

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Effective information management is a strategic fundamental tool for good governance in our modern states and organizations. To effectively achieve this, one must acquire some basic conceptual skills, human skills and technical skills. Similarly, the user of information must know and understand informational roles interpersonal roles, and decisional roles in the face of globalization to create a learning state. Through extensive review of current articles, periodicals, government documents textbooks, and the internet as secondary data, were generated to develop the conceptual framework for this paper on which the entire work is built on. Observations and personal interview were also used as primary data to re-enforce the secondary data gathered through desk research. The paper observed that time, content and form as the three fundamental broad characteristics of useful information are negatively out of place leading to low quality information for development of strategic plans in Nigeria toward good governance. In view, the paper recommends self-appraisal by all the governments and the governed for effective management of information to serve as a tool for good governance as well as purposeful leadership with a strong political will to be perused with tenacity. Finally, the paper vehemently advocates that there be a true transfer of responsibilities and resources from central government to other governments and developed networks between governments and other state actors such as the civil society, communities, non-governmental associations and international organization.

Keywords: Information management, Effective management, Good governance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is dynamic and complex thereby creating dilemma in the conceptual explanations of some terms or concepts in management and social sciences. Scholars and experts confront the dilemma by defining and analyzing terms within their interest, and scope of work. While others look at concepts

within a specific angle, yet others from very abstract perspective. In this paper we observed “information” as data that have been converted into a meaningful and useful context for specific users (Daft, 2000:671). There has been increasing challenge in contemporary organizations to effectively identify and access useful information towards good governance. Users of information must have the ability to distinguish between information and data. Data are unprocessed raw facts, figures, symbols, and science that are in and them self may not be useful. The users of information for good governance must have the ability to generate more information with technology now available with proper information-back.

Management is the second concept to be observed in the paper. It is a process which enables organizations to set and achieve their objectives by planning, organizing, and controlling their resources including gaining the commitment employees (motivation) (Ogundele et al., 2012:19) these managerial tasks entails: Human skills, conceptual skills, and technical skills which involves the mastery of methods, techniques, and tool/equipment. For good governance of people and organization in another dimension, managerial roles must be put in place thus:

- i. Informational roles: to monitor, dissemination, and to be a spoke person;
- ii. Interpersonal roles: to serve as a figure-head, leader, and to liaison;
- iii. Decisional roles: to serve as an entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator.

Information management therefore, is a strategic process in modern state for good governance. Information management here is the attainment of good governance as a goal in an effective and efficient manner through information planning, organizing, leading, and controlling of organizational resources. This require the effectual determination of the hard and software’s telecommunication database management and other methods for collection, analysis, interpretation of data, storage, retrieval, and distribution of information as well as maintaining position as a spokesman for a giving organization or state.

Effectiveness as one of the keywords in the topic, according to Daft (2000): “Is the degree to which the organization achieves a state goal”. The effectiveness required in information management is the display of skills, expertise, and experience in the generation, processing, interpretation, storage, retrieved, and distribution of information to do the right things at the right time based on refined facts and figures in realization of good governance in a given organization or state.

Government in this paper should mean the way society as a whole manages the full array of its political, social, and economic affairs. The World Bank (1994) defined governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social development’. The paper view effective information management as a tool for power relationship between formal government institutions that are saddled by the rulers/governments and people as the ruled/governed which the incidences of either good or bad governance rest.

To achieve this giant academic pursuit, we generate conceptual frame work from the work of experts in various recent journals, textbooks, net, etc. through desk research and documentaries on good governance’s effective information or record management. Simple random sampling was used to assemble the conceptual frame-work, to arrive at conclusion and recommendation proffered for the roles of effective information management as a tool for good governance in the 21st century.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It has been noted that people tend to use the terms data and information interchangeably to mean the same, but in effective information management for good governance in this our democratic dispensation demand for distinctive understanding and application. Data are raw, unanalysed numbers and facts about events. Information in contrast, results when data are organised or analysed in some meaningful ways (Stoner et al., 1995: 613).

The job of a progressive state or organization from the foregoing highlights the magnitude of the act of transformation of data into useful information for effective decision towards good governance. With respect to organization, the interdiction of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) position informed effective achievement of organizational goals. This CIO’s responsibilities include the generation and management of organization databases and implementation of new information technology. Similarly, the CIO is to integrate old and new information technologies to support organizational decision making operations, and communication. He or she manages the infrastructure so that it well places the necessary information in the right place at the right time, right costs, and right purpose.

Effective information management depends largely on high-quality information to develop strategic plans by the top-management of the state or the organization. Hence Stoner et al. (1995: 613) stress that, effective information management should guarantee the provision of different information to the deferent level of management for operational control, management control, and strategic planning. They further observed that information required for effective management must have its bases for evaluation to establish whether it’s qualitative information thus.

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- i. Information quality;
- ii. Information timeliness;
- iii. Information quantity, i.e. sufficiency of information; and,
- iv. Information relevance

In the same vein, Williams (2002: 144) say, a useful information in managing an organization or state shall possess the under-mentioned characteristics.

- i. Accuracy of information;
- ii. Completeness of information;
- iii. Relevancy of information; and,
- iv. Timeliness of information.

He argued that, effective information management gives birth to useful information and useful information has some significant cost associated with them:

- i. Acquisition cost: Expense of obtaining data that one does not have.
- ii. Processing Cost: The expense of turning raw data into useable information.
- iii. Storage Cost: The expense of physically or electronically archiving information for later use and retrieval;
- iv. Retrieved Cost: The expense of accessing already stored and processed information for decision making; and,
- v. Communication Cost: The expense of transmitting information from one place to another.

These imply that an effective information management must be costs effective and efficient towards good governance of a modern state or organization.

Daft (2000: 671) observes the characteristics of a useful information that would guarantee serving as a tool for good governance under three broad categories as follows:

- i. Time: information should be available when needed. Up-to-date, provided when needed, and related to the appropriate time period, (past present or future)
- ii. Content: useful information is error free, suited to the user's needs, complete, concise, relevant (that is, it excludes unnecessary data) and an accurate measure of performance whose attributes are ability motivation clarity of expectation, and opportunity to all the stakeholders; and,
- iii. Form: the information should be provided in a form that is easy for the user to understand and meets the user's needs for the level of detail; the presentation should

be ordered and the combination of works, numbers and diagrams, that are most useful to the user. Also information should be presented in a useful medium (printed document, videos display, sound).

The above can be represented in this diagram below for proper and understanding.

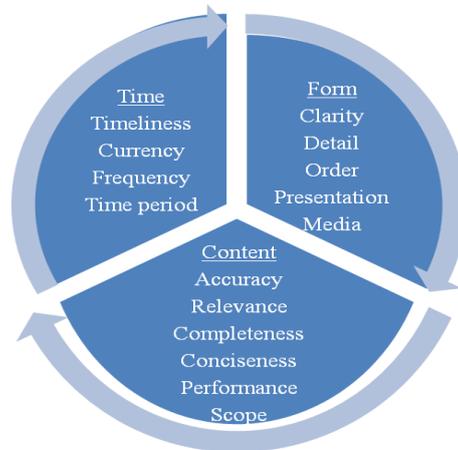


FIGURE 1 - CHARACTERISTICS FOR HIGH-QUALITY INFORMATION
Source: Adapted from O'Brien, 1997: 284-285

O'Brien (1997) viewed management as a social process for planning and regulating the operations of the enterprise towards some agreed objectives and carried out within the framework of an organization structure. Hence, the effective information management that serves as tool for good governance in our modern society or state must be guided by the thought of this management expert:

- Defining the responsibility of information management, supervisory, and specialist staff;
- Determining how these responsibilities are to be delegated in the network of an organisation or state;
- Coordinating the execution of information of responsibilities; and,
- Maintaining high moral information manager and officers

In management and indeed social science, a theory that is substantive, having empirical evidence and a structure is often referred to as a model or framework for understanding and application. The ideal and principles of information management advocated and enforced by most information and management exponent became classical theories of information management. There is the need for inculcating mental process which allows man to model the state or world and deal with information management effectively according to his plans, goals, and desires.

3. GOOD GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES: EFFECTIVE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES

Good governance is witnessed most in decentralized state structure. Mahwood (1992) argued in his book that demise of centralize party state in many part of Africa has resulted in a growing emphasis on good governance at the Local Government Levels. The agitations for Local Government autonomy in Nigeria in the last few decades reflect the desire of the fundamental for good governance. Tordoff and Young (1994) stressed that there is the need for a strong decentralized system as subjected by external and internal democratic pressures. Ideally, good governance supposes to strive better under democratic disposition where effective information management is put in place by government, political parties, organization and civil societies. However, the challenges are innermost; such as, the multi-level governance and the polycentric governance theory which require that all efforts of information user groups that manage common pool of resources are granted the same status as individual or corporate right to private property, which are not adequately put in place owing to our historical past as a sovereign nation (Arry, 2006; Lengnick-Hall, 2009; Olowu, D., 2002).

The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), in 1997 acknowledged the following as core ingredients to bring about good governance and development to any people or modern state:

- Participation,
- Rule of law,
- Transparency,
- Responsiveness,
- Consensus orientation,
- Equity,
- Effectiveness and Efficiency,
- Accountability, and
- Strategic vision

One would agree with us, that the above ingredients of good governance could only be realized if there is effective information management in all organizations. the three (3) tiers of government (federal, state, and local government) and the three (3) arms of government (Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary), their levels of management top-middle can induce effective-lower separation of powers in principles and practice if there is effective information management by especially the public departments and agencies, backed by the private sector of Nigerian Economy, we would have witnessed good governance beyond the present attainments in our 54 years of nationhood experience.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, effort has been made for us to appreciate the fact, “effective information management is a tool for good governance”. The understanding of key concepts in the subject matter explained twinkling-light zones for understanding and knowledge to support self and good governance especially in this democratic experience in Nigeria. Furthermore, the paper reviewed the meaning, nature and dimension of information and its management to guarantee effective information management to be seen as tool for good governance in Nigeria.

The paper also observed, the challenges of effective information management as tool for good governance where it pointed out that there is still need to pursue effective information management in Nigeria and various organizations with proper installation of hard-software apparatus with strong political will, tenacity, and vision after proper self-appraisal by both the rulers/ governments and ruled/governed so as to enable us the full experience of good governance of world standard in the best interests and benefits of all.

Finally, it is undisputable fact that stand the test of times... the heart of good governance is building appropriate institution, and information, systems anchored in a constitution (1979 Federal Republic of Nigeria constitution as amended which is supreme) the support and input of the main political forces (Friedman, 2003)

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective information management is a strategic corner stone of good governance globally. The following recommendations are proffered to the governments' organizations management in Nigeria and the society at large based on the Hausa proverb that say's if you are properly informed and the information gained is properly manage and used by you, your body and your soul are saved. Hence, there is serious need to:

- i. Effective information in our homes, organization, and especially our public sector of Nigeria Economy for effective efficient decision that have human face based on verifiable factual information.
- ii. Re-visitation and still re-orientation of our values with the quest to maintained high quality information data banks in all functional, and costs centre of organizational and national life;

- iii. The installation of operational information system, transactional processing system, process control system, office automation systems management information system (MIS) and information reporting system;
- iv. Proper custody of all historical files (Hard copies) for proper verification of the soft copies at the time that information is needed at the right time, at the right place, for the right purpose, at the costs so as to guarantee good governance at all levels.
- v. Chief information officers should take oath of secrecy as well as their subordinates and the bridge of such ought to be penalized accordingly if good governance is to be guaranteed through effective information management:
- vi. Government should reinforce their informational roles as required by management viz; information monitoring which is seriously wanting, transmitting of information according ethical practices, and creation of awareness in the general public on government activities and policies and the likely areas for public contributions towards good governance;
- vii. Constant training and retraining of people, and especially information staff/management on the 'global best practice' in effective information management for good governance.

In nutshell we are of the optimistic view that if these plausible recommendations are enforced and practice by all, there will be good governance based on information management as an effectual tool for good governance in the 21st century in face of globalization.

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