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Strengthening the Confidence of Citizens in the Effectiveness, Validity and Integrity of Public Administration through Enhanced, Targeted Efforts to Use Good Governance to Prevent, Expose and Deal with Corruption   (Sub-theme (4))

Introduction

Public administration is increasingly concerned with placing the citizen at the centre of policymakers' considerations, not just as target, but also as an agent. The aim is to develop policies and design services that respond to the citizens' needs and are relevant to their circumstances. Fundamental to such concern is the recognition that the citizens have both rights and duties, and that governance should provide opportunities for citizens to participate actively in shaping their world (Holmes, 2011).

Critical to this relationship is the level of confidence of citizens in the efficiency, effectiveness and integrity of public administration. Citizen confidence provides the "opportunity and license" for the continued existence of governance and development. This confidence is however found to be undermined by corrupt practices perpetrated by the public, private or other institutions in the country. Lack of trust compromises the willingness of citizens and businesses to respond to public policies and contribute to sustainable progress in the society. Corruption, can be a major hindrance for development and economic growth, and weakens the trust of the citizen in government. It also hinders the efficiency and accountability of the public and even private institutions (Pring, 2015).

Necessity for Robust Anticorruption Agenda

Incidentally, in Africa, majority of Africans perceive corruption to be on the rise and think that government and public administration are failing in its efforts to fight corruption. Many citizens also feel disempowered as regards their role in taking action against corruption. It is however generally contended that addressing corruption is indeed possible (Pring, 2015).

In most cases, corruption is tolerated because that's how things have always been done. The vice is deeply rooted in most societies around the world and has become a serious barrier to effective resource mobilization and allocation as it diverts and at worst drains resources away from activities that are vital for sustainable development. For these reasons, fighting corruption has become a recognized feature in governance and is increasingly prioritized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda. The role of the citizen in the effort to prevent, expose and deal with corruption has therefore become critical in nation building.

The history of anti-corruption activity is replete with evidence that there are no individual or specific solutions but a diversity of measures. There are no quick fixes. It is a long, hard learning process. I thus submit the following suggestions on how to prevent, expose and deal with corruption. This in turn will cultivate citizens' confidence in the public administration's capacity to address corruption.

Regulatory Framework and Law Enforcement

Regulation and accompanying law enforcement is an important response to the phenomenon of corruption. Laws proscribing bribery and misconduct in public office have existed in many countries. Current range of specific types of corrupt behaviors commonly regulated, include those required by the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) to be criminalized. They include; bribery, embezzlement, influence peddling, abuse of office, illicit enrichment, and money laundering. The challenge in implementing the laws and regulations however lies in their enforcement. The use and enforcement of appropriate laws such as prosecution, imposing strict penalties on individuals engaging in corrupt practices and recovering of wealth obtained through corruption could make it expensive for one to engage in corruption.

Ensuring Accountability by Public Administrators

A sustainable way to develop the culture of accountability is by setting up smart goals for public servants through the performance management process. Coming up with objectives that meet the required performance standards will enforce public servants, their supervisors and other stakeholders such as citizens to be able to measure productivity and capability.

According to Cassese and Savino (2007) it is necessary to redefine the relationships between politics and administration by triggering "agencification". It is conceived that the processes that lead to administrations enjoying a certain degree of autonomy from the government and its policy-making power, tend to weaken the agency relationship between politics and administration.

Setting Up Public Anticorruption Institutions

Corruption is more prevalent when the institutions of governance and public administration are weak or ineffective. Most corruption occurs at the boundaries of public sector organizations where a government official interacts with the private actors such as in public procurement. Recognizing the high risk of corruption in the procurement processes and putting in place the necessary control measures do not only provide an appropriate reference point to what is right but also serves as a starting in seeking to achieve a paradigm shift in how corruption is viewed.

Some countries have already established dedicated anticorruption agencies. Cases in point include Kenya's, Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission, the Mauritian Independent Commission against Corruption and Ghana's, Economic and Organized Crime Office. The argument for the setting up of these special agencies is that they can mainstream and institutionalize corruption prevention without being enamored with other areas of criminality.

The key concern here is to ensure that such anti-corruption agencies have the right composure and capacity to function effectively.

Developing Human Resources Capacity to Prevent Corruption

Institutional responses to corruption often focus on an individual or group of public official. Corruption investigations seek to find culprits, lay blame and punish. The assumption for such situation might be that, sufficient penalty will deter others from doing the same. But because corruption is complex, simple and narrow method of deterrence may not always work unless it is worked out as part of a larger strategy.

Many of the corruption risk factors that originate with individuals can be addressed to some extent by using the relevant human resources policy and practice. Developing human resource policies and codes of conduct that promote honesty and ethical behaviour is appropriate for fostering values that reject corruption. Such policies and practices also assist in developing the capacity of public servants to prevent and or desist from corruption.

Engaging Citizens to Prevent Corruption

Citizens engagement with government could be effected in multiple ways and at various levels, from informal local and community settings, through incorporated entities, NGOs and peak bodies, to such key institutions as legislatures, the courts and the public service (Holmes, 2011). These ways may include consulting or lobbying, monitoring and scrutinizing, being in commercial relationships such as for the procurement of goods and services by government, or by reporting corruption.

Each of these types of interaction between citizens and government makes different demands on public administration. All these have the potential to be an opportunity for either corruption or corruption prevention. Langseth (2001) argues that for the purposes of preventing corruption, satisfactory interactions between citizens and government can encourage social trust, an understanding of public sector values, compliance with anti-corruption regulation and reporting of suspected corrupt conduct.

In a study on corruption in Tanzania, Asiko (2015) found that citizens offer many explanations for why people may not report corruption incidents to the authorities. The three frequently mentioned reasons are; fear of the consequences, ignorance of how to report, and the perception that nothing will be done about the report. The sentiment that nothing will be done can be traced to the perceived ineffectiveness of the government in punishing those involved in corruption, especially when they are key public personalities or even politicians.

Developing capacity in citizen engagement through civil society groups

Civil society is an increasingly important agent for promoting features of good governance such as transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness, and accountability. Among other measures, civil society could provide public access to information, encourage citizens to report on offences and protect the freedom to seek, receive and publish information concerning corruption. In addition, it is necessary to protect whistle-blowers, witnesses and

anticorruption fighters and crusaders. Further, it is important to institute lifestyle audits with a view to controlling and barring corrupt officials and businesses.

Civil society can further promote good governance by policy analysis and advocacy; monitoring the performance of state departments and closely observing the action and behaviour of public officials. They can also help build social capital and enable citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic practices as well as mobilize particular constituencies, such as the vulnerable and marginalized, to participate fully in politics and public affairs. This will go a long way in stopping the current sanitization of corrupt activities, individuals and organisations in the society.

Legislation Regarding Free Access to Information

Open access to information provides a basis for government accountability and raises barriers against capricious, self-serving intervention. Therefore, it is necessary for governments to formulate freedom of information legislation to ensure citizens have access to information about official business and on corruption and similar ills affecting the society. According to Lumumba (2011), without accurate and detailed information, it is difficult to assess public sector performance and use of public resources.

Conclusion

Corruption remains a threat to sustainable development and inclusive growth. It is thus imperative to adopt strategies to address it. In order to prevent, expose and deal with corruption, there is need to strengthen the role of citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) so as to become proper watch dogs. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2008) there is an urgent need to strengthen and sustain institutional capacities of government agencies, and the oversight of the public sector by responsible citizens and civil society groups.

Corporate governance needs to be strengthened through rules, guidelines, laws, institutions, appropriate organizational structures, well designed and functioning accountability systems, transparency in public governance, application of information and communication technology, capable leadership at all levels and in all sectors.

Yet, there is need to pay attention to the development of capacities for competence in the public service. Capable and adequately remunerated public servants are expected to, among other things; refrain from the behavior that would jeopardize their career progression.

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