

Building Moral Foundation for Ethical Professionalpractice:the Nigerian Surveyors Experience.

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SUMMARY

BUILDING MORAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: THE NIGERIAN SURVEYORS' EXPERIENCE ABSTRACT To influence the society they serve positively, Surveyors need to earn and maintain public trust by not only exhibiting high technical capability, but also high moral standards and integrity. This paper therefore deals with issues of professionalism, morality and ethics, and how professional associations ensure public trust by having code of ethics, which governs their activities. Studies show that adherence to professional ethics is a function of three factors – the personal ethics of the professional, the influence of the professional's role models and the Laws and Regulation of the professional body/regulating authority. The paper sets out to determine the extent each of these factors has contributed in ensuring ethical professional practice in the country. Surveyors in Nigeria have code of ethics given by the professional association, called Nigerian Institution of Surveyors (NIS), and a statutory regulating body, the Surveyors Council of Nigeria (SURCON). The codes of ethics from these two institutions regulate professional practice in the country. The paper analyses the activities of these two institutions over the years in checkmating unethical practices and found the Institutional laws and regulations inadequate in addressing the problems. Our findings show that using Laws and regulations to maintain ethical practice is always limited in their effect, and relatively weak. The paper believes that integrity and ethics must be built from within, reserving the use of law and regulations as last choices only. 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. The paper proposes a new professional ethics based on two ethical principles- the Golden Rule and Hippocratic Oath. We saw the universality of these two principles and its applicability in the Nigerian context. Based on these two principles, a more pragmatic, positive ethical behaviour was proposed where the professional sees himself highly obligated to his society, employers and funders, his profession and professional colleagues. In dealing with each of these, 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. This is the whole gamut of moral foundation being canvassed in this paper. The paper advocates a revision of the existing code of ethics based on the proposed moral foundation.