

Deontological and Consequential Ethics for Quality Standards: Blurring the Boundaries to Secure Accountability in Policy Compliance for Public Administration Practices

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Abstract

The nexus between ethics and accountability has long been assumed and debated in public administration but the nature of that relationship has not been clearly scrutinized and pronounced. This is the essence of this article as it seeks to define how problematic the relationship has been in administrative practices in a Ghanaian public university. The paper makes an effort to provide policy direction for service improvement by introducing two key philosophies that form the basis of ethical behaviour for quality standards in administrative work in public universities. It discusses the major approaches to moral theory (deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics) and links ethics to laws and statutory regimes of public organisations. Finally, the paper discusses how these theories might inform ethical administrative practices to achieve quality standards in public universities. The paper obtained empirical data from students and administrative staff from a public university, and lays primary emphasis on the general and common elements in contemporary administrative practices that are needed to achieve quality standards, but nonetheless the discussion also considers the contextualisation processes involved in the realisation or enactment of policy or regulatory statutes in specific organisational settings for ethical behaviour. A set of generic ‘problems’ which constitute the contemporary social and political conditions for administrative practices are also adumbrated. The paper sets out philosophical ideas and a number of practical mechanisms for infusing and institutionalizing quality standards in administrative work. It shows that for the introduction of the relevant codes of ethics and conduct to be effective in administrative work, these need to be supported by a range of mechanisms, training, and strong leadership by managers, and these are made possible when the boundaries around deontological and consequential ethics are blurred.

Keywords: public administration; good governance; code of ethics; professionalism; moral principles; Kantianism; utilitarianism; moral theories.

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1. Introduction

This paper is premised on one of the tensions which runs through varieties of public administration. This is the one between the need to attend to client satisfaction particularities of service provision, and the need to be aware of general patterns and apparent pre-requisites of organisational values in terms of organisational pressures on administrative staff. These lead to ‘street-level behaviours’ of staff which often tend to be (mis)interpreted as unethical practices. That tension is central to this paper. Our primary emphasis is the indicators of quality and the quality standards with specific focus on the services offered to students by administrators at the departments of the Faculty of Technology and Innovations (FTI) at the Hicks Technology University (HTU). This subject pertains to ethics and accountability practices in public administration as used to transform higher education institutions with reference to quality administrative practices. The authors take a view that the nexus between ethics and accountability is an emotive issue for scholarship in public administration. Traditionally, accountability is used as a means to control and direct administrative behaviour through ‘answerability’ to external authorities (Mulgan, 2000). The concept has deep roots in traditional African culture, and can be linked to the principles or ethics that are implicit in the preservation of traditional African societies and used as a system of checks and balances. Consequently, in Ghana’s public administration, accountability has most often been associated with ethical standards of responsible behaviour and professional integrity as defined by ethical principles in the milieu of growth of the administrative state and the widespread use of discretionary powers in public administration.

This perspective inures to issues about the relationship between ethics and accountability that has remained central in the national discourse since the early 1980s. These two related concepts have been core in the debate that sets the intellectual agenda for Ghana’s public administration during the country’s revolutionary era. Since this period, scholars of public administration have persisted with the argument that the traditional means of

oversight and control used for holding public administrators accountable as espoused by the Government were ineffective and unnecessary because they usually resulted in a *faux pas*. They have believed rather that it was reasonable to concede to the judgment of administrators whose sense of professional responsibility and loyalty could be trusted when they carried out public duties in the national interest. This view reinforces the widely held notion that, despite the greater sense of professional responsibility among contemporary Ghana's administrators, the country's governance arrangements still require enhanced policy regulation and direction for administrative officials.

This argument is epitomised by the classic expression of the conventional relationship between ethics and accountability in public administration (Ukeje *et al.* 2020; Moore 2015; Banks, 2003; Strike *et al.* 2005, McSwite, 1997). Fundamental to this view is the assumption that the commitment of public administrators to conduct themselves responsibly and ethically in tandem with 'democratic morality' is not sufficient to ensure that the demands of clients will be carried out as expected. Ostensibly therefore, accountability in the form of external or democratic constraints and controls are of essence as well. Accountability mechanisms are therefore required to render the decisions and behaviours of public officials responsible, not merely in the legal, political or bureaucratic contexts, but morally as well (Darwall, 2009; Gilbert, 1959; Marx, 1949). This portends ethical behaviour which requires the presence of external accountability mechanisms in all their various forms (Appleby, 1952). The central question in this discourse is the determination that accountability does foster ethical or morally responsible behaviour. The paper takes a view that despite considerable scholarship devoted to the examination of efforts to control the bureaucracy through various accountability mechanisms from long ago (Pal & Pal, 2022; Balla, 1998; Calvert *et al.* 1989; Harris, 1964; Hood *et al.* 2000; Kettl, 1992; Light, 1993; McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984; Rosen, 1989; Wood & Waterman, 1994), the existence and effectiveness of the accountability-ethics relationship has not been systematically examined enough.

Etymologically, the word ethics is traced back to the ancient Greek word "ethos" which originally means a place of dwelling, or location, as well as habit, custom, convention. Cicero (44BC) also translated the Greek term into Latin as "mores" (ethos, customs), from which the modern concept of morality is derived (Woolf, 2022). Then, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant described ethics as dealing with the question "What should I do?" (Kant, 2017). An examination of current literature on ethics reveals a focus on guidelines given by philosophers, academics and social critics, which do not meet the requirements of modern organisations in terms of needing a more practical information about workplace ethics. The paper seeks to achieve this. Ethics simply means 'to do what is right' or saying 'do good', and in the instance of this paper it is considered a management discipline. Thus, practicing ethics in the workplace brings tremendous benefits to the client, the organisation and the society as a whole. This is particularly true in the 21st Century when it is critical to understand and manage highly diverse groups of workers, with different values in the workplace of organisations in very tumultuous economic conditions.

The authors believe that ethics involves learning right from wrong, and then doing what is right. However, what constitute the 'right thing' is not nearly a straightforward thing. This means that most ethical dilemmas in the workplace are not simply a matter of yes or no, suggesting that whenever there are some doubts about a decision, one has to be careful before they thread. The paper therefore classifies ethics as a 'science of conduct' because ethics connotes the fundamental ground rules by which society lives. Philosophers such as Socrates and Plato have given guidelines for ethical behaviour and consequently, many ethicists consider emerging ethical beliefs to be legal principles. This means that ethical guidelines usually get transformed into law, regulation or rule. Consequently, abiding by the law is one of the basic virtues of ethics. Values, which guide how people behave such as respect, honesty, fairness, responsibility, etc. are called moral values. Then statements that border on how the values are applied are sometimes called moral or ethical principles. In practice, ethics as a concept has come to represent several things to different people, however in the organisational context, it refers to knowing what is right or wrong in the workplace and doing what is right in the context of affecting services and/or products in lieu of stakeholders.

Ethics and accountability have therefore been the epicentre of quality practices in educational institutions across the globe. In Europe, ethics and accountability have been steering the Bologna process which has been a point of reference for quality practices, and has necessitated the reorganisation of administrative structures in educational institutions (Corbett, 2011; Neave & Veiga, 2013). There have been centralized and decentralized administrative systems in Asia and Africa (Nieuwenhuis & Mokoena, 2005; Papadopoulou & Yirci, 2013) with ethics and accountability being central to these processes. These two principles have also led to the application of new administrative and management approaches to administration in Australia (Pick *et al.*, 2012) and Europe. These administrative reforms in higher education institutions in Australia and Europe have largely focussed on quality service and customer care (Sporn, 2003). In spite of these achievements in administration, there have been enervating issues regarding increased bureaucracy (Davis *et al.* 2016). For example, in East Asia, the administrative bureaucracy has negatively affected the internationalisation agenda of higher education (Chan & Lo, 2008; Chin & Ching, 2009; Poole, 2016). However, the quality issues embedded in administrative trends,

makes it difficult for administrative professionals to make ethical decisions in the face of massification and internationalisation without guidance nor recourse to the tenets of organisational culture (Holzweiss *et al.* 2019). This explains why higher education institutions must equally pay attention to quality administrative services much as they do to quality of teaching and learning.

Grönroos (2001) has classified services as processes whose production and consumption occur at the same time. According to Kayastha (2011), they involve an exchange where one party gives something to the other party for money. In the context of higher education, students for example enrol on a programme and require support to be able to apprehend the benefits of the programme. This support comes in the form of services from both teaching and non-teaching staff. Mostly the non-teaching staff provide forms of support that is classified administrative services. These include timetabling, record management, information dissemination, transcripts services (Egoeze *et al.* 2018; Pohekar, 2018), without which academic work will be laborious. The logic of these administrative services is that the outcomes of universities' main focus of academic work (teaching and research) cannot be achieved without quality administrative services. This logic underscores the need to train administrators to follow particular ethical practices or standards in the discharge of their duties and to achieve the mission of their institutions (Karlsson & Rytberg, 2016). Ethics in this context then connotes the principles by which a practice or behaviour is evaluated as right or wrong, good or bad. They refer to well based standards of right and wrong, and a prescription of what ought to be done. Within the higher education administrative services discourse, ethics seek to craft the continuous efforts towards ensuring that administrators and the institutions they shape, live up to the standards that are reasonable and clearly defined. Ethics in this sense may be distinguished in two domains as: normative which describes the standards for the rightness and wrongness of acts; and descriptive that refers to empirical investigation of people's moral beliefs. The discussion pertaining in this paper is for the most part concerned with normative ethics. █

Higher educational institutions may attach different meanings to the quality of these services as determined by the associated ethical practices that is in turn based on the experiences or philosophies of the institution. This notwithstanding, continuous improvement of higher education services is important as far as ethical administrative practices are used to enhance the quality of the services (Akinyemi & Abiddin, 2013). This means that students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the quality of administrative services is a consequence of ethical practices which are used as a benchmark for improving administrative services.

The ethical exigency is even more imperative at the Hicks Technology University which was transformed to achieve a university status in Ghana in 2016. This redefined their mandate to focus on technical education. But the transitional processes came with its challenges in the quality of services that were rendered to students. In the light of this upgrade, a major responsibility was put on the management to keep up with the norms and standards regarding teaching and administrative services to the letter.

2. Statement of the Problem

The gap that defines the problem for this research is that quality standards governing the University only covers the procedural aspect of administrative work to the neglect of other indicators like good managerial practices, good attitude toward goal setting, adequate training, and socio-cultural factors (induced by values) which influence students' perception of quality. The context of this research problem is an encounter that the researchers had with some students at the FTI of the University which indicated their dissatisfaction with the quality of administrative services they receive.

3. Purpose of the Study

The study sought to investigate the quality of administrative services given to students at the Faculty of Technology and Innovation at Hicks Technology University in order to provide policy directions for service improvement.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the objectives listed below as its benchmarks:

1. To find out the indicators of quality for administrative services offered to students at FTI.
2. To investigate the extent to which the quality standards for administrative services to students at FTI are practised.

5. Research Questions

The underlisted research questions were gleaned from the objectives to lead the research:

1. What are the indicators of quality for administrative services offered to students at FTI?
2. To what extent are the quality standards for administrative services offered to students at FTI practised?

6. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is founded on two conceptual pillars that are derived from the research questions thus:

6.1 *Indicators of Quality for Administrative Services*

Noaman *et al.* (2015) have stressed on the relevance of administrative functions to the attainment of the goals of higher education institutions. They claim that when administrators perform their core functions of planning, organizing, controlling, directing, evaluating, the universities operate efficiently. University faculties have academic administrators like dean, and heads of department, as well as professional administrators like registrars, accountants, and librarians who perform administrative functions (Duze, 2012). Both groups of administrators play significant roles in the governance and administration of the university. However, the latter group can be said to have more direct contact with staff and students on a regular basis due to the services they offer to the university community. These services include admissions, time tabling, to other forms of support services. The quality of these services is measured by certain indicators. The literature classifies these as quality dimensions or quality factors (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Hoang, 2018). These are described as: factors of systems' efficiency (Vuk, 2012); factors of objective measure (Ullah *et al.* 2011); a set of elements for standards used in evaluating education (Lopez *et al.* 2016); academic services and facilities, quality of lecturers and quality of academic programmes (Mattah *et al.* 2018).

In spite of these classifications, the literature identifies specific factors to describe quality. For example, in the field of student admissions, application systems and criteria for selecting students are used (Jahanzaib & Akhtar, 2005); in the area of academic services, teaching and learning are the benchmarks, and these help to improve academic institutions; in teacher education, Dilshad (2010) points to learners, learning environments, contents, processes, and outcomes; then Chalmers (2008) indicates institutional climate and systems, diversity, mode of assessment, student-staff engagement and learning communities. The quality of these indicators bears on administrative efficiency (Chaney *et al.* 2009).

6.1.1 *Models of Service Quality*

Several models of service quality abound in the literature. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) developed the Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) which is also referred to as the gap model. SERVQUAL is characterised by tangibles (appearance of physical facilities, personnel, equipment), reliability (dependability and accuracy of the service provided), responsiveness (prompt services and willingness to assist), assurance (ability of personnel to be courteous and inspire confidence) and empathy (showing concern to customers). Cronin & Taylor (1992) also developed the Service performance (SERVPERF) which sought to modify the SERVQUAL by omitting the expectation element in the SERVQUAL (Carrillat *et al.* 2007). Waugh also made changes to the SERVQUAL model and developed a new model called the Administrative Quality Model (Waugh, 2002). The latter has two features namely: reliability and responsiveness (administrative contact, provision of administrative material, confident and dependable advice, advanced notice of changes); and assurance and empathy (courteousness and confidence in contact, understanding contact and feeling secure). And more modern models exist. Annamdevula & Bellamkonda (2012) have come up with the Higher Education Service Quality (HiEdQual) which focus on administrative ethics like courteousness, willingness, quick service delivery, accessibility, error free delivery and proper record management. Noaman *et al.* (2015) also developed the Higher Education Quality Assessment (HEQAM) model. The HEQAM is also constituted by such elements as: availability of administrative materials for services, effective, accurate and prompt services, the availability of administrative services at the university website, friendliness, clear guidelines and advice, sufficient working hours and availability of technical support for e-services. The literature further discusses two other models called the Higher education quality (HEDQUAL) and Higher Education Quality Assessment models (HESQUAL). İçli & Anil (2014) developed the former which identified the factors in service delivery to include rapid service, availability of information material, friendliness, timely notification to students regarding schedule changes or cancellations, new decisions, activities etc, clear guidelines, promise keeping, having enough knowledge about systems and procedures, sufficient working hours, easily accessible administrative personnel. The latter model identified administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality, support facilities quality and transformative quality as its core characteristics. The proponents further divided these core characteristics into two sub-categories namely: attitude and behaviour of administrative staff in the administrative process. This paper draws from the works cited above to classify indicators of quality for administrative service.

6.2 *Quality Standards Practices for Administrative Services*

The discussion in this section is focussed on the practices of quality standards for administrative services to students. It emphasises that administration and management in higher education play a vital role in ensuring institutional effectiveness. Bevans-Gonzales & Nair (2004), Cheng *et al.* (2004), Balagué (2007) and Bailey (2014) have pointed to various levels of standards that regulate service delivery. The UNIDO (2006) has referred

to quality standards as a document which defines the requirements, rules, and guidelines, for a process, product or service, and it aims to achieve the highest order in a given context. El Abbadi *et al.* (2011) have also referred to quality standards as codes of good practice. Various institutions perceive the phenomenon as performance standards to regulate the performance of employees. This paper however conceptualises the phenomenon as the rules or guidelines that regulate performance towards the attainment of quality.

Campbell *et al.* (2002), and D'Amore *et al.* (2018) have emphasised the importance of quality standards. Regardless of the aspect of an institution they focus on, quality standards are mostly in line with the vision and mission of the institution. This leads to the conceptualization of elements such as goals which break down the vision into achievable targets. These goals are sometimes set towards performance management which is an important aspect of the quality culture (Teo & Low, 2016). Consequently, when the achievement of organisational goals is set as a quality standard, performance can be influenced positively. This means that goal setting helps an organisation to follow a particular line of performance and create a work culture as argued by Sokro (2012) and Ojo (2008) that, organisational culture has a direct impact on organisational performance. This means that setting goals in an organisation introduces a particular culture which consequently influences employee performance and organisational performance at large.

Sabanci *et al.* (2016) have commended for quality standards to be associated with communication because no organisation can thrive without effective communication. They also found out in their study that school administrators had high communication skills and outlined courteousness, politeness and fluency as important elements of good communication. In this line of thought, the paper makes the argument that the setting of quality standards enjoins administrators to be competent enough to meet such standards. This is corroborated by Amias & Segumpan (2017) that a high correlation exists between skills and competence for job performance, implying that administrators have to be competent to communicate a positive image of their institution through ethical practices for the services they render. Consequently, administrators who are unable to perform according to the set quality standards in for instance problem solving, coordination or interpersonal relationships, can be said to lack competence for their work. This paper further argues for a residual relationship that exist between ethics and competence, where competence is mostly attained through training by transferring knowledge, ethics and skills.

7. Methodology

The methodological design for the study encompassed the research paradigm of pragmatism because it sought to provide objective and deductive answers to the research questions which are akin to positivism. Thereafter, it became necessary to probe further for deeper meaning of the data in the natural setting and lived experiences of the participants which links to interpretivism. This paradigm logically led to the use of mixed methods approach (see Grover, 2015). Hence, survey and interviews were used as methods of data collection. The study adopted the sequential explanatory design which allowed the researchers to use quantitative data to expatiate the research problem and then apply the qualitative data for deeper explanation as discussed by Subedi (2016).

The site and subjects for this research was the Hicks Technology University. This is a pseudonym for the site of the study, and it is used in compliance with ethical pre-requisites of the research. This is a public tertiary institution in Ghana. Currently the university has two schools and four faculties, including the Faculty of Technology and Innovations (also a pseudonym). The FTI has 5 academic departments. The site is relevant to the study because of the knowledge gap in the quality of record management and administrative services in general at Hicks Technology University. The general population for the study is the total number of all students at FTI. The target population comprised of second- and third-year students in all five departments at FTI, which totalled 664. First year students were intentionally excluded from the study because they were freshly admitted and have not had much contact with administrative services. The questionnaire was administered to 250 students, which were sampled using the Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967) for determining the sample size as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{664}{1+664(0.05)^2} = \frac{664}{2.66} = 249.62 = 250$$

where n = sample size; N= population; 1= constant; e= estimated % error squared. (level of significance = 0.05)

After the sample size was determined, stratified sampling was used to select the percentage of the sample that each cohort in the 5 departments represented in the target population. Consequently, a total sample of 227 was obtained from the 5 departments with the stratified sampling technique. Thereafter, the study used the homogenous purposive sampling as a second sampling technique to select 13 administrators (5 Heads of Department, 1 faculty administrator, 5 senior administrative assistants, 2 administrative assistants) and 10 student leaders in the five departments at FTI for the quantitative phase. At the qualitative phase, the

homogenous purposive sampling technique was again used to select 11 participants to obtain data on issues identified at the quantitative phase that needed in-depth explanation. This consisted of 5 student leaders, 5 senior administrative assistants (1 from each department respectively) and 1 quality assurance officer.

The face and content validity of the questionnaire were established. Thereafter, the instrument was pre-tested at the University of Applied Sciences (also a pseudonym) to establish the reliability coefficient. The result of the pre-test was analysed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and a score of 0.827 was obtained. This corroborated Taber (2017)'s claim that an alpha of 0.70 and above indicates sufficient reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. The researchers further ensured the trustworthiness of the qualitative data in order to adumbrate the choice of methods for data analysis, and to establish the quality of the research. The research adopted Guba's model of trustworthiness which outlines dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability as its elements (Shenton, 2004; Elo, Kääriäinen *et al.* 2014; Moon *et al.* 2016).

The procedure regarding data collection was that the questionnaire was used to gather data for the first (quantitative) phase of the study using the Likert scale. The second (qualitative) phase of data collection used interviews (that was conducted within one week), and its corresponding instrument (the interview guide) to collect data. The qualitative data was very huge therefore the researchers used the NVivo software to put the recording into written words due to its efficiency, ability to store huge data and ability to show transparency in the data collected (Hoover & Koerber, 2009). The sequential explanatory design defined the mode for data analysis in this research where the quantitative data was analysed first and followed by the qualitative. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation, while the qualitative was analysed using thematic analysis.

8. Data Analysis and Discussion

Per the dictates of the research design, the quantitative data is presented and analysed first to answer the research questions:

8.1 The Indicators of Quality for Administrative Services Offered to Students at FTI

The essence of the discussion in this section is to find out students' perception of the factors that signify quality in administrative services. The results are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on indicators of quality for administrative services

Indicators of quality	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Training of administrative staff	3.46	0.560	1 st
Professionalism of administrative staff	3.27	0.549	7 th
Modern administrative facilities and materials	3.34	0.622	4 th
Disability friendly administrative environment	3.35	0.597	3 rd
Transparency in administrative procedures	3.43	0.578	2 nd
Managing bureaucracy in administrative procedures	3.29	0.593	6 th
Students' assessment of administrative services	3.31	0.587	5 th
Quality assurance officers' assessment of administrative services	3.26	0.588	8 th

Source: Fieldwork data (2022).

From Table 1, students expressed their opinions on 8 indicators of quality for administrative service. All the mean fell within the agree range of 2.50 to 3.49, showing students approval of all the indicators found in the Table. The overall mean and standard deviation of the items were 3.34 and 0.584 respectively. The former falls within the agree range which means students agreed with all items as indicators of quality for administrative service while the standard deviation means that the responses are close to the mean. The qualitative phase of data collection was then conducted to explain why some indicators of quality were given more priority than others.

With the overall mean and standard deviation (M=3.34, SD= 0.584), the answer to the first research question is that the indicators of quality for administrative services offered to students at FTI are: training of administrative staff; transparency in administrative procedures; disability friendly administrative environment; modern administrative facilities and materials; students' assessment of administrative services; managing bureaucracy in administrative procedures; professionalism of administrative staff; and quality assurance officers' assessment of administrative services. Studies conducted by Dhar (2015), and He *et al.* (2017) corroborate this finding and highlights the fact that training plays a major role in the provision of quality services. Respondent # 5 from the interviews explained that "... when we see on notices that the University staff are going to be trained ... in a workshop, it gives us the impression that the University management think about quality because the training will certainly reflect in the discharge of their duties. It also makes us proud to be students of the school".

The second indicator of quality, transparency in administrative services, had mean and standard deviation, (M=3.43, SD=0.578). This emphasized transparency in administrative procedures as very important. This

finding is consistent with the study of Teeroovengadum *et al.* (2016 a, b) that also found transparency to be an important indicator of administrative quality. With respect to administrators, ensuring that students are aware of the procedures that are used during service delivery, and giving important details can make students understand the service they receive. Consequently, should students require the same service again, they may help themselves out without necessarily consulting the administrator where appropriate. This can also train students on how to render services, as part of their human resource development. Respondent #2 pointed to the attitude portrayed by administrators during service encounter:

... sometimes when you go to my department for assistance, the administrators behave as though they have a secret to hide and this is unethical. I am not asking them to tell students how they do their work, ...but it becomes obvious to us that some of the services could be accessed without the administrator but they become impediment. Indeed, students see the quality of openness in certain procedures especially regarding access to information as unethical.

With respect to the importance of the administrative environment, disability friendly administrative environment was third with mean of 3.35 and standard deviation of 0.597 while modern administrative facilities and materials was fourth with mean and standard deviation ($M=3.34$, $SD=0.622$). These indicators of quality are interrelated because it is highly possible that any institution with the aim of providing modern administrative facilities will ensure that the administrative environment is suitable for use by disabled students. This result confirms the findings of Dilshad (2010), Jain *et al.* (2010), Noaman *et al.* (2015), Mattah *et al.* (2018) that the nature of the environment (facilities and administrative materials) are elements that indicate quality in service delivery. The data imply that the environment is of utmost importance to different categories of students, and its ability to assist in service delivery to students signifies quality in the service as explained by a respondent that “aside the way the administrators present themselves, the orderly manner that equipment are arranged, and the office spaces are all evidence of quality” (Interview data, Respondent #5). Interview Respondent #9 however said that:

...I have had interactions with few physically challenged students in my department. They feel comfortable when they are able to do things by themselves. However, some of them are not able to go to the administration office because it is on the first floor. For this reason, they see this department's services as neither inclusive nor quality focused.

Although students' assessment was considered by previous studies as a way of improving services, it was not considered as an indicator of quality (Yavuz & Gülmez, 2016; Ada *et al.* 2017). These views are indication that students' assessment of services are indicators of quality and not just for service improvements. The data on administrative service as an indicator of quality with mean and standard deviation of ($M=3.31$, $SD=0.587$) illustrates this claim. The interview data corroborates this view thus:

...assessment of services is mainly about the resources available to do that. Sometimes getting students to fill some of these questionnaires could be difficult, however, it is true that students in the department assessing the services could make the staff more responsible thereby indicating quality (Interview data, Respondent #3).

Bureaucracy has also become a part of the administrative structures and so students have to go through layers of procedures before they can access a particular service. Consequently, the negative aspects of the system get focussed on as shown by students' responses that rated the management of the bureaucracy as the sixth indicator of quality with a mean of 3.29, and standard deviation of 0.593. The University and the Faculty must focus on how to make the bureaucracy beneficial to its students as illustrated by studies from Chaney *et al.* (2009), Jain, Sinha & De (2010), Noaman *et al.* (2015), İçli & Anil (2014). These studies emphasise management of the bureaucracy to achieve useful results as: prompt feedback; rapid service; and effective administrative processes.

The quantitative data has shown training of administrative staff, transparency of administrative procedures and disability friendly administrative environment as the most important indicators of quality. The absence of these will generate a negative perception among students regarding the quality of administrative services. Furthermore, every stakeholder of an educational institution expects to see professional service. This explains why students considered professionalism of administrative staff as an indicator of quality with a mean of 3.27, and standard deviation of 0.549, making it the seventh item on the rank. Abdullah (2006) and Shekarchizadeh *et al.* (2011) believe that professionalism is a factor that affects service quality. Kolsaker (2014) has also claimed that administrators see themselves as professionals who should exhibit professional values as friendliness, effective, accurate and prompt service, clear guidelines and advice. Noaman *et al.* (2015) and Annamdevula & Bellamkonda (2012) also focus on courteousness and willingness, accessibility, quick service delivery, error free delivery, proper record management. These are indications of quality services. Quality assurance officers' assessment of administrative services was rated eight with ($M=3.26$, $SD=0.5888$). The quality assurance office is there to assist the University to keep up with all quality issues including administrative services. Consequently, the quality assurance office must visit administrative staff to assure quality service delivery. This practice will

make administrators more accountable and ethical, and influence students' perception of quality service. Respondent #5 from the interviews spoke concerning the difficulty involved in achieving this quality assurance target thus:

If management puts the quality assurance staff to work, it will surely bring quality. Should you ask any students to tell you about the duties of the quality assurance office now, they will not be able to tell you. So, if education on quality assurance should go down to the University community, everyone will have an understanding of what quality is, and administrative lapses will be straightened up when they occur.

From the foregoing, the University's management may want to think about these quality service indicators and incorporate them as quality standards in the University's strategic plan.

8.2 Extent to which the Quality Standards for Administrative Service offered to Students at FTI are Practised

The data as presented in this section sought to find out the views of students at FTI regarding the practices of quality standards in administrative services. The data is presented thus:

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the extent to which quality standards for administrative services are practised

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Administrative staff offers services towards the attainment of the university's goals	3.36	0.657	1st
Administrative staff exhibits problem solving skills when rendering service to students	3.17	0.632	3rd
Administrative staff applies ICT for prompt service delivery to students	1.83	0.819	7th
Administrative staff communicates fluently to students	3.20	0.638	2nd
Administrative staff projects the university's image when rendering service to students	3.10	0.669	4th
Administrative staff are courteous when rendering service to students	2.90	0.790	5th
Administrative staff are confident when rendering service to students	1.91	0.876	6th

Source: Fieldwork data (2022).

Table 2 presents data on the quality standards for administrative services offered to students at FTI. The data shows that five quality standards were practised to a large extent with their mean and corresponding standard deviation scores of 3.36, 0.657; 3.20, 0.638; 3.17, 0.632; 3.10, 0.669; and 2.91, 0.790 respectively, while two were practised to a small extent also with the mean and standard deviation scores of 1.91, 0.876; and 1.83, 0.819. Thus, these standards followed a particular order, from the highly practised to the least practised, from 3.36, 3.20, 3.17, 3.10, 2.90, 1.91, and 1.83 as their mean. These quality standards per the ranking above are services towards attaining the University's goals. These are: fluent communication to students; problem solving skills; projection of the University's image; courteousness in service delivery; confidence in service delivery; and use of ICT for prompt service delivery.

Taking into consideration all the means and standard deviations, the overall mean and standard deviation are 2.78 and 0.726 respectively. The mean 2.78 shows that the quality standards for administrative service offered to students at FTI were practised to a large extent. It could also mean that students were satisfied with the extent to which the quality standards were practised. The standard deviation, 0.726 is considered a high as it is close to 1, meaning that the responses were dispersed from the mean. Therefore, the answer to the research question is that the quality standards for administrative services offered to students at FTI are practised to a large extent. Qualitative data was collected on the basis of the quantitative results to give meaning to the statistical analysis. The quantitative data so far has suggested that administrators at FTI work so hard towards ensuring that the mission and goals of the University is attained. The qualitative data shows that this has largely been achieved by working with stakeholders to provide career-based training and research to develop competent human resource. It also means that administrators at FTI are contributing largely towards organisational success. Respondent # 9 from the interviews has said that, "whenever we need assistance with something, the administrators are there to help. Even if it is about contacting a lecturer, or personal issues". And Respondent #10 also added: "as a president, we organise different programmes for students in the department. Mostly I work with the departmental administrator and the programme turns out well. The last one we had, the administrator went with me to get the items we needed so I will say, she is very much involved in our academic activities".

Another respondent argued:

the administrators' work is all too important. I don't think anything in this university can be achieved without the administrators. I mean students register before lectures begin, and lecturers go to the administrator for information. The administrators in my office, because I hold teaching as well as managerial position, I am not always available but they are always

here so things get done even in my absence. The same happens in the faculties so without the administrators, we cannot achieve our set goals. (Interview data, Respondent #3).

Another respondent explained that administrators always have it in mind that the University is not a traditional university because the day-to-day activities are a constant reminder:

when you even want to type a letter and you pull out the letterhead, it reminds you that this is a Technology University. We are either writing on behalf of the students, to secure money to purchase practical items or for an upcoming event in the department etc. so I am always reminded that we are more concerned about technical education (Interview data, Respondent #1).

This means that the administrative culture which has been developed as a result of the regular activities administrators perform, has influenced their performance and subsequently that of the organisation. This is consistent with the study of Sokro (2012) which revealed that organisational culture has a direct impact on employee motivation and an indirect impact on organisational performance. Ojo (2008) has also discovered a relationship between organisational culture and performance. He also found that when employees are committed to the culture of an organisation, effective performance results.

This explains why the practice of other quality standards are also ranked highly. Since administrative staff offering services towards the attainment of the University's goals is the most practised standard, and all other four practised quality standards have most probably been set towards the attainment of the university's goals, it is logical that the most practised quality standard focused on the attainment of organisational goals. This claim is reinforced by a study from Arop, Owan and Akan (2018) which found out that managing communication has a positive influence on interpersonal relationship, work performance and attainment of organisational goals. Similarly, the six quality standards can be achieved through an effective communication medium. Consequently, this paper claims that an effective management of communication channels will lead to the attainment of the university's goals.

At the extreme end, the quantitative data ranked staff confidence on the job to be low. For staff to be able to project a good image for their profession and the University, they have to show confidence on the job. This level of confidence must radiate through their abilities and experiences on the job. This view was corroborated by the interview data which indicated that administrators render services without exhibiting the level of confidence required of them. A respondent said that:

sometimes they tell you to come for feedback the following day ..., they should always have the answers, they should be well-informed ..., I also know that they have to get information from the Head of Department but mostly when we return to get the information, they will ask you, what did you even request for? That is even better. Immediately you ask for an information, some of them will tell you, 'I don't know'. This does not show confidence. (Interview data, Respondent #10).

Another respondent commented that:

I do not think my department's administrator believes in herself. Sometimes when you enquire about something, she will tell you to go to the Faculty Officer. But ... we know that the information we want is within her domain but she will tell you to go to the Faculty Officer. So, I think that is where the problem is (Interview data, Respondent #7).

Triwahyuni *et al.* (2014) and Oyer (2015) have found out in their studies that the confidence of an administrator can influence humility, effectiveness and performance. From the quantitative data, students perceived that administrative staff communicate fluently to a large extent and they are mostly courteous in their service delivery. Hence, per the studies cited above, the fluent communication and courteousness inures to humility and competence. So, the low- ranking assigned to confidence of staff in their service delivery as low may be the result of irregular or inadequate staff training. This view is corroborated by Lim-Teo *et al.* (2008) who have argued in their study that 71% of the reasons given for increase in confidence was linked to training of teachers on the Teacher Education programme. This suggests that low confidence is the result of inadequate training. The interview data adds to this view thus: "since last year we have not had any training" (Interview data, Respondent #4), and Respondent #6 from the interviews also said that, "since I came to this department, there has not been any kind of training organized for administrators in the school". This points to the absence of training sessions over a period of time at HTU, but it is instructive to mention that the University has undergone fundamental organisational change with the transition to a technical university status. Consequently, constant training of staff could boost administrators' confidence. The training sessions could give them a sense of ownership of the change and also equip them with the capability to handle new tasks.

The data also showed that the least practised quality standard was the use of ICT for prompt service delivery. Gyaase *et al.* (2015) have found out that the use of ICT among teachers and administrators in Ghana has been low. This was confirmed by the interview data from Respondent #9 that, "personally, I have not received any service from the administrative staff through the digital means. It is usually done on notice boards". Respondent #5 from the interview also said that:

They are doing their work but I think ICT is used scarcely in the service delivery. In my department, I have not experienced anything like the administrator giving us information through a common platform. They only invite the course leaders to give them information so that they will in turn relay the information to us. I do not think they even use the internet. If they do, then it may be for sending messages to their superiors, and not to students.

This suggests that the non-use of ICT infrastructure present a challenge to quality standards practices in the University's administration. Oboegbulem and Ugwu (2013) have argued that the minimal usage of ICT in school's administrative work is the result of incompetence in ICT and low access to computers and the internet. From the interview, participants were positive about the ability of administrators to use the computers. However, the dominant concern was on facilities, particularly the internet. Respondent #4 from the interviews confirmed this challenge thus: "the facilities are not enough as such. This other desktop is not in good condition ... and I have to use my own laptop". Respondent #1 elaborated on this challenge thus:

sometimes I have to walk to offices in the other block to be able to access the internet. With the normal ones like writing letters and making notices, we are doing them but how to go to the internet and access information is the key challenge. At times, students want information that you can only get for them on the internet but we do not have a functional internet facility. We do not have a photocopier, scanners nor telephone. We do not have these kinds of equipment that can assist us to move very fast.... I was with a department before coming here. We had internet services so whatever is happening in the whole country you get to know, and sometimes they put new lessons of this administrative work online to keep us abreast with innovations in the field. I do not have these facilities anymore. There was also intranet facility in my former office, which made communication with other staff and even the faculty officer very easy so things get done quickly. But such facilities are not available in this department.

These indicate that the absence of the internet does not only inhibit communication for administrative staff, it affects their professional development as well, and consequently can have a negative impact on quality. It is important to note that taking these administrative lessons online is a form of training, therefore the unavailability of the internet tends to inhibit training causing students to perceive administrators as lacking confidence in their work. This inadequate level of facilities is an emotive issue for administrators and students and it is important to give proper attention to it to forestall the continuing decline of ICT in service delivery with dire implications for quality standards practices. The urgency of this situation is extolled by relationship between ICT and quality standards which is a major part of service delivery.

8.3 Public Sector Accountability Concepts and Principles

The data presented so far bears on ethical and accountability principles in public administration, and they are important elements for good governance. Within the university administration context, accountability is about the relationship between staff of the university and their responsibilities, and the extent to which the staff are answerable for their actions, and this is manifested in the legal and reporting framework, organizational structure, strategy, procedures, and actions to help ensure that any university that uses public money, take fees from students and make decisions that affect social lives of students are held responsible for their actions. There are four key elements that are core to administrative accountability (Mulgan, 2000). These are:

a. Transparency

Administrative duties in the university require transparency which strengthens public sector accountability and promotes fairer and more effective and efficient governance system. In this regard, transparency may be classified as an administrative openness about its activities pertaining to the extent to which it provides information about what it is doing, where and how this takes place, and how it is performing. Transparency then involves administrative response to requests for information from students, and providing these students with the information they need to engage in the decisions that affect them. In this tangent, transparency becomes an ongoing dialogue between administration staff of the faculty and the students about the provision of information. In Ghana, individuals right to transparency is diminished by certain unethical decisions and practices by some public officials even though it is a cardinal element in the 1992 Constitution, and this tends to compromise students' expectations from university services.

b. Integrity

In a public administration accountability context, integrity pertains to the exercise of power in a manner that makes it true to the values, purposes, and duties for which that power is entrusted to or held by administrative staff and other office-holders. Consequently, students of HTU expect to see the fiber of integrity woven in administrative duties of staff of the University, and they hope that this will lead to the fair treatment for all students.

c. Fairness

Fairness will require administrative staff of the University to deal with all students matters brought before them in an equitable and unbiased manner. In practice, it means that the administrative staff are expected to act

independently and with an open mind, and that they consider all relevant information carefully and without undue delay. In most instances, acting fairly will also enjoin administration to give students who are the subject to the grievance or complain, a chance to comment on any findings (especially adverse ones) before a final decision is made.

d. Trust

The three imperatives discussed previously will invariably lead to students trust in the administration. And it is important to emphasise that the essence of trust is consistency in what is said, what is done, and how it is done. When the administrative staff act fairly, transparently, and with integrity consistently over time, both students and administrative staff comes to know what to expect from each other. This provides a *modus operandi* for both sides to learn that they can rely on one another and help forge trusting relationships. Besides, public reporting by the University administration on their performance can influence the degree of trust in the administrative services that are being delivered and the administrative unit that deliver them.

These accountability imperatives are reinforced by ethical principles of the organisation because ethics are the rules that define moral conduct according to the ideology of a specific group (Beu & Buckley, 2001). Moreover, ethics in administration are important for achieving organisational goals based on the needs of the organisation's clients. Ethics therefore sets the accountability imperatives between the organisation and its clients. In this context, students will receive what they need in a fair manner when the code of ethics is adhered to by administrative staff, and will further provide the administration with guidelines for integrity in their operations. The integrity, in turn will help to foster trust for the University community. By creating this atmosphere of trust, the administration helps students to understand that they are working with their best interests in mind.

Additionally, a code of ethics creates standards of professionalism that co-workers in the University can expect from each other, that students can expect from staff, and that staff can also expect the same from their leaders. This view is adduced from the notion that, with a strong code of ethics in public administration, leaders have the guidelines they need to carry out their tasks and inspire their employees and units to enforce laws in a professional and equitable manner. Another positive outcome of good ethics in public administration inures to the timely and informative communication with the community. This level of transparency builds trust and prevents or minimizes the potential issues that can arise when information is divulged from outside sources. In this case, if there is something of consequence that students need to know about, it is better for it to emanate directly from the leaders and administration of the University. Communication therefore has the utility to engage all parties so that they can work together to achieve a common goal. Thus, good communication ensures that the University community can engage their leaders on important issues.

On the basis of the ethical and accountability imperatives discussed thus far, the paper makes a claim that the law, statutes, rules and regulations are the fundamental promoter of ethical behaviour in public office. However, these only set a minimum standard for ethical conduct. This view opens up new waves of discourse on ethical behaviour in public administration. The debate here is that just because an act is legal, does not automatically mean it is ethical. Think of about suspension of a habitually late female administrator who is a lactating mother, for instance. Neither is an illegal act necessarily unethical because sometimes it can be justified to break the law. This paper therefore makes a claim that there are at least four key reasons why employees should care about moral questions in administrative behaviour. First, the morality of organisational agents (or staff) influences their behaviour and consequently influences the organisational outcomes. This suggests that the agents' own moral views tend to influence the morality and the behaviour of others. Second, in order to push forward the frontiers of meeting client needs (which rests on strong and debatable moral presuppositions), agents need to direct their attention to morality (Böhren, 1998). Three, to understand how the staff draw on policy and statutes to achieve organisational goals require that one understand moral commitments. Four, positive and normative values are frequently intermingled, and to understand the moral relevance of positive values requires an understanding of the moral principles that determine this relevance.

Such is moral philosophy (which is also called normative ethics and moral theory), and it offers an overarching moral principle to which one could appeal in resolving difficult moral decisions as it seeks to study what make actions right and wrong. At this point the paper emphasise that there are several strands of ethics and they differ in terms of their rationale for their various ethical considerations. The three best known normative theories are virtue ethics, consequentialism (in particular utilitarianism) and deontological ethics (in particular Kantianism), and these theories are useful in the analysis of the ethical behaviour of administrative staff at the FTI in Hicks Technology University thus:

First, virtue ethics focuses on the character of the staff rather than on the formal rules for or the consequences of their actions. The key elements of virtue ethical thinking are based on the approaches to ethical thinking of the ancient and medieval periods which are rooted in the work of Plato and Aristotle, but virtues are deeply embedded also in traditions of African moral philosophy. Virtue theory has been associated with African philosophical thought before Africa's experiment with Western culture, and in the 21st Century it is still one of

the three dominant approaches to normative ethical theories. Virtue ethics includes an account of the purpose of human life, or the meaning of life. In African philosophical thought, the purpose is to live in harmony with others and the cosmic order, and the cardinal virtues embedded in the African virtue ethics are prudence, justice, fortitude, piety and teetotalism. The African idea of the virtues then merges with Christian and Moslem moral theology. Proponents of virtue theory sometimes argue that a central feature of a virtue is that it is universally applicable.

Second, consequentialism applies to the moral theories that believe that the consequences of an action determine the basis for any valid moral judgment about that action. This ethical theory will then want to determine for example what proportion of people believe that not allowing students to take their end of semester examination because they have not paid their fees in full is always wrong. Thus, from a consequentialist standpoint, a morally right action is one that produces a good outcome, or consequence. Utilitarianism is a specific strand of consequentialist ethics which emphasise that one should think about everyone and not just the one making the decision. So, for example, an administrative decision not to procure stationery for examination due to some students' failure to pay their fees in full should also include in the analysis how that will affect the summative examination that has been scheduled for the end of the semester, and even for paid up students. Utilitarianism therefore believes that the moral worth of an action is solely determined by its contribution to overall utility - that is, its contribution to happiness or pleasure as summed up among all persons. This means that the more happiness or pleasure for the totality of the people a behaviour is, the better it is to be pursued. This is consequentialist because the moral worth of the action is determined by its outcome, and that the ends justify the means. Utilitarianism can also be characterized as a quantitative and reductionist approach to ethics. This defines utility (the good to be maximized) as happiness or pleasure versus sadness or pain. This paper therefore defines utility as the satisfaction of preferences in the purview of a life stance with happiness or pleasure as ultimate importance. In general application of the concept to public administration however, utilitarianism often connotes a somewhat narrow but pragmatic administrative viewpoint of behaviour.

The third theory for analysing administrative behaviour in the instance of administrative practices in Hicks Technology University is deontology. This perspective is classified in this discussion as 'duty' or 'obligation' based ethics. Deontology is the belief that ethical rules bind the individual to his/her duty, and they look at the rightness or wrongness of actions themselves, as opposed to the rightness or wrongness of the consequences of those actions. Deontological ethics focusses on fidelity to principles and disregards the consequences of a particular act to determine its moral worth. Kantianism or Kantian ethical theory for example is deontological because it is focused on duty rather than emotional feelings or end goals (Odei-Tettey et al., 2018). The core concept is "duty", or what one ought to do in certain situations. Kantianism states that a true moral or ethical act is not based on self-interest or the greatest utility, but on a sense of 'duty' and a sense of what is right and fair in spite its potential consequences for the individual and their usefulness for others. This theory has as its core element Kant's 'categorical imperative'. Kant thought that human beings occupy a special place in the world, and that morality can be summed up in one, ultimate commandment of reason, or imperative, from which all duties and obligations derive (Odei-Tettey et al., 2018). Thus, a categorical imperative implies an absolute, unconditional requirement that exerts its authority under every situation and condition, which are required and justified as an end in itself.

Kant however opposed utilitarianism and other moral philosophy because the moral systems extolled by moral philosophy cannot persuade moral action or be regarded as basis for morals. Take administrative corruption for example. Moral philosophy or virtue ethics will consider corruption as a break of several categorical imperatives, such as preventing student examination failures and rather enhancing teaching and learning, because corruption (explained by examination malpractices) tends to favour certain people only. Likewise, deontological ethics (or Kantianism) will look at the administrators' commitment to examination principles and disregard the consequences of a particular act as in for example summary dismissal of a student for cheating in examination. This view will argue that corruption involves deception and undermines the rational and moral capacity of those involved, and therefore deem corruption as unethical. Consequentialist theories like utilitarianism, however, may see corruption of this kind as ethical with the argument that corruption 'greases the wheels' and can make bureaucracies work more efficiently (which is useful to most people). The reality however is that the immediate efficiency gain of corruption is ruined by the long-term damage made to the administrative system. A deontological moral system however provides an alternative system that is based on the demands of the categorical imperative such as espoused by Ross (see Phillips, 2019) like: tell the truth; right the wrongs that one has done to others; act justly; help others in respect to virtue, intelligence, and happiness; improve oneself with respect to virtue and intelligence; give thanks; and avoid injury to others. Fink et al. (2022) have said that the categorical imperative determines what one ought to do, and it uses a thought experiment to assess the moral quality of the principles (maxims) that individuals follow when determining their courses of action. In Kant's words; "Act so as to treat others as ends and not merely as means" (Kant, 2017).

On the basis of these discussions, the paper believes that in the 20th century, moral theories have tended to

be more complex especially as they do not emphasise solely rightness and wrongness, but are interested in many different kinds of moral status such as beneficence, fidelity, or justice. These imperatives provide a context for blurring up the boundaries of the normative ethical theories discussed previously, particularly deontology and consequentialism. The two theories have important precepts for public administration practices, and it is difficult to dispense one in favour of the other. The rationale here is that Universities are part of the public sector which is the amalgam of the government with all its ministries, departments, services, central, regional and local administrations, parastatal businesses and other institutions. These categorises the public sector into two core elements: the political level where there are the political institutions for policy formulation and major decision-making; and the administrative level, where there is the public sector administration that is in charge of implementing the policies and decisions made at the political level. This implementing level is the civil service or state administration or bureaucracy which brackets the activities of administrators such as those at HTU. However, the distinction between politics and administration is not entirely clear due to the fact that administration also have quite substantial discretionary powers which allows them to make decisions and engage in activities that are challenged by ethical conduct. An even though there is no limit to what the state can do, there is much debate on how much the state should intervene to check some of the unethical behaviours in administration. The data however explicates this debate in public administration ethics which in one part has tended to be about the principles of ethical behaviour in public organisations, and also about the ethical character of people in public administration regarding judgement about administrators and whether their actions are good or bad. In the other part, the debate shifts slowly towards the contextual or situational dimensions that leverage administrators to behave more or less ethically in their professional setting as pertaining to HTU. The debate in this second part emphasise that the context and the situational variables are essential because they point to the productive dimensions in the study of public administration ethics.

Regarding this contextual dimension debate, it is possible to distinguish between the general context which pertains to the prevalent ideology and philosophy, the structure of the organisational hierarchy, prevalent control mechanisms and the political culture, vis-s vis the specific context of each situation such as carrying out exact orders, assigned tasks, interpersonal relations, political issues and discretionary decisions. These provide a context for the constellation of influences that presses the recognition or non-recognition of ethical principles in any administrative environment. This view shows that 'context' is a force that determines moral priorities in public administration, and suggests that the ethical character of an administrator can be unpredictable and tenuous. However, the weak ethical behaviour of the administrator can be turned around to become meaningful and directional, when the organisational environment (the context) and structural pressures converge. The reverse is also so true, but this will normally lead to a conflict between the belief system (ethical character) of the administrator and the actions that this official is ordered to take (the context pressure). This for some individual administrators may lead to profound frustration and cognitive dissonance. One example is when an administrator at HTU, who believes in the standards of openness, fairness and accountable governance is being pushed into making decisions and relating to students in blatant disregard of these principles. In a contrary circumstance, some others may perceive contextual ambiguity as an opportunity to circumvent standards to serve their own interests and compromise the ethical standards. Furthermore, the contextual standards and principles in organisations can be ambiguous and contradicting in themselves when lofty principles collide with mundane expectations, and high-flying political objectives collide with implementation constraints. The ambiguity of administrative ethics is particularly apparent when values and obligations lodged within the organisation collide with personal values and political priorities. These tend to complicate ethical standards when discretionary powers are used to make decisions.

9. Building the Infrastructure for Public Administration Ethics to Conclude the Discourse

This paper has sought to introduce one key rhetorical question into the debate regarding the endurance of contemporary concerns for ethics in public office especially in administrative duties. This question is whether the concerns for ethics and ethical behaviour in public administration will be informed and consequently sustained by public policy or whether the issues will remain primarily philosophical and normative? On the basis of the evidence from this research we can determine, at least in a tentative way, that ethical guidelines that is informed by public policy plus commitment to implementation will certainly have salutary effects on the ethical conduct of public administration officials. The study has shown that the most important indicators of quality for administrative services offered in all five departments in the FTI at HTU are: training of administrative staff, transparency in administrative procedure and disability friendly administrative environment. On this basis, the study recommends that the HTU infuses the identified indicators of quality into the quality standards for administrative services, and subsequently into the strategic plan of the university and made accessible to students. Second, students were generally satisfied with the extent to which the quality standards for administrative services are practised in their departments, however two of the standards (i.e. level of confidence administrators exhibited and administrators' application of ICT in service delivery) did not meet students' expectations. These

resulted from inadequate training and facilities to promote ICT. This enjoins the University to attach due importance to the training of administrative staff, and the provision of technology-based facilities to boost their confidence in performing their duties. This gap calls for funding for training. Hence, the paper seeks to direct future research on the subject to focus on financing for quality administrative services to compliment this study and to provide a comprehensive all-round knowledge in public administration ethics.

These prescriptions notwithstanding, the authors have argued that much of the professional discourse on ethics in public administration has been normative and philosophical. However, it is uncertain if empirical public policy prescriptions for ethics diminishes the interesting and otherwise lively process of moral reasoning. And do such policy prescriptions make the moral point of ethics irrelevant? Indeed, philosophy, norms, and theory provide a guide for both the structure and actions in public administration. So, if policy prescriptions for ethics do not inform larger issues of philosophy or theory, then such prescriptions become irrelevant. However, if empirical policy prescriptions for ethics in public administration tests the validity of theoretical or philosophical claims, then it can significantly inform ethical practices in public administration. Without empirical public policy prescriptions however, philosophy and moral discourse become absent experiences beyond descriptions of ethics but based on disparate cases in unique administrative settings. On this basis, the paper has sought to search for knowledge based on the real experiences of students and administrative staff. We have therefore argued that understanding ethics in public administration requires a grounding in philosophical issues and a knowledge of the effectiveness, practicality, and utility of particular ethical practices established to enhance effective administration.

In this context of searching for a meaningful policy prescription towards effective and practical ethical practices, the paper concludes with a bird's eye view of the infrastructure for public administration ethics and classifies the fusion of ethical standard setting, legal regulation and institutional reform as 'the ethics infrastructure' and ubiquitously called 'ethics regime' or 'integrity system'. Each of these categories is a typical source of public sector ethics, suggesting that public sector ethics emanates from several different sources. These sources range from the private ethical character of the individual administrator, through the organisation's statutes and culture and national legislation, to international conventions that are manifested in written standards and codes of conduct. And it is our believe however that, the most effective and efficient ethics regime in organisations is obtained when these three sources work in the same direction without conflicting. Hence no matter how manifold the politics of the organisation and how fluid the political cultures may be, the ethical standards of the organisation can be found at extraordinary levels of principle and practicality to make administrative staff accountable for their actions. On the top of the principle hierarchy will be the desired ethical imperatives which must be rooted in a blurred-up boundaries for deontology and consequentialism. And for HTU as other public Universities, these will become accepted principles for democratic and accountable governance. These will further provide spectacular administrative setting for HTU with well configured situational and contextual rules, principles and regulations for the behaviour of public servants and the University's internal standards.

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