

## ***Laborem Exercens: A Tool for Promoting the Provision of Valuable Services by the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants***

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### ***Abstract***

*The contemporary services proffered by the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants appear to be characterized of lack of commitment in provision of valuable services. This work is geared towards challenging the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants with the tool of Laborem Exercens towards the provision of valuable services in their various specific areas of employment. The Social Learning Theory (SLT) and the Social Disorganization Theory (SDT) used in this work revealed to the fur that the lack of provision of valuable services by the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants and the right appreciation of workers is as a result of corruption endemic in the country. It was discovered that a corruption substructure that provides an opportunity to learn corruption and deviant activities is prevalent in Nigeria. Again, there is no down to earth laid down strict disciplinary measures for civil and public servants that engage in corrupt practices in Nigeria thereby making corruption persistence; this as a result perpetuates the provision of invaluable services by the civil and public servants in Nigeria. This work employed both the primary and secondary means of data collection. It streamlined all the gathered data via phenomenological approach.*

### **Introduction**

Pope John Paul II wrote the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* in 1981 as Gibbons (1963) recorded. He wrote this on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Leo XIII's encyclical "*Rerun Novarum*" on the

question of Labour. It was signed on September 14, feast of the Holy Cross.

In the encyclical, according to the record of Gurian and Fitzsimons (1954), Pope John Paul II developed the concept of man's dignity in work, structuring it in four points: the subordination of work to man; the primacy of the workers over the whole of instruments and conditioning that historically constitute the world of Labour; the rights of the human person as the determining factor of all socio-economic, technological and productive processes, that must be recognized; and some elements that can help all men identify with Christ through their own work. In *Laborem Exercen*, Pope John Paul II elucidated that mankind should be committed, sincere, disciplined and honest in providing services in their specific areas of employment and primary responsibilities. Employers and those at the reins of leadership should equally be offering corollary appreciation and payment of workers dues as and when due.

In the light of the above, it is clear that *Laborem Exercens* poses a strict and stern challenge to the Nigerian civil and public servants with special reference to their ability in providing valuable services in their various parastatals. The services timely provided by the civil and public servants in Nigeria are more or less not valuable as a result of corruption endemic in the country as Akunyili (2014), indicated. There is this attitude of indifference, negligence and egocentricism manifested in diverse forms by the Nigerian workers and this in turn reflects in the quality of services they render. At the long run it affects their general output. In this work, the injunctions in *Laborem Exercens* is used as a tool in correcting these obvious manifestations of irregularities and insincerity amongst the public and civil servants in Nigeria in order

for them to start offering valuable services in their various working parastatals.

In order to achieve this works target, it made use of the Social Learning Theory (SLT) as developed by Sandholtz and Taagepera (2005), and the Social Disorganization Theory (SDT) as projected by Bernard, Snipes and Gerould (2010), in studying the condition that fosters corruption which adversely affects the workers services in Nigeria. This work employed both primary means of data collection which involves carrying out personal communication with experienced civil servants and some elderly statesmen in Nigeria; as well as the secondary means of data collection as the researcher consulted relevant literatures on the topic being researched. This work streamlined all the gathered data via phenomenological approach.

This work does not imply that every single civil and public servant in Nigeria renders invaluable service, but rather that a large number of the persons in public and civil services in the country approach their primary responsibilities with clear manifestations of indifference, nonchalance and selfishness which makes the services they provide less valuable. This adversely affects the economy of Nigeria at large. This work does not claim to be exhaustive in nature; room for further studies on the issues being researched abounds.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were deemed necessary to be defined in terms that are relevant to the topic being researched.

**(1) Civil Servant:** It is mainly composed of career bureaucrats hired on professional merit rather than appointed or elected. According to Edsall (2011), their institutional tenure typically survives transitions of political leadership. They are mainly

employed in the public sector on behalf of a government department or agency.

**(2) Public Servant:** This is a government elected official; and appointed government officials. According to Anderfuhren, Varone and Giauque (2014), the term is associated with a social consensus (usually expressed through democratic elections) that certain services should be available to all, regardless of income, physical ability or mental acuity. More so, the definition proffered by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary gives public service a more embracing outlook. Even though the definitions earlier posited will still be retained: It defined public service as “service rendered in public interest”. Nwosuh (2014), indicated that this introduced a nuance which Alan Dowd (cited by Nwosuh) picked up. Thus he affirmed that if an action promotes the public good or meets the public’s needs, it is public service. If it promotes something else or meets only private needs, it is something less than public service, no matter who is performing it.

**(3) Valuable Service:** In the light of this work, it means desired expectations, quality output, desirable or esteemed characteristics or qualities; very useful and of great use.

**(4) Tool:** Yardstick, standard, a sample; a format or stipulated regulation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social learning theory (SLT) and social disorganization theory (SDT) can be sufficiently employed as a medium to study the establishment of corruption in Nigeria and how corruption has affected values and behavioural norms which is the bedrock of

invaluable services being offered by the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants. Even though these theories were originally used in studying crimes; it is equally relevant in studying corruption as they are related.

Alkers and Sellers (cited by Karimu, 2016), noted that these theories help in explaining the behavioural and environmental determinants that facilitates corruption, as well as the social environment within which corruption operates in Nigeria. Pertinent to this work, Ocheje (cited by Karimu), maintained that both behavioural and environmental issues are important when discussing corruption because they determine whether anti-corruption measures will succeed or fail. The negligence of duties visibly eternalized in the Nigerian Civil and Public Service sectors show vividly that corruption has gained ascendancy in the country as a result of failed and insincere laid down anti-corruption measures.

### **Social Learning Theory (SLT)**

Social learning theory postulates that behaviour is influenced by standards of legal and illegal behaviour, peers and positive or negative reinforcement. According to social learning theory as Karimu (2016) recorded, behaviour is influenced by standards of legal and illegal behaviour, peers, and positive or negative reinforcement. A key variable is differential association, or peer influence. Definitions of deviance are developed in interactions with peers and are reinforced, positively or negatively, by rewards and punishments. Those definitions affect attitudes and behaviour in many areas: sexual behaviour, substance use, white collar crime, and so on. Social learning theorists who simplified the theory to the average man's cognition like Sandholtz and Taagepera (2005), expatiated that behaviour is influenced by one's self-concept, one's

social role, and how one perceives a social situation. Each of these, in turn, is the product of the socialization that occurs at the institutional level.

Expounding on Social Learning Theory, Bandura (1977), agreed with the behaviourist theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. However, he adds two important ideas:

- a. Mediating process occur between stimuli and responses
- b. Behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Children observe the people around them behaving in various ways.

Bandura and Ross (1961) illustrated this during the famous Bobo doll experiment. Individuals that were observed were called models. In the society, children are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, characters on children's TV, friends within their peer group and teachers at school. These models provide examples of behaviour to observe and imitate, example, masculine and feminine, pro and anti-social, and so on.

Commenting on this, McLeod (2016), pointed out that children pay attention to some of these people (models) and encode their behaviour. At a later time they may imitate or copy the behaviour they have observed especially when they have never seen such behaviour frowned at nor objected to. They thus deem it rewarding since parents, guardians or elders condone it. Moreso, children or young ones may do this regardless of whether the behaviour is "gender appropriate" or not. Although it is worthy of noting that a child is more likely to attend to and imitate those people it perceives as similar to itself. Consequently, it is more likely to imitate behaviour modeled by people of the same gender. The focal point here is that they learn from the older ones; again, they hold onto behaviours and attitudes that the older ones condone

whether good or bad. Thus, reactions to a peculiar attitude or behaviour (positive or negative) slate it acceptable or not.

### **Social Disorganization Theory (SDT)**

The social disorganization theory is a theory developed by the Chicago school, related to ecological theories. Shaw and McKay (1942), were at the forefront of this research conducted by the Chicago school. Using spatial maps to examine the residential locations of juveniles referred to Chicago courts, Shaw and McKay discovered that rates of crime were not evenly dispersed across time and space in the city. Instead, crime tended to be concentrated in particular areas of the city, and importantly, remained relatively stable within different areas despite continual changes in the populations who lived in each area. In neighbourhoods with high crime rates, for example, the rates remained relatively high regardless of which racial or ethnic group happened to reside there at any particular time, and, as these previously “crime-prone groups” moved to lower crime areas of the city, their rate of criminal activity decreased accordingly to correspond with the lower rates characteristics of that area. In lieu with these observations, Shaw and McKey concluded that crime was likely a function of neighbourhood dynamics, and not necessarily a function of the individuals within neighbourhoods.

In the postulations of Bernard, Snipes and Gerould (2010), the theory directly links crime rates to neighbourhood ecological characteristics; a core principle of social disorganization theory that states location matters. In other words, a person’s residential location is a substantial factor shaping the likelihood that such a person will become involved in illegal activities. The theory suggests that among determinants of a person’s later illegal activity, residential location is as significant as or more significant

than the person's individual characteristics (examples; age, gender, or race). For instance, the theory suggests that Youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods participate in a subculture which approves of delinquency, and that these youths thus acquire criminality in this social and cultural setting.

### **Theoretical Synthesis and Its Relevance to the Quality of Service Offered by the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants**

The proposals of the social learning theory has laid bare the fact that new behaviours whether good or bad can be acquired by observing and imitating others: it can equally be acquired through direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement. Again, in addition to the observation of behaviour, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments, a process known as vicarious reinforcement. Thus, when a particular behaviour is rewarded regularly, it will most likely persist, conversely, if a particular behaviour is constantly punished, it will most likely desist.

In the same vein, from the proposal of the social disorganization theory; behaviour is influenced primarily by one's environment: corruption and other deviant and criminal behaviour is results of weakened mechanisms of social control. It behooves then that in a society where deviant behaviours is condemned and not severely punished, corruption will gain ascendancy. At the long run, a corrupt sub-structure or culture will be developed. This in turn will influence other young ones coming up.

The case of the services rendered by some of the Nigerian Civil and Public Servants follows the same principle. It persists because disciplinary actions are not implemented to the core. New employees learn from senior cum older workers; leaving behind

track records of negligence, indifference and nonchalant attitudes that defines the quality of services they render.

### **Synopsis of *Laborem Exercens***

In his *Laborem Exercens* encyclical, Pope John Paul II writes as Gurian and Fitzsimons (1954) recorded that he wishes to devote the document to human work and, even more, to man in the vast context of the reality of work. Work to him is one of these aspects, a perennial and fundamental one, one that is always relevant and constantly demands renewed attention and decisive witness. It is for the church to analyze the repercussions that changes in the world of labour may have on human coexistence. But the church considers it her tasks always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide the above-mentioned changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.

Human work as he maintained is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question, if one try to see that question really from the point of view of man's good. And if the solution - or rather the gradual solution of the social question, which keep coming up and becomes ever more complex, must be sought in the direction of making life more human, then the key, namely human work, acquires fundamental and decisive importance.

Hughes (1944) commenting on the aspect of Pope John Paul II *Laborem Exercens* sub-titled "Work and Man" maintained that he underlines the church's conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth. This conviction is found in the first pages of Genesis "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it". Man's dominion over the earth is achieved in and by means of work. The proper subject of work continues to be man, and the finality of work is always man

himself. It is a question of the objective and subjective meaning of work: although both are important, the second takes precedence. Hence John Paul II (cited by Herber, 1963) maintained that there is no doubt that human work has an ethical value of its own, which clearly and directly remains linked to the fact that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is to say a subject that decides about himself.

Work then is a good thing for man - a good thing for his humanity - because through work, man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed in a sense, become more a human being. The pope observes under “conflict between Labour and Capital in the present phase of History”, that during the period which has passed since the publication of "*Rerum Novarum*"(1891), which is by no means yet over, the issue of work has of course been posed on the basis of the great conflict that in the age of and together with industrial development emerged between capital and labour. Pope John Paul II (cited by Mesner, 1955) maintained that this antagonism found expression in the ideological conflict between liberalism, understood as the ideology of capitalism, and Marxism, understood as the ideology of scientific socialism and communism which professes to act as the spokesman for the working class and the' world-wide proletariat.

Later, the Holy Father recalls the principle of the priority of labour over capital. The first is always a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause. Thus appears the error of economism, that of considering human labour solely according to its economic purpose. He then refers to the right to private property emphasising that the church's teaching regarding this principle

diverges radically from the program of collectivism as proclaimed by Marxism, and the program of capitalism practiced by liberalism and by the political systems inspired by it.

The position of rigid capitalism continues to remain unacceptable, namely the position that defends the exclusive right to private ownership of the means of production as an untouchable dogma of economic life. The principle of respect for work demands that this right should undergo a constructive revision, both in theory and in practice. For this reason, regardless of the type of system of production, it is necessary for each worker to be aware that he is working for himself.

On the right of workers, the Holy Father highlights that the human rights that are derived from work are a part of the fundamental rights of the person as Twomey (1963) summarized. He discusses the need to take action against unemployment, which is a true social calamity and a problem of a moral as well as an economic nature. Starting with the concept of the indirect employer, in other words, all the agents at the national and international level that are responsible for the whole orientation of labour policy, he notes that in order to solve the problem of unemployment, these agents must make provision for overall planning. This cannot mean one-sided centralization by the public authorities. Instead, what is in question is a just and rational coordination, within the frame work of which the initiative of individuals must be safeguarded.

Speaking of the rights of works, he recalls the dignity of agricultural work and the need to offer jobs to disabled people. As for the matter of salaries, he writes that the key problem of social ethics in this case is that of just remuneration for work done. In addition, there must be a social re-evaluation of the mother's role. Specially, the whole labour process must be organized and adapted

in such a way as to respect the requirements of the person and his or her forms of life, above all life in the home, taking into account the individual's age and sex. It is fitting that women should be able to fulfill their tasks in accordance with their own nature, without being discriminated against and without lack of respect, for their family aspirations and for their specific role in contributing, together with men, to the good of society.

Besides wages there are other social benefits whose objective is to ensure the life and health of workers and their families. In this regard, he notes the rights to leisure time, which should include weekly rest and yearly vacations. The Pope then considers the importance of unions, which he calls an indispensable element of social life. One method used by unions in pursuing the just rights of their members is the strike or work stoppage. This method is recognized by catholic social teaching as legitimate in the proper conditions and within just limits, but must not be abused. As for the question of emigration for work reasons, he affirms that man has the right to leave his country to seek better living conditions in another. The most important thing is that the person working away from his native land, whether as a permanent emigrant or as a seasonal worker, should not be placed at a disadvantage in comparison with the other workers in that society in the matter of working rights.

In the last chapter of *Laborem Exercens* captioned “elements for a spirituality of work”; the Holy father underlines the elements that help give labour the meaning that it has in God's eyes. Thus, the knowledge that by means of work man shares in the work of creation constitutes the most profound motive for undertaking it in various sectors. Labour is participation in the work of the creator and the Redeemer. Jesus Christ looks upon work with love because He Himself was a labourer. This is a

doctrine and at the same time a program, that is rooted in the Gospel of work proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth.

By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross in his turn everyday in the activity that he is *called upon to perform*. Thus in his work, man must understand that he is not only working to get income in order to make ends meet, but rather he is equally involved in the process of saving life, aiding procreation and maintaining the created order. Total commitment is required in order to ensure provision of services valuable to mankind to sustain human kind.

### ***The Challenge that Laborem Exercens Poses to the Civil and Public Service Nigerian***

*The encyclical, Laborem Exercens by Pope John Paul II has a lot in it that challenges the civil and public servants in Nigeria. When juxtaposed with the efforts of the Nigerian civil and public servants with special reference to dignity of labour and the government's responsibility to see to the welfare of workers, one notices that a lot still needs to be done. In the encyclical, the Holy father maintained that the Government has the sole responsibility and chiefly too, to see that her workers salary were paid and increased regularly, as and when due. Workers equally deserve to go on leave and vacations to be catered for by the government whether state or federal as the case may be. Ibenta (2011), maintained that the government of Nigeria is still corrupt as the quality of political institutions is low and this then rubs off on the economy with substantial negative impact on growth and development. Oburota (2011) on his part sincerely declared that the nearest Nigeria has got in seriously and collectively working to*

eradicate corruption was during the Buhari/Idiagbon short-lived regime - January 1984 to December 1985. A corrupt government then can never cater for, sustain and produce a good breed of civil and public servants. A lot of work still needs to be done here at this level.

Again, Njoku (2011), maintained that Nigerian as a nation is a British manipulated clone. To him, the country called Nigeria was a mal-intended child. Thus at the onset of its conception, it was destined to seat on crisis. In his words, Njoku declared:

It was a manipulative conception of the colonial fiat, whose philosophy was inspired by the Corpus Cular philosophy that was the intellectual ancestor of the imperialist/colonial theory of development, various ethnic groups or autonomous nations, with different culture and aspiration, were drag and fused together by an occupying power for the occupying power's own selfish interest. (p. 33).

A country that its foundation was laid on selfishness cannot produce, challenge, sustain nor cater for her work force. Some other features of the Nigerian government corrupt practices as some Nigerian leaders who took power after the colonization continued to practice includes: antecedental waywardness in the management of resources, consequential waywardness in sustaining goals, wrong planning, wrong or poor execution, economic sabotage, poor management and waste of resources; the list goes on *ad infinitum*.

On the part of the average Nigerian Working force, Ogbimi (2007), exposed that they are mediocre. To him, Nigeria has mediocre-workforce because it produces mediocre from its formal and informal manpower-developing sources. Both formal and informal manpower development efforts in Nigeria do not

go through the complete cycle that equips people with both theoretical and practical skills. The secondary school graduate acquires theoretical knowledge alone, he is a mediocre. The polytechnic graduate is very poorly equipped in terms of both theoretical and practical skills.

All these affects the quality of service the Nigerian civil and public servants render: Thus it results in the provision of invaluable services. One possesses the skills but lacks the theoretical knowledge; one is doctored in theory but knows nothing about the field work; one is probably balanced both in theory and practice but the corrupt foundation of the country affects such a ones dignity in labour, hence, insecurity, unfaithfulness, laziness and lukewarm attitudes over ones primary area of responsibility becomes the order of the day. Blames are shifted to and fro. The governments blame the citizens and the citizens as well accuse the government and so on. Whereas the worm still keeps on eating and digging deep into the apple from the base.

This of course is contrary to what Pope John Paul II admonished in his *Laborem Exercens*. If the average Nigerian should study that encyclical and puts it in practice, Nigeria will produce extraordinary working force that knows their responsibilities through and through. It should be noted that no one is condemning the country's effort whatsoever so far, but then, truth needs be told and more needs to be done. Nigeria still has a long way to go in this aspect.

### **Conclusion**

Pope John Paul II pontifical letter, *Laborem Exercens* a master piece to guide any state that wishes to improve her workforce in order to achieve maximum productivity and general economic

output. A country that is known for her high level of religiosity like Nigeria is expected to proffer one of the best work force in the world like Obiorah (2014), expressed. The Nigerian Civil and Public Servants case is a problem of mankind deciding to follow the dictates of his heart alone; choosing rather to be egocentric as against selfless and public interest. Nigeria is not cursed in any way neither are we lacking any natural resource nor manpower. God has already endowed Nigeria with all her citizens needs to prosper as a world power. The problem lies now with management and Good leadership (Good Governance).

Nigeria lacks good governance and some citizen's on their part are not patriotic, all this owes its occurrence to the corrupt subculture that has been formed via negligence and indiscipline. It is quite obvious that traces of nonchalance, insincerity and other irregularities visibly expressed by some Civil and Public servants in Nigeria are not being tackled out rightly. Newly employed workers tend to learn from old ones in the civil and public service: Rendering of invaluable services by the workers on a stage like this will definitely keep persisting. The few patriotic and sincere ones cannot do much because more often than not they may not be opportune to be in a position to proffer solution, and again, they are in the minority. It takes nothing to be good and disciplined. Self discipline is strongly suggested to help the Nigerian government and her citizens in promoting the offering of valuable services by her Public and Civil servants.

### **Recommendations**

Against these backdrops, these papers suggest and recommend the following:

1. There is need for a round table conference in Nigeria that representatives from the major ethnic groups in Nigeria will be in

attendance. This conference will take into cognizance all the complaints of each group and resolves on practical measures to move forward. This conference should be held in utmost sincerity without any selfish interest at all.

2. Anti-corruption bills promulgated in Nigeria should not be used as a vendetta. It should be applicable to all. The rule of law must be maintained in Nigeria. No one should be above the law. Anti-corruption bills should not be used in witch-hunting person's criticizing a peculiar government in power. Constructive and even destructive criticisms have an alchemic mode of keeping the leader in power in-check. It makes a leader cautious; always striving for the best.

3. All forms of negligence and irregularities practiced by the civil and public servants in Nigeria must never be treated with levity. They should always be met with strict disciplinary actions in order to create a corrupt free culture in Nigeria. As posited in the theoretical synthesis, the likelihood of punishment and strict disciplinary actions will influence citizens' decision whether to engage in corrupt practices. Negligence of duties and general corrupt practices among the Nigerian civil and public servants is as a result of a corruption subculture that provides an opportunity to learn corruption and deviant activities. This adversely affects the quality of services they provide.

4. There is need to revisit the amalgamation formularies and make certain corrections and confessional statements to redress and heal the foundation of Nigeria. Scarborough (2008) maintained that what made the United States of America the greatest nation on earth irrespective of the dwindling liberalism and secularism that is invading her shores today is the spirit behind their First Amendment and her constitution which was the foundation for that great nation adopted at Philadelphia by fifty-six men, has its clear

desire expressed in the declaration of independence "that all men are created equal that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (p.xi). Nigeria needs to follow suit, our declaration of independence and the letter of the amalgamation needs to be revisited, certain policies changed and effected sincerely and not just in theory .

5. Nigerians should come to accept wholly that her nation is a country of laws not based on any one denomination or religious groups or faith nor one tribe or ethnic group, but one that guarantees religious freedom for all and the right to elect their own leaders.

6. Emphasis should be laid on theoretical education as well as acquiring the corresponding practical skills. An electronic engineer needs to know how to change fuses and repair electronic related faults and not just holding bogus doctorate degrees and speaking high vocabulary only to be useless in the field of his area of specialization.

7. Since work and labour are means through which mankind contributes in the created order as recorded in *LaboremExercens*, civil, public and self employed workers in Nigeria should go about their duty in utmost sincerity and dignity. Bearing in mind that they are serving God and not just man nor the nation alone. Mankind lives for God first and then man second.

8. Finally, citizens of Nigeria should learn to vote the person that will deliver good governance into public offices. Strict measures should be taken to ensure that the incessant rigging of elections in the country is permanently controlled. Citizens of Nigeria should be focused on sincerity on the parts of persons they vote into public offices and not the chicken change that will be slipped into their pocket.

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