



CURBING CORRUPTION AND PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY IN NIGERIA: LIBRARIES AS PANACEA

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Abstract: Libraries, the world over has come a long way and no doubt has impact in curbing corruption and promoting transparency in the society because of its information resources and services in both print and non-print form, traditional and automated ways of providing services respectively. This paper seeks to explain what corruption is, various forms of corruptions, reason for corrupt practices in Nigeria, countries with low tolerance for corruption and the roles Nigerian libraries play in curbing corruption and promoting transparency by preserving and disseminating information sources on corruption issues. What are transparency and various ways in which transparency will help to curb corruption?

Key Words: Corruption, transparency, libraries. Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is universal. Everyone has at some time been tempted to give or accept an inducement to act in a way that does not conform to ethics and law. Most people have given into that temptation on occasion, even if only very rarely and in small matters. Wherever there are transactions that offer the opportunity for personal advantage or profit someone, somewhere will take advantage of that opportunity. Corruption can be such a part of life that citizens of a badly corrupt country may scarcely imagine that it can be reduced or eliminated. Nevertheless, condemnation of corruption is a universal theme of conversation and political debate worldwide.

The people and successive government of Nigerian have come to terms with this fact leading to the enactment of legislation and anti-grafts agencies like Economics and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and special anti-corruption courts like Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT). In particular, the Nigerian people strongly aligning

themselves to this fact, made corruption the crux of their choice of leadership in the last 2015 general election which saw to the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari whose major campaign thrust was hinged on uprooting corruption in Nigeria as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is however, unfortunate that these efforts have not been able to abate corruption in Nigeria but rather corruption is on the increase. The most culpable reason for this is implementation caused by corruption itself. Studies also revealed that a huge chunk of Nigerian's efforts at checking corruption is punitive and not preventive. Preventive means of curbing corruption has been proven more effective. Preventive means of curbing corruption is highly dependent on public access to information on what corruption is, it causes, types of corruption etc. and libraries are the best tools in providing information such information but in soft and hard copies. Libraries are responsible for selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving and disseminating various information sources in book and non-book format and render services in traditional and automated way for the users to be enlighten on the dangers of corruption and need for transparency in all their dealings. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are one of the good example of libraries resources that users find information from on corrupt practices at various levels of government.

Concept of Corruption

Corruption simply means lack of integrity or honesty, the use of a position of trust for dishonest gain. It is the dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. It is the illegitimate use of power to benefit a private interest (Morri, 1991). According to ICPC Act (section 2) Corruption is the abuse and misuse of power or position of trust for personal or group benefit, it is the dishonest and illegal behavior exhibited by people in authority for their personal gain.

Gbenga (2008) assert that corruption is contagious. An analysis of the anti-graft/anti-corruption laws in Nigeria shows that corruption will continue in spite of the laws because the perpetrators do not fear any

consequences. It is now dawning on the Nigeria public that the so-called private enterprise and legislators are free from scrutiny also governors claim to be immune. Corruption is found in the award of contracts, promotion of staff, dispensation of justice, and misuse of public offices, positions, and privilege, embezzlement of public fund, public books, publication, documents, valuable security and accounts. Corruption can be systematic in nature, and affect the whole life of an organization or society. One significant independent factor of corruption in Nigeria is that our leaders lack the kind of philosophical and ideological vision and orientation that is committed to developing a dream society. They have no dreams beyond the satisfaction of selfish desire and primitive accumulation of wealth.

Corruption has different meaning to different people. Broadly speaking, it can be define as the misuse of office for unofficial ends. Corrupt act include but not limited to bribery, extortion, influence padding, nepotism, fraud, use of money to bribe government officials to take some specific actions and embezzlement. Corrupt practices prevalent in the school system of Nigeria are cult activities, sales of handouts the admission and certificate racketeering, academic fraud, examination misconduct, among others.

Corruption in the education sector can also include bribes and illegal fees for admission and examination, academic fraud, the withholding of teachers' salaries, preferential promotion and placement, extortion of money from student and so on. Heinemann (2004) argues that corruption in education includes the abuse of authority for personal and material gains. Corruption in education affects more people than the one other sectors and it affects the development potential of the whole country. It takes various forms, bribes paid by parents to teachers and public officials to get good grades and pass examination, bribes paid by teachers to public officials to get preferred posting and promotion-embezzlement of funds allocated to purchase teaching materials and school building, sexual and other exploitation of students.

The negative influence of corruption on education in Nigeria is obvious. From the primary school level through the tertiary levels corruption is endemic and pervasive. It occurs at any stage and among any group from policy makers at the ministerial level to providers such as contractors to the beneficiaries of education such as students and parents. Corruption impacts negatively on the core values and ethics during the formative years of young people's lives as it undermines the entire generation's core values regarding accountability, personal responsibility and integrity. Corruption is a cankerworm that is in the front burner of all sectors of the country. There is need for collective consciousness to get out of it. This needs a change of attitude and behavior on the part of all.

Concept of Transparency

Uncorrupted politicians and civil society campaigning bodies propose a variety of approaches to the problem of corruption. Institutional reform, powerful legal sanctions, and the creation of regulatory bodies are amongst the types of approach that appear in anti-corruption programmes. Forming an essential part of all of them, is increased transparency. The reason why transparency is so consistently advocated is that it offers both knowledge of how a corruption-free system should operate and what it should offer, and the capacity to find out about the day-to-day operation of governance and the manipulation of it that is practiced by the corrupt. In some ways the faith in transparency is naïve. By itself transparency achieves nothing, or very little. What it offers is a basis for effective action based on knowledge and understanding.

Transparency is a term that is comparatively little used by the information professions themselves and yet it encapsulates a great deal of the rationale behind the provision of good information systems, be they libraries, archives, databases, or reporting and monitoring systems. The term is used in conjunction with a range of related and complementary terms such as scrutiny, accountability, audit, disclosure, and it has considerable elements in common with freedom

of access to information. Statements on transparency frequently start by citing the same Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that can be seen as the basic rationale behind the activities of the information professions. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

This same formulation is vital for a range of human rights NGOs; it underpins the work of investigative journalists and broadcasters; writers and publishers associations justify the work of their members in its light; and it also has implications for the accountants and economic regulators who seek to induce the business world to operate in a climate of financial transparency. What transparency (and Article 19) means in terms of a establishing a polity in which corruption will not thrive tends to take a number of specific forms.

The following will be briefly outlined here as an introduction to some of the main elements of public transparency:

- Open government and public scrutiny;
- Freedom of information laws;
- Protection of public interest disclosure;
- Financial accountability and auditing;
- Investigative journalism;
- Civil sector campaigning.

Open Government

Probably the best starting point is the concept of open government and public scrutiny. It is rooted in an elected legislature, distinct from the executive arm and supported by an independent and impartial judiciary. Parliamentary scrutiny of the executive through the opportunity to question and debate the decisions of ministers in the legislative chamber, and a system of non-partisan specialist review committees are essential. However, open government goes much further than this. In a system of open government the meetings of not merely the legislature, but the committees that work on specific issues

are open to the public. Government financial accounting is full and promptly delivered. Planning documentation, and minutes of decisions are all open to public inspection and consultative forums are called as a matter of course whenever appropriate. A system of ombudsmen permits the citizen to follow up cases of maladministration. The same systems and standards are also applied to the workings of local government, and privatized government agencies. Taken together, these can be seen as aspects of a total national integrity system. (Pope, 2000) Yet open government, as can be seen from this, is much more a culture than it is a system. It calls for politicians and officials who will accept the disciplines that it requires rather than seeking to evade or delay. It also relates very closely to other sources of transparency.

Freedom of Information Laws

Arguably, the cornerstone of open government is freedom of information legislation. In Sweden for example there has been a law in force since 1766 granting free access to all official documentation. These rights go far beyond what is offered by the freedom of information legislation of most other countries. In fact the European Commission not long ago accused Sweden of infringements of Community Law because Commission documents regarded as confidential were released to enquirers under their law. (Campaign, 1996) However, the best-known freedom of information law is probably the US law of 1966 that has been used to expose political scandals, throw light on the administrative process, and also provide corporations with valuable business intelligence held in government files. Freedom of information laws cut against both the secretiveness of those in power and the laxity of record keeping in official bodies.

Protection of Public Interest Disclosure

The courage of individuals who are prepared to reveal information that they may be contracted or otherwise obliged to keep confidential is an indispensable complement to formal structures for freedom of information. These are the so-called whistleblowers.

Financial Accounting and Audit

According to Power (1997) transparent financial reporting is also essential. The whole business structure that depends on limited liability companies exchanges the protection of the personal finances of investors in a company, on the one hand, for full, prompt and accurate public accounting, on the other. This is then subject to audit. The general idea is that the audit process, and related forms of accounting for performance, open up organizations to independent external scrutiny and thereby provide a basis for enhanced control by those parties with the legitimate right to exercise it.

The parties he is referring to include shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers and subcontractors, and the regulatory agencies that act on behalf of the general public. Auditors look in depth at the internal management control systems and their functioning, which reveals much about the overall financial management of the company. The system should be adequate to detect and eliminate employee fraud, but management's control of the systems means that they have the scope to conceal their own practices, at least for a time. A series of recent scandals, of which the name Enron has become emblematic, shows the extent to which this system struggles to deliver. (Johnson, 2004) Nevertheless, audit is the means by which financial dishonesty and mismanagement are eventually made transparent.

Investigative Journalism

A free and independent press is the essential means of bringing to public notice what is revealed by these and other mechanisms. Investigative journalism feeds on what is revealed by open government and laws that facilitate access to information, but ideally it takes matters a step further. (Waisbord, 2001) There is generally an element of detective work when journalists seek to reveal wrongdoing that affects the public interest and methods that in themselves are ethically questionable (deceptive interviewing techniques or the use of concealed recorders and cameras) are often used.

Civil Society Campaigning

The last element we will discuss here is the role of campaigning civil society organizations. In a sobering warning, Johnston (1997) points out that:

Transparent procedures mean little if there is no external monitoring: corrupt states abound in inspectors, commissions of enquiry, and record keeping requirements that create and conceal corruption rather than reveal it, because no one outside the state can demand a meaningful accounting. Without a strong civil society to energize them, even a full set of formally democratic institutions will not produce accountable, responsive government.

The point is well made. All of the elements outlined above are vulnerable and in need of the support that a whole integrity system can offer. The whistleblower, the most vulnerable of all, needs the press to report the wrongdoing that is exposed, civil society organizations to provide shelter, legal advice, moral support and logistical backup, laws that recognize the concept of the public interest, responsive institutions and all the paraphernalia of open government to justify disclosure. International and national NGOs are often the moving force behind changes in the system and instigators or supporters of challenges to corruption of all types in high places or low.

Transparency means operating in ways that the actions performed are not hidden. Transparency is practiced in companies, homes, organization or country on its decision and policies to disclose to its employees and the public. Trapnell (2015) defined transparency as the availability of information, both to the general public and to individual that comprise the government workforce, as well as clarity about government processes, rules, and decisions. The Transparency International (TI) is a non-governmental global Civil Society Organization (CSO) leading the fight against corruption. It was founded in May 1993 through the initiative of Peter Elgen, a former Regional Director for the World Bank. With its international

secretariats in Berlin, Germany, the organization has more than 90 chapters worldwide. It attempts to give every year, critical indicators of corruption on a global and national scene. This is achieved through a set of three summaries of information derived from a questionnaire-based survey.

Types of Corruption in Nigeria

According to Oyinola, 2011 corruption is perpetrated in various forms and manners in Nigeria which include:

Public Sector Corruption: The misuse of public funds or misappropriation of public resources into private pockets includes corruption of the political process and of government agencies such as the police as well as corruption in processes of allocating public funds for contracts, grant and hiring.

Political Corruption: This involves the abuse of public office or resources by elected government officials for personal gain through extortion, soliciting or offering bribes.

Police Corruption: It is specifically police misconduct designed to obtain financial benefits, other personal gain, and/ or career advancement for a police officer or officer in exchange for not pursuing, or selectively pursuing, an investigation or arrest. One common form of police corruption is soliciting and or accepting bribes in exchange for not reporting organized drug or prostitution rings or other illegal activities.

Economic Corruption: This includes fake drugs manufacturing and distribution, adulteration of drugs piracy etc.

Judicial Corruption: This corruption is related to misconduct of judges, through receiving or giving bribes, improper sentencing of criminals, bias in the hearing and judgment of argument and other such misconduct.

Corruption in Educational System: Corruption in admission, result, projects, dissertation thesis, in universities is traditionally considered as one of the most corrupt areas of the education sector. The general public is well aware of the high level corruption in Colleges and Universities.

Reasons for Corrupt Practices in Nigeria

Corruption can be spotted in every sphere of the nation in family, politics, educational sector, organization and among friends (Ojomu 2006). Causes of corruption among others are:

- I. Greed.
- II. Poor youth empowerment and,
- III. Unemployment.

Greed

Greed has cause a lot of crises in the world, including Nigeria. It is because of greed that political leaders embezzle funds they are supposed to use for national development for their own selfish need. (Uzochukwu 2013). Some Nigerians, who are mainly youths, have been scanning their fellow citizens using illegal means. Some host websites online and claim to be giving jobs to job seekers and scam any who fall prey to their tricks.

Poor Youth Empowerment

Poor moral Youth empowerment is a contributor to corruption. Internet fraud, sexual harassment by male or female CEOs, and other bad acts are one form of corruption or the other because of our poor understanding of youth empowerment. Politicians at some levels believe that Okada or pepe grounder is the best impact for youth empowerment. When parents and government empower youth both financially, morally and show them the art of good governance and transparency. The level of corruption among them will diminish (Uzochukwu 2013)

Unemployment

One of the major challenges in Nigeria is unemployment which has broken the hearts of many citizens. People are pushed in to corrupt practices because of high unemployment. An unemployed citizen can indulge in corruption to make money and live better. Everybody in the society is lamenting on the negative impact of unemployment in the land, except this few that are direct beneficiary of these endemic disease called corruption. The rate of suicide is on the high side in the country today, while many had attempted to personally take their lives because of the leadership in the land. Uzochukwu (2013) observed that some preferred death than to continue suffering under the torment of unemployment in the country. Words cannot explain the level of suffering the citizens of the country are facing as a result of this menace.

Dori (2006) also gave his assertion on the various reasons for corrupt practices in Nigeria. On his part, he lamented that corruption has been so pervasive in Nigeria to the extent that one could not open a daily newspaper without reading about corruption. This clearly shows that there is no regime that is absolutely free from corruption right from independence to date. From the accounts of various regimes in Nigeria, one could see that a lot of money had been lost to corruption. This is the money that ought to have been used to put smiles on the faces of the ordinary men in the street especially in this era of economics recession. However, according to Dori (2006), there are three major factors responsible for corruption and these are; political, economic and socio-cultural factors.

Political Factor

According to Dori (2016), corruption in Nigeria is symptomatic of the crisis of governance; misgoverned by unpatriotic, parasitic, bad, unnationalistic, greedy and selfish leaders. To him, corruption arises when public officials have a wide authority with little or no transparency and accountability respond to informal rather than formal forms of regulations. Others include concentration of too

power in the executive arm of government, restricted access to information, weak systems of oversight and enforcement, excess spending on struggle for power, belief in power as the only source of wealth and belief in political offices as the only source of compensation. However, the institutions established to enforce sanctions on corrupt officials are too weak to carry out this function. These institutions are highly politicized that the lukewarm attitude of those who are supposed to enforce the laws of the land – judges, courts, and police officers could easily lead people to engage in corrupt practices because they believed that they would go unpunished.

Economic Factor

Economic crisis and instability have contributed generally to high rate of corruption in Nigeria. Corruption in Nigeria occurs as a result of unequal distribution of populace. However, there is perpetuation and increasing wide gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria. The rich are able to afford and live in a good life, education, health, shelter, food, income, employment and standard of living for themselves and their families while the poor are virtually left with nothing other than vicious circle of poverty, poor income, deteriorated life, unemployment, diseases, illiteracy, destitution, begging, humiliation and helplessness from generation to generation. However, the first class people, elites, ruling class and technocrats are able to acquire good life not only by hard work but because they were opportune to be in position of authority and looted public funds. Therefore, economically, greater inequality in the distribution and sharing of wealth and resources play vital role in increasing the rate of corruption in Nigeria.

Socio-Cultural Factor

The breakdown of socio-cultural norms, values and values system and social control has greatly contributed to high rate and persistence of corrupt practices in Nigeria. Merton (1968) quoted in Dori (2016) was able to establish the relationship between culture and level of corruption. He further asserted that corruption motivated behavior

responding to social pressure has the ability to violate the norms so as to meet the set goals and objectives of a social family and social orientation. It has also been argued that culture (norms, values, beliefs, attitude and folktales) influence the existence and perpetration of certain corrupt practices. Most of the cultural values, norms and beliefs prohibited theft, stealing, looting, distrust and abuse of authority. Most of the traditional Nigerian communities regarded them as abomination which usually lead to punishment like rejection, capital punishment, fine or execution. But unfortunately our traditional rulers, religious leaders, families and communities have institutionalized corruption by receiving gift from corrupt leaders, sharing the looted or stolen money or wealth and even praying God's protection for the corrupt leaders to escape judgment.

Countries with Low Tolerance for Corruption

The World Economic for Global competitiveness Report 2015-2016 highlights corruption as a significant factor in preventing business activity in emerging and developing economies. Tackling corruption is central to breaking this cycle of poverty and inequality. This is why countries that have focused on dealing with the challenges of inequality in the last few decades have made monumental progress. It has been documented that in recent memory, a combination of pressure from below and enlightened leadership from above has produced some remarkable exercise in redistribution. In several Eastern Asia countries, for example, elites have embraced the long-term case for equality, to prevent social division and to stoke a thriving economy. Taiwan and Viet Nam have combined astonishing growth with high level of equity. Indonesia and Malaysia have managed to reduce inequality over an extended period through government-led redistribution and generation of employment.

In Brazil under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Lula da Silva, popular movements have carried business elites along it redistributing wealth and opportunity in a hitherto appallingly unequal society. In the past decade, Brazil have managed to lower its

world inequality ranking from second to tenth by a mixture of good economic management and redistributing income to poor people through various government schemes such as the Bolsa Familia (family stipend), which pays poor families a monthly stipend if they ensure that their children attend school and are vaccinated. Lula's first term saw the poorest 10 percent of the population increase their income by 7 percent a year, while the incomes of the richest 10 percent were stagnated. As a result, some five million Brazilians were lifted out of poverty, and inequality fell to its lowest level in 30 years.

Transparency and Libraries in Nigeria.

Transparency means operating in a way that the actions performed are not hidden. Transparency is practiced in companies, homes, organizations and countries. It is guided to an organization or country on its decision and policies to disclose to its employees and the public. Traphel (2015) defined transparency as the availability of information both to the general public and to individuals that comprise the government workforce, as well as clarity about the government processes, rules and decision. The Transparency International (TI) is a non-governmental global Civil Society Organization (CSO) leading the fight against corruption.

There are a number of indications that the use of libraries can promote transparency and battle corruption. Bhatnagar (2003) stated the following as ways libraries can promote transparency:

- Providing information on government rules and citizens' rights
- Providing information about government decision and actions
- Disseminating information on government performance
- Identifying elected officials and civil servant under investigation for corruption and fraudulent activities through preserved print and non-print information sources in libraries.
- Disclosing of assets and investment of elected officials and civil servant by making information resources carrying such detail accessible to library users.

Transparency has considerable elements in common with freedom of access to information which is using the right to information as an anti-corruption tool. International Federation of Library Association and Institution (IFLA Manifesto on Transparency from Corruption (2008) states that transparency is the basis of good governance and the first step in fighting corruption. It provides a universal rationale for the provision of good records managements systems, transparency is enclosed around the rationale behind the provision of good information systems, by libraries. The availability of the most accurate and unbiased educational, scientific, technical and socially relevant information to each and every one is the very essence libraries should stand for as transparency institution.

Libraries as Tool for Curbing Corruption in Nigeria

One of the traditional functions of the library is the provision of access to print electronic resources. In fact libraries acknowledge the users' rights to information, although this makes, the library already contributing to a kind of transparency is not the reason for providing libraries. Transparency has considered elements in common with freedom of information Act and this is so because the act is expected to promote transparency and accountability. Freedom of information Act (FOIA) makes provision for the ability of citizens of a country to have free access to information enabled by legislation. Nigeria's freedom of Information Act was signed into law by President Good luck Jonathan on the 28th of May, 2011. This took 17 years from the origin of its first draft in 1994 to become law. The basic philosophy of the act is that public offices are custodians of a public trust on behalf of a population who have the right to know what they do. Libraries in Nigeria can contribute to the democracy process by offering citizens the means to expand their political knowledge beyond daily media. However, it is with this democratic function that libraries' transparency function can be identified although it is seldom exploded in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, corruption is spreading like epidemics in our society. All hands must be in desk in order to curb corruption by accessing our libraries stocked with various information sources on the activities of the government officials at all levels. When people are better informed through library resources it will in turn promote transparency and integrity to the society at large. Libraries are not tools for curbing corruption in place of anti-corruption laws and enforcement agencies, but they serve as instrument to enhanced society's ability to fight corruption

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