

Strategies to Curbing Corruptive Practices through the Promotion of Accountability and Transparency in the Nigerian Public Service

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1. Introduction

The need to curb corruptive practices in the Nigeria public service is glaringly clear as it has become enigma that is hard and strong to be uprooted. It is globally known that accountability and transparency are necessary tools to checkmate corruptive practices in public offices, Nigerian public service inclusive. Accountability refers to answerability of one's action or behavior that involves the development of objective standard of evaluation of persons and units within organization, while transparency denotes a situation when the processes of government are opened and accessed to the people and the more open the process, there more easily enforceable in accountability (Olowu 2015). Efforts to eradicate this pervasive bureaucratic abuses are continuously challenging and paradoxically too, Lack of accountability and transparency breeds corruption in the sense of abuse of public office for personal or private gain (Dibbie, 2014). Indeed, the concern for the eradicating corruption is the Nigeria public life through the promoting accountability and transparency has been demonstrated since the launch of economic and financial fraud commission (EFFC) and Independence corrupt practices (ICPC) by the President Olusegun Obasanjo's government The present government has further internationally the war on corruption eradication by it avowed commitment to prosecuting corrupt public officials and embarking of external networks such as the prominent participation in the London Government Anti-Corruption Submit in 2016, 30th Annual submit of the Assembly of the African Union in January 2018 and open government partnership in Paris (2019).

The paper assesses factors that have induced corruptive practices in the Nigerian public service and suggests strategies to ameliorate it, in the nation's public service and in the nation at large.

1.1 The Concept of Accountability

According to Stanley (2005) accountability means being held to account, scrutinized and being organized to give an account or explanation. To him, civil servants are accountable upward through audit and parliamentary scrutiny and outward through transparency and openness to stakeholders and to the public at large. Accountability are promoted by strengthening the mechanisms of administrative process and some of these mechanisms are internals to the administrative system. Such steps include linking budget with performance or linking staff promotion to performance. In addition, the strengthening of accountability of public duties vis-à-vis and society through the involvement of citizens as the local level directly in governance and oversight, coupled with the strengthening of monitoring and evolution system to province imperial basis for assessing result and outcome (Levy 2007)

According to Mbeli (2010) accountability connotes answerability of administration or management to the people. A principle of administration stipulates that in practice, the chief executive is answerable for the act of omissions and commissions of their subordinates. Accountability is the required that those who hold public trust should account for the use of that trust to citizen or their responsibility. Accountability signifies the superiority of the public will over private items and that public officials must try to ensure that the formal is supreme in every activities and conduct of the public official (Nkoma, 2004).

1.2 The Concept of Transparency

Transparency means the quality to make things easy to be seen or noticed (Oxford dictionary, 2009) Sharma et al (2007) that transparency requires that the decision are taken and their enforcement is done

in a manner that is in conformity with rules and regulations and that information can be received by those who are being affected by the decision in easily understood forms. It can be enhanced by the free flow of information and the vibrant press. The promulgation of freedom of information act of Nigeria is to promote transparency in the public service. The activities of international non-governmental organizations like the transparency international are helpful in promoting transparency in the public domain. The public sector reforms dealing with public accountability have transparency as its objectives and achieving these changes involves building technical capacity, training and retraining and funding of administrative institutes in the country. While establishing the links between accountability and transparency in governance, (Olowu 2005) argues that the mechanism for enforcing Accountability (parliament, courts, ombudsman and the like) are ineffective without their own independent access to information on the details of local the executive arms runs the government. Hence, the consideration of improved and effective accountability has often fueled the demand for freedom of information.

1.3 The Concept of Corruptive Behavior

Public service has been an integral part of government structures in Nigeria during the colonial and post-colonial eras (Oladayo and Oni 2016) public service attracts a kind of individual and the calling to public service is at the heart of public administration and is based on a duty or an intense inner commitment to a cause that extends beyond the exigencies of the movement. Public servants are people who achieve internal satisfaction by making a contribution to a society as opposed to a self-serving commitment to achieving personal goals. As such monetary gain and other external rewards are often not primarily significant, as those who enter the service do so out of the desire to serve public interest (Holzer and Schwester 2011). The opposite is the case in Nigeria as the public service that consists of the presidential, ministerial and extra-ministerial departments which are responsible for public all quasi public sector enterprises are guilty of this illicit practices. The various efforts control of bureaucratic and political corruptions have been checked in the reality subterfuge policies (Adetayo 2005). Agagu(2015) explicates that corruptive practices are unethical and pervade the political leader class, the bureaucratic class and the Nigeria populace as well. According to him, corruption is the most talked about in Nigeria till date and it manifests inform of mis-using official purposes, tempering with records,

kickback, demanding for sex from female applicants, election malpractices, inflation of contract and so on. Corruption or corruptive behavior has become a socio-economic and political scourge that has eaten deep into the fabric of society in general and public service, in particular in the Nigerian state (Ighodolo, 2007).

2. Nigeria Public Service

According to Abdulkarim et al (2010) public service refers to all organizations that exist as part of government machinery for implementing policies and programmes of the government as well as delivery of certain services to the people. The public bureaucracy in Nigeria consist of the core civil service and outside services such as the public agency and other security agencies: the armed forces, the National Assembly, the judicial service, public enterprises other services provided by other bodies established by the acts of National Assembly.

On his part, Aina (2006) notes that, the Nigerian public service is part of the executive arm of government that is responsible for the effective administration of the law and procedures of the government. It is the arm of the executive of the laws, the law which have been passed by the legislative and deals with day to day running of government. The public service has been an integral part of governmental structures in Nigeria whose behavior has been a reflection of the prevailing circumstances and governmental structures in Nigeria (Aina, 2006).

Section 3: Theoretical Framework: Bureaucratic Theory of administration

Bureaucracy was formulated by Max Weber who fondly referred to as the father of bureaucracy. According to him, the ideal bureaucracy organization, called rational, legal bureaucracy could contain the following elements:- , a well defined hierarchy ,a division of labour based on functional specialization. It is also based on formalized, written rules and conduct and procedure to be applied uniformly. Central to this is that administration is based on written document and this tends to make the office the hub of modern organization and organizationis Impersonality, in that, impersonal relations established by code of conduct and recruitment and promotion based on technical competence (Sharma 2010) These requirements or characteristics tend to lead to delay or slowness in the execution of the organization which is equally red tapism. (Onuoha 2015).

Lawal (2012) notes that bureaucracy is found in all organizations be it political, religion, military and other organizations. The main features of weber' bureaucracy includes specialization, hierarchy of authority, formal procedure and rules, formal selection, carrier orientation and impersonality in application of rules. The advantages of bureaucracy are specialization of structure, predictability and stability of organization system, rationality and partial democracy. It was the first attempt to systematically define the dimensions of the public organization and explain its operation in abstract and theoretical terms and it has remained the foundation on which subsequent modifications and improvement in theory and practice in the public organization are based (Onah, 2009).

The research work is anchored on bureaucracy theory because it reflects one of the requirements necessary in bureaucratic organizations, that is, ethical standard of curbing diverse corruptive behaviors in the nation's public service. Accountability and transparency form parts of necessary codes of conduct espoused by the bureaucratic school of thought in administration in order to secure efficient and effective role performance in any bureaucratic set up.

3. The challenge of corruptive behavior and need for accountability and transparency in the Nigerian Public Service

Scholars have advanced reasons why corruptive behavior persists, thereby making accountability and transparency important strategies for revamping the Nigerian public service.

Achegbulu et al (2007) posits that corruptive behavior is promoted by institutional factors in the Nigeria public service. These factors are coherent provisions to hold offices personally responsible for financial improprieties arising out of their actions, audit queries are treated with levity and that audited account of governance characteristically many years in arrears making accountability and transparency far fetch. Other factors identified by them or social and technical factors growing moral decadence, poverty and criminal attitudes which have been made public officers and public trust being subsequent to corruption and other forms of deface behavior, with the technical factor manifesting in form of endemic shortage of qualified audit accounting staff to conduct necessary audit where there are cumbersome method for dealing with large financial bodies of financial data.

On his part, Eneaya (2010) observes three political factors manifesting in form of lack of political will and committed by administrative and political leaders to corruption, coupled with the fact that unethical behavior in the public officers inhibits the drive for accountability and transparency. Secondly, cultural factors such as pressure from friends and kinsmen on their relations in government for benefits appointment impose difficult strains on desire for accountability and transparency in the Nigeria public service. Thirdly, economic factors such as poverty and greed, poor wages and salaries and term conditions of service account for lack of commitment and accountability in the Nigerian public service. Olowu (2015) explains that the challenges of corruption arouse due to fact that:

- There are doubts about the genuineness of the support of Africa's political executives for straightening institutions especially for ensuring that they became independent and self accounting institution as accounting and transparency and considered troublesome by them according to him
- The problem of high costs of building and nurturing these institutions not only in financial terms but also in terms of the required administrative and technical capacity.
- Also, the challenge of developing the appropriate constitutional environment to support these types of institutions for accountability and transparency serve as constraining factors as offer as accountability is concerned in the Nigeria public service.

Ijewereme (2005) points out that one of the major causes of corruption in the Nigeria public service is greed and obsession to share the national cake by the components units of the federation without thinking on how the cake would be baked. He argues that the political and bureaucratic hegemony constitutes a powerful cult and the unbridled access to states wealth in Nigeria. They are in every ethnic grouped sector of Nigeria public service and they can instigate rig election, assassinate any perceived enemy or obstacle to their way in the quest to have unlimited access to state fund. He adds that the slogan expressed in every ethnic group is to ensure " You steal the state wealth and give a part of it to the political Godfather's" who will settle your case in situation of any outcry or protest.

Egbuwalo (2018) identify causes of corruption in the Nigeria public service as the failure of the failure of

the country to apply rulers against corruption as formal rulers is subordinate to informal rules, weak public management system and inappropriate politics. He maintains that in Nigeria, the political terrain is so uncertain, unstable and unpredictable and with this in mind, the Nigerian political chart develops the propensity to group public funds as much as is possible for him/her before any sudden change in over government occurs which may order him/her to host his/her positions. Other social factors other may induces corrupt practices are pressure from extended family and friends and lack of distinction between personal and private properties. The political class, of which ever persuasion, ought to be committed to a developmental ideology and achievement of goals while senior administrators must be committed to rapid social-economic change because bureaucrats have been trained to administer and transmit reestablishment under rather than innovate. Obviously, politicians cannot hope to secure the cooperation of senior administrators in situations where major policy decision tended to be influenced only by party consideration without inputs from the bureaucratic class (Akinsanya, 2017)

Folarin (2014) notes that corruption is endemic in the Nigeria societies from pre-colonial are persists till date. He identifies protocol causes of corruption practices in Nigeria as including the escalating rate of poverty practiced in the country arising out of poorly implemented economic policies, misappropriation of public funds amongst others. This has made the people to exploit this opportunity for felt enrichment. He maintains that social pressures on public office holders or an affluent individuals imposes a burden that push over to be involved is corruptive behaviors. This is because some are close to the national cake/purse and very wealthy are usually pressured to leave their residency and should continue prompt corruptive behavior to source for illicit funds to meet the myriad of demand coming to them from their immediate societies .noting that some desire to meet such expectations. To meet great responsibility by public figure in Nigeria usually results to despite moves to amass wealth to meet such expectations. This usually refers to taking care or delivery of domestic dividends by the political class.

Ufor (2016) identified the reasons for corruptive behavior to the Nigerian state or including poor political culture(example no Nigeria official is ashamed or condemned by his people for being involved in corruptive behavior rather he is lauded of being smart while those who have opportunities to be corrupt but refused are excommunicated e. t. c by his people after leaving office. He further notes that non

implementation of government policies usually leads to corruption as those who are supposed to enforce or implement the policies like judges, the police and bureaucrats have engaged themselves in corruption this manifest as a result of fear and tension by state high ranking officers because of lack of social security. He adds that reward system, high level of poverty lacking professionalism in the civil service and facts of favoritism, tribalism and nepotism fan ember of corruptive practices in Nigeria till dates.

Erunke (2014) explicated that corruption has eating deep and have found its way into the body of the Nigerian state so much so that virtually all spheres of the nation in the states with the forces of corruption. He continues “corruption” whether political, economical, judicial, and institutional or bureaucratic could, by and large impedes the progress of any society, and in fact has been the bone of sustainable development in Nigeria. No longer believes the honesty and integrity are not worthy principles since one can do very little or even do nothing of all to getting so much as high degree of ineptitude and indolence in the attitude of Nigeria further confirms the fact that corruption is not a thing of the leadership alone but involving followers too. Corruption manifests in the affairs of the family, schools, worship centers, the beuaracracy market places, electoral activities and many more.

4.2 Strategies to achieve curb corruptive behavior through accountability and transparency in the Nigerian public service.

Sharma (2012) suggested ways to curb corruptive behaviors through the application of accountability and transparency in the Nigerian public service. They include:

- Responsible bureaucracy with underlined with values, attitude, beliefs and interest of the society that they serve. That is, they must mirror the goods ethics of their society.
- Public participation in the decision making boards and community control over funds and expenditures.

Accountability must be impacted in the public servants and sensitivity to reveal and punishment must be employed.

Administrative reforms must be constantly done this can be done through training performance appraisal.

Debbie (2014) posits that lack of accountability and transparency, breeds corruption, in the sense of abuse of public office for private personal gain in Nigeria. He advocated certain steps to entice accountability and transparency which include, gaining access to government information by the public, the press

(both print and electronic, media) should play a critical role of watchdog on the conduct of governmental interest. In addition, the media should be engaged in investigative journalism and the media should also educate the citizen as to their right to organize public protest against corrupt political leaders and senior administrators.

He adds that civil society groups should also be able to mobilize in order to confront public leaders who are corrupt and public officials should treat citizens with fairness and impartiality, with inspect to rule of law and an independent judiciary which constitute mechanizing for enforcing accountability.

Egonmwan (2018) contends that curbing corrupt practices and making management more effective entails providing public management with the necessary tools to deliver public service in a more efficient and cost effective manner. This includes management structures and institutional mechanisms their improve policy development, coordination, and implementation for better public sectors outcomes. He maintains that rule is need to have some measures of control over human and financial resources and the use of information technology for efficient revenue collection management and accounting and inter-dependable communication system.

Noting that operational and management control system have been put in place in Nigeria South Africa, Ghana e.t.c for example, the nitrated payroll and performed information system and bio-metric captive of offices are meant to enhance accountability and transparency in the Nigeria public service. In addition, the need for accountability and transparency has led the government to adopt the Nigeria Extractive industry transparency initiative Act of 2007, fiscal responsibility Act No 37 of 2007, the public documents Acts No 31 of 2007 and freedom of information Act.

Ijewereme (2015) admonished that public institutions in Nigeria must be characterized by meritocracy and professionalisms, a high morale cum reform-minded public servants, with a sense of patriotism and commitment to fighting corruption as well as ensuring transparent management and institution more effective corruption reporting mechanism. The anti-corruption agencies must not only be made to function independently of government apparati but also must also have the capacity to institute and effectively executive sanctions without recourse to. Political or public office is a trust and demands integrity transparency and dignity in the conduct of affairs of a nation. To this end, that is need for critical involvement of a National Ethics Programme for

Development as setting up of anti Corruption agencies (Independent Corrupt Practice Commission, Economic and Financial Crime Commission and National Orientation Agency, among others) without articulating National Ethic programmed for all stadium of the Nigeria Society would continue to yield power result in the fight against corruption in the country (Akeem, 2010).

4. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is glaringly clear that corruptive practices have negatively impacted the Nigerian public service and it has manifested in different forms ranging from graft, abuse of office, embezzlement, patronage among others. This has resulted in unyielding, uncooperative, unproductive and desperate public service in Nigeria.

We therefore advanced Nolar Report (1995) strategies to salvage the nation's public service from its present skewed and non-impressive situation. The report outlines ethical standard necessary in public offices to promote accountability and transparency in public offices. Such prescriptions are:

- (a) Selfishness: holders of public office should take decision in self-interest but in the interest of the public and they should not do so to gain financial interest for themselves or their families.
- (b) Integrity: Holders of public office under any financial or other obligation to individual or organization that must influence the performance of their official duties.
- (c) Objectivity: Public official should make their choice of individual or content award should do so merit.
- (d) Accountability: Public officials should be accountable for their decision and actors taken while carrying their duties and be ready to submit themselves for scrutiny.
- (e) Openness: Public official should be as open as possible in regard to decision and actions take and give adequate reason for their actions.
- (f) Honesty: Holders of public offices should adequately resolve conflicts between private and official interest.
- (g) Leadership: Holders of public office should as are expected to promote and supplies their administration principles and show good examples.

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