

## Ethical Considerations in Software & Information Systems Engineering: The Case of a Local Hospital in Adamawa State of Nigeria

Arthur U. Ume

School of Information Technology and Communications  
American University of Nigeria, Yola, Nigeria

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### Abstract

For more than a decade now, Nigeria has been witnessing a continuous improvement and boom in the application of Information and Communications Technology in all the vital sectors of her economy. There is an increasing dependency on computer programs for critical infrastructures, business processes and operations. This boom is not abating, and is resulting in a corresponding increase in the number of companies and individuals who join an increasing population of software engineers, enterprise application developers and programmers. But regrettably, the boom has given rise to a host of ethical issues. The ability to make sound ethical judgement and decision is becoming very important as "half-baked" software developers produce critical software that are supposed to run critical business functions and operations. To compound this problem the few technical schools or colleges that produce the very needed programmers and web designers do not have a clue that there is something negative creeping in from another angle; they do not have qualified or versed instructors to arm their graduates with the basic foundation knowledge in software professional ethics which is needed to effectively practise the art of software engineering in the society at large. This paper investigates the state of software engineering ethics in the face of Nigeria's upwelling Information and Communications Technology and intention to produce and use locally designed and implemented software. The paper calls attention to the nonchalance, dispassion and mass negligence attendant to this issue. It further highlights and calls for adherence to sound ethics at all levels of software production in the Nigerian society at large. The paper uses a case-study and scenario to illustrate how to start doing so.

**Keywords:** Software Engineering, Ethics, Nigeria, Information and Communications Technology, "half-baked"

### Introduction

Of late, owing to the huge influence and effect that software engineering is having in the lives of the modern work force in the Nigerian society, it has become very important to seriously start considering how to integrate Information and Communications Technology and human values in such a way that this enabling technology will indeed protect the improvement and enhancement of societal values.

There is a growing need to start thinking how to produce and implement software to achieve a semblance of orderliness instead of the "jungle" of participants which is presently out there right now. There has to be a concerted effort to bring in some guiding principles and code of ethics. Such effort will express a consensus of the profession on ethical issues and judgement. Codes of ethics usually express this consensus, and will serve as a means of training and educating the general Nigerian public about the ethical norms and values of the software engineering endeavour and profession.