FUW CENTRE FOR RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL SCIENCES (FUWCRJMSS)

Transformative Leadership and Public Governance: The Role of Character and Values in Service Delivery in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper investigates the crucial role of transformative leadership and public governance in improving service delivery in Nigeria, emphasising the significance of character and values. Using secondary sources and a case study approach centered on Nigeria, the paper investigates how ethical leadership is critical for creating trust, accountability, and integrity within public institutions, which are critical components for good governance and service provision. The study looks at a variety of secondary sources. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of long-term commitment to ethical principles and value-driven leadership in Nigeria's journey to a more fair and prosperous society. The study makes several recommendations, including the need for comprehensive ethical training, strong transparency and accountability procedures, citizen engagement, strengthened legislative frameworks, and the use of technology to support ethical government.

***Keywords**: Leadership, Governance, Service Delivery, Character and Value*

Introduction

Nigeria has immense growth and development potential. Natural, human, and material resources are abundant. The country has been spared from the extremes of weather and geological formations that have threatened more developed cultures with tsunamis, earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions. Nigeria has some of the best leaders any country could have in the years preceding national independence. Today's Nigeria is a far cry from the vision that inspired our founding fathers' pioneering efforts. The Titans - the brilliant Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the wise Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and the ingenious empire builder, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, would never recognise the country for which they worked and died. Chinua Achebe is most apt here:

There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership….. I am saying that Nigeria can change today if she discovers leaders who have the will, the ability and the vision to prioritise the collective good over personal gain. Leaders who embody integrity, accountability, and a genuine commitment to the welfare of the nation. Nigeria's potential is vast, waiting to be unlocked by leaders who inspire and empower the populace, who steer with wisdom and foresight, and who lead by example in every facet of governance and public service. When Nigeria finds such

leaders, it will embark on a transformative journey towards prosperity, unity, and progress for all its people. The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.

What is it about leadership that is so difficult to understand and overcome? Leadership is not about gaining friends and becoming popular with others. Men are drawn to the attractiveness of a captivating personality rather than demagoguery. It is not intimidating to use coercive force to bring individuals into line. It is also not manipulative to twiddle guys around your thumb and treat them like pawns in a chess game. Leadership is not even sermonising, sounding like a missionary and using normative power to appeal to people's consciences.

Leadership plays an extremely important function in governance and public administration. The quality of leadership is critical, especially in Nigeria, where multiple issues exist despite tremendous potential. Transformative leadership, defined by a dedication to ethical ideals and service delivery, is the key to tackling the country's current concerns and realising its full potential. This article examines the relationship between transformative leadership and public governance, highlighting the importance of character and values in promoting effective service delivery in Nigeria.

As noted by various scholars, including Peter Northouse (2021) in "Leadership: Theory and Practice", Chinua Achebe (1984) in "The Trouble with Nigeria", Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (2012) in "Reforming the Unreformable: Lessons from Nigeria", Nasir El-Rufai (2013) "The Accidental Public Servant", and James MacGregor Burns (1978) in "Leadership," transformative leadership transcends mere management of affairs; it inspires positive change, fosters inclusivity, and cultivates a shared vision for progress. However, the realisation of transformative leadership in public governance requires a foundation built on character and values. Drawing on insights from authors such as Fred Greenstein (1982) in "The Hidden-Hand Presidency" and Barbara Kellerman (2010) in "Leadership: Essential Selections on Power, Authority, and Influence", the researchers investigated how leaders' integrity, moral courage, and ethical conduct influence service delivery and public trust. In Nigeria, where socioeconomic inequities exist with structural difficulties such as corruption and inefficiency, the need for transformative leadership based on character and values is especially apparent.

Leadership is defined as INFLUENCE, *the ability to inspire others through character. It expands a man's vision, improves his performance, and develops his personality beyond its natural bounds.* The position does not qualify someone as a leader; such a positional head has authority but no influence. And anyone who professes to be a leader but has no following is just taking a walk (Benjamin, 2021).

John Maxwell identified FIVE distinct levels of leadership. The first is the person who aspires to be a leader because of his position in the organisation; he expects followership as a *right*. Many of Nigeria's leaders are at this basic level. The next step is one who is *Permitted* to be the leader because of the *relationships* he has developed with his peers. In the third stage, one is

designated as the *Production* leader based on the results achieved in the organisation. In the fourth stage, is a leader by *Personnel Reproduction*, he is *Reproducing* himself in his subordinates. Finally, the leader by *Personhood* has earned the *Respect* himself to be a leader, whether within or outside the organisation. This view has been widely canvassed that Nigerians have a terribly skewed understanding of the concept of leadership (Benjamin, 2021). Opinions on this may be divided, but researchers venture to present perspectives on certain essential aspects of leadership:

a. **Leadership is Ministry Service:** Leaders are servants, not masters. They establish trust without requiring allegiance. They are self-effacing, self-deprecating, and very humble. Three characteristics distinguish them: their leadership is defined by service; their message is defined by the quality of life they live and their success is evaluated by the level of sacrifice they make for their employees. They never pursue titles or positions of honour, and they wear no status symbols; they take no pleasure in their lineage or ancestors. They do not have the heart of a boss, but rather that of a parent. The leader's life serves as a measuring stick for their service.

b. **Leadership is integrity**: Walking on moral high ground. Character and integrity are not mutually exclusive concepts. Character development is key to our leadership development. The character serves as the cornerstone for a leader's life. Talent is a gift; character is a choice. A man may not be able to pick his parents or the circumstances surrounding his birth but he may certainly choose to build character. Character expresses credibility, commands respect, establishes consistency and builds trust. In the words of Drucker (1981):

> It is the character that demonstrates leadership, sets an example, and is imitated in turn. Character is not something a man can learn; if he does not bring it to the workplace, he will never have it. It is not something you can deceive people about... The spirit of an organisation emerges from the top. If an organisation has a tremendous spirit, it is due to the great spirit of its leaders. If it decays, it is because the top has rotted; as the proverb goes, trees die from the top.

Leaders must be willing to go the extra mile. Personal integrity is essential for the leadership development path. George Washington was believed to *be "superior in character, not talents." He possessed the ability to inspire respect but lacked the gift of popularity. He was straightforward, not adroit; unyielding rather than adaptable; sluggish to make a judgment rather than a rapid thinker. The dignity that disguised his inner life stemmed from humility and self-control".*

c. **Management and leadership are not exactly the same**: Leadership is a spirit-based combination of personality and vision; its practice is an art. Management is a mental activity, more a matter of precise calculations, statistics, techniques, timetables, and routines; its application is scientific. Warren Bennis (cited by Hersey et al, 1998) makes perhaps the most startling contrast between management and leadership:

> Leaders master the context…… whilst managers yield to it. The manager administers, but the leader innovates. The manager is a copy, whereas the leader is the original. The manager maintains while the leader develops. The manager focuses

on processes and organisations, whereas the leader focuses on individuals. The manager relies on control, whereas the leader inspires trust. The manager has a short-term outlook, whereas the leader has a long-term viewpoint. The management asks 'bow' and 'when', whereas the leader asks 'what' and 'why'. The manager focuses on the bottom line, whereas the leader looks ahead. The manager accepts the status quo, whereas the leader challenges it... Managers and leaders do the right things.

d. **Leadership is Vision:** Vision is a clear and compelling vision of a better tomorrow that motivates people to change, become involved, care, and do things for the greater good. The presence of vision is one of the most reliable indicators of whether a person is a leader or simply occupies a position of leadership. It is one unwavering measure of leadership, a position required for real leadership. Vision is the foundation from which strategy and tactics emerge, resulting in a plan of action that people can implement and evaluate. True vision inspires holistic, consistent, and transformative action. Someone who tries to lead people without vision is simply playing a hazardous, arrogant game (Barna, 2003). If vision is the starting point for effective leadership, it is also the finish line, because all of our efforts are eventually judged in terms of how far we have come toward fully and faithfully fulfilling the vision.

e. **Leadership demands Courage**: No leader who sincerely wants to make a difference can succeed without bravery. Courage allows the leader's determination to outweigh his reservations, his ambitions to outweigh his desperation and his compassion to outweigh his grievances. Without bravery, no matter how excellent the leader's intentions are, he cannot do what he is frightened of. A leader who lacks guts will never venture beyond his comfort zone, and his following will lack dedication. According to Sydney Smith, "a great deal of talent is lost to the world for want of a little courage". When a leader expresses courage, it indicates that he has developed convictions that are stronger than his fears, vision that is clearer than his doubts, spiritual sensitivity that is louder than popular opinion, self-esteem that is deeper than self-protection, appreciation for discipline that is greater than desire for leisure, risk-taking that is stronger than safe keeping, and right actions that are more robust than rationalisations (Maxwell, 2007).

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach and secondary data analysis to get a better understanding of transformative leadership and public governance, with a focus on the importance of character and values in service delivery in Nigeria.

a. Data Sources

To improve the analysis and discussion, the study looks at a variety of secondary sources. Scholarly discourse is predominantly supported by peer-reviewed academic journals sourced from trustworthy publications on transformative leadership and public governance: the importance of character and values in Nigerian service delivery. These periodicals present scholarly perspectives, empirical research,

theoretical frameworks, and case studies.

Furthermore, scholarly works such as books and dissertations that address transformative leadership and public governance in Nigeria are consulted to provide thorough assessments and synthesize knowledge. Authored by specialists in the field, these publications offer theoretical insights, historical perspectives, and practical implications that deepen understanding and enrich discussions on transformative leadership and public governance.

b. Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from the aforementioned sources is analysed using thematic analysis, a rigorous technique of classifying data in order to uncover recurring themes, concepts, and patterns across a dataset.

The study employs thematic analysis to clarify major aspects of transformative leadership and public governance advancing a thorough understanding of the subject. Using this analytical framework, the research intends to generate major insights and recommendations for decision-makers, professionals, and academics to solve the diverse difficulties confronting Nigeria's transformative leadership and public governance.

Transformation Leadership: Principle and Theory

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that affects both individuals and social systems. It generates significant and positive change with the ultimate goal of transforming followers into leaders. James MacGregor Burns proposed this concept in his 1978 book "Leadership," and it has since become a prominent subject of research in organisational behaviour and leadership studies (Burns, 1978).

a. Principles

i. **Idealised Influence (Charisma):** Transformational leaders serve as role models and are admired, respected, and trustworthy. They are constant in their acts and uphold high ethical and moral values. By showing these attributes, leaders can motivate followers to mimic their actions and adhere to similar ethical norms (Bass 1985). Leaders with exalted influence create a standard for service excellence. Their dedication to ethical behaviour and high standards inspires employees to strive for quality in their interactions with customers. This idea aids in creating a culture of trust and dependability, which is necessary for providing high-quality services.

ii.

iii. **Inspirational Motivation:**

iv. Transformational leaders present a clear and compelling vision that inspires and drives their people. They convey high expectations and demonstrate devotion to the goals, instilling a sense of purpose and passion in followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Inspirational motivation entails presenting a vision of great service to energize personnel. Transformational leaders would increase morale and motivate staff by setting high objectives and demonstrating confidence in the team's capacity to reach these goals.

v.

vi. **Intellectual Stimulation:**

vii. Transformational leaders promote innovation and creativity by questioning the status quo and pushing followers to try novel strategies. They create a climate

where followers feel comfortable expressing new ideas and taking chances without fear of criticism (Avolio & Bass, 1995). In service delivery, intellectual stimulation is critical for ongoing improvement. Leaders who inspire staff to think creatively and make changes could improve service procedures and outcomes. This principle encourages an innovative culture in which staff take the initiative to identify new methods to serve clients.

viii. **Individualised Consideration:** Transformational leaders offer personalised encouragement and assistance to their followers. They notice and address each follower's needs, offering coaching and mentoring to help them reach their maximum potential (Bass, 1985). Individualised service delivery ensures that employees feel valued and supported. Leaders would create a supportive work environment that improves employee satisfaction and performance by recognising and addressing each team member's specific needs and goals.

b. Theory

Transformational leadership theory describes leaders who inspire and drive their followers to go above and beyond their recognised capabilities. These leaders prioritise upgrading their followers' interests and ideals and changing them into better, more capable versions of themselves. Bass (1985) emphasised the following fundamental components of transformational leadership theory:

i. **Core Characteristics:** Transformational leaders are usually dynamic, enthusiastic, and passionate. They have a clear vision of the future and excel at articulating it to their followers. They are also trustworthy and act with integrity, which inspires trust and respect among their teammates.

ii. **The Four "I"s**: Transformational leadership is often described in terms of four key behaviours, sometimes referred to as the "Four I's":

- **Idealised Influence:** Transformational leaders establish a strong moral compass and act as role models for their followers. They exemplify the ideals they promote, earning admiration, respect, and trust. This is especially important in service delivery, where ethics and integrity are key.
- **Inspirational Motivation:** These leaders inspire and drive their people to achieve things they never imagined possible. They express a distinct vision and give significance and challenge to their followers' work. Setting high standards and demonstrating confidence in their team's talents fosters a feeling of purpose and dedication, which is required for high-quality service delivery.
- **Intellectual Stimulation:** Transformational leaders promote creativity and innovation. They disrupt the existing quo and foster an environment conducive to critical thinking and problem-solving. In service delivery they constantly upgrade processes, implement new technology and develop innovative solutions to satisfy clients' expectations.
- **Individualised Consideration:** These leaders view their followers as people, valuing their abilities and contributions. They offer guidance and support to help followers realise their greatest potential. This tailored approach guarantees that each team member feels respected and empowered, resulting in increased

job satisfaction and better service outcomes.

Transformative Leadership: Governance and Service Delivery

Transformative leadership and governance are critical to creating conditions that promote accountability, openness, and ethical behaviour. Transformative leaders do more than just manage everyday operations; they inspire and drive their staff to excel in providing excellent service. These leaders generate positive change by concentrating on long-term goals and social progress, ensuring that service delivery meets the highest standards while also contributing to the community's overall well-being.

a. **Inspiring & Motivating Teams:** Transformative leaders inspire and motivate their people by advocating a compelling vision, building a sense of shared purpose, and encouraging creative thinking. This leads to increased team involvement, job satisfaction, and performance (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

b. **Governance:** Effective governance includes principles such as accountability, openness, and ethical behaviour. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines governance as the procedures and institutions by which organisations or societies make and implement choices that affect public life. These values are critical to preserving public trust and achieving sustainable development (UNDP, 1997).

i. **Accountability:** Leaders and organisations must be accountable for their activities and outcomes to foster trust and legitimacy (Bovens, 2007).

ii. **Transparency:** Open communication and decision-making ensure stakeholders are aware and involved (Heald, 2006).

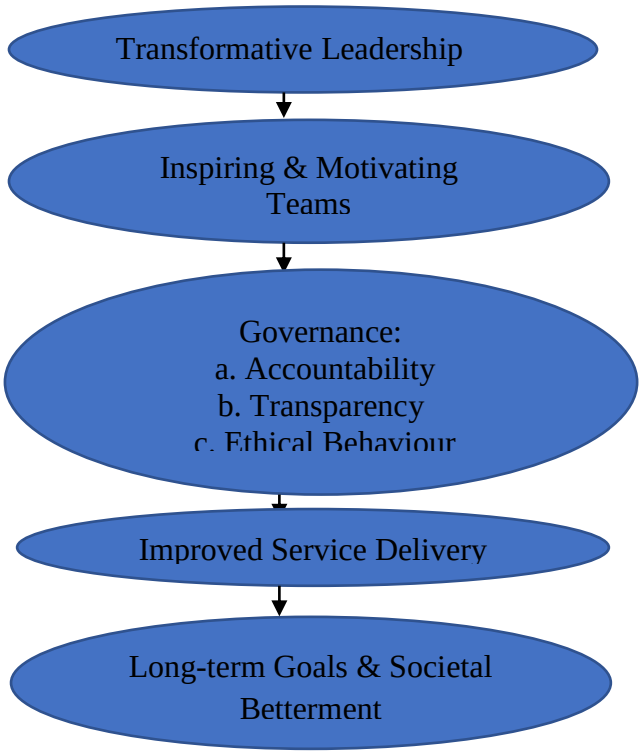
iii. **Ethical Behaviour**: Following moral principles and norms promotes a culture of honesty and respect inside an organisation (Trevino & Nelson, 2017).

c. **Improved Service Delivery**: Effective transformative leadership and governance lead directly to improved service delivery. It includes improving the quality, efficiency, and responsiveness of public services, all of which are critical for meeting community needs and expectations (Osborne, 2010). Quality of service refers to the standard of services offered, which must meet or surpass community expectations through dependable, timely, and effective delivery. Transformative leaders establish high standards and encourage ongoing progress, while governance structures uphold these standards through regular monitoring and feedback. Transformative leaders prioritise efficiency in service delivery by stimulating innovation, streamlining processes, and leveraging technology to optimise resources and reduce waste. Governance ensures that costs are kept under control while also providing excellent service. Responsiveness is the ability to respond swiftly and appropriately to public needs, promoted by transformative leaders who instil urgency and accountability and supported by governance structures that allow for effective communication and decision-making. Meeting society's wants and expectations entails understanding varied requirements and adjusting services accordingly. Transformative leaders work with stakeholders to

ensure that services are relevant, egalitarian, and inclusive, whereas governance frameworks use community feedback to make required changes. Improved service delivery also helps to promote sustainable development and societal well-being by taking into account future needs, environmental impact, and social equality. Transformative leaders promote sustainable practices, and governance ensures that these practices are integrated into organisational policies.

d. **Long-term Goals & Societal Betterment:** Focusing on long-term goals and societal improvement entails working for sustainable development and improving the overall quality of life for present and future generations. Transformative leaders integrate their initiatives with these goals to provide long-term societal benefits (United Nations, 2015).

The diagram below helps visualise how transformative leadership leads to inspiring and motivating teams, which in turn reinforces governance principles such as accountability, transparency, and ethical behaviour. These elements collectively enhance service delivery and contribute to achieving long-term goals and societal betterment:



Ethical Leadership in Public Governance

Ethical leadership is crucial for building confidence, accountability, and integrity in government institutions (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). This form of leadership is characterised by leaders who not only uphold high ethical standards themselves but also actively promote these values and principles throughout their businesses. Ethical leaders establish a moral example for others to follow, ensuring that public institutions' choices and actions are governed by fairness, openness, and justice.

Leaders earn the trust of citizens and stakeholders by exhibiting ethical behaviour. Trust is a fundamental component of governance because it fosters public confidence in government processes and judgments. When leaders act with integrity and transparency, the public is more likely to believe that its leaders are looking out for their best interests, which is critical for maintaining social stability and cooperation.

Furthermore, ethical leadership promotes accountability in government entities. Accountable leaders establish a culture in which workers take responsibility for their behaviour and performance. This sense of accountability decreases the possibility of corruption and guarantees that public resources are managed properly and effectively.

Integrity, another key component of ethical leadership, refers to a leader's consistency in words and acts. Leaders who demonstrate integrity are seen as trustworthy and reliable, boosting public faith in government processes. Integrity in leadership is making decisions that are not only legally correct but also morally sound, even when confronted with tough choices.

Promoting principles of ethics in decision-making and activities ensures that public resources are used properly and to benefit society. Leaders who prioritise ethical issues are more likely to put in place equitable, inclusive, and long-term policies and programs. This ethical use of resources contributes to the successful meeting of social requirements, improved service delivery, and improved general public welfare.

a. Importance of Ethical Leadership in Public Governance

Ethical leadership is crucial for several reasons, each of which underscores the importance of maintaining high public governance:

i. **Building Trust:** Leaders earn the trust of their citizens, stakeholders, and coworkers by acting ethically. Trust is a critical component of efficient governance because it fosters public collaboration and confidence in government institutions. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) argue that ethical leaders who display honesty, transparency, and consistency contribute to a trustworthy government. This trust is required to win public support and ensure the seamless implementation of policies and initiatives.

ii. **Preventing Corruption:** Ethical leaders develop procedures and practices to prevent corruption and misuse of public resources. They encourage openness and accountability systems, which are essential for safeguarding the integrity of public administration. Brown et al. (2005) underline that ethical leadership entails establishing clear ethical standards and ensuring that these standards are followed throughout the organisation. Leaders can considerably lower the likelihood of corruption and boost the legitimacy of public institutions by creating an environment in which ethical behaviour is expected and rewarded.

iii. **Enhancing Organisational Effectiveness:** Ethical leaders create a positive organisational culture in which people are motivated to achieve common goals. This type of culture improves both productivity and organisational effectiveness. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) found that ethical leaders motivate their colleagues by providing a moral example and fostering a supportive work environment.

Employees who believe their leaders are ethical are more likely to be engaged, committed, and eager to contribute to the organisation's goals. This results in improved levels of performance and more efficient service delivery.

iv. **Promoting Sustainable Development**: Ethical leadership ensures that policies and actions take into account the long-term benefits to society, environmental sustainability, and social equality. Leaders who prioritise ethical issues in decision-making are better prepared to face the complex problems of sustainable development. According to Brown et al. (2005), ethical leaders approach governance holistically, taking into account the consequences of their decisions for future generations and the environment. This strategy is critical for supporting sustainable development and making progress that is inclusive and equitable.

Conclusion

In Nigeria, integrating transformative leadership and public governance is critical for improving service delivery and promoting long-term development. Transformative leadership, defined by strong moral values and principled decision-making, is critical for resolving the systemic difficulties that public institutions face. Leaders who demonstrate honesty, responsibility, and a commitment to the public good establish a strong example, inspiring their teams and garnering citizens' trust.

The emphasis on character and principles in leadership guarantees that public resources are used properly and equitably. Ethical leadership helps to prevent corruption, improve organisational effectiveness, and promote transparency and accountability, all of which contribute to more effective and responsive governance. Furthermore, by emphasising long-term societal advantages, environmental sustainability, and social equality, transformative leaders contribute to sustainable development and inclusive progress. Transformative leadership based on strong character and values is critical for improving public governance and service delivery in Nigeria.

Recommendations

To enhance transformative leadership and improve public governance and service delivery in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. **Enhance Ethical Training and Development Programs:** Provide comprehensive training for public officials to promote ethical leadership, honesty, and accountability. These programs should be incorporated into all levels of public service education and professional development to guarantee that ethical standards are constantly followed.

b. **Enhance Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms:** Develop and implement strong transparency and accountability frameworks in public institutions. This includes establishing independent monitoring organisations, conducting frequent audits, and implementing transparent reporting systems to monitor and assess the use of public resources and decision-making processes.

c. **Promote a Culture of Integrity:** Recognise and reward ethical behaviour to promote an integrity culture inside public organisations. Recognise and celebrate leaders and employees who display excellent

ethical standards and set clear repercussions for unethical behaviour.

d. **Engage Citizens in Governance:** Increase citizen engagement in governance processes by holding regular consultations, public forums, and feedback channels. Engaging citizens ensures that policies and services are in line with public needs and improves accountability by providing a forum for the public to express issues and hold leaders responsible.

e. **Strengthen Legal and Institutional Frameworks:** Strengthen legal and institutional frameworks for combating corruption and ensuring ethical governance. This includes updating anti-corruption laws, improving judicial processes, and ensuring that institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) are adequately funded and empowered to carry out their functions effectively.

f. **Encourage Political Will and Commitment:** Political leaders must be deeply committed to ethical governance. This entails setting an example, making public professions characterised adhere to ethical tenets and ensuring that ethical considerations are prioritised in policymaking and implementation.

g. **Implement Technology Solutions:** Use technology to increase openness, efficiency, and accountability in public administration. Digital platforms can be used for procurement, service delivery, and public feedback, lowering the opportunity for corruption while boosting service delivery.

h. Promote Collaboration and Partnerships: Encourage collaboration among the government, civil society, and the private sector to promote ethical governance. Partnerships with civil society organisations can improve supervision and accountability, whilst private sector involvement can bring innovative ideas to service delivery.

i. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Create procedures for regular monitoring and evaluation of governance processes and service delivery results. This aids in identifying areas for improvement, tracking progress, and ensuring that governance improvements are successfully implemented.

j. **Advocate for Ethical Leadership at All Levels:** Promote ethical leadership at all levels of government, from local to national. Ensure that ethical concepts are established in the organisational culture and that leaders at all levels adhere to the same high standards of conduct.

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