The Status of Good Governance in Public Sectors of Africa

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Abstract: The paper examines good governance in the public services of Namibia. The public sector has credible principles of good governance and plans that are well documented and that need to be pursued in order for these sectors to deliver quality, equitable and non-partisan or political inclinations on service delivery to the communities that need these services for their survival. The paper looks at six major thresholds by which governance could be viewed as good for any public sector and these are: Focusing on the organization’s purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users; Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles; Promoting values for the whole organization and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour; Taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk; Developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective and lastly, Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real. An overview of Good Governance are contrasted between the United Nations Development Program, the European Commission and Lord Nolan’s Seven Principles of Public Life in order to buttress the principles of good governance, which any sector may wish to align with in order to achieve good governance in a competitive edge.

Keywords: Good governance; Accountability; Credible principles of good governance; Nolan’s Seven Principles of Public Life; Values of good governance; Public sectors; The ruled; The elite; Appointment of Governors; Service delivery

1.1 Introduction

This paper advocates that any public sector or organization to be able to perform properly, it needs to align itself with the credible principles of good governance. According to the standard used as a guideline or model which has been adopted from Good Governance Standard for Public Services (OPM & CIPFA, 2005), six principles of good governance with a characteristic of each having a supporting principle have been adopted. These principles are discussed below to indicate how they are well modelled towards achieving good governance in public services. If organizations or public sectors use these principles, they would perform to their satisfaction on the part of the people being governed.

1.2 Statement of the problem:

Since states of Africa started to get their independencies, freedoms and sovereignties, little has been achieved in advocating for good governance in which the ruled enjoy freedoms, social justice, equitable service delivery and a sense of being represented by the elite whom they put in power through a ballot box to rule over them. In most states of Africa, the elite are the ones put in power to govern and they have to ensure that they serve the ruled in a way that they have to be held accountable of the services they render in the public sectors in which they serve, but this trust has not been honoured. In order to achieve performance and productivity, public sectors should be aligned to the vision, mission and goals of the organizations they serve and to be abreast with the knowledge of the needs of their people, in which case this has not been practical (Hickman, 1998). A situation in an African context exists, where governors are appointed by the president; it is difficult for democracy which entails good governance to prevail and to be achieved as these governors will be politically influenced in the decisions they make in order to please their masters. There are problems in transparent decisions and taking decisions on behalf of the governed in most African states. The tax payers do not really get the value for their money that they are contributing to the public sectors as these monies are diverted in programmes that do not address the popular needs. Governments are so reluctant in taking sound evaluation of the performance of those people in their individual or group capacities that serve in those positions entrusted by the populace. Contributions of the tax payers are channelled to corrupt activities of the elite of the governing body in most African states. Focus is not directed to developing the capability of
people such as governors and councillors with the responsibilities of governance. Those appointed and elected governors do not have the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform their tasks well. At most stakeholders in public sectors of Africa are not engaged and do not ensure that accountability is realised in all the sectors responsible for delivering services to the ruled. It is important therefore that a leader is globally literate (Rosen, 2000). It is important for the leaders to know the meaning and measurement of leadership roles and satisfaction for the people they lead (Kerr & Jermier, 1978).

1.3 Orientation of the research paper:

Immediately after achieving their independencies and sovereignties in the 1950s, African governments had to address the imbalances that were brought as a result of the colonising governments. In ensuring that they hold on the power in order to address inherited imbalances that were inherited after colonisation, African states still preach about the histories of their colonisation and how they are failing to grow economically (Nirenberg, 2002). In most of all the times, the people are led to believe that the scars of apartheid and colonialism are still being the stumbling blocks of these states to grow economically (Likert, 1961). Instead of concentrating on addressing each key developmental area, there are new issues such as fighting corruption, poverty, education, medicine, agriculture, mining, etc. The focus of good governance is affected by a situation in which the leaders pay little attention to good governance and then become more politically dominant. They now concentrate on issues of patriotism, tribalism, racism, regionalism, partisan, nepotism, etc. and these become the most areas of concentration. The issues of skills, capabilities, equitable distribution of resources to all the regions of the country, and accountability and proper use of these resources to benefit all become problematic and therefore, the most neglected function. When this is the trend, there are now unrests, coups, one dominant party responsible for everything, segregation of people by being polarised to fall to a political party that is in power and that takes control of everything. Many other sections of the country and ordinary people and those not wanted by the systems are made to suffer even if they have the potential to grow together with the country and contribute to the development of such a state (Nirenberg, 2002). Those who are now disgruntled part ways with the systems that were supposed to unite them and provide good governance. Those with skills and are neglected either leave the countries to those countries in which their skills are needed than in the countries where their skills are affected (Lussier & Achua, 2001).

2. Literature review

Fink (2005) defines literature review as "a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners."

2.1 Focusing on the organization’s purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users

Good governance is a serious challenge, especially in Africa states. The problem in African states is that good governance is affected by illegitimate leaders that come into governance of the states. Some of these leaders may come in governance through military or coup d'état or self-imposed and therefore govern through fears and intimidation, thus making the credibility of governance void. Accordingly, good governance should solely focus on the purpose the public service or organization was founded to achieve. A focus should be directed on the purpose and outcomes for the citizens and to those using those services or those to whom such intended services should be rendered. The users of such services should receive them in a high quality form. Importantly, the governing body must ensure that tax payers really get the value for their money that they are contributing to the sector. Interestingly and surprisingly, while tax payers contribute to the economy through tax contributions to sustain the system of governance, the very contributions of the tax payers are channelled to corrupt activities of the elite of the governing body (OPM & CIPFA, 2005); Kerr & Jermier, 1978).

2.2 Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles

A properly established governing body will perform effectively in clearly defined functions and roles at the expectations of the governed. In this case, the functions of the governing body should be clear. The responsibilities of executives and non-executives should be also clear. In simpler terms, such responsibilities by the executives and non-executives should be carried out. There should be clear relationships in place between the governors and the public they serve. In an African context where governors are appointed by the president; it is difficult for democracy which entails good
governance to prevail and to be achieved (OPM & CIPFA, 2005).

2.3 Promoting values for the whole organization and demonstrating the values of good governance through behavior

Good governance is very crucial as it focuses on promoting values for the whole governing body and as well demonstrating the values of good governance through the behavior of the elite of the governing body and those being governed. In this scenario, organizational values should be put into practice in order to achieve performance and productivity and these should be aligned to the vision, mission and goals of the organization. It is imperative that individual governors behave in the manner that ensures that they comply with set standards of good governance. These governors should be the actual examples of good governance (OPM & CIPFA, 2005).

2.4 Taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk

Good governance should focus on taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risks. It is essential that good governance embraces those attributes of being rigorous and transparent decisions and taking decisions on behalf of the governed. It is necessary that good quality information, advice and support are practised and upheld (OPM & CIPFA, 2005; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). In good governance, effective risk management is necessary in all the operations of the public service or the people they lead (OPM & CIPFA, 2005; Fiedler, 1967).

2.5 Developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective

It is important that good governance is aimed at developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective. In this case, appointed and elected governors have to have the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform their tasks well. They should also be aware of the environment they operate in so that they deliver to the expectations of the governing body and those being governed. Good governance should focus on developing the capability of people with the responsibilities of governance. Evaluation of the performance of those people in their individual or group capacities is crucial if good governance should be achieved. A balance should be struck in the membership of the governing body, between continuity and renewal of tasks that are aimed at achieving the goals of the governing body (OPM & CIPFA, 2005).

2.6 Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real

The last of these principles of governance is ensuring that stakeholders are engaged and ensuring that accountability is realised. In this case, it is important to understand formal and informal accountability relationships of the executives and non-executives in the governance system as compared to those who are governed. It is essential that an active and planned approach to share ideas in dialogues with the public is practical and real. The executives and non-executives should be accountable to the people as well. Institutional stakeholders are important in this principle of good governance and should be engaged effectively to manage good governance in a democratic manner (OPM & CIPFA, 2005).

Table 1 on the overview of Good Governance are contrasted between the United Nations Development Program, the European Commission (25 November, 2015) and Lord Nolan’s Seven Principles of Public Life (31 March, 1995) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Nations Development Program</th>
<th>European Commission</th>
<th>Nolan’s Seven Principles of Public Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Legitimacy and voice</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Selflessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Direction</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
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<td>3. Performance</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
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<td>4. Accountability</td>
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<td>5. Fairness</td>
<td>Openness</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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The ‘openness principle’ of Lord Nolan is the same such as the European Commission and has equal meaning to that of ‘fairness’ advocated by the United Nations Development Program. Objectivity by Nolan ties with fairness, integrity and honesty. Direction by the UNDP has equal weight with leadership as indicated by Nolan. Accountability is applied across the board by all stakeholders (such as UNDP, EC and Nolan) mentioned above. Legitimacy and voice work together with popular participation indicated in UNDP and EC above. Coherence works with leadership that is consistent. Performance by UNDP and Effectiveness by EC work together. Legitimacy, participation and selflessness go together and are found to be good principles of good governance because they are the ones that pave the way to democracy (OPM & CIPFA, 2005).

In relation to the six principles of good governance discussed and as shall be listed here below, Lord Nolan’s seven principles will be linked to those as follows: Good Governance means:-

- **Focusing on the organization’s purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users**
  
  Nolan’s ‘honesty principle’ applies here in which the governing body should be clear about the organization’s purpose and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users; making sure that the users receive a high quality service and lastly, making sure that taxpayers receive value for their money. Nolan’s ‘selflessness principle’ also finds its place in this principle of good governance.

- **Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles**
  
  Nolan’s ‘objectivity principle’ applies here in which the governing body should be clear about its functions. In addition, the governing body should be clear about the responsibilities of non-executives and the actives and lastly, to also be clear about the relationships between the governors and the public or the governed.

- **Promoting values for the whole organization and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour**
  
  Nolan’s ‘integrity principle’ is applicable here in which putting organizational values into practice and that individual governors behave in ways that uphold and exemplify effective governance.

- **Taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk**
  
  Nolan’s ‘openness principle’ is applicable here where rigorous and transparent decisions are take; having and using good quality information, advice and support and lastly, making sure that an effective risk management system is in operation.

- **Developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective**
  
  Nolan’s ‘leadership principle’ is applicable here, making sure that appointed and elected governors have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well; developing the capabilities of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group as well as striking a balance, in the membership of the governing body, between continuity and renewal.

- **Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real**
  
  Nolan’s ‘accountability principle’ works in this situation where understanding formal and informal accountability relationships; taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with accountability to the public; taking an active and planned approach to responsibility to staff and engaging effectively with institutional stakeholders come to the fore.

The meaning of good governance in regards to corporate sectors varies between actors. Legislation has been enacted in an attempt to influence good governance in corporate affairs (Wikipedia/good governance: date retrieved/03/06/2016). The Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002) set up requirements for businesses to follow. Whistleblowing has also been widely used by corporations to expose corruption and fraudulent activity.

Good governance in local governments is argued to be the most important in local governments; as in all respects, it tries to promote more relationships between government and the empowered citizens in which case empowerment is to be defined as:

- **Empowered citizens**
  
  “Empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. Empowerment refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and eventually to use their resources and chances. The term
empowerment originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Julian Rappaport (1981).

- Neighborhood councils
- Community councils

It is imperative to note that good governance with local government is aiming at increasing civil engagement with more members of the community in order to get to the bottom of the best options that serves the people in the areas where they are residing (Wikipedia/good governance: date retrieved/03/06/2016).

3. Research method

3.1 Research design:

This research paper use qualitative research design in investigating the status of good governance in public sectors of Africa. According to Strategy Analytics (2003), research design is defined as a detailed outlining of how an investigation will take place, which includes how data is to be collected, what instruments will be employed, how the instrument will be used and the intended means for analysing data collected. Creswell (2007) on qualitative research methodology posits that qualitative research is primary exploratory research. It is used to gain some understanding of underlying reasons, motivations and opinions regarding the subject matter under research. Qualitative research provides insight into the problem and as well helps develop ideas or hypotheses for potential research.

3.2 Research population:

The population of the research paper was conducted from the members of the public sector such as those from the Public Service Commission, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Khomas Regional Council, Moses Garoeb Constituency, Windhoek West Constituency, Ministry of Regional and Local Government and National Planning Commission in Namibia.

3.3 Sampling procedures

In this research paper the population was selected as follows: 20 participants from the Public Service Commission of Namibia, 20 from the Ministry of Education, 20 from the Ministry of Finance, 20 from Khomas Regional Council, 20 from Moses Garoeb Constituency, 20 from Windhoek West Constituency, 20 from the Ministry of Regional, Local Government & Housing and lastly, 20 from the National Planning Commission of Namibia. In total, 160 participants were interviewed.

3.4 Research instruments

The research paper employed qualitative method. Multiple instruments were used qualitatively in collecting data needed for the paper. The following research instruments were found to be relevant and used: semi-structured interviews, observations and analysis of existing documents and government plans. In-depth individual interviews were applied in collecting data and in getting clear understanding of the individual’s perceptions and experience on the subject matter.

Observations

Observations were used to obtain the most convenient data that was used to supplement data being collected. Official government plans, Acts, rules, code of conduct and standing rules of order were observed. Document analysis is essential for the researcher in familiarising himself / herself with what is happening and what has been planned on the ground. Documentary analysis is crucial in that it gives the researcher a general background on the subject under study. Official records are essential in gathering data for the research, because they enhance and support the interview paradigm.

3.5 Data collection procedures

The researchers conducted observations to the top and middle management officials and attended their scheduled meetings to ensure that the phenomena taking place are observed and recorded to supplement the study. In this manner, both primary and secondary data were used in order to collect data from the participants. In order to collect data safely, informed consent was obtained from the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries, from the Chief Regional Officer of Khomas Regional Council and from the Constituent Councillors of each respective Constituency under study. Personal interviews were then conducted to these selected respondents/participants. These were conducted on a face-to-face basis with the selected respondents. The research also employed structured and semi-structured questionnaires and responses were then recorded using a tape recorder as audio equipment and were then transcribed to ensure proper data handling and use thereof.

3.6 Data analysis

The process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. This form of analysis is just one
of the many steps that must be completed when conducting a research experiment. Data from various sources is gathered, reviewed, and then analysed to form some sort of finding or conclusion. There are a variety of specific data analysis method, some of which include data mining, text analytics, business intelligence, and data visualizations (http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/data-analysis.html#ixzz4AWhdXBTb).

Data that was collected from interviews were taped and transcribed. The data was further examined and read carefully. The data was analysed into themes and categories by classifying similar responses that came from the respondents. Bogdan and Biklein (1982) famously define data analysis as involving working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and as well deciding what the research could tell others about the subject under study.

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