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Prospect of Ethical Consultancy: Empirical Assessment in Ghana

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Abstract:

This paper finds out the prospect of ethical consultancy in Ghana using some organisations in the Upper East and Northern Regions as a case study. A survey questionnaire based on the organogram used by Luu & Safia (2014) was employed. Empirical evidence revealed that there are ethical challenges within the organisations. There exist ethical officers in some of the organisations whose roles and positions on the organisations' organogram are unknown to the responded staff. The grounds for ethical consultants is fertile and its prospect is real in Ghana

Keywords: Ethics, Consultant, officer, challenges and Consultancy

1. Introduction

Ethics are the adopted principles or values that govern an organisational behaviour. Staff conduct and responses to external environment is based on these values, principles or guidelines. Ethics defines what is right conduct and wrong conduct of staff.

The basic concepts and fundamental principles of decent staff conduct are keen to the Success of every organisation. These basic concepts and fundamental principles may be passed on orally to staff or written down for reference.

Thompson & Strickland (1998) asserted that the key success factor of implementing a management strategy is the presence of ethical standards and values into the corporate culture of the organisation. He added that, these values and ethical standards do not necessarily need to be in written documents.

According to Humble, Jackson & Thompson (1994), the written or coded values and ethical standards explicitly define what the company intends and expects: they serve as benchmarks for judging both company policies and actions, and individuals conduct.

Ethical challenges confront all levels of management and thus influence organisations' success. These include situational factors as in Zimbardo (2007). He asserted that when the individual is confronted by some situational factors; his/her human values may be suspended, self-concepts are challenged and finally, the ugliest (most base), pathological side of human nature surfaced.

The next set of ethical challenges borders on subordinates working under the instructions of authority; Gerrig & Zimbardo (2005) assert that only a few are able to resist the command of authority that challenge their ethical standing. Peterson (2001) also indicated that responsible individuals can blindly obey authority and become very unethical in their actions. He further stated that top management also fall prey to this blind obedience when conflict of interest set in with promising personal benefits.

Luu & Safia (2014) assessed the prospect of ethical consultancy and concluded that ethical consultancy was possible and that consultants venturing into the area need to be strategically diversified to enable them design and develop customized ethical codes for the heterogeneous clientele with appropriate supporting, monitoring and compliance procedures.

Luu & Safia (2014) conclusion was based on review of literature and particularly on lessons drawn from the collapse of Enron and WorldCom and its aftermath legislature, Sarbanes-Oxley.

To set up an ethical consultancy in a country or assess its possibility in the future, we need to have empirical evidence of the felt need of the service by the target clientele before venturing into operation. Are the target clientele aware of the term organisational ethics? Do they have ethical officers? Are there challenges that need to be addressed by an ethical consultant? Does staff know the role and position of ethical officers on the organogram? These questions among others need to be answered before concluding on the prospect of ethical consultancy in a particular environment.

This paper empirically assesses the prospect of ethical consultancy in Ghana using some Organisations in the Northern and the Upper East Regions as a case study. We want to seek the opinions of staff from organisations in these regions on the above questions and deduced the prospect of ethical consultancy thereof.

2. Methodology

The hypothetical organogram used here is adopted from Lun & Safia (2014) as a theoretical framework. A questionnaire based on it was designed to assess the ethical situation in organisations operating in the Northern and Upper East Regions of Ghana.

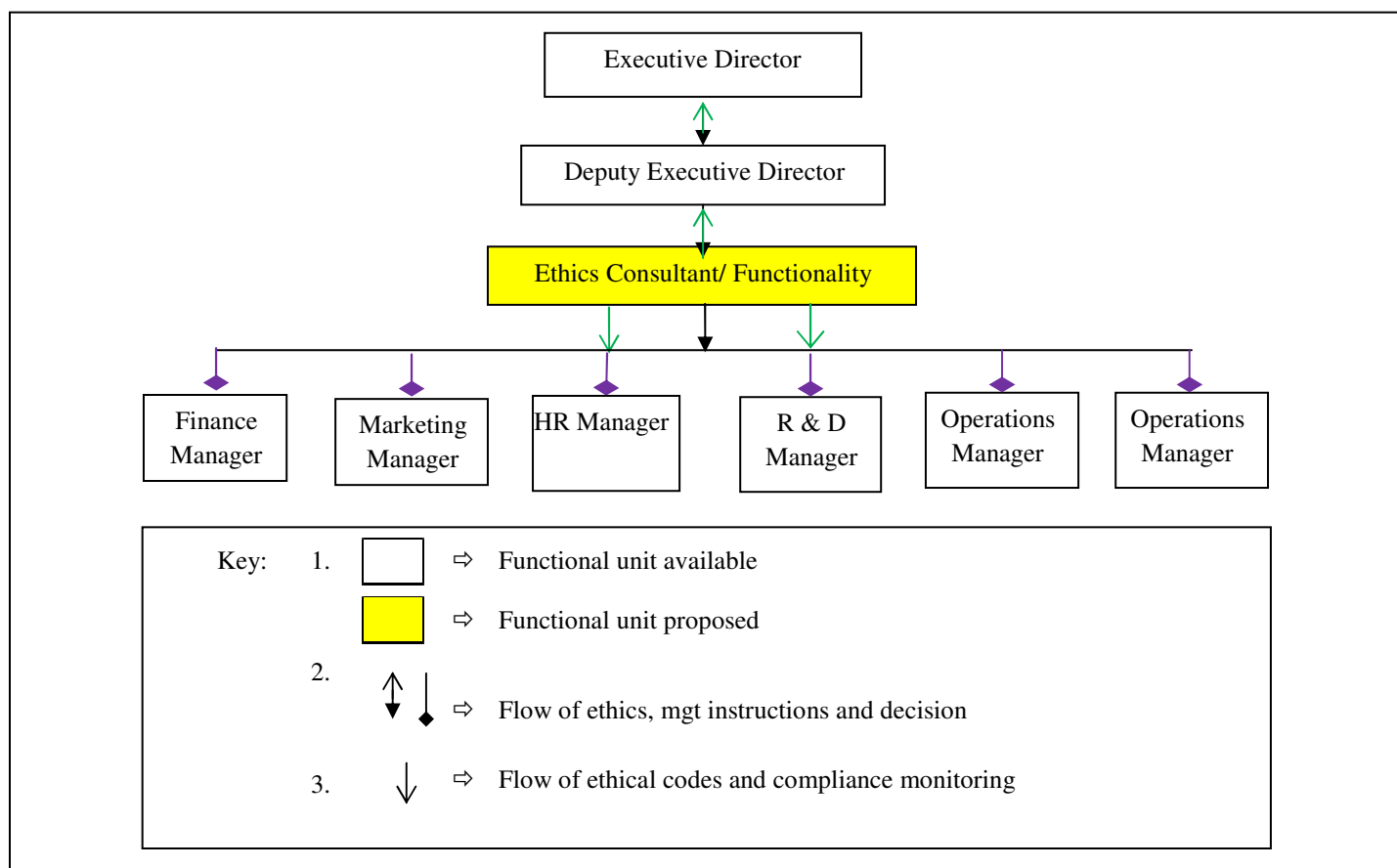


Figure 1: A Modified Hypothetical Organogram
Source: Luu & Safia (2014;2)

Thirty (30) organisations were sampled for the study. These organisations are found either in the Northern or Upper East regions of Ghana or both. The simple random sampling technique was used with the assumption that these organisations are normally distributed with population proportion of 0.5 at the 5 percent level of confidence and with anticipated marginal error of ± 0.2 . Five staff were sampled from each organisation excluding casual workers, security, cleaners and messengers from the sample.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. Are The Target Clientele Aware of the Term Organisational Ethics?

Most Staff of the organisations sampled in the Northern Region and Upper East Region are aware of the term “Organisational ethics”. From table 1 below, 93 percent of staff responded that they have heard of the term “organisational ethics”. The awareness makes it easy for ethical consultants to work within the frames of these organisations. He/she does not expend energy trying to first let them know about the term before doing his work. Hearing of the term “organisational ethics” from the organisation or elsewhere does not matter; knowledge of it is keen to the ethical consultant. Hearing of the term saves the ethical consultant time and takes off the worries of how to introduce the new term to his/her clients.

Have you ever heard of the term organisational ethics?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	136	90.7	92.5	92.5
	no	11	7.3	7.5	100.0
	Total	147	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	3	2.0		
Total		150	100.0		

Table 1: Hearing of the term "Organisational Ethics".

Source: Field survey

3.2. Ethical Officers

Ethical officers are responsible for implementing, educating, monitoring and evaluating ethical issues in an organisation. They ensure compliance of ethical standards in the organisation. From table 2 below, 58 percent of those who have heard of the term organisational ethics have ethical officers in their organisations. 1 out of 3 respondents who did not answer the question "Have you heard of the term organisational ethics" also said there is an ethical officer in his/her organisation.

		Is there an ethical officer in your organisation?			total
		N/A	No	Yes	
Have you heard of the term organisational ethics?	Yes	3	54	79	136
	No	11	0	0	11
	N/A	1	1	1	3
Total		3	55	80	150

Table 2: Response on hearing Organisational ethics against having ethical officer

Source: Field data

Do we foresee the need of an ethical consultant here as 58 percent said their organisations have ethical officers? Yes, ethical officers had to recommend or propose to management to bring in an expert in the area to help them achieve target goals or set up rules.

In organisations where the ethical officers are absent, management had to learn from others or consultants had to make conscious efforts of sending proposal to them for considerations.

The next issues, does staff of organisations that have ethical officers know the roles and or position of the ethical officers? Let us find out whether the role and position of these ethical officers are known to the respondents.

		Is there an ethical officer in your organisation?			total
		N/A	No	Yes	
What is the role of the Ethics officer?	Assign a role	0	15	70	85
	No	0	0	0	0
	N/A	15	40	10	65
Total		15	55	80	150

Table 3: Ethical officer and role of the ethical officer

Source: Field data

Empirical evidence here in table 3 shows that 88 percent of those who said their organisations have ethical officers were able to assign roles to these officers. 27 percent of those who said their organisations are not having ethical officers went on to assign roles to ethical officers.

88 percent of staff of organisations knowing the role of ethical officers gives a high possibility to a consultant getting a contract in the future since these staff would compel management to hire ethical consultants to help address the organisational ethical issues or pushed contracts to ethical consultant for approval in the organisational meetings.

		Is there an ethical officer in your organisation?			total
		N/A	No	Yes	
Is the position of the Ethics officer below, above or equal to a line manager?	Above	0	5	30	35
	below	0	0	15	15
	Equal	0	5	25	30
	N/A	15	45	10	70
Total		15	55	80	150

Table 4: Ethical officer and position of ethical officer

Source: Field data

From the table 4;47 percent of respondents' could not tell whether ethical officers were above, below or equal to line managers in their organisations. It is a pity to have officers in an organisation whose roles are not known to others in that same organisation. The question one may ask is, how do they implement or monitor or evaluate ethical standards? We may need somebody with the knowledge of ethics to take these organisations through training or advised them appropriately on ethical issues if we agreed that ethics is an essentially factor that is key to organisational success. Who possible do we invite? The ethical consultant stands out in the list and has the chance of winning this contract.

3.3. Existence of Ethical Challenges in the Organisation

To venture into ethical consultancy, we need to have empirical evidence that indeed the target clientele have ethical challenges.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	No	60	42.0	42.0
	yes	83	53.3	58.0
	N/A	7	4.7	00.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0

Table 5: Responses on ethical challenges

Source: Field data

Table 4 shows an interesting result. 58 percent of the responded staff agreed that there are ethical challenges in their organisations. This is more than half of the respondents. It is possible that the response could be skewed to some organisations more than others. Whichever the case may be, it is a predictive future possibility of the need for an ethical consultant; a call to ethical consultant to resolve or minimise these ethical challenges. The empirical evidence of 58 percent of staff saying there are ethical challenges is significant enough to stimulate the setting of ethical consultancy.

3.4. Years Staff works or Organisational Existence

Most of the organisations involved in this survey had been in existence for more than five (5) years. From table 5, 93 percent of staff who responded said their organisations had been in existence for more than five (5) years. The years of existence validate and prove the reliability of the research because as an organisation progresses through the years it tends to implement critical factors such as ethical codes and gain experience as well. It also corrects itself of mistakes, educate it staff as well as gains expertise, and becomes more stable.

For organisations to be in existence for more than five years implies that it should have by now makes available or know to its staff ethical codes and standards that are key to its growth and success. Ethical codes or standards guide the organisations' staff on how to behaviour and react to the external environment.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 - 5	10	6.7	6.7	6.7
	6 - 10	40	26.7	27.0	33.7
	11 - 15	18	12.0	12.2	45.9
	16 - 20	5	3.3	3.4	49.3
	greater 20	75	50.0	50.7	100.0
	Total	148	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.3		
Total		150	100.0		

Table 6: Organisation age

Source: Field data

From table 6, 96 percent of staff who responded had work in their respective organisations for one or more years. One year or more is enough for a staff to learn about organisation ethics and to conform to these ethics for the success of the organisation. For organisation that usually organised orientation to introduce its newly employed staff to the working environment and ethics should be able to do that within a year or after a year when new staff are employed. That is, 96 percent of staff responding should have learnt or had been educate on the ethical issues in their respective organisations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 1	6	4.0	4.0	4.0
	1 - 5	85	56.7	56.7	60.7
	6 - 10	50	33.3	33.3	94.0
	16 - 20	5	3.3	3.3	97.3
	greater 20	4	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: How long have you been working with the organisation?

Source: Field data

4. Conclusion

The awareness of the term “Organisational ethics” among most staff of the organisations involve in the survey indicates the fertility of the grounds for setting up ethical consultancy.

The existence of Ethical officers in some organisations is a spur factor that could ignite the setting of ethical consultancy.

Stimulating factors such having ethical challenges in the organisations, the role of ethical officers not known to some staff, the position of ethical officers not known to some staff encourages the setting up of ethical consultancy in the Northern and Upper East Regions of Ghana. Based on the fact that most of these organisations have offices in other part of the country and works in similar environment as other institutions, we could generalize that the prospect of ethical consultancy in Ghana is good.

We assumed that responses provided are reliable because most of the staff involved in the research had work in their respective organisations for more than a year and by then should have learnt about ethical codes or standards of their organisations.

In addition, majority of the organisations involve in the research have been in existence for more than five years and should be then develop most of the basic frame works such as ethical codes and standards for its success.

Based on the revealing factors fertile for the setting up of ethical consultancy from some organisations in the Northern and Upper East Regions, we conclude that the prospect of ethical Consultancy is good and that ethical consultant need to come up to help resolve ethical issues.

Luu & safia (2014) was right when they stated that consultants venturing into the area need to be strategically diversified to enable them design and develop customized ethical codes for the heterogeneous clientele. This is based on the fact that the position of ethical officers varies among institutions. Officer in such positions such head of department, branch manager, Chief Executive Officer among other positions were mentioned as officers in charge of ethics by respondents of these survey which shows the diversity.

Researchers interested in the topic “Prospect of ethical consultancy” may study on the nature of the ethical challenges and positions of ethical officers in the organisations.

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