

Corruption, Ethics and Extant Rules¹

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¹ Being the text of a presentation at a retreat for Chairmen and Members of Governing Councils and Principal Officers of Federal Polytechnics at the IdrisAbdulkadir Auditorium, National Universities Commission, Abuja on Thursday 11 May 2017.

Courtesies

It is my pleasure and privilege to be called upon to speak during this retreat for Chairmen and Members of the Governing Councils as well as the Principal Officers of Federal Polytechnics. I have been asked to speak on the theme, **Corruption, Ethics and Extant Rules**.

Before going into my assigned task, let me begin by congratulating the Chairmen and Members of the Governing Councils who have been found worthy of the trust required to help steer the activities of our Federal Polytechnics. I am sure your letters of appointment contained not only the duration of your tenure but also what was expected of you as Governing Councils Chairmen and Members, and your relationship with the Rectors and other Principal Officers of your individual institutions.

Know your mandates

Ignorance of the law, it is said, is not an excuse. It is therefore imperative that you know what your mandate is from day one. Councils are responsible for the issuance of broad policy guidelines, approving operational targets, and ensuring that resources were judiciously and efficiently managed. The mundane, day-to-day running of affairs is the preserve of the Rector aided by other Principal Officers. However, the Rector is duty bound to report back to you during statutory meetings what it was that had been achieved based on the direction provided by you.

Once Governing Council Chairmen and Members understand what their tasks and responsibilities were and what functions and responsibilities are assigned Rectors and other Principal Officers there should be little or no friction between one and the other. I should

therefore urge you to read the extant laws setting up your institutions to know the limits of your powers and privileges.

In addition to the laws establishing your institution, you also need to familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Financial Regulations. Your institution being a public one draw funds from the federal treasury. Whatever was appropriated and released to the institution must be spent in accordance with the approved budgetary estimates and guidelines of the Financial Regulations.

Receipts and income from Internally Generated Revenue, IGR, bonds, stocks, endowments, gifts and donations are also to be used and accounted for in accordance with the Financial Regulations. The same regulations specify contract and procurement procedures as well as the ways by which stores and assets should be disposed.

I would like to believe that if you all in Council and Management abide by the provisions of the Financial Regulations you need not worry becoming our guest at the EFCC!

Renewed Political Will

Since the emergence of the MuhammaduBuhari administration the fight against corruption has gained traction on account of the political will exhibited by Mr. President to conquer the menace.

As it is well known, the EFCC is responsible for, among others:

- The investigation of all financial crimes;
- The co-ordination and enforcement of all economic and financial crimes laws and enforcement functions;
- The adoption of measures to identify, trace, freeze, confiscate or seize proceeds derived from terrorist activities, economic and financial crimes
- The prevention and eradication of economic and financial crimes.

Consequently, the only way to escape the wrath of the law is to abide by the law! Because it is no longer business as usual, those entrusted with public offices, including those gathered here today, must maintain the highest ethical standards in the discharge of the responsibilities they have been shouldered with.

The EFCC will remain resolute in the pursuit of its mandate, all those who have committed economic and financial crimes shall have neither peace nor sleep. We shall continue to meticulously identify, trace, investigate, freeze, confiscate all ill-gotten wealth and assets and prosecute the perpetrators in our law courts.

Corruption – the silent killer

I don't think at this stage I need to belabor you with a definition of corruption. We are all too familiar with corruption, we are surrounded by her features and landmarks, as evidenced by poor roads, erratic power and water supply, abandoned projects, decayed infrastructure, half-baked products of tertiary institutions, etc.

All one needed to know about corruption is in the public domain. Television and newspapers daily show how government officials with modest salaries acquire expensive homes, jewelries and foreign currency stashed in all manner of places. The whistleblower policy is indeed a timely addition to other policies and strategies put in place by the current administration as part of the resolve to combat corruption.

Corruption is commonly defined as the "misuse of public office for private gain." Public office is a trust yet, disregarding that trust, some elected officials and public servants take advantage of opportunities made available to them by their positions of trust to divert money and assets from government to their own pockets. When those entrusted have neither conscience nor morals,

when they blatantly disregard ethical norms and decency the entire nation suffers the consequence.

Heeding the Clarion Call

President Buhari has never tired of repeating that, “unless we kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria.” A complement to this exhortation was the reminder, again by Mr. President, that, “Change begins with me.”

Institutions of higher learning like the polytechnics you have been called upon to serve are the finishing grounds after which the products are set to take up responsibilities in key sectors of the society and the economy. May I remind you of those precious words that precede the conferment of degrees and diploma in all tertiary institutions?

Being found worthy in learning and character – those are the qualities required before one could merit a diploma or degree.

Here is hoping that the Chairmen and Members as well as the Principal Officers at this retreat help heed the call that, “Change begins with me”. Unless people change, we will be kept busy receiving guests at the EFCC.

I thank you for your kind attention.