Nigerian State, Leadership Deficiency and the Challenges of Good Governance in the Fourth Republic.

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Abstract

State is essentially created to provide and sustain good governance for its citizenry. The ability of the state to fulfill this fundamental responsibility is greatly depended on the physical, social and political capacity of the leaders entrusted with the management of the affairs of the state. Significantly, the nature and quality of leadership and governance in any state determines to a large extent how such state will be socially described, politically evaluated and economically rated among the comity of nations within the global community. Consequently, every state strives to ensure that its leadership recruitment processes is jealously guided and protected by the essential qualities capable of engendering good governance and ensuring effective service delivery system. Nigerian state has been battling with leadership and governance crisis since independence without any strong hope of surmounting these unending challenges as poverty, insecurity, corruption and the like continued unabated. With this ugly and unceasing situation, one is forced to ask the following questions; one, despite various policy attempts and ceaseless use of resources at ensuring good governance by successive governments in Nigeria, why has it been so difficult to achieve? to what has been responsible for this never-ending leadership debacle in Nigeria in spite of series of implemented reforms on leadership recruitment? Based on the foregoing, the study examined critically leadership recruitment and governance processes in Nigeria with the intention of identifying the various factors that are strongly responsible for leadership deficiency and the apparent failure of governance in the last decades. The study adopted Elite theory for its analysis. The study employed the use of existing data from texts, journals, magazines, conference proceedings, newspapers, bulletins, published and unpublished theses and the internet to source its information. The study observed that leadership deficiency has been responsible for governance crisis in Nigeria, and therefore recommended cultivation of public interest, constitutionalism, integrity, accountability and transparency as panacea to good leadership and governance.

Key words: Citizen; Governance; Leadership; State; Recruitment.

Introduction

Meaningful and genuine development of a multi-cultural society is essentially and greatly depended on state of leadership and path of governance as the former and latter determine to a large extent the progress of such society (Lawal, 2019a). The hope and expectation of the citizen, arising from the entrenchment of democracy in 1999 after long years of military leadership was suddenly dashed by the apparent manifestation of leadership and governance in the fourth republic. To support this claim, UNDP (2018) has consistently rated Nigeria low in its Human Development Index (HDI) since 2003, which shows that Nigeria has continued to lag behind in terms of governance and development. In Singapore and China, development was possible as a result of discipline and transparent leaders. In Chile, Indonesia and Malaysia, leaders were committed to development. Strong commitment and clarity of vision on the part of leaders have been fingered for the success stories of South Korea and Taiwan (Umana, 2018). In developed world, development is not linked or traceable to the level of available resources alone but also the leadership quality (Agbor, 2012). United States became one of the world's most developed nations through her well spirited and committed political leaders ranging from George Washington to John Kennedy. The leadership in Cuba under FidelCastro lifted their people from quagmire of poverty (Agbor, 2012).

However, in Nigeria, effective leadership and good governance remain elusive as poverty insecurity, unemployment, corruption, hunger continued unabated despite huge resources at her disposal. This has made Agbaye, Onwudwe& Diamond (2004: XX) described Nigeria as "a rich country of poor people". In a similar vein, Suberu (2004:31) captures Nigeria as the "Greatest single development tragedy in the world today, the metaphor per excellence for a failed developmental experience. It has been further observed that 'leadership expression in Nigeria since 1999 has shown that an elected leader and manager of the resources of a state, whose first inclination is to build the next big house in his village and buy every available land in his state capital, acquire bigger houses in Abuja, Dubai, London or Washington, will think less about building and equipping schools and hospitals in his state' (The Sun, 2019).

In attempts to tackle this challenge, successive governments had introduced different policies and reforms expected to systemically address the situation, for instance, introduction of two-

party system, introduction of option A4, Registration of more political parties, passage and approval of not too young to run bill, introduction of card reader machine etc. Despite these various innovations, leadership recruitment process has continued to be scammed, manipulated and invariably questioned for lack of integrity and transparency. Consequently, the much-needed good governance has apparently continued to elude the citizens. Based on this, the study examines the various factors responsible for this never-ending leadership and governance crisis since independence without any strong hope of surmounting these ceaseless challenges.

Governance, State and Leadership

UNDP (1997) perceives governance as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs, comprising the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences. It encompasses the political, economic, legal, judicial, social and administrative authority and therefore includes; government, the private sector and the civil society. Adamolekun (2002) conceives element of governance as rule of law, freedom of expression and association, electoral legitimacy, accountability, transparency and development-oriented leadership. According to Yagboyaju&Akinola (2019:3) "governance presupposes a power structure with its own hierarchical categories, incorporating the economic, social, cultural and political tensions within the society, and thus spreading out an inherent dynamism which absorbs the ebbs and flows of pressures towards ensuring peaceful and effective solutions to existential problems confronting the society and its people''.

Umana (2018) links the crisis of governance with the deliberate refusal of some state officials to render account of their stewardship, having served the government in one capacity or the other. According to him, most of these offices are apparently personalized, thus becoming difficult to actually render required services to the citizens. In line with Umana's position, there are clear evidences that probity, accountability and transparency are conspicuously absent in public service and consequently impede good governance (Lawal &Owolabi, 2012). Agulana(2006) as cited in Yagboyaju&Akinola (2019) cleverly observed that democracy has failed to provide dividends in Nigeria because of the nature and characters of the political class who has faint idea of the demands of governance. Yagboyaju&Akinola (2019) has identified military denomination

of political party and the subsequent introduction of military command system into the electioneering and governing processes as bane to good governance and leadership. According to them, this undemocratic attitude affect leadership recruitment process as candidates are handpicked for elective position and electoral processes compromised. Thus, putting democratic ethos in limbo and paving way for leaders without vision and development characters. Ake&Olowojolu (2016) have described governance and leadership as the pivot for socio-economic and political structure. Unfortunately, Nigeria's problems have been traced to ineffective leadership, manifesting in poor governance (Christian Aid, 2017).

Lawal (2019b) has argued that state basically exists for the good of men. According to him, it is created to protect, preserve, secure and provide for the citizenry. The foregoing suggests that effective functioning of state is capable of enriching and fulfilling lives of individual citizen. Disturbingly, Nigerian state has been incapacitated by the inept attitude and selfish interest of her leaders, which has subsequently affected governance in negative perspectives. This position was corroborated by Yagboyaju&Akinola (2019) when they described Nigerian state as weak and ineffective. According to them, Nigerian state has not been able to combat poverty, infrastructural deficit, insurgency and terrorism as a result of her weakness. Whereas, the state is expected to perform service-delivery responsibilities, such as infrastructure provision and other social service. This failed expectation is not unconnected with leadership crisis rocking the nation.

In the work of Agboola, Lamidi&Shiyanbade (2017) Nigerian leaders have been described as self-seeking and not oriented to the interest of the citizens and nation at large. Leadership is critical to governance as it often advances societal development. A good leader is someone who leads a group of people in the direction of the accomplishment of set goal (Kehinde, Imhomopi&Evbuoma, 2016). Leadership is a process of allocating scarce resources, managing conflicting situations and providing serene environment for governance to thrive for the purpose of societal development. Every leader must as a matter of emphasis possess the required capacity to accomplish these goals. Leadership is a call to serve and not an avenue to accumulate wealth at the expense of the innocent citizens as observed by Kolade (2012) and as presently manifesting in Nigeria.

Umana (2018) aptly argued that Nigerian leaders have demonstrated performance failure, which has manifested in massive unemployment, inequality, inflation insecurity and poverty. It is instructive to know at this juncture that a wide gap still exists between leadership and good governance and hence, the need for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Elite theory is a philosophical explanation of the role of the leadership in governance as it affects public policies. Elite theory holds that politics is best understood through the generalization that nearly all political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy group of people sharing similar values and interests and mostly coming from relatively similar privileged backgrounds (Higley& Burton, 2006). If the formal structures of government are central to explaining 'who gets what, when and how', then the role of elite in governance process is equally important. Elites dominate the formal institutions of government and are a determining factor in governance and decision-making processes. Elites are the decision makers in the society, whose power is not subject to control by any other body in the society (Arowolo&Aluko, 2012).

According to Field and Higley (1980), elite theory seeks to describe and explain the power relationships in contemporary society among members of the economic and political elite. Bottomore (1993) views elites as a particular set of people, who direct the affairs of the state and possibly replace themselves with their children. They occupy all segments of decision-making process, which enables them to exert a significant power over the policy decisions of corporations and government (Bottomore, 1993).Under this theory, a political system is seen to be divided into two major groups which are what some scholars referred to as the political entrepreneur otherwise known as elite and the masses popularly referred to as apolitical class. The elite in this group are those who possess various ideological interests while the average citizens are more or less not aware or interested in the public affairs of their society. It is based on the notion of groups that this theory gives higher credits to the elite group owing to the fact that ordinary citizen is incapacitated to administer the state of a smooth running of government. All have to come from the wisdom and directives of elite in the state, who in the contemporary era are the political leaders who are perceived to possess special skills and knowledge in the state.Elite theorists are of the view that even when entire groups of elites are ostensibly excluded

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from the state's traditional network of power, counter-elite frequently develop within such excluded groups, and there will be negotiation between elite and counter-elite in order to reach a compromise (Bottomore, 1993, Ikelegbe, 1994). This explains the conspiracy theory of elite in governance. The theorists are of the view that though in modern societies, the power of elite is constrained by legal-constitutional rules and practices, the elite usually have enough autonomy to interpret laws, modify rules and alter public responsibilities in ways that protect their interests. The elite generate the support of non-elite populations by employing formidable coercive machine of states, persuasive powers of mass media and payoffs to discontented groups.

Most time elite rely on persuasion but coercion is always a possibility if their vital interests are threatened. Elites are capable of setting the tone of society by coming out with policies of their choice and the laws by which they will abide. The level of success or otherwise recorded in the service delivery is a function of elites' initiatives and caprices. The elite theory postulates that public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elite rather than demands of the masses. The elite consist of those few individuals who wield powers and hold leading positions in the strategic aspects of society. The majority, nay the masses, only obey and are guided, controlled and governed by the few (Bottomore, 1993, Ikelegbe, 1994). It is on the basis of the authoritative position of the elite that informs elites' reflection of policy and decisions and their unending involvement in government activities. Most of the rules and principles of governance are designed and implemented by the elites.

Robbinson, Amsden&Dicaprio (n.d) have noted that whether the welfare impact of elites is positive or negative is determined by how the actors or elite group executes its influence. The bottom line here is the fact that elites can serve as agents and catalysts for good governance if they are willing to do so. The law and policies that emanate from the state reflect the interest of the ruling and dominant class (Elites). Disturbingly, the objectives of Nigerian elites are often more altruistic. Elite theory is relevant to this study because it explains the influence of the elite (leaders) on formulation and implementation of policies (Governance) and how they have used their authoritative positions and powers to strain governance to suite their prebendal interest.

Leadership and Governance in Nigeria: The Missing Link

Lawal &Alonge (2019) have described the relationship between leadership and governance as symbiotic and inseparable. According to them, successful leadership determines progressive governance and failed leadership breeds poor governance. The latter diction appears more pronounced in the present Nigeria, with apparent growing gaps between leadership and governance and the subsequent concerns expressed by the academics and policy analysts. Governance prescribes effective ways of leadership performances and behind good governance is good leadership. State is fundamentally created to ensure good governance through effective leadership. This suggests that governance is directly connected to exercise of authority in state institutions and how leaders are made to be accountable (Davis, 2011). Flowing from the foregoing is the fact that state and governance are driven by leadership capacity. Notably, Nigerian leadership have failed to exhibit the virtues of good governance (Adamolekun, 2002; Lawal &Owolabi, 2012; Anyadike&Emeh, 2014; Umana, 2018;Yagboyaju&Akinola, 2019). Few of the identified factors responsible for this apparent gap between leadership and governance are discussed below.

Leadership recruitment process is often manipulated and compromised. Sadly, credible election as a critical process of leadership recruitment has overtime been elusive (Waziri, 2009). It has become worsened by the current and trending vote buying and selling phenomenon. The new trend and common practice of "edibokesibe", which literally mean vote and get money to cook soup (Olaniyan, 2020), associated with vote trading is contrapuntal to effective leadership and good governance. When leadership recruitment process is monetized and hijacked, it becomes difficult for people with vision, capacity and creativity to emerge as leaders.

Another factor is followership gullibility, which is serving as a stumbling block to good governance. As a result of pecuniary motives and gains, Nigerians, particularly the youth and the impoverished have compromised and aligned with political class to further impede governance by ensuring that the bids of political elites are successfully executed.

Additionally, is the propagation of self-interest as against public interest by the leadership class. This has been adequately captured by the theoretical framework (elite theory) adopted in this article. Leadership recruitment process is hinged on patronage system, where the high cost of

expression and nomination forms imposed by some of the notable and ruling parties, particularly the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) is often negotiated to be paid by political godfathers for political godsons based on agreement and sharing formula and or paid by caucus party members or political associates of the aspirant, where such aspirant cannot afford the bill (Herbert, 2018). In this crude arrangement, upright individuals without godfathers as well as youth are sneakily shut out of the process.

Culture of impunity among the political leadership also affects governance. This was also noted by Yagboyaju&Akinola (2019) when they observed that Nigerian leaders do not often respect rules and regulations of the country. Politicians are fond of disobeying court orders, flouting party rules at will without sanction. Corrupt attitude of political class is also worrisome. A corrupt leader is antithetical to good governance. Leadership recruitment process should be thorough and driven by merit, decency and competence rather than filthy considerations. It should be based on track records to ensure that creative and self-contented people with vision, boldness, willingness and courage to serve are apparently recruited as leaders.

The nature and character of Nigerian political parties constitutes impediment to good leadership and good governance. Political party is unarguably and significantly expected to be organized, disciplined and capable of driving and providing genuine process of leadership recruitment and democratic governance (Ekundayo, 2016). However, this expected task has become herculean and unachievable as parties in Nigeria are no longer exhibiting the real characters and culture of political party as obtained in developed societies, but are more interested in power, wealth and influence at all cost for altruistic motives. This prevalent but ugly attitude has continued to truncate the process of leadership recruitment in Nigeria with its attendant effect on governance. Inter and intra party wrangling and squabbles cannot also be divorced from leadership and governance crisis as it has become fashionable for parties to have new and old, particularly, the ruling parties, which impacts negatively to a large extent on candidate selection.

Conclusion

This study focused on leadership and governance in Nigeria. It identified leadership and governance as the most needed elements by the state to propel sustainable development.

Unfortunately, Studies have also shown that leaders in Nigeria lacked leadership qualities and required elements to provide and sustain good governance. Be that as it may, this study has made us to understand that a lot of efforts and innovations are still required by both the political class and the citizens in the process of ensuring effective leadership and good governance.

Recommendations

What is presently needed is the strategies that are capable of ensuring credible leadership recruitment process with viable and sustainable empowerment programmes. To achieve this, the following are recommended;

a. Cultivation of public interest. The leaders in position of authority must develop the idea of placing public interest over individual or private interest.

b. Constitutionalism. There is urgent need for adherence to rules and regulations. Every individual irrespective of his or her position must respect and obey the law. Every action of our leaders must be in tandem with the stipulations of law to avoid impunity and recklessness.

Integrity. Integrity is essential to good leadership and governance. This should as a matter of fact be embraced and exhibited by our leaders who are in various positions of authority to make decisions that will affect millions of Nigerians.

Accountability and transparency. Leaders, particularly the political leaders must be made to account for their actions and inactions while serving the people as this will promote trust, enhance transparency and effective performance. It should be noted that if all these elements are sincerely inculcated and implemented, good leadership capable of promoting and engendering good governance is ensured and assured.

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