

# Enhancing Public Accountability and Performance in Nigeria:

## Periscoping the Impediments and Exploring Imperative Measures

*Research Article*

ADEJUWON DAVID K.

### Abstract

Over the past decades, accountability and performance have been central in public sector management. Accountability is important for effective performance in the public sector because both elected and non-elected officials need to show the public that they are performing their responsibilities in the best possible way and using the resources provided them effectively and efficiently. This article examines the impediments to public accountability and performance in Nigeria, and recommends remedial actions for effective public accountability and performance in Nigerian public sector management. The article adopts qualitative method in gathering data from various sources. It traced the absence of accountability in public sector management in Nigeria to the incursion of the military into the Nigerian public

administration. It shows with relevant examples how the culture of non-accountability and poor performance has eaten deep into the fabric of the society. It therefore proposes some measures to address the malaise of public accountability and performance in Nigeria. The article contends that unless good governance is in place with public accountability carefully observed, effective public sector performance cannot be realized.

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**Keywords:** Public Service Delivery, Public Accountability, New Public Management, Performance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Transparency, Corruption, White-collar Crime.

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## Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed intensified debate about the role, scope and performance of the institutions and organizations within the public sector (Hookana, 2011:25). Efficiency and effectiveness became the central terms used in assessing and measuring the performance of organizations (Mouzas, 2006:1128). As a result, there have been increasing calls for the public sectors in developing nations including Nigeria to provide quality public services that meet the needs of its citizens, be more accountable for its decisions and actions and to manage resources more prudently. Thus, accountability and performance of public officials and institutions are the central concerns of modern governance.

In Nigeria, the state of public accountability from independence till date is highly disheartening. In fact, it is a form of rhetoric. The more emphasis is placed on it, the more worrisome it becomes (Thovoethin, 2003:45). The Nigerian post-independence socio-political and economic experiences aptly provide more than sufficient materials to prove this fact as public accountability, based on performance-responsibility evaluation, has been very weak since the first republic in 1966. The level of accountability among public officials in the management of public affairs in Nigeria has consistently declined especially under the present democratic dispensation. The continued deterioration of the level of accountability among public officials in the country shows that the adoption of multipartysm has not contributed to good governance. Given these facts, it is in order to raise the following pertinent questions:

- What have been the major causes of the lack of/or poor accountability among public official in Nigeria?
- Has the performance of public sector organizations been improved in terms of service delivery?
- Why have the existing instruments and watchdog institutions for regulating and monitoring ethical standards of public officials failed to ensure accountability?
- What strategies need to be adopted in order to enhance accountability and performance among public officials?

These are the most important questions that this article set out to answer.

## Methodology

The article adopts a qualitative research design to gain insight into the nature and character of Nigerian public service. It uses descriptive analysis and observation methods to critically examine public accountability and performance in Nigeria. This article, which is theoretical in nature, basically draws its arguments from secondary data including existing legal frameworks and other related policies, textbooks, journals articles and other publications. However statistical data were also used where appropriate as empirical evidence. To improve on the reliability and validity of the study, multiple secondary sources were used to minimize the risk of error.

## Conceptual Analysis

In this section, attempts were made to define and explain the major concepts in the article. The necessity of the exercise is to give explanatory power to some important concepts in the article. This is the intent of Babbie (1995) methodological research diction that "we specify why we use particularly terms for the purpose of facilitating their contextual operationalization and comprehension."

**Public Accountability:** Public accountability means that government and its employees are accountable and their activities are open to the public. In essence, records of government activities should be open to the people unless it involves security of the country (Bovens, 2007:453). From this definition of public accountability, it is clear that the public entities that utilize public resources have an obligation to account for the way these resources are allocated, used and the results these spending have achieved. In other words, the main objectives of all public accountability initiatives are to ensure that public money is spent most economically and efficiently; that there is minimum of wastage or theft and that public actually benefit from public finance.

Public accountability rests both on giving an account and on being held to account. Therefore, a public officer may not only be required to present his 'doctored' account but may face the challenges of a certain compelling expectable stewardship from the authorities whose office he manages, or enjoys. Public accountability, offers figure of trustworthy, dutifulness, justice, clarity, attempt for improving and ethical qualification of public officials. Public accountability ensures that the society gets value for its money and that public resources are not diverted to private use (Ejere, 2012:19). Public office

being a sacred trust, those in whose hands public resources are placed as trustees, have a sacred duty to not only account for them, but also to ensure their prudent management and efficient utilization.

**Performance:** Performance became one of the buzz words in the world of public management and public sector reform in the 1990s. What is meant by performance is hotly contested in the literatures. In the view of Mulgan (2013:10), performance refers to the implementation of given policies and the extent to which government agencies succeed in achieving the objectives set for them. Generally, performance is defined as “the achievements of public programmes and organizations in terms of the outputs and outcomes that they produce” (O’Toole Jr. & Meier, 2011:79). It means whether resources have been used in the intended way in order to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness (Brewer & Selden, 2000:693; Halachmi, 2002:371). Indeed, in the current public management discourse, the term ‘performance’ is most commonly associated with questions of the efficient and effective administration of government policies.

### **New Public Management as a Framework for Improving Efficiency and Effectiveness in Public Sector Performance**

The arrival of New Public Management (NPM) over the last thirty years (30) represents one of the most significant events for the study and practice of public administration. NPM is a vision, an ideology or a bundle of particular management approaches and techniques. In the 1980s, the drivers of change, particularly financial pressures, pushed most Western countries towards a focus on making the public sector more competitive and public administrators more responsive to citizens by offering value for money, flexibility of choice and transparency (Kalimullah, Alam, and Nour, 2012:6). As a result, New Public Management became the most dominant paradigm in the discipline of public administration (Arora, 2003:9). It conjures up an image enmeshed with a minimal government, de-bureaucratization, decentralization, market orientation of public service, contracting out, privatization, performance management, *etc.*

Following the changed role of the state and growing demands for good governance globally, the New Public Management paradigm emerged to implant a new approach into traditional public administration. It was geared toward enhancing efficiency,

productivity, improved service delivery and accountability, and emphasizes a result-orientation as opposed to the process-orientation of traditional public administration. It calls for a reduction in the exclusive reliance on public bureaucracy for service delivery and advocates instead the increased use of the private sector organizations as alternative mechanisms of service delivery (Dzimhiri, 2008:46; Hughes, 2003:79).

As a new paradigm of public administration, New Public Management points to the failures and inadequacies of public sector performance over time and the problems lying squarely in the nature and processes of public sector activity and traditional public administration (Kalimullah, *et al*, 2011:1). The central 'doctrines' of the New Public Management, their meaning and rationale are set out in the table below.

**TABLE 1: Central Doctrine of New Public Management**

Doctrine	Meaning	Justification
Hands-on professional management of public organisation.	Visible managers at the top of the organisation, free to manage by use of discretionary power.	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility, not diffusion of power.
Explicit standards and measures of performance.	Goals and targets defined and measurable as indicators of success.	Accountability means clearly stated aims; efficiency requires a 'hard look' at objectives.
Greater emphasis on output controls.	Resource allocation and rewards are linked to performance.	Need to stress results rather than procedures.
Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector.	Disaggregate public sector into corporatized units of activity, organized by products, with devolved budgets. Units dealing at arm's length with each other.	Make units manageable; split provision and production, use contracts or franchises inside as well as outside the public sector.
Shift to greater competition in the public sector.	Move to term contracts and public tendering procedures; introduction of market disciplines in public sector.	Rivalry via competition as the key to lower costs and better standards.
Stress on private-sector styles of management practice.	Move away from traditional public service ethic to more flexible pay, hiring, rules, etc.	Need to apply 'proven' private sector management tools in the public sector.

Stress on greater discipline and economy in public sector resource use.	Cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, limiting compliance costs to business.	Need to check resource demands of the public sector, and do more with less.
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**Source:** Hood, 1996:271

The serious criticism of the new public management is that it is against the precepts of democracy. It is argued by some that NPM may reduce political accountability; if the manager is to be more accountable, then the politician is axiomatically to be less accountable and public accountability may be reduced through contracting or other ways in which a function is delivered by the private sector so there is no longer government involvement. Furthermore, there would be no reason that programmes aimed at being more equitable would not be able to be managed by the NPM principles (Kalimullah, Alam, and Nour, 2012:17). Despite criticisms, changes of government, misgivings from parts of the public, the model of public management has become established and useful paradigm in enhancing public accountability and improve public sector performance.

### **The Nexus of Public Accountability and Performance in Public Service Delivery**

Accountability plays a key role in improving performance at institutions, organizations, and individual level. For some scholars, accountability and performance improvement are instrumental to each other, which means one variable can enhance the other (Dubnick, 2005:390). Another strongly held position is that there are the tensions between accountability and performance due to incompatibility with each other (Halachmi, 2002:370). The tensions between the requirements of accountability and those of effective administrative action have been described as one of the classic dilemmas of public administration (Bovens, 2007:470). Some believe that through greater accountability we will enhance the government's performance (Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011:8). In other words, accountable workers are expected to yield better productivity. Regarding the effect of accountability on performance, there has been little significant

contestation and debate concerning this relationship because it is rarely challenged (Dubnick, 2005:379; Halachmi, 2002:372; Behn, 2001:78).

Accountability and performance have been central in public management (Behn, 2001:89). The effort to enhance both values and mechanisms of public organizations supports the rationale that the essence of public administration is 'making government work.' Some use the terms "accountability" and "performance" interchangeably. It is true that both terms blur into each other. Public accountability is increasingly becoming one of the main determinants of effective governmental performance. It results into improving practices of good governance, management of public finances, and service delivery (Schillemans, 2008:16). Allen and Tommansi (2006:22) also agreed that improving public accountability would enable governments to achieve optimal performance and improve delivery of quality services to its citizens.

Accountability is important for effective performance in the public sector because both elected and non-elected officials need to show the public that they are performing their responsibilities in the best possible way and using the resources provided them effectively and efficiently. In the public sector, accountability means that all government officials must answer to the citizens and justify the source and utilization of public resources in their disposal. It is imperative that citizens have access to information either facts or figures that allow them to make decisions, thereby encouraging citizen participation in government. Democracy makes it permissible for citizens to hold government officials accountable and also to monitor and control government conduct, which prevents the development of concentration of power within a particular office. It encourages the learning capacity and effectiveness of public administrators (Olu-Adeyemi and Obamuyi, 2010:125). This shows that accountability is one of the fundamental prerequisites for preventing the abuse of power and for ensuring that power is directed towards the achievement of efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency.

When we posit or assume a relationship between accountability and performance, we are in essence linking account-giving behaviour with some form of intentional behaviour. Getting an analytic handle on performance requires that we make some sense out of the many ways performance is referred to in that literature while our factoring in the generic parameter of intended behaviour. We can accomplish this by relying on two aspects of performance stressed in much of the literature: the quality of the actions being performed, and the quality of what has been achieved as a result of those actions. It has

been seen in this section that accountability and performance are intertwined and interwoven to the achievement of effective service delivery in the public sector.

### **Public Accountability and Performance in the Public Service: The Nigerian Experience**

To understand the need for accountability in the public sector, it is important to analyze the Nigerian structure of governance by discussing the nature of the economy of the country. Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of oil and gas in the world, but the average Nigerian on the street is poor and there is poor infrastructure like power supply, roads, hospitals, etc (Onuorah and Appah, 2012:13). This point to the fact that there is absence of proper accountability and this has drastically affected the performance in service delivery in the public sector in Nigeria. Lack of accountability manifests itself in a number of ways, for example, uncompleted projects. Nigerian physical environment is dotted with abandoned projects; some are as old as the first republic and non-functioning industrial establishments. This explains why Nigeria being the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest world producer of oil and having four lame-duck refineries, cannot meet domestic demands for petroleum products. The steel sector has also suffered severe knocks from political recklessness. A country with two major iron and steel industries and four (4) inland rolling mills cannot produce ten percent (10%) of domestic iron needs. Nigeria has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest bitumen deposits in the world; yet up till today, exploitation has not commenced. Nigeria instead spends billions of dollars to import bitumen annually (Osakwe, 2011:3), and this has been reflecting in the level of public sector accountability in the country.

Almost fifty-four (54) years of independence, Nigerian public service ought to have come of age where accountability should be institutionalized in the polity. Unfortunately, accountability in the public service is still a mirage. In spite of the gloomy picture, there is still a ray of hope if the citizenry would have the moral courage to fight this political monster that seems to have held Nigerians hostage for over five decades. As a result, the public sector is not accountable to the people, it seems like there is a divide between what actually goes on in government and what is being reported to the citizens. There is no accountable and transparent system where the public is allowed to



participate in policy formation and have a say in how these policies should be implemented. Nigeria has a large amount of natural resources but lacks proper accountability measures (Okekeocha, 2013:19).

Nigerian governments have attempted improving performance of their public service through reforms. All ended up failing to meet the desired results due to lack of effective accountability to curtail the excesses of public office holders. Many studies were, and are still being done on attempts at reforming the public service and making it performance oriented in Nigeria. One of these notable studies is the Udoji commission (1972). The Nigerian Udoji review commission report (1972) proposed the introduction of a "unified" grading and salary system, the abolition of Permanent Secretaries and their replacement with Directors-General / General Managers, programme and performance budgeting, management by objectives, organisation development, planned and preventive management, and so forth. Nothing of significance was practically done to implement the recommendations of the commission (Musingafi, Dumbu, and Chadamoyo, 2013:24).

### **Impediments to Public Accountability and Performance in Nigeria**

There are serious public accountability issues in Nigeria. The Nigerian public sector is experiencing inefficiencies in performing its roles for a number of reasons. Firstly, the administrative measures which would have been effective for enhancing public accountability are instead ridden with corrupt practices which prevent exposure of misconducts and bringing culprits to account (Ijeoma, 2013:283). Post independent Nigeria has been grappling with the problem of unaccountable and non-transparent leadership as a result of corruption.

The incursion of the military into Nigerian public administration causes lack of accountability in governance. The military took over the control of government in 1966 citing the corruption of public officials as the main reason, yet the political system became worse afterwards. Each military regime proved to be more corrupt than the previous ones thus leading to the proliferation of corruption. Each military government was known for its abuse of power, lack of transparency and accountability. Since the governments were being controlled by the military, there was no system of checks and balances. This system as noted by Owolabi (2007:3) created a culture of corruption in government where public officials did not need to be accountable for their actions and the citizens could not demand accountability.

The absence of accountability culture and strong government agencies to enforce laws and rules has significant influence on public sector performance (Omotoye, 2011:17). This creates an opportunity for public officials to embezzle funds without fear of repercussion or punishment. Nigeria is degenerating into a society without a discernible legalistic framework for law enforcement agencies or judicial system. In Nigeria, anyone that is favoured in political patronage can basically get away with most crimes, and some of these crimes involve money laundering, uncontrollable theft of government money and other illegal crimes. For instance, the Nigerian Police Force was ranked the nation's most corrupt public institution. In 2006, the Inspector General of the Police was convicted on eight charges of theft involving more than \$100 million of public money while in office. When he was convicted, he spent only six months in prison (Okekeocha, 2013:62; Omotoye, 2011:15). This example creates a lack of public trust in the government and its enforcement agencies. When the people set up to persecute criminals are criminals themselves, could there be any possible hope for the country?

In Nigeria, the civil service employees view public service as an opportunity for self enrichment; hence incompetence and inefficiency among the public servants have been given as one of the causes of corruption. Pervasive and chronic poverty, extremely high levels of material deprivation; severe deprivation and severe inequalities in the distribution of resources have been advanced as major determinants of corruption in Nigeria (Osoba, 2000:473; Arowolo, 2004:64). There seems to be inefficiency in public spending in Nigeria either in the form of misallocation, mismanagement, or embezzlement. From year to year, trillions of Naira are budgeted for expenditures by Nigerian governments. In the face of these huge budgets and expenditures, there are still problems of unemployment, infrastructural decay, collapse of social infrastructure and poor services delivery by sectors/institutions like education and health, among others. The result of this is low output of the economy and poor quality service delivery (Ademu, 2012:150). It shows therefore that corruption is the major bane of public accountability and performance in Nigeria. Although corruption is an issue under impediments to public accountability and performance, it deserves a separate treatment in the case of Nigeria. As a result of this, the next section of the article dealt with corruption in Nigeria and its effect on public accountability and performance.

### **White Collar Crime: The Bane of Public Accountability and Effective Performance in Nigeria**

White collar crime is becoming endemic in developing economies. This mode of financial crime is so rampant and topical in Nigeria that there is no gain saying the fact that it is one of the significant factors moving the country towards becoming a failed state (Nentiaba, 2012:48). White collar crime is a crime committed by a person of high-respectability and social status in the course of his occupation. White-collar criminals therefore are usually those who take advantage of their positions to illegally accumulate financial gain for themselves and at the detriment of the larger society. This article therefore adopts the term, "white collar crime" to refer to the nature and magnitude of corruption in Nigeria due to the level of the people that indulge in this act. A recurring decimal in the exposition of poor service delivery is lack of accountability in governance and poor performance of public sector organization is the recognition of corruption as the most imposing albatross. Almost all facets of the Nigerian economy are haunted by the spectre of corruption. Corruption is the single most potent impediment to accountability in governance (Agaptus, 2011:2).

Since independence, Nigeria has earned a reputation for corruption on a grand scale. As stated earlier, one of the reasons advanced for the military coups in January 1996 was alleged corruption by the elected civilian leaders. Allegation of corruption also featured in virtually all the other military coups. The wide spread corruption under the military rule and deteriorating economy have raised a number of concerns. In spite of the promise by the coupists to eradicate corruption, most of them became more corrupt than those they replaced. In fact, it is alleged that the regimes of General Babaginda and General Abacha escalated corruption to an astounding level. The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida is seen as the body that legalized corruption in Nigeria, because terms such as settlement and embezzlement became the order of the day (Oyediran and Nwosu, 2005:81). On his assumption of office, he did not only rubbish the anti-corruption crusade started by Murtala Muhammed and intensified by Muhammadu Buhari's administration, but also reinstated the dismissed military governors to their ranks and returned all the property earlier confiscated from them. Babangida administration did not show any commitment to the anti-corruption drive of its predecessor; rather the administration launched the Nigerian society to eight years of

kleptocratic rule characterized by corrupt practices of different shades. Some of Babangida corrupt practices include:

- Misappropriation of \$2 billion Gulf war windfall in 1991
- 30% of oil revenue diverted to frivolous uses throughout the time.
- Huge extra-budgetary spending: 1989 = = N=15.3b, 1990= N23.4b, 1991= N35b, 1992=N44.2b, 1993 (by August) = N59billion.
- \$200 million siphoned from the Aluminium Smelter project.
- =N= 400million wasted on Better life project
- Colossal Corruption at the NNPC, *e.g.* \$101 million for the purchase of strategic Storage facilitation (Lawal and Ariyo, 2006:646).

Although the Abacha regime claimed to have instituted machinery for prudence in governance, particularly with the setting up of the Petroleum Special Tax Fund (PTF) headed by Rtd. General Muhammadu Buhari which had recorded some successes in the area of infrastructure development, the regime was not immune from the syndrome of corruption. Abacha's administration was notorious for tampering with and looting the public treasury. He and members of his family became some of the richest people in the world. He served himself and allowed his lieutenants to serve themselves as well. The death of General Abacha in 1998, revealed how deep the man and his associates have gone into the ocean of corrupt activities. The Abacha's loot became top on the list of grand corruption in the history of Nigeria. After his death, Chief Anthony Emeka Ani, his finance Minister refunded the sum of \$45 million allegedly given to him by his master. Under the Abacha administration several public utilities collapsed. The four refineries stopped production of petroleum products, thereby creating a severe domestic shortage which led to Nigerian importing fuel on a massive scale (Ali, 2013:5). Although it was glaring that Abacha's regime was corrupt, the extent of it became manifest only after Abacha's demise.

**TABLE 2: Abacha's Loot from the Nigerian Economy**

Break Down	Amount	The Bank
February 6, 1995	\$4 million & £2 million	Australia, New Zealand, London Branch Banking group
February 17, 1995	\$4 million & £2million	ANZ, Frankfurt
February 27, 1995	\$4 million & £2million	ANZ, Frankfurt
July 8, 1995	\$5 million & £2million plus £2m in travelers cheques	Bank in Liechtenstein AG, Vaduz.
July 8, 1995	\$5 million & £2million	Bank Len, Zurich
December 29, 1995	\$5 million	Bankers Trust Company, London
March 28, 1996	\$5 million & £3million requested by Abacha CBN ran out of foreign currency	Bankers Trust Company, Frankfurt Banque Baring Brother, Geneva
May 29, 1996	\$5 million & £5million. The Bank ran out of pounds.	Barclays Bank London, Banque Edouard Constant Generale
June 20, 1996	\$30million & £5million	Banque Nationale de Paris, Geneva.
August, 20, 1996	\$30million & £15million	Banque Nationale de Paris, Basel
September 24, 1996	\$50million	Citibank N.A London
September 30, 1996	\$50million & £3million	Citibank New York & N.A Luxembourg
November 26, 1997	\$24 million	M.M Warburg and Company, Hamburg
December 18, 1997	£6:15million	Midland Bank London, National West Minister's Bank, London

**Source:** ANEEJ Briefing paper on the Abacha loot, October 2002. Cited in Anazodo, *et al*, 2012:8, Civil service reforms in Nigeria: The journey so far in service delivery.

Official corruption was also evident during the Abdusalam's administration particularly in the award of contracts as in the case of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Defence and Police Force Headquarters.

The story is not different under the current democratic dispensation. Although, there were increased hopes and rising expectations that the return to democratic rule in 1999 after a long period of military administration will improve the well-being of the Nigerian

people, but soon these expectations and hopes of Nigerians were turned into oblivion because of the seemingly unsatisfactory performances of civilian rulers right from the time of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo up to the present administration of President Goodluck Jonathan (Sadiq and Abdullahi, 2013:88). Corruption has eaten so deep into the fabric of our society, that no segment can claim immunity from its ugly effects. It is present in all sectors of our society, more especially in the government institutions, the Executive Arm, the Legislative Arm (the Senate, House of Representative), Local Governments, the Judiciary (courts, tribunals, lawyers), and uniformed establishments (Military, Police and Road Safety Corps), *etc.*

All the three arms of government and other state institutions are immersed in corruption. For example, in the National Assembly, corruption creates serious setback in the Fourth Republic. Chief Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo and Adolphos Nwabara were all impeached on grounds of corruption (Ogundiya, 2012:10). Senator Chimaroke Nnamani also faced 124 count charges of fraud, conspiracy, concealment and money laundering amounting to about 5.4 billion naira (Vanguard Newspaper, Saturday, 2008). In addition, Madam Patricia Olubunmi Etteh, the first female speaker of the House of Representatives was forced to resign following an allegation of misappropriation of public funds in multiple contracts of 628 million Naira (US \$5 million) for the renovation of her official residence and purchase of 12 official cars. Senator Iyabo Obasanjo Bello, was involved in a contract scandal amounting to N3.5 billion involving her and an Australian firm. She was also involved in another financial scandal of mismanagement of funds in the Ministry of Health. It was this scandal that led to the resignation of Mrs. Adenike Grainge and her Deputy, Architect Gabriel Aduku (Mohammed, 2013:120). Likewise, the former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was guilty of corrupt enrichment, having said to have diverted the sum of US \$145 million Petroleum Technology Development Fund (Mohammed, 2013:129; Ogundiya, 2012:29). Due to the level of corruption, Nigeria was ranked the most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International in 1999, the very year President Obasanjo was elected to office.

**TABLE 3: Nigeria's Corruption Perception Index, 1998-2010**

Year	CPI	Rank	Position from Bottom
1998	1.2	81/85	5 <sup>th</sup>
1999	1.6	98/99	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2000	1.2	90/90	1 <sup>st</sup>
2001	1.0	90/91	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2002	1.6	101/102	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2003	1.6	132/133	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2004	1.6	144/146	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2005	1.9	152/168	6 <sup>th</sup>
2006	2.2	142/163	22 <sup>nd</sup>
2007	2.2	147/179	33 <sup>rd</sup>
2008	2.7	121/180	60 <sup>th</sup>
2009	2.5	130/180	51 <sup>st</sup>
2010	2.4	134/178	45 <sup>th</sup>

**Source:** Transparency International. [www.transparencyinternational.org](http://www.transparencyinternational.org)

In 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143th out of 182 countries surveyed by the Transparency International in its corruption perception index indicating the level of corruption in the country as compared to other countries. Although this came as an improvement from the previous years, it did not result from an improved system of governance; rather it was due to an increase in the number of countries that participated in the survey. The problem of corruption in Nigeria has become dreadfully endemic and successive Nigerian governments have come to realize the problem posed by corrupt practices to the nation's economic and political development and have at different time devised various means to curb its menace. Without doubt, corruption has permeated the Nigerian society and in the words of Achebe (1988) anyone who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in the country. All government ministries and organizations lack a transparent system of

administration. The biggest corruption deterrent is when civil servants, ministries and all senior management in government corporations know that they are under scrutiny.

**TABLE 4: Assessment of levels of corruption in Nigeria Institution (SCALE: 1-5)**

Institution/Agency	2004	2005	2006	Rank
Police	4.8	4.7	4.9	1
Political Parties	4.5	4.5	4.5	2
Customs	4.0	4.2	4.2	3
Legislature	4.2	4.1	4.1	4
Educational System	3.8	3.8	4.1	5
Judiciary	3.8	3.8	4.1	6
Military	3.9	3.8	3.7	7
Utilities (PHCN etc)	3.5	3.6	3.8	8
Tax Revenue	3.8	3.6	3.5	9
Business/Private Sector	3.4	3.2	3.7	10
Registry Licensing (CAC, etc)	3.3	3.1	3.3	11
Medical Services	3.1	3.0	3.4	12
Media	3.0	2.8	3.2	13
NGO's	2.7	2.5	3.0	14
Religious Bodies	2.4	2.3	3.0	15

**Source:** Agenda 20:20:20; Redesigning Nigeria's future, cited in Anazodo, Agbionu, T.U and Ezenwile n.d p:21

The audited report of Chief Vincent Azie who was appointed as Acting Auditor-General of the Federation for six months in 2003 shows the annual accounts of government bodies and the following was identified.

**TABLE 5: Comparative losses in the Federal Ministries (1997-2001)**

Year	No. of Cash losses	Amount in Naira	Losses of Stores/Equipment
1997	12	3,722,019.94	8
1998	10	4,215,871.42	1
1999	6	1,933,157.45	15
2000	15	3,254,438.86	26
2001	14	1,379,758.47	14

**Source:** Report of the Auditor-General of the Federation to the National Assembly for the year ended 31st Dec. 2001.



Within the context of Nigerian state, it is not as if successive governments have not realized the problems posed by corruption to the socio-economic development of the country. Without doubt, successive government at one point or the other have been making series of attempts at combating corruption through series of anti-corruption campaigns. What is in doubt however is the impact of the anti-corruption campaigns on society (Lawal and Ariyo, 2006:645).

Since the return of the country to civil rule on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian government has taken a number of measures to address the problems of corruption and bad governance in the country. These measures include public service reform (monetization to reduce waste and reduction of over-bloated personnel, reform of public procurement); establishment of anti-corruption enforcement agencies (such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Independent Corruption and other Practices Commission); and the recent sanitization of the financial services sector by the Central Bank under Governor Sanusi, which has revealed mind-bulging levels of bare faced theft by the management of several banks in Nigeria. Also, there is a new agency known as the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit, whose main objectives include promoting transparency in government financial transactions and establishing open and competitive bidding process for government contracts. It was created during Olusegun Obasanjo's administration (Obasanjo, 2003:6).

Though Nigeria has formulated various legal instruments and established a number of watchdog institutions (like EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Bureau) for regulating and monitoring the ethical behaviour of its public officials. However, despite the existence of a number of legal instruments and watchdogs institutions for regulating and monitoring the ethical standards of public officials, and the adoption of multipartyism, the management of public affairs and institutions by those who are entrusted with positions of authority in the country has not improved. Nigeria cannot afford to continue on the path of unbridled corruption because corruption erodes the capacity of governments at all levels to provide public services at the quality and quantity needed to improve the living standard of the people.

## **Imperative Measures for Effective Public Accountability and Performance in Nigeria**

In a bid to effectively and efficiently meet the ever changing citizens' wants and needs, governments around the world are increasingly searching for the best mechanisms to improve the extent to which public office holders can be held accountable and responsible (Ijeoma and Sambumbu, 2013:282). In the absence of comprehensive public accountability frameworks, achieving effective public accountability still remains increasingly a challenge. In an attempt to improve the accountability of government and its executive institutions, governments are looking towards mechanisms to secure the accountability of government and public officials (Heerden and Steyn, 2012:75). Measures to secure accountability serve to embed and secure whatever it is that people are accountable for: "they are instruments for calling people to account, for judging the adequacy of the accounts rendered, and for bringing sanctions to bear for failures to produce an adequate account" (Goodin, 2003:365). Agara and Olarinmoye (2009:13) note that accountability and control measures were engineered in the public service when it was observed that workers popularly called public servants require some levels of restraints in the execution of their official duties and delivery of services to the public. Accountability is thus a means to an end. No wonder, Premchand (1999:79) noted that:

*...the capacity to achieve full accountability has been and continues to be inadequate, partly because of the design of accountability itself and partly because of the widening range of objectives and associated expectations attached to accountability. He further argues that if accountability is to be achieved in full, including its constructive aspects, then it must be designed with care. The objective of accountability should go beyond the naming and shaming of officials, or the pursuit of sleaze, to a search for durable improvements in economics management to reduce the incidence of institutional recidivism. The future of accountability consists in covering the macro aspects of economic and financial sustainability, as well as the micro aspects of service delivery. It should envisage a three-tier structure of accountability: that of official (both political and regular civil employees),*

*that of intra-governmental relationships and that between government and their respective legislatures.*

In order to ensure effective running of government and ensuring accountability in Nigeria, adequate structures need to be put in place, systems and processes need to be developed to guide the operators of the structures and ensure strict compliance with them. This is one of the measures of ensuring accountability in the system and for promoting its integrity through the consistency of the application of rules and regulations in order to be able to predict actions and curtail the culture of impunity and arbitrariness in government.

To improve public accountability and performance in the Nigerian public service, it has been argued in the article that there is need to reposition the public service, making it more efficient, effective, dynamic and result-oriented by enhancing its work culture that will, among others, enhance transparency, accountability and ethical standards. All these are today known to be critical elements and requisites of democracy and sustainable partnership between government and the citizenry. While some factors that influence improving performance are immutable, other factors can be influenced by the performer or by others.

There is need to reform the anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria. These agencies should be given the authority to go after any person who is suspected of being corrupt without fear or favour. Enforcement agencies need to be equipped to enforce laws and be given the authority to persecute anybody regardless of his or her position. There should also be an audit of the enforcement agencies to expose all the bad officers who are corrupt, thus forcing a change to occur in these agencies and leaving the good officials in charge. If these agencies are given the authority to prosecute anyone, it will build public trust in government and also serve as a deterrent to corrupt public officials, constantly reminding them that there, indeed, are consequences to their actions. The agencies should be accountable to the public while an independent agency that can audit them to ascertain that they are doing proper investigations and conducting themselves ethically as created.

Government must first exhibit political commitment, beginning with the leading organs of government. It is with this that the government will be able to uphold integrity and effectiveness of public institutions of accountability as well as their technical efficiency. As noted by Osuntokun (2012:34), "Nigeria is still a state in ebullition and in

evolution; it has a long way to go to settle down. It also needs commitment on the part of the political leadership to do the right for the people and to put national interest above self. That is the only way Nigeria will get it right. Our country needs clear-headed, public spirited leaders at every level to propel this country to a higher stage of development than is presently the case.” There must be a spreading of awareness about the harmful effects of corruption and publicizing of the benefits of accountability both to the individual and the nation. Corruption in public service should be seen and treated as evil and the perpetrators should be stigmatized.

Generally, it is important to implement accountability measures as a central concept for good governance. Accountability requires that elected and unelected officials in government account for their performance to the public or to their duly elected representatives. Once these accountability measures are implemented, public officials will be under the scrutiny of the public and will be less likely to engage in corruptible acts.

### **Conclusion and Areas of Further Research**

Improving public accountability and performance in the public service has long been a concern in all states but it is particularly acute in Nigeria today given the failures identified in this article. Among the pervasive notions characterizing contemporary public administration rhetoric and scholarship is the idea of accountability as the solution to a wide range of problems in public service including performance and effective service delivery.

In this article, we have discussed the issues of public accountability and performance and the challenges of achieving accountable governance that can sustain effective performance in public service delivery. We have pointed out that the adoption of New Public Management is a useful framework for improving public accountability and performance in the public service. We identified the impediments to public accountability and performance in Nigeria. Our attention was also focused on corruption in particular as the major bane of public accountability and effective performance because the challenges of corruption remain a major devastating issue facing Nigeria since the colonial period, and till today this phenomenon has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of every segments of the country. The article shows that

there is a link between corruption and development crisis due to lack of accountability in governance. Also, corruption is central to the problem of poor public service delivery in the post-independent Nigeria to the extent that it inhibit ethical values in the public service. It has undermined the normal functioning of socio, political, economic and administrative systems. It literally undermines effective governance and erodes the social fabrics of Nigeria (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2010:43). Combating and preventing corruption therefore has become imperative for effective public sector performance because the roots of corruption are deeply embedded in the Nigerian society.

Due to the significance of accountability and performance in the public sector, both have been central in public sector management. Enhancing public accountability and performance therefore is one of the fundamental prerequisites for preventing the abuse of power and for ensuring that power is directed towards the achievement of efficiency, effectiveness and transparent government. Improved public accountability and performance was meant to improve service delivery. The emphasis in this article has been on measures for enforcing the accountability and performance through increases transparency, openness and citizen participation.

As a result of the qualitative nature of this study, similar analysis of public accountability and performance in Nigerian public service from empirical perspective need to be carried out. Further research on the influence of leadership/leadership styles on accountability and performance is equally of great importance.

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**AUTHOR'S CONTACT:**

**ADEJUWON, David K.**

Dept of Public Administration  
Lagos State University, Ojo  
Email: [adekenneytee@gmail.com](mailto:adekenneytee@gmail.com)