Leadership, Good Governance and the Challenges of Development in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Development in any nation is a function of leadership and good governance at any level. However, there is no doubt that Nigeria faces some challenges of development where it has been argued that one of the factors that has militated against the initiatives for developments by various governments in Nigeria since independence in 1960 is that of leadership and good governance, which fails to embrace the culture of accountability and proper management of public resources thereby, resulted into poverty and hunger among the people, as well as political and social instability in the country. This paper seeks to examine the concept of leadership and good governance as they relate to the challenges of development in Nigeria. The methodology employed in this paper is content analysis and largely from secondary sources of data. Thus, relevant books, journals, magazines, newspapers and internet materials were analyzed to determine ways in which poor leadership and lack of good governance have been the obstacles to development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that, for effective and sustainable development to be achieved there must be a link between the elements of good governance and leadership which includes accountability, rule of law, transparency in the management of resources as well as absence of corruption among others.

Keywords: Development, Leadership, Good Governance, Accountability, Rule of Law and transparency

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most endowed countries of the world with vast physical and natural resources that are capable of improving the socio-economic status and living standard of its citizenry. However, Ogundiya (2010) observed that despite its enormous resources and huge potentialities, Nigeria remains grossly undeveloped. It is pertinent to note that since when Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, the nature of governance in the country has been a subject of intense debate by scholars of all divides. Some scholars argued that a leadership which subscribes to good governance is fundamental to development in any nation and Nigeria is no exception (Richardson, 2008). In addition, some have argued that there is a positive relationship between effective leadership, good governance and proper accountability in the handling of public affairs in a nation’s quest for development (Edoho, 2007). Furthermore, some have argued that one of the factors that militated against the

Genyi (2013) observed that the current democratic governance in Nigeria has continued to witness repeated abuses of state power that has manifested in different forms and guises. No doubt, the political elites still see politics or state power as an avenue for primitive accumulation of wealth. According to a report of TELL Magazine (2005). Many public office holders in Nigeria especially state governors, ministers (past and present) and members of the National Assembly are stupendously wealthy. These public officers according to the Magazine have huge investments both at home and abroad which cannot be explained. This basically explains why corruption has remained endemic in the country. When public officers who are supposed to be the vanguard in the fight against corruption now elevates the ignoble practice to statecraft, democracy, good governance, peace and security cannot but be at risk. Corruption no doubt undermines the governance process and indeed development.

It is evident that since independence in 1960, successive government have dismally failed to cultivate and promote the culture and practice of good governance to make Nigerian radiate with happiness and contentment. The political leadership has not been prudently utilized to meet the legitimate socio-economic need of the people. Against this background, the article examines the challenges of development in Nigeria as they relate to poor leadership and lack of good governance in the management of public resources. The paper posits that, the obstacles to development in Nigeria emanate from poor leadership at various levels of government (Federal, State and Local) that fails to subscribe to good governance in the management of public resources.

The article is divided into sections. Section one covers the general introduction, section two handles conceptual clarification, section three deals with theoretical framework, section four examines the relationship between leadership, good governance and development, section five deals with the overview on the challenges of development in Nigeria while section six conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

It is pertinent that we briefly clarify on the concept of leadership, good governance and development in order to appreciate their interconnectedness and relevance in the context of enhancing effective, efficient and sustainable development.

Leadership

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes, such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills (www.nwlink.com).

According to Blunt and Jones, (1992) Leadership is a process of creating a vision for others and having the power to translate that vision into reality and sustain it. While for Muhammad, (2013) Leadership is a concept that encompasses personal or group attributes, organizational structural arrangements, positions, functions, responsibilities, knowledge, skills, actions and attitudes that are shaped by the past and
current socio-politico-economic and cultural conditions in pursuing a shared common vision/goal/purpose/objectives. Hence, it’s a road and a vehicle leading from the past through the present into the future. Thus, Leadership is a reflection of characters, which include but not limited to knowledge, vision, courage, openness accountability, determination, transparency, uprightness, motivation and patriotism put in place by office holders to lead their people and or followers so as to achieve reasonable and positive societal development. Profound changes need committed leadership exemplified in transformational policies and actions (Ukaegbu, 2010). Therefore, Leadership is significantly related to the ability to provide vision and direction to the society.

Good Governance

Generally, governance, according to the World Bank Report (1989) is the exercise of political power in the management of a nation’s affairs. This definition thus implies that governance encompasses the state’s institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes and implementation capacity, and the relationship between the governing apparatus and the governed- that is the people in terms of their standard of living. Ogundiyi, (2010) opines that governance is the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country’s social and economic resources. The nature and manner of this distribution makes governance a bad or a good one. Thus, when resources are distributed to promote inequality or to achieve personal or group ambitions, the essence of governance which coincides with the essence of politics and essence of the state is defeated. Therefore, resources must be distributed responsibly, equitably and fairly for the realization of the essence of the state. This brings us to the idea that governance can be aptly described as good or bad.

In a World Bank report (cited in Odock (2006:3) sees good governance as “a system of government based on good leadership, respect for the rule of law and due process, the accountability of the political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operations of government.” He further clarified that it has to do with the leadership carrying out government business in an open, easy to understand and explicit manner, such that the rules made by government, the policies implemented by the government and the results of government activities are easy to verify by the ordinary citizens. Therefore, Good governance is in tandem with democratic governance which is largely characterized by high valued principles such as rule of law, accountability, participation and transparency, human civil rights. These governance qualities have the capacity to provide the development process of a country (Genyi, 2013).

Development

Development has been viewed in various ways by different scholars. Ajagun (2003) conceptualizes it as an advancement which makes life more meaningful in its various aspects, including the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural and religious. Uga et al (2005) sees development as a process of economic and social transformation within countries. According to Yunusa and Okeke (2008:51) “development is about the issue of self-reliance. It is a self-generating and self-sustaining phenomenon”. For Ibude (2008) development implies the manner in which individuals cooperatively cultivate the capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship to bring about growth
in the quality and quantity of goods services that are readily available in the country for the enhancement of the living standard of its people. Thus, development essentially focuses on the transformation of the individuals with the aim of eliminating poverty, unemployment and inequality. However, emphasizing the importance of leadership for development, Maxwell (1995:6) posits that “everything rises and falls on leadership.” For him, “the strength of any organization is a direct result of the strength of its leaders. Weak leaders equal weak organizations. Strong leaders equal strong organizations.”

Theoretical Framework

In this paper, authentic leadership theory is adopted as the framework of analysis. The proponents of the theory are Luthans, Avolio, Gardner, Walumba and a host of others. Authentic leadership is a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context which result in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behavior on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development (Avolio et al, 2009).

The main argument of the theory is that authentic leaders, whether at the organizational or national levels tend to exhibit transparent and proper ethical behavior that focuses on accountability, which is required for efficient and effective management of resources for enhanced development (Avolio et al, 2009).

George (2013) posits that authentic leaders are genuinely desires to serve others through their leadership. They are more interested in empowering the people, they lead to make difference than they are in power, money or prestige for themselves. They are as guided by qualities of the heart by passion and compassion as they are by qualities of the mind. He further stress that authentic leaders are expected to demonstrate five qualities:

i. Understanding their purpose;
ii. Practicing solid values;
iii. Leading with heart;
iv. Establishing connected relationship;
v. Demonstrating self-discipline.

In the same vein, Jensen and Luthans, (2006) argued that leaders who act in accordance to the three component of positive psychological capacity (hope, optimism and resilience) are more likely to become authentic leaders. This is true for several reasons:

- First, leaders who can set and explain goals effectively, create a more hopeful environment for their followers.
- Second, optimistic leaders have a greater ability to motivate their followers and help them more easily, anticipate future events.
- Third, resilient leaders are better equipped to function in changing environment in order to support their followers. (Jensen and Luthans, 2006). Avolio et-al also write:

Authentic leaders were leaders who acted in accordance with their core personal values and beliefs in order to built credibility and earn the respect and trust of their followers through the process of actively encouraging different viewpoints and building transparent and collaborative relationship with them. Such leaders could be described as Charismatic, Participative or Transformational in addition to being described as Authentic (Avolio et al, 2004:801-823).
Moreover, leaders with traits of character such as transparency, honesty and accountability, motivate people to share information with them and with each other, resulting in the realization of an organization’s or nation’s quest for enhanced development (Kauda, 2010).

The justification for adopting this Theory in the case of Nigeria’s governance system is the fact that, governments or organizations at any level require leaders that are transparent and exhibit proper ethical behavior in the management of resources as a basis for enhanced performance and development. But to our dismay, many political office holders and even organizations do not exhibit these ethical behavior in the management of resources that brings about enhanced performance and development. Although, authentic leadership theory is in its early stages of development, the construct of authenticity has deep roots in philosophy and psychology (Avolio et-al, 2004). However, in recent years, the construct of authenticity has been clarified and refined through theoretical developments and empirical research by social psychologists.

Therefore, despite its criticism of being at its infant stage of construct development, the application of authentic leadership theory approach to governance in Nigeria is very relevant, desirable and effective for advancing the general development as well as achieving positive and enduring outcomes in Nigeria.

4. Some Key Elements of Good Governance

While there may be no best way of achieving good governance, the following standout as the most common elements. They are: accountability, transparency, combating corruption, participatory governance and Legal and Judicial Framework.

1. Accountability:
Accountability is defined as holding responsible elected or appointed individuals or organization charged with a public mandate to account for specific action, activities or decisions to the public from whom they derive their authority. In a narrow sense, accountability focuses on the ability to account for the allocation, use and control, i.e budgeting, accounting, and auditing. In a broader sense, it is also concerned with the establishment and enforcement of rules and regulations of corporate governance (Agere, 2000).

2. Transparency
Transparency is broadly defined as public knowledge of the policies of government and confidence in its intentions. This requires making public accounts verifiable, providing for public participation in government policy making and implementation, and allowing contestation over choices impacting on the lives of citizens. It also includes making available for public scrutiny accurate and timely information on economic and market condition (Agere, 2000).

3. Combating Corruption
Corruption is defined as the abuse of public office or public trust for private gains. Combating corruption is a key indicator of commitment to good governance. Corruption tends to weaken the ability of government to carry out their functions efficiently. It can also manifest itself as individual, organizational and institutional level. However, in the context of the state, corruption most often refers to criminal or otherwise unlawful conduct by the government agencies or by the officials of the organizations (Agere, 2000).
4. Participatory Governance
Participation is defined as a process whereby stakeholders exercise influence over public policy decisions and share control over resources and institutions that affect their lives, thereby providing a check on power of government. In the context of governance, participation is focused on the empowerment of citizens, including women and addressing the interplay between the broad range civil societies (Agere, 2000).

5. Legal and Judicial Framework
A pro-governance and pro-development legal and judicial system is one in which laws are clear and uniformly applied through an objective and independent judiciary. It is also one in which the legal system provides the necessary sanctions to deter or penalize breach. It promotes rule of law, human rights and private capital flows. In its absence or when it is weak private capital flow may be discouraged, transaction cost may be distorted and rent-seeking activities may become rampant (Agere, 2000).

Challenges of Leadership and Governance in the Management of Resources in Nigeria

1. Absence of development-oriented leadership:
Many observers of the development and crisis in Nigeria since independence agree that poor leadership has been a major factor. Most of the Nigerian leaders were not committed to development of their society (Adamolekun, 2005). According to Babawale (2007:7), one of the major challenges to development in Nigeria is that of bad leadership and ‘politics of belly’ that abound at all levels of governance in the country. He posits that “Nigeria lacks good quality leadership. To move forward as a nation, we need a new breed of leaders that are sensitive, patriotic, and accountable and have demonstrable vision.” For Yunusa (2009), over the years, Nigeria’s failure has been traced largely to a failure of leadership: most Nigerian leaders have come to power unprepared, and therefore unable to grapple with the modern world where democracy is the dominant ideology. This must have been the reason why Buhari (2008) observe that Nigeria lacks effective leadership to harness its rich human and material resources for development. Lack of accountability and transparency in government has helped to create wide distortions of income distribution throughout the society, thereby militating against development (Buhari 2008). Thus Nigeria’s inability to provide for her people is a function of the absence of effective leadership capable of harnessing the country’s abundant resources for the enhancement of the living standards of its people.

2. Corruption-Related Challenges
Another major obstacle to development in Nigeria is corruption amongst public officials, and which has been pervasive in governments of the country since independence in 1960. For example, within a span of twenty years, the country earned a total of USD300 billion or NGN46.5 trillion from the sale of crude oil in the international market without commensurate human and infrastructural developments to show for it due to embezzlement of public funds by government officials (Gberegbevie et-al, 2013). Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears to suffer tremendously from this malaise. Everyone appears to believe that the nation has a culture of corruption; Nigeria is a rich nation floating on oil wealth, but almost none of it flows to the people. The countless reforms and lack of genuity and integrity of our leaders have left Nigeria corrupt as ever. Politicians are expunged and later re-admitted into their parties, then, what hope for good governance when the leadership is deeply entrenched in corrupt practices? (M, 2000). Instances of corrupt practices by top
government officials have continued to abound in Nigeria at the federal, state and local government levels despite the nation having launched into the fourth republic of democratic governance in 1999. For example, in the year 2000, the Federal Government under the leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo initiated the National Identity Card Project (NICP). Regrettably, after 13 years of the project and investment of colossal sums of public funds, its objective is yet to be realized due to corruption on the part of government officials. The investigation carried out on the project by the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) in 2003 showed a contract scam of USD240 million involving top government officials including the then Federal Minister of Internal Affairs, Chief S.M. Afolabi, charged for receiving USD345, 000 as inducement to obtain his support to enable a company, Sagem S.A. of France, to execute the contract (cited in Onah, 2009:40).

3. Absence of Accountability and Transparency:
In Nigeria, there is complete absence of transparent and accountable leadership. A government is deemed to be accountable when its leaders (both elected and appointed) are responsive to the demands of the citizen. Furthermore, lack of accountability and transparency of public officials in the management of public funds manifested in 2005 when the government of former President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) gave USD2 billion to the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) without the approval of the Nigerian National Assembly (The Senate and Federal House of Representatives) (cited in Yunusa 2009). Poor management of public resources was also evident in the importation of goods that could have been produced in the country. For instance, between January and March 2011, even though the nation is a leading member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria imported refined petroleum products to the tune of USD1.34 billion or NGN 201 billion (Omoh 2011).

Thus, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, has lamented:

Nigeria does not support the growth of her local industries, but subject them to stiff competition. We export crude oil and we import refined petroleum products. We are the world’s number one producer of cassava but we import refined starch. We have a large cotton belt and we import textile fabrics from China. We have hides and skin and we do not have a leather goods industry. Nigeria spent USD1 billion in 2010 on the importation of rice, why should Nigeria import rice? Is there no land and the intelligence to farm? Or rice processing plants are high technology that is beyond the understanding of Nigerians? (Quoted in Akowe 2011:2).

4. Lack of Rule of Law
The leaders in Nigeria do not show respect to the rule of law, especially, judicial decisions. This hampers the judiciary to effectively discharge its duties. The predictability of the judiciary is not yet a reality in Nigeria, the political executives still undermine the independence of the judiciary through patronage appointments, and judicial administration is characterized by weak enforcement capacity. Good
governance is best enforced through the instrument of rule of law and independent judiciary. Citizen can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission or commission by a government and its officials. However, Nigeria has not done well in this regard; it has been corruption at all levels. And this corruption is not unconnected with profuse index of weak or poor leadership. Thus, poor leadership is a major obstacle to development in Nigeria, particularly due to inadequate levels of accountability and transparency in the handling of public affairs (Gberegbe et al, 2013).

5. Poor Management of Public Resources

Another instance of poor management of public resources is in the area of privatization of public enterprises in Nigeria. Alarmed by the poor handling of privatization of public enterprises in the country, the Nigerian Senate constituted an ad hoc committee to investigate the transactions of the Nigerian Bureau of Public Enterprises on behalf of the Federal Government. The committee discovered that the Aluminium Smelter Company of Nigeria, located at Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, whose construction was completed by the Federal Government in 1997 with a 540 Megawatt capacity electricity power plant for USD3.2 billion, was valued by the Nigerian Bureau of Public Enterprises in-house consultants for only USD250 million, and was eventually sold to a Russian company for a mere USD130 million in 2010 (Philips, 2011:30).

Similarly, investigations by the ICPC revealed a scam in the contract awarded to Solgas Energy Limited in 2003, at the cost of USD3.6 billion, for the construction of Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited in Kogi State of Nigeria. The investigations found that the cost of the project of USD3.6 billion, as claimed by the company through the support of top government officials, was far in excess of what was required, the realistic cost of the execution of the project having been USD1.5 billion, giving a contract inflation of USD2.1 billion (Onah, 2009).

Conclusion

This paper has examined the challenges of development in Nigeria as they relate to poor leadership and lack of good governance. It has also argued that the obstacles to development in Nigeria emanate from poor leadership at various levels of government (federal, state and local) that fails to subscribe to proper accountability and transparency in the management of public resources. We have also established that the historical experience of Nigeria has affected the nature of governance that has failed to effectively address the development needs and aspirations of the citizens. We conclude that if the war against the mismanagement of public resources and corruption amongst public officials is to be won, the Federal Government of Nigeria must reinforce the existing anti-corruption mechanisms. This will facilitate the strict compliance to rules governing the proper management of public resources by public officials as a strategy for enhanced development. We also observed clearly, that there is deficit in good governance. And these deficits can be corrected through a virile and active civil society, revamping of the economy and proper socialization in the society. And lastly the paper suggests that Leadership training should be provided for all categories of leaders. This will ensure that they know their rights and responsibility to the polity. Thereby imbibe the values of honesty and integrity which are the building blocks for provision of selfless service.
Recommendations

From all the foregoing anomalies, it is apparent that there is deficit in the governance process. But this can be corrected through an active and virile civil society. As Larry Diamond (1996) provides us some intellectual insights on the relevance of civil society in the following context:

1. An organized civil society serves as a watch dog to check the excesses of government, to expose and curtail or put a stop to human rights violation, abuse of the rule of law and infringements of constitutional provision.

2. Civil society organization can supplement the role of political parties in stimulating political participation, increasing the political efficiency and skill of democratic citizens, and promoting an appreciation of the obligation as well as the rights of democratic citizenship.

3. Civil society is considered as crucial arena for the development of other democratic attributes such as tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, and respect for opposing viewpoints, which are better experienced in organizational participation in civil society.

4. It serves to enhance the bargaining power of interest groups and provide inclusive mechanisms for them.

5. It helps in recruiting and training new political leaders, not only in technical and administrative skills but also in normative standards of public accountability and transparency.

The above intellectual exploits of Larry Diamond provides the civil society a variety of ways to chart the course of good governance and sustainable development. It is obvious the governing apparatus in Nigeria lacks the legal and bureaucratic means to check corruption and abuse of power but the civil society with its free, robust and inquisitive institutions has the capacity for pressing for institutional reforms which can fill that gap.

Again, revamping the economy is a critical factor in the evolution of good governance in Nigeria. A virile economic system will no doubt deal with the problem of poverty. It is impossible to address the problem of insecurity and promote peace and sustainable development with the degree of poverty in the country.

The evolution of good governance also requires proper socialization of the citizenry. Through this process, our children will acquire relevant attitudinal dispositions and behavioural patterns. In point of fact, proper socialization of the children by agents such as the family, school etc. will shape their behaviour and inculcate in them the values of discipline, hard work, and such other values that are promotive of good governance and democracy.

Moreover, Leadership training should be provided for all categories of leaders. This will ensure that they know their rights and responsibility to the polity. They must imbibe the values of honesty and integrity which are the building blocks for provision of selfless service.

Lastly, the anti-corruption commission should be strengthened by making it possible for it to initiate proceedings against all citizens and to prosecute offenders.
References


