

NIGERIA@50: THE ROLE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS ACHIEVING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND STABILITY IN FLEDGELING DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, a country endowed with abundant natural, mineral and human resources is grappling with problem of development, fifty-one years after flag independence. She has been overtaken in development by some other developing countries notably Indonesia, Malaysia and Venezuela. Today, she is faced with myriad of problems prominent among which are poverty, corruption, insecurity, kidnapping, ethno-religious crises and many more. These problems can be attributed to bad governance. This paper examines the role of good governance and effective public administrative system in ensuring economic growth and stable polity. The paper contends that good governance is crucial to economic growth because it enhances human development which in turn is the pivot around which other developmental activities revolve. The paper further argues that only an efficient and effective public administrative system can deliver the dividends of democracy. The paper concludes that adherence to basic tenets of good governance and a combination of well trained and carefully recruited and motivated public servants as well as an enabling environment can ensure economic growth and stable polity.

Key Words: Good Governance, Public Administration

INTRODUCTION:

Nigeria, the heart of Africa and the world's most ethnically numerous state [Adeosun, 2010] has been described by some scholars as an “unfinished state [Joseph, Taylor and Agbaje, 1996] and as “a truculent African tragedy” [Ayittey, 2006] in the midst of abundant human and natural resources, which are propelled in the vicious cycle of poverty and autocracy [Fagbadebo, 2007]. The country two years ago celebrated her Golden Jubilee [Fifty years] of attainment of independence from Britain against the backdrop of poverty, unemployment, insecurity, infrastructural decay, ethno-religious crises, etc, confronting the nation. These numerous problems have been attributed to bad governance and bad leadership. This paper examines the role of good governance and public administrative system towards achievement of economic growth and stable polity. In this paper greater attention will be given to civil service as an instrument of public administration. The reason for this is because, it is crucial in the planning and execution of public policies as well as in the making of resource allocations. As rightly noted by Gboyega and Abubakar[989], “no part of the public service is beyond the reach of the arm of the Federal Civil Service” [1989:.11].

The paper is structured into seven sections. The first section focuses on conceptual clarification of good governance and public administration. This is closely followed by the role of good governance and public administration in development. The third discusses the attributes of good governance and the nexus between good governance and public administration, while the fourth segment delves into the state of governance in Nigeria from 1999 to date. The fifth section examines the evolution of Nigeria Civil Service. The sixth section takes a cursory look at the obstacles to good governance and effective public administration and the last section gives the concluding remarks and recommendation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARAFICATION:

To enhance our understanding and appreciation of this paper, it is imperative to clearly define and explain the concepts of good governance and public administration.

Good Governance

Before defining good governance, it is important to define governance in order to fully understand good governance. But before defining governance too, it is also important to differentiate it from government. The words governance and government are sometimes used interchangeably but do not mean the same thing. Government is a collective body of elected and appointed institutions empowered to legislate and adjudicate for the good of the society [Natufe, 2006]. While the concept of governance means different things to different people.

The World Bank [1989] defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources. Yaqub and Abubakar [2005] defined governance as the totality of the process of constituting a government as well as administering a political community. Similarly, Ninalowo [2005], defined governance as the totality of executive or administrative functions of the state, with a view of fulfilling terms of social contract or constitutional obligations to the citizenry. Igho Natufe [2006], defined governance as the process and system by which a government manages the resources of a society to address socio-economic and political challenges in the polity. For erstwhile governor of Lagos state, Bola Ahmed Tinubu [2008], governance is the process of decisions making and the process by which decisions are executed or not implemented. Therefore, governance is the sum total of ways by which the general affairs of the commonwealth is managed in the interest of all.

It is imperative at this juncture to define good governance. The concept of good governance has been extensively used within the international community in the last seventeen years and has acquired what Ladi [2008] described as a “container concept” which incorporates a variety of principles and is as general as concepts such as globalization or global governance.

Good governance refers to competent management of a country's resources or affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to the yearning and aspirations of the people. According to Tinubu [2008], good governance means participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability. Healy and Robinson defined good governance as “the use of legitimate authority exercised in the application of government power and in the management of public affairs” [cf Obaidullah, 2001, p 9]. For Ekpu [2009:11], good governance means “respect for the rule of law,

accountability, transparency, delivery on election promises, and creation of an atmosphere for the flowering of freedom and for the achievement of the greatest good for the greatest number of our people”.

Public Administration

Before defining public administration, it is imperative to define administration. According to M.J. Balogun [1983], administration is a ‘universal phenomenon’ which as a concept and as a process ‘can exist in “government, in business, in churches, mosques, in families and in other interactions”’. Adebayo [1982] sees administration as “the organization and direction of persons in order to accomplish specified ends”. For Pfiffner and Presthus[1960], administration refers to an activity or process concerned with the means for carrying out prescribed ends.

Public administration, by extension has been defined as “the marshalling of human and material resources in order to achieve the objectives of public policy [Balogun, 1983:10]. L.D. White [1955] sees public administration as consisting of all those operation having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy. For Herbert Simon [1960] public administration are the activities of the executive branches of national, state and local government. M.E. Dimock and G.O. Dimock [1958] see public administration as the area of study and practice where law and policy is recommended and carried out. Therefore, public administration refers to both the activities concerned with the management of government business as well as the study of those activities.

THE ROLE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Good governance plays an important role in the advancement of sustainable development. It promotes accountability, transparency, efficiency and rule of law. Besides, it allows for sound and efficient management of human resources for equitable and sustainable development. According to former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan [1998], “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development”. Good governance enhances human development and human development is the pivot around which other developmental activities revolve. Human development is the channel through which other forms of development are achieved.

Similarly, Kayode, Oyejide and Soyode [1994], contend that a successful development effort requires good governance, managed by an enlightened political leadership operating in a stable political system that creates an enabling environment in which capable people have the incentive to work effectively. In the same vein, Diamond [2004:222], contends that the root cause of development failure is not a lack of resources or international isolation. Rather, it is lack of good governance. Good governance promotes development by generating and defending broad commitment to the public welfare.

Public administration lies at the heart of modern state. It is a recognized fact that it plays crucial role in all societies- developed or developing. In modern state, public administration has become so important that our development, upliftment and progress depend mainly upon the efficient functioning of it.

It serves as the basis of government. A government can exist without other arms of government such as legislature and judiciary. But no government can exist without administrative machinery. All countries irrespective of their system of government need some sort of administrative machinery for implementing public policies.

Public Administration is also responsible for implementing the law and policies of government. By implementing laws, it regulates the behavior of the people in the society. By executing policies and programmes, it delivers the promised goods and services to the intended beneficiaries. The importance of an efficient public administration is underscored by the fact that policies and programmes of government may not be realized without an efficient public administration. Put differently, the best policies and laws of government may remain as mere paper declaration of intent, if the administrative machinery does not function efficiently. An efficient public administration avoids waste, correct errors; limits the consequences of incompetence, while executing laws and public policies.

In modern state, public administrators participate in policy making by giving advice to ministers and providing them with necessary information which will assist them in formulation of policies. It also acts as a great stabilizing force in the society. It settles social tension and conflicts and thus creates social unity and harmony in a country.

In addition, it provides continuity in government. In other words, it carries on government when rulers change every now and then owing to elections or coups. It protects the lives and property of the people by maintaining law and order. The survival and progress of the people depend on the proper enforcement of laws against violators. This is the primary responsibility of public administration. In

the event of failure to perform this function effectively, the law of the jungle will prevail in a state [Dayil, n.d].

ATTRIBUTES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE NEXUS BETWEEN GOOD GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The World Bank [1989] identified the following as the features of good governance.

- An efficient public service
- An independent judicial system and legal framework to enforce contract
- The accountable administration of public funds
- An independent public auditor, responsible to a representative legislature
- Respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government
- A pluralistic institutional structure and
- A free press

In the same vein, Sir Kenneth Stove [cf Faradaus and Khan, 2006: 92], identified the following as features of good governance:

- Political freedom including free speech and a freely elected parliament
- Constitutional and judicial protection for the rights of the individual
- Maintenance of the rule of law by an independent judiciary
- Maintenance of stable currency
- Development of a society as a whole by education and health care and
- Executive accountability to a freely elected legislature.

According to Faradaus and Khan [2006], good governance is characterized by the following:

Participation: This involves the participation of all and sundry in decision making either directly or through their elected representatives. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech as well as capacities to participate constructively.

Accountability: It requires not only government institutions but also both private sector and civil society organizations to be accountable to the public. Accountability is guaranteed by the process by

which public decision-making processes and the results they produce are held up to public scrutiny and feedback.

Management Effectiveness and Efficiency: Effectiveness concerns the ability of public bureaucracies to skillfully and efficiently transform public resources into services and infrastructure that correspond to public determined priorities. The concept of efficiency covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of environment.

Equity and inclusiveness: This attribute requires all groups particularly the less privileged ones to have opportunities to improve or maintain their wellbeing. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Transparency: This built on the free flow of information, process, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

Consensus Orientation: It requires mediation of different interests in society to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the country and the way this can be achieved.

Responsiveness: It requires that institutions and processes serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

Having examined the attributes of good governance, it is important to examine the relationship between good governance and public administration. As we all know, public administration does not exist in a vacuum, it is influenced by a number of factors among which is the political values [Adeosun, 1999]. By political values, it means basic beliefs and assumptions not only about politics and the political system but also about appropriate government relationship to private activity, especially economic activity [Gordon, 1992].

Good governance and administration demand that citizens be able to contribute their views on issues of importance to them. Put differently, good governance and public administration ensure citizen participation in governance.

Another element of good governance is responsiveness. The public officials are expected to be responsive to the yearning and aspirations of the people. Their ability to do this depends on several

factors present in governmental processes. The first is the people assumption of what is and what should be the conduct of government and public policy making; secondly, responsiveness requires access to right decision makers and a legitimate opportunity to be heard; government and its agencies have to be able to respond to policy and programme demand.

Holding government official, accountable for their actions is crucial to good governance, more so, when responsibility is entrusted to non-elected personnel. Governmental openness to public scrutiny is a key to accountability for official conduct.

In the same vein, Adamolekun [2002] contends that a public administrative system that functions in an environment of transparency, with officials fully aware that they would be held accountable for their actions, is likely to perform more efficiently and effectively than one that operates in an opaque environment where the rulers are not accountable to the ruled.

STATE OF GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

As already indicated in the introductory part of this paper, this segment will focus on state of governance from the time that democratic civil rule was restored to date.

After over three decades of military rule, from 1966-1999[with the exception of 1979-1983 and eighty-two [82] days in 1993 when the Interim National Government held sway], Nigeria transitioned to democratic civil regime on May, 29, 1999. Unfortunately, since restoration of democratic rule, Nigerians is nowhere near the realization of the ideals of good governance.

In the area of the rule of law, Nigeria is replete with abuse of rule of law. The judicial arm of government which is the one saddled with the responsibility of protecting the rights of the people has either assisted or impeded course of good governance in areas such as revenue allocation, status of local government, intrigues associated with impeachment of certain political office holders, human rights, etc [Ayodele,2008].

The issue of “absentee executives” also characterized governance in the period under review. The Obasanjo’s administration was guilty of this. According to late Gani Fawehinmi[cf Agbaje and Adebawo,2005], Obasanjo travelled out of the country 93 times spending 340 days abroad in his

first-three years. This did not include the 354 days he spent visiting and touring the 36 states of the federation. Also, two governors –one in the South-South and the other in the North-West were more or less governing their states from Western capitals.

The National Assembly has failed to utilize its enormous power to ease the economic and social hardship confronting the people of this country. It is impossible to pin-point any concrete achievement of this body. When its members have not fought themselves over leadership positions, they have been busy devising ways for their pecuniary benefits. At a time, when most Nigerians could not afford three square meals, the legislators were growing fat allocating to themselves juicy salary and retirement benefits.

In the area of security, the country has not fared well. The country is in the state of insecurity and this can be seen in the increase in crime rate, the emergence and spread of politically motivated violence and assassinations, increased importation of arms and ammunition, an upsurge in ethnic, communal and conflicts; proliferation of ethnic and sectional militias and the deteriorating standard of living of the people[Tyoden,2005]. Only recently, kidnapping and bombing are the new dimensions of crime in the country.

There has not been any significant improvement in the living standard of Nigerians since restoration of democratic rule. Presently, 70% of Nigerians earn below one dollar a day, with 66-70% living below the poverty line. Thus, poverty provides the main catalyst for heightened conflicts and communal unrest in the country [ibid].

EVOLUTION OF NIGERIA CIVIL SERVICE

The Nigeria Civil Service evolved from the Colonial Service which was set-up by the British Colonialists as the administrative machinery for governing Nigeria. The merger of the then Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 under Lord Frederick Lugard led to the establishment of what seemed like a unified service. The upper stratum of the Colonial Service was dominated by Europeans on whom were vested executive, judiciary and legislative powers. Traditional rulers were co-opted into the colonial power structure.

With the adoption of federal system of government in 1954, the then regions established their own civil services. A Public Service Commission was also established at the centre and in each of the three regions within the same period. The Federal and Regional Services thereafter nurtured a career Civil Service within their respective domains. At the attainment of independence status in 1960, the role of the civil service shifted from the colonial form of maintaining law and order to that of facilitating the realization of the country's development aspirations. Consequently, the civil service became more active both in the formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes [Adegoroye, 2006]. With increased oil revenue in the 1970s, and the successful prosecution of the Nigeria 'Civil War (1967 -1970), greater commitment to the expansion of the economy and the creation of states to replace the Regions, the Federal Civil Service and its state counterparts witnessed unprecedented growth to match the increased responsibility of both the federal and state civil services. Military incursion into politics and their inexperience in governance especially between 1966 and 1975 allowed permanent secretaries to become more visible and powerful. The visibility of the civil service during this period created resentment for the service by subsequent administrations, which is exemplified in the sacking of over 10,000 civil servants in what has been described as the great purge.

OBSTACLES TO GOOD GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

As it is today in Nigeria, good governance and public administration are facing some obstacles. These obstacles are examined critically in this segment.

One of the obstacles standing in the way of good governance in the country is corruption. According to Ologbenla [2007], corruption is one of the three-monsters the country is grappling with. Others are bad leadership and bad governance. Nigeria continues to feature prominently amongst the most corrupt countries in the past three decades. According to a survey result on corruption index, conducted by the Transparency International, Nigeria is ranked 2.4 same as the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Togo, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe, out of possible 10.0 [occupied by Denmark], the world's No 1 ranked less corrupt nation [Daily Trust , 2010: 31]. The effects of corruption on the nation's development cannot be overemphasized. It prevents a fair distribution of national resources and broadened the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have not'.

The inefficiency of the bureaucracy is another obstacle in the way of good governance. Bureaucracy is inevitable in any country and inseparable part of an organized society. But Nigeria bureaucracy is not efficient in management and administration. Put differently, Nigeria bureaucracy is no longer the engine room for governance. It is an ineffective institution for checks and balances as well as continuity. Bureaucrats are not accountable, responsive and transparent to the people. Lack of bureaucratic accountability can be attributed to bureaucratic corruption. But there is no effective mechanism to make them accountable, responsive and transparent.

Nepotism is another stumbling block in the realization of good governance in Nigeria. The rulers in this country pursue nepotism. They give privileges and undue advantage to their family members, friends and associates, kiths and kins in the distribution of public resources. Similarly, Ekpo [2009, p.11] identified non-legitimacy of government due to election malpractice, corruption, violence, tribalism, poverty, illiteracy, impunity and oath-taking as impediments to good governance in Nigeria.

At this juncture, it is imperative to examine the impediments to effective public or civil service in Nigeria. Following Okafor [2005], the structural problems confronting the Civil Service in Nigeria can be categorized as: personnel regulations, personnel qualifications, organizational structure and work environment.

The personnel regulations state requirements for entry into the bureaucracy as well as the procedure for promotion and dismissal. Public Service rules in Nigeria state a long list of requirement for entry, including federal character [Nnoli, 1980]. In theory, positions are supposed to be filled based on merit but in practice, political, family, ethnic and religious considerations are important factors in Civil Service appointment [Mohr 1987; Adebayo 2001; Yesufu 1992].

Promotion in Nigeria Civil Service is based on seniority. Rules for promotion fail to differentiate between productive and non-productive workers. Dismissal is uncommon except during the mass purge of Murtala-Obasanjo Administration in 1975-1976. As regards personnel qualifications, workers entering the Civil Service through the use of political or family influence may lack the required technical skills for their positions. Besides, on-the-job training programmes are weak and ineffective [Otobo, 1992]. Also, compounding the skills problem is the emphasis on filling slots rather than matching workers skills with the need of the position. Thus, many of the skills that public servants

have are wasted [Okafor, 2005] The Civil Service tends to be overstaffed with workers who lack the requisite skills for their positions [Jike, 2003; Otobo, 1992; Nwachukwu, 1998].

Moreover, Public Servants are poorly paid. Most of them earn just a little in the face of rising inflation brought about by deregulation policies of government [Onyeoruru, 2004]. Because of this state of affairs many have resorted to multiple job- holding in the informal sector, thereby impacting negatively on their attitude and commitment to work.

Furthermore, poor and outdated equipment, lack of office space and poor filing systems in the work place act as impediments to the effectiveness of the civil service in Nigeria [Okoh, 1998].

The problem of Public Service in Nigeria is worsened by the difficulties of gaining the confidence of the general people. Public Servants tend to be objects of doubt and suspicion. According to Okafor [2005], much of the doubt and suspicion directed at public servants also reflects age-long traditions of ethno-religious hostilities in Nigeria. Public servants regardless of their dedication to national goals and the norms of professionalism, tend to be seen as biased and self serving by the masses[Soleye, 1989].The people tend to assume that public servants are influenced by religious, ethnic and other parochial considerations and act accordingly[Nnoli,1980]. Besides, most people because of ignorance and poor orientation see government jobs as ‘nobody’s job’ which must provide for ‘everyone’ [Soleye, 1989].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

In this paper, attempts were made to explain concepts such as good governance and public administration, their importance, the nexus between them as well as the attributes of good governance. The state of governance in the country was critically examined and some of the issues raised were the inability of those at the helm of affairs to adhere strictly to the tenets of good governance, namely, rule of law, inefficient institutions, insecurity, etc. The evolution of Nigeria Civil Service was also discussed and obstacles to good governance as well as effective public administrative system were critically examined. The paper identified such factors as corruption, inefficient bureaucracy and nepotism as obstacles that stand in the way of good governance in Nigeria. Also, personnel regulations, personnel qualifications, organizational structure, work environment, etc, as impediments

to effective public administrative system were thoroughly analyzed. The question to ask is, what is the way forward? This forms the recommendation of this paper.

The government should as a matter of urgency, address the issue of corruption in the country. The existing institutions saddled with the responsibility should be strengthened and any public official found to have corruptly enriched himself or herself should be dealt with seriously. In this regard, I will suggest the confiscation of the property of such a person and in addition, he or she should be banned for life from holding any political position.

One of the cornerstones of good governance is accountability. Government should be made accountable to the people through free and fair election. A government not well constituted through the provision of the law of the land should not be recognized by the people. Besides, those at the helm of affairs should carry the people along in their major decisions especially those that affect all of us.

There is need for attitudinal change on the part of the ruler and the ruled. We need to do away with nepotism in our public life and embrace excellence.

For the effectiveness of the Public Service, far reaching measures must be taken. First, the recruitment process must be looked into. Recruiting personnel on the basis of federal character is to sacrifice efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, recruitments should be based on merits, competence, etc. Secondly, the Civil Servants and other categories of staff must be well motivated in order for them to discharge their duties without fear or favour. Thirdly, the behaviour of the civil servants must change. It must not be business as usual. They must be trained and re- trained to imbibe the spirit of innovation, ingenuity, efficiency, achievement, prudent use of scarce resources and to do away with all forms of wastes that have characterized Nigeria public administrative system over the years. There should also be public enlightenment in order for the masses to appreciate what the public servants are doing.

In the final analysis, if the above recommendations are implemented by those at the helm of affairs, they would go a long way in solving some of the problems confronting our public service and also improve the quality of governance in the country.

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