

Leadership Challenges and Nigeria Development. The Issues and Imperatives

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Abstract: *The study examined leadership challenges and Nigeria development: issues and imperatives. The most critical challenge confronting Nigeria is leadership. The present and past leaders of Nigeria seem to have failed to provide quality leadership capable of addressing numerous challenges confronting the country. These leadership challenges are evidenced in political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crises, which have bedeviled Nigerian socio economic development. The reverberation effects of the failure of leadership, corruption and bad governance are visible and being felt across all sectors and segment of the Nigerian society. Leadership and good governance are crucial to realizing any giant stride taken in pursuit of development anywhere in the world, Nigeria is not an exception. The Contingency Theory of Leadership propounded by Fred Fiedler was adapted. The study assesses the challenges of leadership in Nigeria and the characteristics of good governance. It was concluded that, to tackle the challenges of leadership that bedeviled the country, Nigeria needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. Leaders who place fairness at the center of decision making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve. It therefore recommended that leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.*

Keywords: Leadership, Development, good governance, rule of law

1.1 Background of the study

The crucial and major challenge confronting Nigeria and other developing countries of the world is leadership. The issue of getting the right leadership to propel good governance has been a recurring challenge in Nigeria and developing countries in general. The present and past leaders of Nigeria seem to have failed to provide quality leadership capable of addressing numerous challenges confronting the country. Governments are unable to set in place transparent and accountable institutions capable of securing economic progress, governing effectively, and protecting their citizens. This lack of capacity is amplified by recourse to authoritarianism and repression, dramatic economic decline precipitated by indiscriminate corruption, and the adoption of exclusive (ethnic) policies to assure self-succession tendencies. Inefficiency in governance has further deteriorated the Nigerian economy. Political instability and lack of proper accountability in the country have severely impeded the ability of successive governments to implement economic policies for the common good of the people, thus creating a lack of basic amenities for the people in the country Ejimabo (2013). The solution for addressing Nigeria's problems and consolidating democratic governance in the federal republic lies in having a government or leadership that works on the principles of good governance and is, most importantly, accountable to the Nigerian people. Good governance in Nigeria is essential to its stability, growth and development. Adejimi (2005) cited in Ejimabo (2013) indicated that in Nigeria, most of the policy makers as well as those involved in decision making are engaged in bribery, egoism, power, and trade liberalization. Fagbadebo (2007) stated that the Nigerian State is a victim of high-level corruption, bad governance, political instability, and a cyclical legitimacy crisis. The country's authoritarian leadership faced a legitimacy crisis, political intrigues, in an ethnically differentiated polity, where ethnic competition for resources drove much of the pervasive corruption, and profligacy.

The history of a great nation is linked to purposeful leadership. Such leaders have played significant roles in the socio-economic development and political emancipation of their nations. In Nigeria, leadership has failed to harness the resources and the ingenuity of the people for national development. The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. The nature of political leadership became a problem as most of them lost or lacked control of effective leadership. This led to the scramble for state resources to suit their personal desires.

Onodugo (2016) asserts that corruption and lack of vision among past and present leaders of Nigeria culminate to hamper any meaningful effort in the quest for good governance in the country. It is often said that no country can develop beyond the level of its leadership. Nigeria needs committed leaders who will govern with integrity and doggedly influence its human and natural resources toward the actualization of sustainable national development. This paper focused on leadership challenges and development in Nigeria. This paper seeks to conceptualized

leadership and development, discusses and assesses the leadership challenges in Nigeria and characteristics of good governance, lastly recommended a way out of these leadership challenges.

1.2 Conceptual Clarification

The word Leadership has been defined in so many ways by different scholars and as a result, it has become almost an impossibility to come up with a single definition that is acceptable to scholars of various divides. Leadership has been defined as a necessary phenomenon in political field. It is the capacity in a person or in a group of persons to inspire confidence and thereby regard for himself or themselves to guide and govern the followers (Okaneme, 2017). Leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behavior Ogunmilade, Nwoko & Akhigbe (2017). Political leadership is the decision on social policy and resources allocation, as exerted by pattern representatives (Okadigbo, 1987; Abbott, 1947; Cranston, 1964). These definitions suggest that the leadership process is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resources, which determines the locus of power. Leadership is the ability to influence the behaviour of others in a group or organization, set goals, for the group, formulate paths to the goal and create some social norms in the group (Uveges, 2003). Leadership involves the exercise of social power. Thus, by exerting a profound effect on personal behaviour, individual and organization productivity, adjustment to working situations, and morale in organizations, leadership should not be viewed separately from social power (Nwagboso & Duke 2012). Omolayo (2006) describes leadership as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working without any difficulty. According to him, leadership makes the difference between success and failure in a country. The qualities of good leadership according to Orji and Ekpo (2010) include transparency, accountability, honesty, diplomacy, etc. A leader is someone who leads a group of people in the direction of the accomplishment of set goals.

Development is process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are Raising peoples' living levels, i.e. incomes and consumption, levels of food, medical services, education through relevant growth processes, Creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples' self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect and Increasing peoples' freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. Development is therefore realisation of increased self-esteem and self-reliance. People should be capacitated to have power to influence and control their own future. i.e this concept does not only mean capacity building for socio-economic achievement, but also political empowerment so that people have power to influence their future (Wetmore & Theron 1997).

According to Kolade (2012), Governance involves participation by both the governor and the governed (i.e. the leader and the follower). Salman (2009) asserts that Governance entails the procedure through which governments are selected, monitored, held accountable, and replaced; it is government's ability to judiciously manage resources well and formulate, implement as well as enforce good policies and regulations; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction between them. Dickson (2011) said that good governance in relation to a popular democracy ought to be hinged on two basic things; the first is a constitution fit to the distinct needs and circumstances of Nigeria as ethno-religious, multi-dimensional, and political economic structure. Secondly, a leadership fit not only to the pressing needs of Nigeria but the exact needs of its citizens. He reiterated that generally, good governance does not call for ordinary type of leadership but it requires tolerance, breadth of outlook, intellectual comprehension, hard work, selfless devotion, statesmanship, a burning sense of mission, etc. to make a success of leading Nigeria as a nation.

2.1 Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on contingency theory of leadership propounded by Fred Fiedler in 1958

The Contingency Theory of Leadership states that a leader's effectiveness is contingent upon with how his or her leadership style matches to the situation. That is, the leader must find out what kind of leadership style and situation he or she thrives in. Fiedler believed that one's effectiveness to lead depended on their control of the situation and the style of leadership. The Contingency Theory can be used to create leadership profiles for organizations, in which certain styles can be matched with situations that have proven to be successful (Gupta, 2009). Contingency Theory is a useful (although not always practical) tool for predicting leadership success within an organization. Contingency Theory believes that leadership styles are fixed and promote matching leaders with situations.

2.2 Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria

Lack of Rule of Law: The rule of law is a principle or system where a society or nation is governed by a set of legislation instead of by an individual making the whole decision. Rule of law makes it impossible for one person to have the unrestrained exercise of power over a society or nation. It applies and puts a limit or check to the behavior of everyone including government officials. The level of poverty and illiteracy in Nigeria is also a limitation to the

rule of law. A lot of people live in ignorance of their constitutional rights which makes it easy for people to infringe their rights. Nigerian leaders do not show respect to the rule of law, especially, judicial decisions. This hinders the judiciary from discharging its duties effectively. The judiciary is so unpredictability because the political elites still undermine the independence of the judiciary through patronage appointments, and judicial administration is marked by weak enforcement capacity.

Absence of Accountability and Transparency: lack of openness and accountability remain a frightening legacy of the Nigerian leadership since 1960 to date. A country where corruption is entrenched can never have a transparent and accountable system. Transparency and accountability are absent in Nigerian leadership. An accountable government is one that is responsive to the demands of the citizen. Accountability is best enforced through the instrument of an independent judiciary and the rule of law. 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 accountability and lack of transparency. Nigerian leaders abuse public office for private gain.

Corruption Challenges: Although corruption is a global problem, Nigeria appears to suffer greatly from this menace. Corruption is a huge problem Nigeria has been fighting with since independence. It started with government officials and has gradually eaten deep into every other area of the economy. It's very rare to see a government official who isn't corrupt nowadays. Currently, Nigeria ranks very high in the league of corrupt nations, and as stated by ex British Prime Minister David Cameron, Nigeria is a "fantastically corrupt" country with corrupt leaders. This problem has been there since independence and has gotten worse. The countless reforms and lack of honesty by our leaders have left Nigeria poor as poor can be. 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. Corruption is one of the greatest threats to good governance today (Iyoha, et al 2015). It is a social problem which hampers development and robs people of the chances for any significant economic as well as social advancement (Okeyim, Ejue, & Ekanem 2013). Corruption slows down economic growth and investment. Economic growth and development in Nigeria for over twenty years has been soiled with misappropriation and embezzlement of funds even with the return of democracy, turning the country's economy into an underdeveloped nation with least position in international ratings (Abullahi 2009).

Lack of Ideology: The lack of ideology is the tragedy of our politics since 1999. An ideology is a collection of ideas or beliefs shared by a group of people. It may be a connected set of ideas, or a style of thought, or a world-view. There are two main types of ideologies: political ideologies, and epistemological ideologies. Political ideologies are sets of ethical ideas about how a country should be run. Epistemological ideologies are sets of ideas about the philosophy, the Universe, and how people should make decisions. In Nigeria, the political elites constitute a non-productive class who rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over-politicization of the Nigerian state is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political contest ensured the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centered political gains.

2.3 Characteristics of good governance

The primacy of leadership in the governance project (Chikendu, 1987) rests on the ability of the leadership to see beyond the perceptual vista of the people, appreciate their needs and inspire and motivate them to cherish and desire these needs as goals that should be achieved. Indeed, ensuring good governance for achieving peace, security and sustainable development rests with the leadership. Governance should have a number of characteristics to be considered as good governance. Reviewing the relevant literature it has been found out that various international organizations have set different types of characteristics for good governance. This paper discusses the main characteristics of good governance as below:

Transparency: Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them. Good governance requires transparency in public procedures, process, investment decision, contracts and appointment. It is not sufficient that information simply be available, it must also be reliable and presented in useful and understandable ways to facilitate accountability (Rahman 2016)

Consensus orientation: is a group decision-making process in which group members develop, and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole group or common goal. It is used to describe both the decision and the process of reaching a decision. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned with the process of deliberating and

finalizing a decision, and the social, economic, legal, environmental and political effects of applying this process. Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, Where possible, on policies and procedures.

Rule of law: Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights. One of the main characteristics of good governance should be its capability to formulate effective and implementable laws and policies. Good governance should have the ability to implement the established rules, regulations, laws and policies of the land. Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force

Accountability & Transparency: Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organisations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisations and whether the decision is internal or external to an organisation. The extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media (Mogilevsky, 2010). Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Transparency in good governance entails that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms of media. Transparency in government decision-making and public policy implementation reduces uncertainty and may help inhibit corruption among public officials.

Strategic vision: Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded. The leader should have the qualities of a visionary: he must lead others to see a future that could be different notably from the present and to adhere to this vision by inspiring them through his words and his actions. Indeed, visionary leaders develop values and create and interpret the objectives of the institution, they are models, and they produce meanings, open doors and shape the culture of the organization. They are persistent and consistent and have such a powerful vision that they know what they want from each interaction. Their visions do not blind others, but give them strength (Egan, 1985 cited in Korbi 2015).

Securing Property: Securing the properties of the people is one of the most important characteristic of good governance. Players of Good Governance at every level at the national, international, and corporate level should be able to secure people's properties.

Control of Corruption: Corruption remains a priority concerns to the Nigerian Government and People. Corruption affects all aspects of public life, continues to undermine the social, economic and political development of the country and is a major obstacle to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Good Governance should be in a position to control corruption (Mogilevsky, 2010)

Participation: All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively (Rahman 2016).

3.1 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To truly clean up the bad leadership and corruption, Nigeria needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty and community. Leaders who place fairness at the center of decision making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve. The country needs people who are educated, and sincere and honest both in administration and leadership styles. In the Nigerian leadership situation, self-less and charismatic leaders are needed to amend the wrong. The most fundamental measure required in confronting the challenge, and averting the Nigerian state from failure and collapse is strategic and progressive leadership. The importance of strategic leadership is that it identifies and harmonizes national capabilities to achieve the national interest. The following recommendations classified as long-term are proffered to meet this challenge. Undertake concerted development, broadly understood as progress toward stable, accountable society. Restructure the polity to ensure equity, justice and fairness. Leader should be creative. Indeed, creativity plays an important role in the quality of decisions: the ability to propose innovative solutions is essential to decision-making process such as the development of new opportunities and problems diagnosis. Leaders should help arouse their followers' uniqueness and potential innovation perspective for more effective problem solving without direct intervention from their leader. Leaders should have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs, and problems of the citizens in the country.

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