GOOD GOVERNANCE: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Good governance is the key to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. For any nation to be fully established, it must place premium priority on the existence of efficient and accountable institutions, political, judicial, administrative, economic, corporate and entrenched rules that promote development, protect human rights, respect the rule of law and ensure that the people are free to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The aim of this paper is to discuss on good governance as a panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper revealed that corruption, lack of party ideology and quota system are among the hindrances to good governance in Nigeria. It concludes that good governance is a sine qua non of development, hence it is a catalyst for sustainable development. The paper recommends among others that democratic administrators should manifest the spirit of accountability, responsibility and responsiveness to ensure good governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Good governance, Governance, Sustainable development, Nigeria.

The concept of governance has over the years gained momentum and a wider meaning, apart from being an instrument of public affairs management, or a gauge of political development, governance has become a useful mechanism to enhance the legitimacy of the public realm. It has also become an analytical framework or approach to comparative politics. The issue of good governance is a phenomenon that has stunted the growth of many developing nations with respect to Africa and Nigeria in Particular; since independence in 1960, Nigeria has battled with the issue of good, credible and accountable government. The search for good governance seems to be Nigeria's most urgent need at this time of history.

Most Nigerians believe strongly that the major factor that had crippled the country's sustainable development in virtually every aspect of human endeavour is poor leadership and bad governance Ebikeme(2017). The ultimate desire of human beings, wherever they find themselves is to enjoy certain level of good and quality life. As a result all nations aspire to attain the goals of rapid economic transformation and sustainable development that will ensure that the citizenry enjoy better conditions of living in their various communities (Onyeoma& Esther, 2014).

The level of underdevelopment in Nigeria today is largely attributed to bad governance as politicians form the government without development plans; the party manifesto they sold to the electorates during electioneering campaign are never fulfilled. In the recent past, it was believed that bad governance in the nation is associated with the several years of military rule. But since the transition to democratic rule, there has been no significant improvement in terms of good governance as corruption has been on the increase. There is high rate of unemployment, no access to basic infrastructural facilities and public health care, high rate of inflation and above all poverty has been ravaging the society.

The relationship between good governance and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. Given the present social, economic and political condition of the Nigeria state, good governance has become a subject of intense and passionate discourse. This is reflected in the high rate of poverty, unemployment, lack of transparency and accountability, inefficiency and ineffectiveness, lack of equity, poor standard of living of its citizens, social injustice and organized corruption.

The Concept of Good Governance

The concept of governance has been discussed by both political and academic referring to it as a generic sense to the task of running a government or any other appropriate entity. Governance could be described as an exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It 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 (UNDP, 1997). Governance is essentially a political process whereby decisions and policies are taken for the benefits of the citizenry. It is the proper use of legitimate power and authority in the affairs of a nation (Onigbinde, 2007).

Governance is the manner power is exercised in the management of a country's economical, and social resources for development (Akindele, 2003). Ebikeme (2017) sees governance as the process of allocating resources (which includes institutional and structural arrangement, development of personnel, decision making process, policy formulation and implementation capacity, information flow and the nature and style of leadership) within a political system. It is the way rules, norms and actions are structured, sustained, regulated and held accountable.

With special relevance for the developing world, World Bank Experience noted that good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; while poor governance is characterized by arbitrary policy making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced or unjust legal systems, the abuse of executive power, a civil society unengaged in public life, and widespread corruption. This description of governance reflects the worldwide thrust toward political and economic liberalization. This approach of

governance highlights issues of greater state responsiveness and accountability, and the impact of these factors on political stability and economic development.

Good governance is striving for rule of law, transparency, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision in the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority. It is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human right (Onyeoma& Esther, 2014). Good governance entails the existence of efficient and accountable institutions, political, judicial, administrative, economic, corporate and entrenched rules that promote development, protect human rights, respect the rule of law and ensure that people are free to participate in decisions that affect their lives (Inekengha&Charitoo, 2017). It is a set of qualitative characteristics relating to processes of rulemaking and their institutional foundations and encapsulates values and public access to information; it also assist in combating corruption and securing both basic human rights and the rule of law (UNU-IAS, 2015).

Good governance is an approach to government that is committed to creating a system funded in justice and peace that protects individual's human rights and civil liberties. UNESCAP (2009) identified eight major characteristics of good governance:

   i.   Participatory by both men and women which is the key to good governance.
   ii. The rule of law which requires fair legal framework that are enforced impartially.
   iii. Transparency which allows decisions to be taken and enforced in a manner that follows rules and regulations.
   iv. Responsiveness which implies that good governance requires the institutions and process to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.
   v.   Consensus orientation which requires mediation of the different interests in the society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved.
   vi. Equity and inclusiveness which requires that all groups especially the most vulnerable have opportunities to improve on their well-being.
   vii. Effectiveness and efficiency which requires that the processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of the society while making the best use of resources at their disposal.
   viii. Accountability which is a key requirement of good governance, not only of the government.

Good governance is about leadership and people-focused political institutions, working with the people to empower them to reach the highest points of their productive and creative abilities. It is about democratizing politics and economic opportunities, and opening sustainable option and possibilities for peace, harmony, unity, collective work, and collective progress. It could be described as institutional issues, social justice and inclusiveness.

Sustainable Development

Development can be defined as eliminating poverty, unemployment and inequality. Sustainability is associated with satisfying a national economy's needs for natural resources without compromising generations (Luke, 2013). It is related to about how individuals should act towards nature, and how they are responsible for the other and the future. The vision of sustainability aims at justice in the domain of individual-nature-relationships and in view of the long term and uncertain future including three specific relationships such as justice between individuals and nature (Iyigun, 2015). According to Iyigun (2015) sustainability involves three dimensions namely economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and societal sustainability.

The concept of sustainable development was first discussed at an international level after the publication of the report "Our Common Future" in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations. Sustainable development puts into consideration the present conditions of people as well as not compromising those that come later. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (UNWECED, 1897). Sustainable national development could be referred to as the process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems (Etebu, Ohajianya&Nwokamma, 2017).

According to Agu (2005), sustainable national development is expected to increase capital income and employment, promote human welfare by satisfying the basic needs, and also protect the environment. Hence, sustainable development is prioritizing the development of the present generation without compromising the future generation. To this end sustainable development is about:

i.   Establishing a trajectory of human development that allows all people to exercise their choices and meet their aspirations, both in this generation and those to come.
ii.   Enabling the benefits of development to spread to those left behind in the progress made to date.

Sustainable development is the state of having well balanced, steady and effective use of human, material and capital resources for total economic independence of a nation without compromising the future (Okoye, 2013).

Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Good governance remains the instrument for effective sustainable development in Nigeria. Good governance is an essential precondition for sustainable development. Most countries that are similar in terms of their natural resources and social structure with Nigeria have shown strictly different performance in improving the welfare of their people. This has been attributed to standards of governance which stifles and impedes development. A nation where there is corruption, poor control of public funds, indiscipline, and lack of

accountability can never experience sustainable development. Good governance plays a vital and influential role in the sustainable national development of any nation.

Good governance is not only critical to development but also, it is the most important factor for determining whether a country has the capacity to use resources effectively to promote growth and reduce poverty. According to (Onyeoma& Esther, 2014), Economic and human development progress cannot be sustained if the ecosystem on which they depend are irreparably damaged; and if gross inequity leaves the societies unstable and without cohesion. They went further to state that:

i. Good and active governance anticipates and responds to the needs of its citizens and evolving development challenges.

ii. Fair, reliable and accountable government build trust between people and government; hence, good governance matters for sustainable national development as it holds the key to building stable and secure society and to driving inclusive growth within the finite boundaries of our planet over the long term.

iii. Good and effective governance is a prerequisite for putting in place the integrated policy making capacity which is needed to derive sustainable development. Hence sustainable national development demands policy making that view economic growth, social development, equity, poverty reduction, and sustainability not as competing goals to be traded off against each other, but as interconnected objectives which are most effectively pursued together.

Good governance has been acknowledged as a foundation for sustainable development including sustained and inclusive growth, environment protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger. Dahaoul, (2019) identified three dimensions that have to be assessed in order to ascertain whether governance is good namely:

i. Mechanisms that promote good governance which include: transparent and democratic institutions, efficient and effective public services.

ii. Governance processes which refer to the quality of participation necessary to ensure that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus in society and that the voices of the excluded and most vulnerable are heard in decision making.

iii. The outcomes achieved: these could be peaceful, stable and resilient societies, where services are delivered and reflect the needs of communities, including the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Dahaoul (2019) went further to state that integrating good governance with sustainable development could include:

i. Protecting basic rights of citizens and creation of valued services for higher standard of living;

ii. Transparency and accountability which are important characteristics of decision making for sustainability;

iii. Efficiency which is necessary to make things as simple as possible yet beneficial as well;

iv. Sustainability which depends on the government integrating many services and producing one-step critical service to citizens.

Challenges to Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria are saddled with a lot of problems, which may be internally or externally oriented. Such challenges are

Corruption: Corruption is a major cankerworm, which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigeria nation. The high rate of corruption at various levels of government has greatly stunted the growth of the economy as political and public office holders see their positions as avenues for illegal wealth accumulation to the detriment of the populace (Igbate, 2011). Corruption may manifest itself in different forms such as embezzlement of funds or misappropriation of account and in turn has led to loss of government revenue, poor governance, unemployment, drain and electoral malpractices, poor investment channel, poverty, unsustainable development, civil unrest, business failure among others. In which ever form corruption o0ccurs, it distorts the realization of a targeted objective. Most Nigerians see public institutions, structures and politics as veritable instruments for self-aggrandizement at the detriment of public interest.

Lack of Ideology: An ideology is a closely organized system of beliefs, values and ideas that form the basis of a social, economic or political philosophy. In terms of governance, ideology can be seen as a group of ideas that informs government policies and actions (Ebikeme, 2017). Nigeria, right from independence, has not found her feet ideologically. It is when the goals and aspirations of the people are properly articulated in the form of ideology that the country can move forward. Nigeria has been adopting bastardized ideological systems through the adoption of "a little to the right and a little to the left", thereby sitting on the fence ideologically (Okereke, 2003).

In most democratic states like Nigeria, political parties form the government but sadly Nigerian politicians and leaders have no party ideology, hence the political parties do not have clear cut agenda of what they intend to pursue if voted in power. When a political party without ideology forms the government, automatically, bad governance will be evident as the politicians will not fulfill their electioneering campaign promises but will concentrate on looting public funds. Unlike Nigeria, in Europe and North America, parties grow and develop as autonomous political institutions for the articulation and aggregation of common interest, ideas, values and challenges of governance to those who subscribe to them (Onigbinde, 2007). Ideology is meant to serve as driving force as well as a guideline for a party when it finally forms the government. It enables the leadership of any nation to be committed towards the implementation of her set objectives.

Federal Character Principle (Quota System): The Federal Character Principle as enshrined in the 1999 constitution and re-affirmed in subsequent constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is to ensure social harmony among all citizens and to promote the

stability and integration of the nation. The policy provided among others that the six geopolitical zones in the country must be represented in every cadre of the public service in order to foster unity and national integration in a country with ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity.

Federal character principle instead of fostering unity and national integration has accelerated the promotion of mediocre and incompetent civil servants into government (Ebikeme, 2017; Okereke, 2003). The appointments into sensitive public offices are not mostly based on merit but on the geo-political zone a person comes from and on the political connection of an individual.

Nigerian federalism is characterized by centripetal and centrifugal forces to the extent that the leaders get involved in issues that favour their ethnic groups or personal aggrandizement. When these happen, development planning gets highly politicized. Politicization of development planning leads to establishment of white elephants projects that have little or no bearing to the people's needs.

Lack of Political Will and proper Mobilization of the Citizens: Nigeria has been unfortunate to be ruled by comprador bourgeoisie whether as civilians or military officers (Okereke, 2003).. These are people who have little or no regards to the problems of the people they are ruling. For sustainable development in any given society, the leadership must be such that is committed to its successful implementation. It is only when a country has a committed leadership that the masses can easily be motivated to take active part in the projects designed by the state to up-lift their living standard. Nigeria have enough human and material resources but lacks committed or dedicated leadership to trigger off a total transformation of the society.

Strategies for Ensuring Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Developed nations by most indicators have experienced rapid economic development, but same cannot be attributed to most developing nations in Africa; as African nations and Nigeria in particular, have been bogged down with crisis due to poverty and underdevelopment, government ineffectiveness, corruption among others, due to bad governance records compared to other regions of the world (Fayssa&Nsiah, 2013)

Economic transformation and sustainable development will remain a mirage so long as the process and institutions that guarantee accountability and transparency; rule of law and security of the citizens are either absent or rudimentary (Onyeoma& Esther, 2014). To this end, the achievement of the goal of sustainable development in Nigeria will depend to a very large extent on people particularly those in position of authority's ability to suppress their selfish interest in favour of the nation's interest. The following strategies are suggested for good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria:

  i.   The government should enthrone the rule of law and allow the legislature to enact laws; while the judiciary should be given the enabling environment to interpret same and deal with offenders irrespective of primordial affiliations without interference.

ii. There should be entrenched framework and enforceable rules that will ensure that the nation's resources are developed for the benefits of all citizens irrespective of tribe and political affiliation.

iii. Corruption should be tackled with anti-corruption strategies that may include: zero tolerance for corruption and other economic crimes; hence inefficiency and ineffectiveness in governance should be eliminated through reform of government agencies, discipline and exemplary leadership.

iv. Accountability and transparency should be maintained n every sector, that is both the private and public sectors.

Conclusion

Sustainable development requires governance to rise to new levels of effectiveness and develop new capacities for integrated policy-making around clear vision for sustainable development. Nigeria has the capacity to design pathways to a future grounded and equitable sustainable development which meets the needs of current generation without compromising of the future. It is governance that provokes and defines the nature of development. In effect, when there is governance failure, the policies and programmes put together to drive development would remain what they are on paper. Good governance is a sine qua non of development; hence it is a catalyst for sustainable development. Though there are no perfect governing structures and institutions but they can be continuously improved

Suggestions

Based on the conclusion, the paper recommends that:

1. There should be effective institutions and systems that are responsive to public needs, deliver essential services and promote inclusive growth as institutions are the basics for good governance.

2. Democratic administrators should manifest the spirit of accountability, responsibility and responsiveness to ensure good governance in Nigeria.

3. Both effective management and well functioning markets require that there should be clear rules about what constitute acceptable conducts in the realm of economic, social and political life. Hence strict enforcement of the rule of law to all citizens should not be based on ethnicity and political affiliation.

4. There should be full inclusive citizenship based on respect of gender, cultural, religious and other differences.

5. Nepotism, tribalism and corruption should be highly reduced as good governance entails the exemplary leadership through the charismatic and sterling qualities of the ruling class.

6. There should be respect for limits of constitutional rights and responsibilities.

7. Nigerian and its political leaders should adopt an ideology as the country can no longer afford to be moving desultorily. Ideology provides a guiding principle of sustainable national development.

8. Patronage based on tribal and religious affiliations should be jettisoned while principle of merit should be embraced in all public and private institutions.

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