

Good Governance as an Impetus for National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian state has been beleaguered with variegated challenges since the post-colonial history. Over this period, there has been a recurrent and sustained argument that the Nigerian state comparatively underperforms due to lack of credible and sustainable governance. Without good governance, there would be no accountability and transparency, rule of law and national development. It is the contention of this paper that the country has not experienced national development because the principles of good governance have been grossly undermined and thwarted. This paper, which utilized the qualitative methodology and draws data from secondary sources, examines the connection between good governance and national development in Nigeria and submits that only good governance offers the best prospects for national development. The paper concludes that the hope and assurance for national development in Nigeria rests in promoting good governance through the principles of transparency and accountability, rule of law, popular participation and consultation.

Keywords: Governance, Good Governance, National Development, Transparency, Corruption

1. Introduction

The Nigerian state for several decades has suffered considerable people-oriented and life changing governmental programmes and policies across levels of government. Successive administrations and Nigerian political leaders merely pay lip service to the twin concepts of good governance and development. They only popularize and mounted the ideas to gain access to political power and public offices after which they thereafter become either too lethargic to walk the talk or are consumed by what was now known as the “Nigerian system”. The Nigerian system is a euphemism for dysfunctional state of affairs of Nigeria’s public institutions and governmental agencies which have been perverted by consequences of dysfunctional governance.

The consequence of this poor attitude to governance includes, among other things; mass poverty, economic stagnation, political instability, corruption, unemployment, insurgency and terrorism, abuse of power and the principle of the rule of law, all of which reinforces one another. The overflowing mass poverty and the wide gap between the few rich and the massive

poor has been the result of a state with great potentials but which has ironically experienced a steady decline since oil windfall peaked several decades ago. The slow and disarticulated growth in tandem with rising population and mass unemployment have created dramatic increases in the poverty levels of Nigeria state thereby causing social and political disequilibrium. As a matter of fact, the epileptic growth, rising poverty and deep-rooted economic inequality constitute a direct cause of social instability and disarticulation especially in the areas of ethnic conflicts, religious bigotry, or separatist agitation or agenda in Nigeria.

The consistent call for good governance, therefore, is not a misplaced priority among the citizenry as it has been their major aspirations. The multiplying effects of entrenching good governance is widely understood to bring accountability and transparency, rule of law, justice, equity and national development. There are different perspectives to measure good governance taking into cognizance the peculiarities of each country. As a matter of fact, Improved performance of governmental agencies in every nation largely depends on good governance. It leads to an increase in people's living standards and socio-economic growth. It is through good governance that developmental projects and programmes are realized in any nation. In a state where good governance is thrown overboard, accountability of governmental institutions and progress of such states are likely to be highly un-realistic. A governance and leadership style that is operated on inequality, marginalization, infrastructural deficit and political unrest cannot by any standard facilitate national development. Good governance is a vital pre-requisite for the improvement of wellbeing of the citizen as it is indispensable for transforming the socio-economic potentials of any nation (Adenugba, 2013). The problem associated with bad governance in Nigeria, especially as regards to development programmes cannot be separated from the type of elected or appointed officials in place and the capacity of various successors to complete the uncompleted projects of his successors. According to Ojeife (2017), lack of integrity by appointed or elected leaders has been one of the biggest problems confronting good governance system in Nigeria.

It should be noted that, one of the most pernicious features of most African countries, Nigeria inclusive, is distrust of many citizens in public governance. More often than not, many government officials and many administrations often treat their citizens' welfare with disdain and with little or no regard to public accountability and transparency. The neglect to the rule of law, transparency, accountability which serves as conveyor belt to national development have been the bane of underdevelopment. Coincidentally, all these are largely the outcome of absence of good governance and people-oriented programme. Expectedly, this has put the development of Nigeria in doubt. According to Adenugba (2013) most countries who have made significant progress and development achieved it on the basis of good governance.

By an extension, x-raying the nation-state Nigeria from 1999 till date, it can be argued that, there has been immense optimism about the prospects for good governance. This same optimism motivated the citizens and successive governments in Nigeria to carry out some reforms and put some institutions in place so as to guarantee good governance and national development. But this has not materialized. As a matter of fact, lack of good governance has grossly undermined the efforts towards actualization of national development. Ogundiya (2010) cited in Ezeani, (2017), submits that lack of good governance is one of the major factors that has undermined economic development and popular trust in government, and which has subverted transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

This is corroborated by Ani (2011) that bad governance is the bane of Nigerian development. Without mincing word, a system that does not encourage and guarantee good governance could not possibly provide for national development. However, the most dangerous and protracted challenge that have frustrated governance in Nigeria is the widespread problem of endemic corruption. Corruption has become a contagious and a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the main fabric of our national existence. It has been the socio-economic and political problem enervating the development aspirations of the state. Corruption radiates and permeates every stratum of the Nigerian society, reduces the values system and has been institutionalized. Without mincing word, national development remains a vital future of a nation, as such, its realization is dependent on efficient application of good governance and development administration. This will culminate into the improved economy and better standard of living among the citizens. The trust of this paper, therefore, is to examine the concept of good governance as a condition for national development. The relationship between good governance and other key factors such as leadership and democracy, which are critical to growth and National development, will be considered.

Conceptual Clarification

Good Governance

In an attempt to examine the concept of good governance, it is important and equally essential to examine what governance entails. Governance refers to the exercise of political and administrative authority at all levels to manage a country's affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. When the institutions of a state are transparent, accountable, its governance terrain is then referred to as good. These critical institutions include the legislature, bureaucracy, Executive, Judiciary, Mass-media and other agencies of government. The process to actualize this includes important activities such as elections, legal procedures, execution of project which should be free from embezzlement, corruption and other form of socio-economic and political perversion or manipulation.

The extent to which a nation actualizes this height is a key measure of its credibility and legitimacy status among the comity of nations. Good governance enhances the operation of the elements of democracy like public participation, constitutionalism, and the rule of law. Indeed, the bench mark has been representative parliament which provides effective oversight on the executive and an independent judiciary which interpreted the law without state interference. By an extension, good governance represents governing the nation in the best possible way and in line with international best standard. The concept of good governance within the confines of democracy ensure that the ethical segment of civil society and the media anchors these agenda while ensuring that the wishes and aspiration of the weakest people in the society are brought to perspective. The essence of good governance can hardly be over-emphasized as a foundation of democracy and drivers of development. It is therefore the totality of accountability, transparency, rule of law, equitability, inclusivity, and commitment to the need of the people. Good governance revolves around on what makes institutions and rules more effective and efficient, in order to achieve equity, transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, and the rule of law. These aspects are crucial for human development and the eradication of poverty since ineffective institutions usually result in the greatest harm to those who are poor and vulnerable.

Sharma, Sadana and Kaur (2013) observed that, good governance establishes the rule of law, enforces contracts and agreement between the individuals, maintains law and order, guarantees security to the people, economizes on cost and resources, protects the government and properly delivers services to the society. It equally determines an optimal size of the government and makes best possible use of government resources. Good governance implements a clear-cut and unambiguous roadmap of people-oriented policy. Governance requires all hands to be on deck. It entails the sum total of the ways in which individuals and government institutions manage their common affairs for the good of the state and the citizens.

National Development

The concept of national development according to various literature have different meanings and interpretations. To however understand the concept, it is important to first examine what development entails. Development can be defined as the process of improving the quality of all human lives in the areas of raising peoples living level, i.e. their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education etc. through relevant economic growth process, creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect, and increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. Similarly, the meaning of development was elaborated by The Report of the South Commission (1993 cited in Ezeanyika, 2006) in this way:

Development is a process of self-reliant growth achieved through the participation of the people under their own interest as they see them and must be to end poverty, provide productive employment, and satisfy the basic needs of all the people, any surplus being fairly shared. This implies that the basic goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities and clean water must be accessible to all. In addition, development presupposes a democratic structure of government, together with its supporting individual freedoms of speech, organization and publication, as well as a system of justice, which protects all the people from actions inconsistent with just laws, that are known and publicly accepted.

Given the above, national development encompasses social, economic, technological and political growth or development (Unanka, 2001). National development entails the availability of basic necessity of life (food, clothing, education, medical services, shelter and water), elimination or reduction of poverty and unemployment. It equally focuses on increasing the people's choice, and participation in governance and maintaining the rule of law. Besides, it deals with raising the incomes and consumption levels of the people and equitable distribution of resources. When the indices of social, political, technological and economic development are growing at a high level and beyond doubt, national development is said to have taken place. But when the reverse is the case, it would be wrong to call the result national development.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the framework of common good theory. Common good theory occupies space in political and social philosophy. It is ultimately concerns with the welfare and interest of the people. Aristotle was considered by many as the father of common good theory and its development came through the works of political theorists and moral philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau etc. It is important to note that the works of Aristotle, "the politics", Thomas Aquinas' "Treatise on Law" and even Plato's "Republic" pointed to the fact that the creation of the state and the objective of government was to ensure good and betterment of man (Ani, 2011).

Thus, good and betterment of man is found in the common good. Based on this premise, Aristotle distinguished the right and wrong constitutions. Aristotle averred that the right constitutions pursue common interest, while wrong constitutions are in the interest of the rulers. By an extension, he argued that there is greater good in the common good than in the individual good even if the end is the same. This theory is most germane to the study. This is because, good governance pursues the common good. It focuses on the benefits of the community and not of any group or individual. By this token, good governance through transparency and accountability, rules of law and citizens participation, interplay to preserve

the interest of the people which in other words referred to as common good. In this light, good governance is found in common good and this is the foundation of national development.

Features of Good Governance

Good governance entails planned and changing administrative style that brings fast changing political, social, technological and economic arrangements. In determining the nexus between good governance and national development, it is very pertinent to note that both are not the same. But good governance is not only essential for national development but offers the best prospects of national development in terms of ensuring transparency and accountability, rule of law as well as popular participation and engagement. Therefore, the promotion of good governance has become a pillar of development policy. Sharma et al cited in Chimezie, (2016) analyze the elements of good governance to include:

• Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability

One of the ways through which national development could take place is through public accountability and transparency. Transparency means openness. It entails that the public office holders should be open to public inspection, investigation and scrutiny. In other words, there is no secrecy in public office as it belongs to the people and people should know from time to time what the officials and officers in public office are doing). On the other hand, accountability according to Ogunna (2015) connotes the obligation of the administrators to give a satisfactory account of their performance and the manner in which they have exercised powers conferred on them. Its main aim is to check wrong and arbitrary administrative actions and increase efficiency and effectiveness of administrative process.

Through the process of transparency and accountability, social, economic and national development become realistic as the public office holders are compelled to act in the best interest of the people. It is therefore this means that common good is achieved and national development is realized. Besides, the Nigerian political scenario shows that there is poor public transparency and accountability in view of the high level of corruption in governance which is a strong indicator of bad governance (Nnaeto & Okoroafor, 2016). The presence of accountability and transparency will increase government activities that can be felt particularly in the area of economic growth and development. This will in turn help to deliver social and economic goods and services to the people.

• Good Governance and Rule of Law

Good governance ensures the preservation of rule of law. It requires that public institutions comply with laid down rules and regulations guiding their conduct, and also sees that policies and laws are made, interpreted and enforced by fair legal frameworks that are impartially as well as the protection of the fundamental human rights particularly the minority (Ojeife, 2017).

It is however important to note that without independent and incorruptible judiciary, the rule of law would be thwarted. The need for the rule of law in Nigeria lies on the fact that it will strengthen the adoption of constitution for enhancement of good governance. Since 1999, Nigeria has witnessed various administrations. The preponderance of the instances of the rule of law by these different administrations has been worrisome. There are many instances of violation of the constitutional provisions and human rights. The more worrisome is the fragility of the judiciary in upholding the sanctity of the rule of law. Rule of law therefore is the cornerstone of democratic governance and constitutes part of national development. It ensures the supremacy of law and makes for a government of laws, and not of men. (Okoroafor, 2010). This is very indispensable as the existence of rules to guide the collective for the common good.

● **Good Governance Popular Participation and Engagement**

Good governance is a road map to democratic development as it serves as a springboard for citizen's engagement and participation in governance. Without popular participation and engagement, democracy is void. This is because it helps to build the spirit of patriotism, solidarity and understanding among the large ethnic groups that make up Nigeria (Adekanye cited in Adenugba, 2013). However, it is morally and lawfully dangerous and subversive of the worthy objectives or goal of the social contract entered into by Nigerians where right of citizens participation and engagement is denied. Our political system was based on the proposition that government is people centred and inspired but the attitude of most public office holders shows otherwise.

Unfortunately, Nigeria's democracy works contrary to the principles of popular participation and engagement. It subverts the wishes of the people as their preferred choice of leadership is not respected. This is often expressed through rigged elections which impose candidates and leadership on the people which negates people's participation leading to the problem of legitimacy of leadership. Not to be forgotten is institutional participation and engagement. Good governance has the capacity of strengthening the institutions of the state (such as legislature, civil service, executive, judiciary, press, political parties etc) in a manner that they can discharge their responsibilities constitutionally without compromise (Iheanacho, 2013). In other words, it is only when the institutions of the state are stable, strong and functional that common good can be realized and national development achieved. This therefore calls for the strengthening of the institutions of government.

● **Good Governance and Consensus Oriented**

Good governance should aim at reaching broad consensus after mediating different interests in the society for the best interest of the community. It aims at sustainable human development and also to achieve the goals of such development.

• **Good Governance, Effectiveness and Efficiency**

Good governance also rests upon the fact that the process and institutions should produce results to meet the needs of the society. It also entails proper utilization of resources at their disposal as well as in the government.

• **Good Governance and Responsiveness**

Good governance would be possible only when the institution and processes are responsive and serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time-frame.

Good Governance as Key to National Development: Nigeria in Perspective

Good governance manifests itself in all facets of society and the economy. Development cannot take place in an atmosphere of insecurity and unstable political system. It is in view of this that the World Bank has said that lack of development is a direct consequence of bad governance, emphasizing that bad governance inhibits the growth of the economy. According to the World Bank (2010) bad governance has many features, among which are, failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior in a manner that is conducive to development; or arbitrariness in the application of rules and law; excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, etc., which impede the functioning of markets, and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessive narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making.

As Obadan (1998) argues, where all these problems exist there is little or no room for development. Thus, bad governance hinders socio-economic and political development anywhere in the world. There is no doubt that national development can only be achieved where there is good governance and stable polity. Thus, Todaro (1986) asserts that there is a positive correlation between good governance and national economic development. Since governance in Nigeria and much of Africa has been pathetically bad, it is not surprising that national development has been correspondingly very slow, especially where there has been a long period of military interregnum as was the case in Nigeria.

Ogbu (1998) argues that inept political leadership and lack of organization constitutes a stumbling block to national development in Africa and the rest of the Third world. He says that these two variables provide a useful framework for appreciating and analyzing the internal dimension of the problem of national development in Nigeria and the rest of Africa. Ogbu argues further that the task of defining and pursuing national goals is carried out only by a relatively few political leaders who represent a small percentage of the total population of the country. The active involvement of the intellectual class will go a long way in defining appropriate goals and objectives and in also charting a clear course for development. Poverty

and unemployment rates are very high in Nigeria and the rest of Africa as a direct consequence of bad governance. Statistics show that 70.8% of Nigerians live below the poverty line of \$1 a day and up to 92.4% live below \$2 a day (The World Bank, 2010).

The high rate of youth unemployment of between 20 and 75% of Nigerian youths who graduate from tertiary institutions year in year out contributes to insecurity and high rate of crimes in the country. The springing up of the armed bandit, Boko Haram sect made up of idle youths in Nigeria is not unconnected with the usual frustration arising from unemployment. Public Policies such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), The Peoples Bank, Better Life for Rural Women (BLP) and the Family Support Programme (FSP), Peoples Bank and other such policies have failed to improve the living standard of the people in the country largely because of gross mismanagement of resources and official corruption.

For all these problems to be achieved, good governance is indispensable. Part of Nigeria's problem is that the country's development objectives and strategies have more often than not been set externally, and therefore not capable of addressing the peculiar problems and needs of the country. This problem has now been compounded by the phenomenon of globalization. There is an urgent need to create a virile but flexible workforce that can initiate development momentum in the new world economic order that is driven by globalization. This underscores the need to create a congenial atmosphere for enduring good governance in Nigeria and the rest of the Third World countries that are saddled with the problem of underdevelopment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria is one of the most endangered and embattled nations in Africa. Since its independence in 1960, it has been struggling for good governance which is a pre-condition for national development. Nigeria's democratic governance is driven by individuals who are self-centered as opposed to common good. This is largely the reason why transparency and accountability, rule of law as well as popular participation have remained an outcry. This is the bane of national development. However, to ensure that national development and common good of the people are realized, Nigeria needs a kind of governance that emphasizes public transparency and accountability, rule of law and popular participation and engagement.

In the light of the issues raised and discussed in the paper, it is obvious that a lot still needs to be done in Nigeria and Africa as a whole in terms of instituting a mechanism for good governance that will eliminate corruption in the high places and facilitate effective implementation of development policies. In a world already searching for improved implementation of sustainable development policies options, good governance has always been recognized as a vital mechanism for promoting such initiatives and a critical component to be

integrated in sustainable growth strategies to meet the sustainability development policy agenda. Deliberate efforts must be made to embark on capacity building of all the institutions of governance, especially the current President Buhari Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. There is also the urgent need to mobilize and motivate the civil society to collaborate with government in the process of pursuing Nigeria's development policy goals.

Secondly, the diverse ways to meet these needs are the involvement of citizens in decision making, adhering the democratic principles; good government for community development depend on appropriate institutions to facilitate good governance, so if appropriate institutions together with democratic principles in an era of governance, then good governance will be achieved and the impact will be seen in the development of the communities which in turn enhance national development.

Thirdly, good governance means transparency, the openness of the state business and conduct to the scrutiny of other state actors and of the public. As a result, democratic administrations should manifest the spirit of accountability, responsibility and responsiveness to ensure good governance in Nigeria. Not forgetting that, to foster good governance and effective development policies agenda an inclusive democratization process is urgently required. This process must enshrine all stakeholders; civil society, the organized labor, youth movement, women's groups, professional bodies, the media etc. There should also be a continued dialogue between government and this critical mass of the population as the needed driver to push for a regime of good governance. This positive collaboration would create the unity of purpose to confront obstacles to good governance such as official corruption, widespread insecurity, youth restiveness, social inequality, gender discrimination etc.

The increasing support being given to the government by many of these mass organizations is a step in the right direction. When growth strategies aim to fulfil expectations, the incorporation of good governance will undoubtedly catapult it to the forefront. Balanced governance involves a conducive and continuous interaction between the government and civil society as an involved player. The challenges of good governance require government activities to be reinvented, bureaucracy to be repositioned, civil society activities to be re-energized with a social motive. Re-invented governance should be visionary, egalitarian and energized in a manner with less machine-like and less hierarchical structure and procedure. The three arms of government should be allowed to efficiently perform their functions without influences. Administrators (political appointees and bureaucrats) should be trained and equipped with administrative tools to realize efficiency, government should strengthen the necessary legal and institutional framework for the implementation of economic policies that seek to integrate the private sector in the development process.

Issues of property rights, tax administration and a predictable justice administration system should be emphasized. This will contribute to the creation of a favourable environment for private investment and a strong public-private relationship, especially in infrastructure growth. There is an immediate need to implement functional education and human resource policies that represent national goals and address sustainability challenges. Implementing a blueprint or implementing a sustainability agenda on a people-oriented development strategy by the subsequent government, through differing political will, is an aspect of good governance. Instead of considering legislation implemented by an opposing faction, elected office holders often abandon the execution and fulfilment of those policies. This accounts for a high rate of abandoned projects scattered in all the nooks and crannies of the Nigerian nation, it is advisable that such move be avoided.

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