

Governance Crisis and the Crisis of Leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract

The nature of governance in any given political system is determined by the quality of leadership in power. Nigeria, a nation endowed with natural and human resources still battles with crisis of leadership and governance after fifty-one years of independence. This paper discussed the causes of governance crisis and the crisis of leadership in Nigeria. The data used for the paper was sourced from secondary method of data collection. The paper concluded that transformational leadership is required for good governance in Nigeria

Keywords: Leadership, Governance, Nigeria, Crisis, Development, Government, independence and Service Delivery

Introduction

The socio-economic and political development of any country depends largely on the ability of its leadership to facilitate, entrench and sustain good governance. Importantly, good governance is a manifestation of committed, patriotic and discipline leadership. Nigeria has existed for over fifty-one years with little or no record of socio-economic development. This ugly trend is not unconnected with poor leadership. It is logically unbelievable and appalling that despite the long years of independence, Nigeria the so called “giant” of Africa is still battling with the problem of good governance. The crop of leaders that have attained leadership position since independence had in one way or the other lacked vision, most of them have been engrossed with corruption and political bickering leading to the enthronement of maladministration and mismanagement of public resources, and consequently economic setback and abject poverty as nation heritage.

Significantly, Nigeria is among the countries of the world endowed with natural and valuable resources that are capable of improving socio-economic status and living standards of the citizenry. But the reverse has always been the case. In view of this ugly trend one begins to

wonder the kind of “giant” Nigeria is bearing in Africa, after fifty one (51) years of independence of both military and civilian ruler ships.

It has been observed in Africa, particularly in Nigeria that poor leadership and leadership failure has been responsible for governance crisis since independence and this trend has continued unabated.

It is against this background that this paper examines leadership and governance crisis in Nigeria since independence with a view to providing alternative method and style of leadership that can enhance good governance.

Leadership and Governance: A Conceptual Analysis

According to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) research project, “Good governance is the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised; the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced; the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently, and to formulate, implement and enforce sound policies and regulations; and, the respect for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them” (cited in Onigbide, 2007).

UNDP (1997) described good governance as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country’s affairs, comprising the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences. It encompasses the political, economic, legal, judicial, social and administrative authority and therefore includes; government, the private sector and the civil society. It also includes both a broad strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more democratic (Minogue, 1997 cited in Abe, 2010). In the words of Healey and Robinson, it implies “a high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy formulation and the policies actually pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and public welfare (1994). In addition to participation, accountability and transparency as enunciated by the UNDP report, good governance according to Healey and Robinson also include openness and the rule of rule.

The World Bank defined good governance in a more robust manner when it averred that, “it is the means of exercising power in the management of a nation’s economic and social resources for sustainable development” (World Bank, 1992). Potter (2000) calls good governance “sound development management” that is the totality of public sector management; accountability; legal framework for development (reforms); information and technology; the acceptance of government by the people; the capacity of governments to initiate appropriate policies, make far-reaching decision; implement them effectively for service delivery. Good governance can also be linked to the extent which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens,

competent to assure law and order, and deliver public services, able to create an enabling public environment for productive activities and equitable in its conduct.

Adamolekun (2002) simply views governance as the process of exercising political power to manage the affairs of a nation. He listed the main elements of governance as; rule of law, freedom of speech and association, free and fair election, accountability, probity and transparency and result oriented leadership.

Governance means initiating, directing and managing public resources, organizing people, directing subordinates to put in their best to achieve good result in a given assignments. It is about ensuring that things are done accordingly, accountability is maintained through the instruments of governance. In the realm of public affairs, governance is seen as the range of policies public officials make and means they employ to manage the affairs of society (Ukaegbu, 2010). The need for good governance has been emphasized as an ingredient of progress. It is essentially necessary in Nigeria. This is because of its ability to propel positive changes.

A leader can be described as anybody that can influence others to perform beyond their formal authority. Leadership emerge because every society is organized. The masses cannot lead. There is a need to have a few people who will lead (Ujo, 2001). Leadership is both the adhesive that binds a work group together and the catalyst that triggers employee motivation, thereby having major influence on organization performance.

Omolayo (2005) 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. It involves giving direction to citizens who are the critical assets of the nation.

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).

Transformational leadership has core values of goals, visions, and the means to unite with followers to ensuring that such goals are achieved. He also takes the responsibility of ensuring that people are mobilized to participate in the process of change, and encourages a sense of collective action. Essentially, transformation leadership is the type that strives to make leaders out of the available followers. Such generated leaders are dispersed across sectors of economy to ensure that the mission and visions of progress created at different centres of power are executed based on the needs of citizens and that the later actively involved in goal implementation. With this, the transformational leader takes people beyond pre-occupation with basic needs and scraping by, as it is today in most parts of the country, and sets the pace for individual and national self-actualization.

As a matter of fact, transformational leaders work independently and courageously to make choices that are best for the country within the international system of economic, political and cultural interaction; lead the citizen to bring back quality and excellence to education, revitalize infrastructural facilities and modernize productive activity in agriculture and industry; insert skilled indigenous professionals and labour centre stage of building national development infrastructure.

Transformational leadership is inward looking and conscious of the benefits that its society can derive from the international environment. It takes the responsibility of the national or local problem depending on the layer of leadership; deploys skill, knowledge imagination and energy to solution to most problems and assists followers to realize their hidden and untapped capabilities. The transformational leader is always physically present to monitor projects at sites. He also receives report from the subordinates to ensure that policies and projects are implemented according to designs and specification. This style of leadership relegates corruption to the background, and brings sanity, transparency and accountability to the fore. This is the legacy of transformation left by transformational leaders in many countries of the World (Ukaegbu, 2010).

Assessment of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria in the Last Fifty One (51) Years

According to World Bank study of sub Sahara Africa (SSA), “The problem of Africa’s Development is a crisis of governance; the study affirmed that because of the selfish interest of some state officials, who have served in one capacity or the other and have deliberately refused to give account of their activities while in office. Such office become personalized and politicised, thus paving ways for unnecessary patronage, which consequently undermine the authority of the leadership. It thus becomes difficult for a sustainable and dynamic economy to grow in such environment (World Bank, 1989).

Basically, fifty one year independence is worth celebrating. But there is absolutely nothing to show for this fifty-one year of existence. Nigeria of today cannot compete favourably with its counterpart in the march to development, especially in the areas of quality of life, infrastructural facilities, basic needs of life and technological development. This development problem was traced to inadequate and qualified personnel, lack of enough fund and low technology to drive the vehicle of development immediately after independence. But this is fifty-one years after independence now, why is Nigeria still lagging behind? Should we still continue to hinge our underdevelopment on personnel and finance problem? Of course No, the major constraint to Nigeria’s development is lack of transformational leadership. According to Onigbude (2007) “regrettably poor leadership performance has remained with us despite years of complaints and grumbling. We have acquiesced in our own progressive destruction by submitting ourselves to the leadership of political misfits”. It is surprising that the so much expected dividends of democracy eluded the mass of the people, while the leadership has remained unaccountable to them.

According to Odekunle (2007) most of the problems Nigeria is facing today particularly, in term of development are caused by the sharp practices of our past and present leaders. In terms of accountability, transparency and service delivery, despite the abundance of human and natural resources that make the country the toast of many nations, our leaders have not been at their best as people's expectations of a better hope and opportunities have long be dashed, with governance ingredients still at its elusive stage to Nigerians. The leadership problem that has confronted Nigeria since independence is making the polity deteriorating. Few of the leaders if any, work for the development of the country more often than not, their policies are hastily put together and poorly executed.

As a matter of fact, going by all the development parameters and performance indices, Nigerians leaders have failed, economically, macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline, economic reforms, due process and relatively low inflation rates that the state could claim to have achieved sit alongside weak business confidence, low growth, massive unemployment, and rising inequality between the rich and the poor. Nigerians per capita GDP is nothing to reckon with, poverty is widespread and about 54 percent of the population is living on less than One US dollar Per Day. Nigeria ranks low on Human Development indices (HDI), ranked by the United Nations in 2007 as 157th out of 177 countries, down from 148th out of a total of 173 in 2003. The country's human development index of 0.453 in 2005 was lower than the average index for sub-Saharan Africa (0.515) and thereafter was rated as 13th least viable countries of the World. While corruption, which every government has always promised to eradicate at its inauguration continued unabated (Azeez, 2010).

The current republics are a semblance of the previous republics in terms of leadership and governance. It becomes difficult for one to distinguish military leadership from civilian leadership in Nigeria. Though, Nigeria has been ruled by the military for a longer period since independence than by civilians. But yet, there is no evidence of leadership performance to differentiate civilian leaders from military rulers.

Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria

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.

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. Available evidence in the development literature on transformational leaders who have significantly reduced poverty in their respective countries during the past quarter century does not generate any consistent conclusion regarding the factors that contributed to the successes. The leaders of the success stories in Chile, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, all

demonstrated strong commitment to development, with clarity of vision and of goal (Adamolekun, 2002).

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. Accountability 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 accountability and lack of transparency. The leaders abuse public office for private gain.

Corruption challenges: although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria appears to suffer tremendously from this malaise. Every one 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.

Electoral malpractices challenges: This problem has become a popular phenomenon in Nigerian politics. As a matter of fact, an average Nigerian believes that elections cannot be won except it is rigged. Yes, this is an extent at which our electoral system has deteriorated. Electoral malpractice is not a recent phenomenon, in fact, it has existed since independence and has continued to exist, even, in a modernized fashion. Our leaders are the architect of electoral fraud, for instance, in the first republic, the leadership of various political parties were accused and alleged of election rigging. The same happened in the second republic. And forth republic was also not different. If by now, our leaders, the so called politicians are not ready to face free and fair election I doubt if good governance can be entrenched by these same set of people who are so desperate in their bid to clinch to power at all cost.

Conclusion

The paper, having analyzed and discussed leadership and governance in Nigeria since independence went ahead to suggest viable means of generating transformational leaders who are capable of entrenching and sustaining good governance in Nigeria. It is reasonable that those vying for elective positions should be carefully and strictly screened to ensure that credible candidates are elected into various offices. It is also important that every appointment into sensitive and strategic position must be based on merit. Merit rather favouritism or nepotism should be allowed to determine who occupies any position of authority and responsibility within the polity. This will ensure the appointment of credible, competent and qualified citizen as leaders, and consequently enhance the quality of governance. In addition to this, the electoral process should give people opportunity to interact with all contestants from different political parties to enable the people screen candidates based on their mission and vision for the people. This will allow for a good choice among the candidates by the people.

Unlike the present situation in Nigeria, where candidates are super imposed on the citizen by their political parties or political godfathers. On a final note, it is instructive at this juncture to note that Nigeria, since independence has produced a pattern of leadership characterized by coups, countercoups, corruption and instability. As Nigeria grows daily both in age and size, the need for capable hands to handle its affairs cannot but be emphasized, as this remain the only panacea for the desirable changes people have been clamouring for since the creation of Nigerian state. This is a straight road to good governance. With the present crop of leadership in Nigeria, good governance may be unattainable, except for the emergence of transformational, selfless competent and discipline leaders who are ready to make sacrifices for the development of their country.

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