regulations of the professional body/regulating authority.



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REGULATION AND CONTROL OF SURVEY PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

- ☞ Surveyors Council of Nigeria (*SURCON*)
(*Statutory Body*)
- ☞ Nigerian Institution of Surveyors
(*Professional Body*)
- ☞ Each have similar code of ethics that guide survey practice in Nigeria

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ACTIVITIES OF THE REGULATING BODIES IN THE LAST TEN YEARS

YEARS	NATURE OF CASES	TRIAL	SANCTIONED	OUTCOME OF CASE
2003	Professional Charges/undercutting	„		Resolved
	Private Practice while in paid employment, professional misconduct		„	Resolved
	Undercutting and Professional practice while in paid employment		„	Resolved
	Professional misconduct/misuse of professional name	„		Resolved
	Professional charges/undercutting and unprofessional attitude towards a colleague	„		Resolved
	Professional misconducts		„	Resolved
2004-2008	NONE REPORTED			
2009-2010	Professional misconduct/undercutting of professional fees		„	Resolved
	Unprofessional attitude towards a colleague			Resolved
	Plan backdating and unprofessional conduct	„		Resolved
	Private practice while in employment/undercutting		„	
	Professional misconduct	„		Resolved
	Professional misconduct	„		Resolved
	An independent Survey carried out by court order	„		Resolved
2011	Unprofessional attitude towards a colleague	„		
	Professional misconduct/undercutting of professional fees	„		
	Unprofessional attitude towards a colleague	„		
2012	NONE REPORTED			
2013	NONE REPORTED			

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OBSERVATIONS

- ☞ See Table 1 shows a listing of unethical Cases handled by the National Ethic committee.
- ☞ Some states, especially those in the northern part of the country are yet to have very functional SURCON STATE ETHICS COMMITTEES, after more than 20 years of the promulgation of the decree.
- ☞ There are many incidences of unethical practices in the country. Many do not report cases of unethical practices.
- ☞ Seeking legal redress or even reporting cases of professional misconducts always result in time wasting. Many prefer to bear a wrong than to face the harrowing experience of numerous court adjournments and police unending invitations during investigations.
- ☞ Other issues peculiar to the Nigerian environment affect the smooth operation of these two regulating agencies. Problems of corruption, nepotism, tribalism are challenges that hamper their effectiveness.

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ENSURING ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

What factors influence a professional's adherence to a profession's code of ethics?

- Is it fears of legal sanctions or penalty
- Is it Personal ethics?

“Laws and regulations are limited and relatively weak, and therefore “far from the solution to ethical behavior. ... integrity and ethics must be built from within, reserving the law and fear as last choices only. (Jerry E. White)

Based on this fact, this paper focuses attention on what happens in the inside of the professional, the moral make-up that shapes all other professional action.



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MORAL FOUNDATIONS

THE PROPOSED PERSONAL ETHICS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IS BASED ON TWO MORAL FOUNDATIONS:

(1) GOLDEN RULE : “Do unto others as you would have others do unto You”

(2) THE HIPPOCRATIC OATH : “Above all, not knowingly to do harm”



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The Proposed Moral code For Professional Practice Requires that :

A professional considers the impact of his actions on other persons;

That he modifies his actions to reflect the respect and concern he has for them.

It emphasizes his obligations to other persons, to his colleagues and the profession, to his employers, and to society as a whole.



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Obligations to Society

He Does the Best Work Possible :

- By being objective, using due care, and making full use of his education and skills.
- He practises with integrity and is not unduly swayed by the demands of others.
- He strives to do what is right, not just what is legal

He Speak Out About Issues:

- Calls attention to the unprofessional work of others when necessary;
- Admits when a mistake has been made and, makes corrections where possible



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Obligations to Employers and Funders

He Delivers Quality Work :

- By ensuring he is qualified for the tasks he accepts to do.
- He identifies risks and the potential means to reduce them;

He Has Proper Professional Relationships:

- He avoids all conflicts of interest with clients and employers,
- He does not solicit for any inappropriate benefit that is connected to his working relationships.
- He honors contracts and assigned responsibilities
- He accepts decisions of employers and clients, unless they are illegal or unethical.



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Obligations to Colleagues & the Profession

He Respects the Work of Others:

- He accepts & provides fair critical comments on professional work of others.
- He recognizes the limitations of his own knowledge and skills and uses the skills of other professionals as need arises;
- He works respectfully and capably with other surveyors or team members;
- He deals honestly and fairly with his prospective employees, contractors, and vendors.

He Contributes to the Development of the Profession:

By publishing results so others can learn about them; and volunteering time to his professional educational development



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CONCLUSION

- The paper has looked into the activities of Survey regulating bodies- SURCON & NIS, and observes the challenges facing them in maintaining professional ethics.
- We also found out that of the three factors that determine adherence to ethics- personal morality, influence of role models, law and professional regulations– only personal morality is most effective, as no professional regulation or rules of conduct can handle every conceivable situation.
- The paper proposes a new professional ethics based on a sound moral foundation. This moral foundation is based on two ethical principles- the Golden Rule and Hippocratic Oath.
- In this proposed ethic, the professional sees himself highly obligated to his society, employers and funders, his profession and professional colleagues.
- He makes sure that he is fair to all concerned, by not knowingly do harm unto any, and by acting in a way that he will want them to deal with him



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Recommendations

- ❖ Professional ethics should be included in Surveyors training programme
- ❖ We recommend a revision of the existing code of ethics based on the proposed moral foundation
- ❖ Professional ethics should be incorporated as part of Surveyors Mandatory Continuous Professional Developments Programme,



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THANKS FOR LISTENING



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