

**TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY:  
TOOLS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

The paper critically examines transparency and accountability as veritable tools for good governance in Nigeria. Since representatives in government are chosen in a democratic process by the people, such representatives must be accountable, and the process of electing such representatives must be credible and transparent as well. This is the objective of the paper to examine the concepts of transparency and accountability as veritable strategies for promoting good governance. An insight is given to the meaning and dimensions of transparency and accountability. The paper stresses the need for ensuring that the resources of the country are equitably distributed to all segments of the country. The paper uses content analysis to examine the roles and strategies used in promoting good governance in Nigeria. The paper recommends among other things that political office holders must declare their assets before assumption of office.

**Keywords:** *Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability.*

**Introduction**

Among the persisting problems Nigeria has faced since independence in 1960, are the issues of leadership and good governance. In search of a turn – around, democracy as a system of government has been adopted based on certain assumptions among which is that those who become leaders are given the mandate by the people. Supposedly, therefore, they represent people's interest by authoritatively allocating societal resources to meet members'

needs.

Secondly, the system stipulates a process through which such representatives are chosen and made accountable. What is germane to this work is that this process must be transparent enough to guarantee at least procedural legitimacy for governments, before a governance which presumably requires accountability from political office holders.

#### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The concept of good governance is the manner in which power is utilized in the management of a country's economic and social resources. According to Ayene (2003), good governance implies:

- The promotion of the best wishes of the majority represented in the actual policies and programmes of the constituted authority;
- The accommodation and tolerance of the yearnings and aspirations of the minority and discordant groups;
- The principles of consultation involving the widest spectrum of the society where the wishes of the people are harvested and pursued at all times.
- The strict adherence to the rule of law at all levels of society and
- The adherence to the practice of accountability and transparency by leadership and others in political authority.

#### **Transparency - Meaning**

It is the condition of being transparent, an honest way of doing things that allows other people to know exactly what you are doing. (Macmillan Dictionary (2009). Wikipedia (2015) explains transparency as operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. It has been defined simply as "the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender.

#### **Accountability - Meaning**

It refers to answerability, blameworthiness, liability and the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities. It is the expected or required account for one's actions. Wikipedia (2014) explains accountability as the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. It also includes the responsibility for money or other entrusted property.

#### **Governance - Meaning**

Establishment of policies, and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation, by the members of the governing body of an organization. It includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members, and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organization (Wikipedia, 2015).

#### **The Role of Transparency and Accountability for Good Governance**

For good governance; Augustine (2005) sees transparency as an act of being transparent, honest and upright. Transparency ensures that information is available that can be used to measure the authorities' performance and to guard against any possible misuse of power. In that sense, transparency serves to achieve accountability, which means that

authorities can be held responsible for their actions. Without transparency and accountability, trust will be lacking between government and those it governs. The result would be social instability and an environment that is un conducive for economic growth and development.

Accountability and transparency are twin concepts that are important pillars for democratic governance in modern societies. Transparency and accountability also play important role in the maintenance of good governance in our society such as:

Transparency and accountability are crucial for ensuring that resource wealth is managed for the benefit of the whole population. Transparency in the oil sector operations allows democratic debate on how oil wealth should be handled.

Transparency and accountability make Nigeria to advance in transparency in the oil sector. It is among the first to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

They help in the publication of financial results of licensing of Nigeria's principal commitment, under the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is helping Nigeria fulfill its undertakings under the EITI (Augustine, 2005). The experiences of some developing countries in the management of oil wealth offer dramatic illustration of the problems that could be passed by resource rich countries. Typically, the exploitation of oil generates large and sudden revenue flows. The change alone creates significant challenges for developing countries, because their administrative systems are often not well equipped to handle such flows. The uncertainty associated with volatile oil prices add layers of complexity that further strain an already over burdened system.

#### **Effects of Corruption on Good Governance in Nigeria**

The universal phenomenon of corruption which presents itself in different variations and dimensions depending on where it rears its head has resulted in underdevelopment, poverty and chaos in the polity. The effects of corruption on the nation's democratic process is a myriad. Some of the effects of corruption on good governance in Nigeria are outlined below:

- i. It has made Nigeria to be ranked as one of the most corrupt countries of the world.
- ii. Corruption has become the biggest challenge against Nigeria's democratization march.
- iii. It has shown its effect on Nigeria's past and present fragile and fledging democracy in the aspect of poor governance.
- iv. It has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of the larger segment of the Nigeria population.
- v. It has much effect on the falling standard of education in Nigeria mostly in the area of the involvement of teachers in bribery; to alter scores of students so that they can have good grades in their examination.
- vi. Abandonment of patients by doctors in government hospitals has made many patients to lose their lives.

- vii. Collection of bribes by vehicle inspection officers (VIOs) on our highways, and allowing vehicles that are not road worthy to ply our highways has resulted in road accidents and loss of lives of many Nigerians.
- viii. Collection of money fraudulently by policemen at check points, has resulted in high cost of transportation and death in some cases. There are cases where policemen at check points shot and killed drivers and some passengers of some cars, for refusing to give them money. This occurs mostly when the driver of the vehicle is trying to escape without offering them money.

Anyim and Akanwa (2002) viewed how corruption affects the public service. He argued that widespread corruption among Nigerian public servants is due, among other things to economic crisis, due process, which is better described in terms of bureaucracy, value system, sociological, civil consciousness and proper reward system for those in service and even after the service years. Employment in the civil service is basically done on political patronage, ethnicity and god-fatherism. How do we then ensure efficiency in doing what we know we cannot do. The incompetence must be covered.

Accountability will be lacking because government business is not conducted efficiently and effectively. Inefficiency in the public service will make good governance to be by chance.

#### **Strategies Used in Promoting Transparency and Accountability for Good Governance**

Many factors have been given as strategies used in promoting transparency and accountability.

1. Quarterly ratification of government oil revenues by external auditor. The certification reconciles revenue payment to the government with the revenue receipts of the government. An audit firm of International reputation has undertaken audits of the (1999 - 2001) and 2002 external accounts of the state oil company (NNPC).
2. Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by transparency International is becoming of great value in the promotion of transparency and accountability among the countries of the world. This body and the G8 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States) fight against corrupt practices in most societies.
3. The external audit firm reviewed the internal control and fiscal agency functions of the oil company (notably oil sales, oil-based financing).
4. The multilateral initiative in Africa places emphasis on good governance and accountability through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as a way of promoting transparency and accountability.
5. Organizing democratic debates on how oil wealth should be handled to ensure transparency in the oil sector operations is one of the ways of promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria (Augustine, 2005).
6. Work on standard and codes is an international initiative to promote transparency. It aims at improving the quality of policy making and investment decisions. These

vehicle inspector officers and policemen at checkpoints and any one found wanting should be penalized in accordance with the gravity of the offence committed.

- The government should empower the law enforcement agencies through the provision of sophisticated ammunitions and vehicles to curb insecurity in the country and also improve on their welfare packages.

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