RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: AN UNENDING QUEST

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Abstract

The results of paucity of good governance and irresponsible leadership in Nigeria, five decades after independence, are glaring. Nigeria is presently faced with several problems bordering on violent conflicts, poverty and economic underdevelopment, diseases such as HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and bad governance, among others. It has been observed that, compared to other nations about five decades ago, Nigeria presently lags behind in economic growth attainments. This has been attributed to the lack of responsible leadership in the polity. Most Nigerian leaders are rather self-serving. They distribute favors to cronies rather than providing platforms for individual entrepreneurships. Few examples of countries that have developed a tradition of responsible leadership since the late 1960s such as Botswana and Mauritius, have consistently delivered high quality governance to their people. Both governments have sought to promote free and fair elections, rule of law systems, and tolerance of free expressions. The Paper shall adopt the stakeholder theory. The paper argued that Nigeria is in dire need of visionary and responsible leaders who will motivate and mobilize the nation's human and materials resources towards nation building. Our paper's source of data was drawn essentially from secondary sources involving books, journals; articles on the subject matter under review. Data sourced will be qualitatively analyzed using the descriptive method of data analysis and qualitative reporting.

Keywords: Responsible Leadership, Good governance, Development, Fellowship, Polity

Introduction

The role of leadership throughout the ages has been to enable development and progress in any society, communities and organizations and, therefore, the ultimate task of leadership in any given society is that of transformation. Effective leadership must have the capacity to transform individuals, societies, communities and

institutions by providing role models (Mbigi, 2003). The general prospect of most citizens of African states was that the achievement of political independence will lead to the progressive transformation of these countries by fighting poverty and underdevelopment. Nkrumah (1963) had argued that Africa should seek first the political kingdom and everything else will follow. After many years of political independence, these expectations are yet to be met largely due to leadership crisis and poor governance (Dlamini, 2007). Nigeria leaders have not lived up to expectation in terms improving the lives of citizens despite the abundant natural resources in these countries. As a result of the leadership ineptitude, critical infrastructure in our polity has collapsed, unemployment is on the increase, just as health care, educational standards, and life expectancy have continued to decline. Poor security, increase in crime and corruption are also as a result of irresponsible leadership in our polity.

We have failed to meet the expectations of independence due to leadership crisis and bad governance, amongst others; Other Nations whose leaders pursued transformative values have stood out, as exemplified by the cases of developmental states such as Botswana and Mauritius. Responsive leadership has proved the decisive factor in South Africa, especially with Late Nelson Mandela's adherence to the rule of law and insistence on broadening the delivery of essential services, and emphasis on building a productive economy. The thrust of this paper is that people will follow a person who inspires them, and that responsive Leadership starts with the development of a vision and a view of the future that will excite and convert potential followers and galvanize their collective efforts towards societal development.

The paper which is divided into five sections argues that task of organizing any given society and improving the quality of life for all depends on Responsive leadership and good governance. Following this introduction, the paper discusses the theoretical framework, concepts of leadership and governance in section three. Section four, discusses challenges of responsive leadership and governance in Nigeria. Section four concludes the paper.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the stakeholder theory. Bass and Steidlmeier's (1999:200) suggestion to discuss "leadership in the context of contemporary stake holder theory "we assert that responsible and stakeholder leadership is not just inextricably linked but that responsible leadership provides a convincing perspective on how to connect leadership to stakeholder theory. In making leader-stakeholder relationship the centre of attention, responsible leadership focuses on the responsibilities that leaders have in relation to different stakeholder group. As we have argued else-where," building and cultivating ethically sound relations towards different stakeholders is an important responsibility of leaders in an interconnected stakeholder society" (Maak and Pless, 2006:101).

In this view followers become stakeholders of the leadership project, so responsible leadership must ask a core: "what is the role of leadership- and of leaders- in a network of stakeholder and how a leader can lead responsibly across various potentially conflicting needs and interest?" Schneider (2002) makes an important

contribution by stressing that both the context of organizations and the profound change in these organizations as they become flatter, less bureaucratic, and more dispersed increased the complexity of the leadership project and create new implications for what effective leadership means. In this theory, responsible leadership shares the idea of the leader as a positive role model who behaves virtuously, acts according to ethical standards, insures ethical and pro-social conduct in the work place, and uses principles of moral reasoning to make decisions (Trevino etal, 2000, 2003).

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of leadership is elusive and contestable, and perspectives on leadership are varied. It is a matter of debate whether leaders are born or developed. Despite the many books written on the subject, many authors are yet to arrive at an answer. That notwithstanding, there is a common understanding that a leader is an individual who influences others towards the achievement of specific goals or objectives. Therefore, leadership is not the stop-point, but directed towards the attainment of common goals or objectives. Within the context of an organization, leadership is the process of influencing individual and group behavior towards the accomplishment of organization goals or objectives (Mitchell, 1982).

Ake's discourse on the character of Africa political leadership has helped to shed light on the selfish motives of most African leaders. He argues that "African leaders place more value on capturing political power for themselves and grow increasingly fearful about what seem to them to be the grave consequences of losing it to their rivals in the competition for control of state power." To Bedeian (1986) leadership is the art of influencing individual or group activities towards the achievement of organizational or societal objectives. Also leadership involves the inducement of followers by the leader to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivation, the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978).Therefore ,leadership is the act of leading performed by a person authorized through appointment or election to do so. Leadership emerged because every society is either organized or seeks to be organized as the masses cannot lead hence the need to have a few people lead (Ugo, 2001).

Ogbonnia (2007) defines an effective leader as an individual with the capacity to consistently succeed in a given condition and be viewed as meeting the expectations of an organization or society. Leaders are recognized by their ability to care for others, clear communication and a commitment to persevere, as individual who is appointed to a decision-making position has the right to command and enforce obedience by virtue of the authority of his position. It is expected he must possess adequate personal attributes to match his authority because in the absence of sufficient personal competence, he may be confronted by an emergent leader who can challenge his role in the organization and reduce it to that of a figure head.

Dele Seteolu quoted in Ologbenla (2007:100) identifies and discusses six salient features of leadership with its theoretical underpinnings. These include trait, behavior, and attribution, charismatic, visionary and transformational. The trait theory

is associated with confidence, iron will, determination and decisiveness. The behavioral theory appraises the conduct specific leader's exhibit such as initiatives, experimentation, generating and implementation of change. The attribution theory depicts the intelligence, personality, oratory virtue and aggressiveness of leaders. The charismatic theory shows leadership features such as self-confidence, vision, articulation, conviction and extraordinary behavior. The visionary leadership deals with the ability to explain and strengthen the vision through skillful oral and written communication behavior. The transformational theory is tinged on the charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision, pride, respect and thrust.

After a careful examination of leadership impasses in Nigeria, Achebe (1983:10) concludes that:

> The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of her leaders to rise to responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of true leadership.

Surely leadership holds the key to unlocking the transformation question in Nigeria, but to sustain this drive, leaders must carry certain genes and attributes that are representative and promotive of this order. These include: i) The existence of practical, purposeful, visionary and missionary initiative by the individual, reflecting the objectives of held ideas, values and aspirations, ii) The existence in an individual of a clear set of ideas,values,aspirations reflecting those of the majority who are the subject or followership and iii) The existence of patriotic and nationalistic spirit ,transparency and accountability, signs of concrete achievements involving the extent to which intended effects are produced by the leader. These are the cores values of good governance.

A related concept to leadership is governance. The concept of governance like many other concepts in the social sciences is a subject of discuss. According to Yaqub and Abubakar (2005), governance is a broader term than government despite their similarity in terms of etymological roots. Governance can be viewed as the totality of the process of constituting a government as well as administering a political community. Ninalowo (2005) also identified the major difference between government and governance. He argued that governance is 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. While on the other hand government refers to position or office of authority to administer the affairs of the state.

He notes that governance has certain salient features imbued that drives towards empowerment- socio-political empowerment, socio-economic empowerment, legal-rational empowerment, cultural empowerment, gender empowerment, civil-society organizations, etc. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011) governance is defined as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authorities to mange a country's affairs at all levels". Similarly, the

world Governance Survey report conceptualized governance as the formulation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulates the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and social actors interact to make decisions (Hyden&Court 2002). Lately the terms "governance" and "good governance" are been used in development literature. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of all evil within our societies.

Major donors and international financial institutions are increasingly basing their aids and loans on the condition that reforms must ensure good governance are undertaken. Good governance has some characteristics which include: It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making (Akhakpe, 2014). It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society (Downer, 2000).

Politically, good governance is about the establishment of a representative and answerable form of government; good governance requires a strong and pluralistic civil society, where there is freedom of expression and association; it requires good institutions-sets of rules governing the actions of individuals and organizations and the negotiation of differences between. Good governance requires the primacy of the rule of law, maintained through an impartial and effective legal system. Economically, good governance requires policies to promote broad-based economic growth, a dynamic private sector and social policies which will lead to poverty reduction. Economic growth is best achieved in an efficient, open market based economy. Investment in people is a high priority, through policies and institution that improve access to quality education, health and other services that undermine a country's human resource base. Careful management of the national economy is vital in order to maximize economic and social advancement .Governance 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. Good governance means competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsible to people's needs. All these factors in the view of Akhakpe (2014) combined determine the level of development in a given society.

Issues of governance have received the attention of development institutions and civil society. Civil society organizations as well as international development institutions amongst others such as the United Nations Development Programme have promoted governance as a participatory approach to development. The UNDP points out that governance have three core dimensions which include: economic, participatory and administrative governance. Economic governance is linked to the public decision making processes on the economy and how such processes affect economic activities of citizens and a country' external relations. Political governance refers to the processes of formulating public policies, without neglecting the fact that participation of the people is crucial to the success of the policies. Administrative governance entails the actual implementation of the policies. Good governance means

that the three dimensions of governance are brought into play in the administration of socioeconomic and political relationships.

The subject of leadership keeps recurring in our national discourse suggests that the leadership question is still critical to Nigeria's quest for good governance and the consolidation of the democratic order. This is attributed to the widely held notion that the problem with development in Nigeria is mainly that of leadership. We believed that the quality of governance will be much higher when compared to military rule. Citizen will have benefit of accountable and transparent leadership and that the resources of the country will be managed for development. In essence, a responsible and accountable leadership that would characterize good governance in Nigeria is patently absent. Nigeria political elites have an insatiable capacity to steal from the commonwealth and leaving the people more impoverished.

Many of these elected officials who came to power in fraudulent elections have committed abuses against their constituents and engaged in the large-scale looting of public resources (Human Rights, 2007). There is a very wide hiatus between the rich and the poor masses. Presently our polity lacks social, economic and political development.

Challenges of Responsive Leadership and Governance in Nigeria
One of the challenges facing Nigeria is how to create a context of stable political and socio-economic environment for policies and programmes to be implemented. The issue of responsible leadership in promoting good governance has been a recurring decimal in Nigeria. Once an enabling environment is created, it becomes easy for the people to confront and resolve challenges facing them by using resources within their environment to create a condition of where each stage is progressively better than the preceding one. Aregbesola, a serving governor in Osun State in South West, Nigeria corroborated this point when he explained thus:

> When there is disharmony between social justice and universal law, chaos and disorder ensues…The environment of extreme poverty, ignorance and diseases where might is right, where the gap between the haves and have-nots is increasing at a geometric proportion, where law serve the interest of the few, where most people are hopeless, can only but encourage such sundry acts of terrorism capable of regressing man into the hobbesian state of nature where there is war of all against and the life of man is nasty, brutish and short (Aregbesola,2011:11).

This is the case in Nigeria due to bad governance. Good governance encapsulates transparency, accountability, freedom of choice and liberty for the people to pursue their individual and corporate interest. Indeed, at the core of our under management is leadership deficit.

The second of these challenges has been that of coping with Nigeria's complex political environment, a complex federation with about two-hundred and fifty ethnic groupings just like other African countries faced with internal divisions

and problems which are enough jeopardize her capacity to survive. The political situation especially with the effort to consolidate democracy and sustain development in Nigeria has contributed in no small measure to the high level of insecurity in the polity. The struggle for political power, the quest to control the centre and the ethno religion differences among the various political groupings in the country can be described as a "push-pull factor" leading to a do or die politics. Religious differences between the predominantly Muslim North and Christian South coupled with the agitation for an equitable distribution of resources by minority groups. This has created a pattern of feuding and an unending circle of violence and destruction of lives and properties. This has resulted in marked differences in which the international community has tended to interpret and perceive governance in our polity.

A third challenge is that of implementing democratic and human right agenda in our polity. The rules of the game are yet to be clearly defined and internalized such that the outcomes of major democratic process such as elections could become predictable and readily acceptable. Observations noted is that some of those who wield political power are disposed to bending the rules of the game in their favour, while those who recognize themselves as outsiders, have constantly challenged democratic processes. Significantly the plural character of the Nigeria society especially religion and ethnicity have been politicized in our polity resulting in serious conflicts that have set back our country's democratic agenda.

Fourthly this has created problems in terms of growth and development in our polity. For instance Nigeria's Human Development index at 0.459 lags behind the sub Saharan Africa average of 0.463 and the world average of 0.682.The inequity adjusted HDI is even further disappointing at 0.278. The low point in the global scale is 0.456. The Multi –Dimensional poverty index (MPI) shows that 54.1% of the population lives in poverty, with 57.3% in intense deprivation (HDI, 2011).   In Utomi view (2011), the problem of Nigeria stems from the decline of our institutions, collapse of our culture and the triumphalism patrimonial state and goal displacement on the part of leaders'. He observes with regret that there is a disconnection between the leaders and the people they lead. Nigerian leaders are connected to those godfathers who put them in the office and not the electorate. Policy inconsistency, government instability are common phenomenon and bane of effective leadership and good governance in Nigeria. Leaders hardly sustain their policies and program of their predecessors; cabinet reshuffle is often expected because government is expected to be representative of all interest in the country. We lack implementation and this has affected our performance as a nation.

Nigeria is the largest country in the continent of Africa has a dearth of genuine leaders. The absence of political will has been a cog in the wheel of progress for our development. A political will is the compelling force for sound leadership quality, the ability to do what is right, what is relevant and what is attainable within the context of patriotic nationalism. Political will means personal or group sacrifices. It is the ability to implement policies that have a nationalistic importance and relevance without allowing pockets of interest to detract from what should naturally be of national benefit. In present day Africa Nelson Mandela represent models of

leadership by personal sacrifice to redeem his people from servitude (Isekhure, 1995:141-142). In light of the above, Eze (1995:96) has this to say about leadership in Nigeria;

In considering the Nigeria situation, there seem to be certain issues in Nigerian leadership which require experimental investigations. For instance, it has been generally asserted that Nigerian management is marked by authoritarian leadership characteristics and practices. They are said to have maintained a rigid dictatorial approach, as well as master-servant, rider-horse relationship with subordinates. In fact, it is been said that a Nigeria man is by nature and training an autocrat who demands nothing but respect and obedience from his subordinate, and those younger and lower in status than him. Also in public sector, the leadership has been associated with certain undesirable traits such as double standards, pursuance of selfish goals, lack of seriousness and indiscipline.

The challenge before our leaders is to develop the capacity that would enable us to strike a balance between our values and governance that our country must follow. However, the concern must be to blend the two rather than to treat them as if they were mutually exclusive. Flowing from the above points, it is clear why the issue of responsive leadership and good governance will continue to remain an issue of discourse in the Nigerian polity. Leadership at the government level is therefore seen as the cause and effect of the country's development predicaments. It appears that once our public office holders feel they have arrived, they lose focus of their calling? They tend to distance themselves from the people they ought to serve. In this context, governance essences are ignored as service delivery, transparency and accountability take the back burner.

Conclusion

Our paper admits that our polity is facing challenging times especially at the domestic level. The relationship between the state and citizenry is under considerable storm and stress. There is the need to begin to squarely address the question of poverty, unemployment, and decayed social and economic infrastructure in our evolving democratic order. There is the need to address attitudinal disposition of our elites towards governance, the absence of which good governance and development will continue to be a mirage. Confronting the challenges of leadership and governance in Nigeria rest on the preparedness of our leaders to bring to bear on public conduct the principles of equity justice and fairness as well as judicious application of public resources, while putting the interest of the common man and the imperatives of building a nation that accommodate all at the centre of our development objectives.

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