GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY & INCLUSIVENESS AS PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

A BOOK OF READING

IN HONOUR OF:

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NIGERIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: QUESTIONING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ETHICS OF YESTERYEARS AND YEARS TO COME

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Abstract

Developed societies are by products of honest and accountable leaders who form the crux of ethics of public administration. Leaders in this context plan the process and situation of achieving development by practical examples thereby convincingly carrying everyone along. The holistic implementation of researches meant for societal development differentiates ethical leaders from unethical ones. In Nigeria, corruption erodes ethics of government so much to the extent that it has been accepted as a process of government. This paper takes a retrospective view on Nigeria's public administration vis-à-vis leader's ethics in government. The paper argues that since Nigeria's first republic, there is no study or programme initiated by the government that has been holistically implemented for social development. This is because the government at any point in time in Nigeria is grossly unethical. Simply put, the government is corrupt. An ethical government leads by practical example; hence Nigeria has been unable to make any tangible developmental progress. Ethics in public administration stipulates that programmes meant for social development must be executed and those that constitute hindrance to the implementation must be sanctioned. In most cases, Nigerian leaders hinder development through embezzlement and mismanagement without sanction. The paper recommends that for Nigeria to achieve socio-economic development, the rule of law must be effective and the strict enforcement of the law must be without a sacred cow. Finally, the present fight against corruption must be followed to a logical conclusion.

Keywords: Corruption, Development, Ethics, Leaders, Public Administration

1. Introduction

The administration of human society demands leaders' prudency, meticulousness, honesty, and accountability since these attributes support truly developed nations. The complexity of the leadership task is embedded in the fact that they must co-ordinate studies and researches which implementation gives society desired outcomes.. The achievement of this singular task characterise most of European and American and Asian countries thereby certifying their leadership ethics. The certification of the ethical status of leaders confirms their exemption from corruption and involvement in aiding and abetting corrupt acts of different magnitude. Despite these examples, especially those acquired from Britain, Nigerian leaders still flaunt

corruption to the rest of the world. Ajibewa (2006) noted that a bit more of the traumatic political and economic background of Nigeria might also help us to analyse the lingering issues of distress-democracy and corruption in the country. Nigeria is one of the world's most endowed nations, with abundant human and natural resources. However, Nigeria remains one of the developing but under-industrialised nations of the world. Many observers see Nigeria, once the 'giant of Africa', now economically bankrupt due to morally bankrupt leaders' that mishandled the economy. The manifestation of Nigeria's leaders lack of commitment to public administration due to mismanagement, misappropriation and misapplication of public funds are factors that question the ethics of Nigerian leaders in public administration.

2. Theoretical Basis

The continuous existence of the society is possible on different logical platforms. This amounts to the fact that the phenomenon is connected to the continuous existence of human society as argued by the structural functionalist that the society is a complex system which parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. Functionalism interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole. As Durkheim suggested functionalism conceptualises society as more than the sum of its component parts. Each part is "functional" for society-that is, contributes to the stability of the whole. The different parts are primarily the institutions of society, each of which is organised to fill different needs, and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The parts are each then dependent on one another (Andresen and Taylor, 2005).

The society consists of various institutions that are inter-connected and interrelated. The political institution is the nucleus of society which co-ordinate other institutions for societal development. Social institutions are social structures which give our lives shape. Social structures can be understood in terms of their social functions or consequences for the operation of the society as a whole (Jain, 2012). The function of the electoral body which is a branch of the political structure is to conduct free and fair election. Collaboration with any political party at rigging an election can spell doom for the society. In the same vein, the consequences of corrupt leadership cannot be underestimated in that the nation's peace, progress and development have been auctioned for egocentrism. The consequences of the malfunctioning of the political structure are enormous because other structures of the society first lack co-ordination, and the entire societal growth will be stuck in a stalemate (Bolaji and Zubair, 2016).

More importantly, the first national development plan coincided with the political crisis of 1962 in the western region, the national census crisis of 1962-1964, the general election crisis of 1964, and the western regional election crisis of 1965 which eventually resulted in coup d'état and the crumbling of the first republic (Dare and Oyewole, 2002). These crises were due to corruption of different magnitude ranging from electoral malpractices to figure falsification in population census and the likes. The assumption of office by the military and the ouster by another set of military men totally abrogated the actualisation of the first national developmental plan. The second national development plan which attempted at addressing the limitations of ISI strategy was to span across 1970/1974 and placed emphasis on the upgrading of local production of intermediate and capital goods for sale to other industries. The plan

coincided with Nigeria's newly acquired status as a major petroleum producing country thereby not starved of fund, but instead of using the enormous fund for reasonable industrial take-off, the plan was turned to avenue of misappropriation, misapplication and mismanagement, hence the failure (Bolaji and Zubair, 2016).

The third national developmental (1975-1980) plan failed to advance the course of industrial development despite allocating ₦42 billion to the project because there was little concern for the country's technological capacity acquisition. This implies that the country depended wholly on imported machinery and raw materials. Ideally, leaders are expected to know the provisions needed for the development of the society. If a nation desires true development, such country will avoid foreign expertise which is not dependable. Rather indigenous human resources are trained to be readily available for the development of the immediate society. Nigeria's leaders' failure to do this meant corruption, that is, collaborating with expatriates in delivering questionable services, or deliverance of the service at inflated costs.

The fourth national development plan (1981-1985) according to Onipede (2010) coincided with the inception of a global economic recession which sparked declining foreign exchange earnings, balance of payment disequilibrium and unemployment in the Nigerian economy. As a result, the hugely import based manufacturing sector was severely hit because the expatriates were maintained with hard currency. This reveals why Nigerian leaders never bothered to develop local expertise since they benefit from the imported ones. Indeed, this global recession exposed profound weakness in Nigeria's industrial structure and planning. It was evident at the end of the fourth development decade in Nigeria that existing strategies targeted at industrial development could neither solve the problem of economic under development nor the social ones created by mass poverty.

Amodu (2010) noted that you need not be a Nigerian to identify the common theme with the following names: Joshua Dariye, James Ibori, Sanni Abacha, Bode George, Ibrahim Babangida, Patricia Etteh, Salisu Buhari, Diezani Allison Maduekwe among others. This is just a few among political leaders of Nigerian origin, who have been alleged of one form of corrupt practice or the other at one time or another. Politicians of both the Islamic, Christian and Traditional faiths and inclinations have been found corrupt at one time or the other. The Nigerian political landscape between 1960 till date is characterised by unstable, erratic and unpredictable leadership.

Fairbanks (1999) argues that leadership and governance in Nigeria is bedeviled with fraud in the form of trickery, swindle, counterfeiting, racketing and forgery, nepotism, in the form of exempting some category of persons in the application of certain laws or regulation. Extortion in the form of using violence or threats to extract money or other resources, embezzlement in the form of theft of public resources by officials employed by the state, and favoritism in the form of abuse of the apparatus of office in an even distribution of state resources, among others. These acts exhibited by Nigerian leaders negate public administration which requires selfless service to humanity.

According to Ogaba (2008), is useful to think about nation-building as an ongoing process that continually tests the ability of national leaders to deal with problems, some of which are fundamental. In the course of public administration, leaders commit blunder, sometimes deliberately and at other times unintentional. These blunders lead to different crises as specified by Ogaba (Ibid). They are crisis of identity, crisis of legitimacy, crisis of penetration, crisis of participation and crisis of distribution. These crises are outcomes of leadership unethical behaviours cum corruption which negatively infer on Nigeria's socio-economic development. This is responsible for the failure of Nigeria's leaders in public administration.

3. Rule of Law and Public Administration

The rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, public and private including the state itself are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and legal transparency (Agbebaku and Edeko, 2010). If this principle actually works as stated in Nigeria, no Nigerian leader will be acquitted of all the crimes against inhuman doctrines and maladministration so enormous that cannot be ascertained.

Obviously, these leaders are guilty of political, ethnic and religious violence, intolerance of opposition, executive/legislature feud, political high handedness, muffling and harassment of the press, increase in poverty level, high crime rate, among several others which Aliagan (2008) referred to as pains of democratic governance. Nigerian leaders according to Bolaji, Adeoye, Afolayan, Kuranga and Salami (2017) engage in different corrupt acts to support and sustain their social class. These include electoral crises such as the general election crisis of 1964, the western regional electoral crisis of 1965 that lead to wanton destruction of lives and properties (Dare and Oyewole). The October 1965 regional elections continued with the mistakes of the 1964 elections in terms of election misappropriation. It was in fact as if Nigeria was a cursed nation (Iwara, 2010). The political violence that led to the destruction of many electorates was masterminded by Nigerian leaders for their selfish means.

Equally, the various embezzlement and mismanagement such as the Halliburton bribery scandal which involved three former Nigerian heads of state/president, and other top government dignitaries, questions if the public administration ethics of leaders could be adjudge, then the nations socioeconomic development would have been rightly developed. The various monumental mismanagement charged against people like Diezani Allison Madueke and a host of other Nigerian leaders are yet to be decided. If the rule of law actually operates in the true sense, then these cases would have been concluded including the charges of aiding and abetting theft leveled against the former Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki.

4. Conclusion

For Nigeria's future to be bright, order must first be established. The law must be enforced on all citizens irrespective of status. Much as it has been established that the hindrance to the

nation's development was the making of the leaders, the democracy practiced must embrace public participation in that the electorates will have much say as a means of practicing the referendum, the initiative and the recall. If Agagu's (2010) assertion that public policy can be seen as an intention, pronouncement, a general plan or action adopted by a government to solve a social problem, counter a threat, deal with a given circumstance or pursue an objective in a given state, is accepted, then all citizens must participate to ensure full implementation of a desired policy. Finally, if the future administration of the Nigerian nation would not be put to question, the rule of law must strictly operate on both the leaders and the led.

5. Recommendations

This paper proffers the following recommendations for a prosperous Nigeria:

- Leadership must be strictly ethical, that is contestants to political positions should be totally screened of crimes or dent in records.
- All studies and researches initiated by the government for societal development should be publicised for close watch and holistic implementation.
- Electoral processes should be open to electorates for proper monitoring of their activities.
- There must be strict enforcement of the rule of law on all citizens.
- Leaders involved in corruption should attract severe sanction to serve as deterrents to others.
- Immunity clause should be removed from all political positions.

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