

Leadership, Public Finance, Accountability and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the role of leadership, public finance and accountability on national development in Nigeria. Public finance, accountability and National Development cannot be achieved without the role of leadership. Leadership is the hub. A good leader is accountable and utilizes public finance for the development of the nation. Accountability is holding bureaucratic power accountable to ensure that public trust is not abused or misused. In recent times Bureaucrats give very scant regard to accountability. They forget that they are stewards who must give account to the public. Accountability is giving account of one's stewardship. In Nigerian civil service and the public service, it is the Machiavelli's style that is in operation. The survival of the fittest, the winner takes it all have become the norm today. This unethical conduct has led the country to corruption. This paper is therefore concerned with pointing out why national development has stagnated for some time now. The neglect of the core issues of this paper are responsible. To redress this, I recommend a fool-proof system of checks and balances that will be based on transparency and through supervision. I have adopted the trait theory of leadership in my exposition of leadership options that are open to us.

Keywords: Leadership, Public finance, Accountability and Development

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Introduction

Accountability is an important concept in any country's public administration. The state, the local government, the federal government, people who are appointed or elected into positions should be accountable for the actions they exhibit in the course of their duties. Public complaint commission as the Ombudsman has been established in Nigeria to handle issues of abuse of power in office and corruption. Today, we have ethics in governance which spells out expectations from public servants. It is also , ethical and professional conduct which states how a public servant should behave, the rights and duties and responsibilities of leaders to the citizens. Adebayo(1993).

The Code of Conduct's responsibility is to bring to book all government officials who violate the rules. In Nigeria, despite the bodies established to check-mate the conduct of government officials, nothing serious is being done to implement the sanctions spelt out against corrupt practices in the civil service. Government officials are not liable to anybody, once a person gets into power, he controls and takes all the resources that are under his control. There is no way any nation can develop by allowing this state of affairs. This paper is concerned with pointing out the areas where we are getting it wrong, especially in leadership, accountability and public finance.

Theoretical framework

In this work, we are applying the trait theory which holds that leadership is the outcome of complex interaction in an organizational situation. A leader must have many sided positive traits that will help him or her discharge the duties of his office. The leading role of the leader in concert with the led is of paramount importance. According to Ghiselli there are nine leadership traits which are indispensable in achieving leadership responsibilities. These traits are outlined as follows: self assurance, supervisory ability, intelligence need for achievement, initiative, decisiveness, need for self actualization, working class affinity and security.

According to Stoghill quoted by Ufort and Sote,(1999) trait leadership theory has the following attributes namely: strong drive for responsibility, task completion, persistence in pursuit of goals, venture someness, originality in problem solving, initiative and drive to exercise it in social situations, self confidence, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustrations and willingness to accept consequence of decisions and actions. Having said this, it is imperative to mention that the trait theory is used to help us evaluate the leadership capacity of our present leaders in Nigeria and to determine the extent to which the lack requisite traits necessary for providing adequate leadership.

Conceptual issues

Leadership

The issues of leadership started from the Old Testament. Kings and princes were seen as leaders (PS.75:1-8). Stanko (2012) in his words explained that it is God that established all leadership and so no leader whether the bank manager, president, army general, local leader, etc, should boast to say I will do this or that. The leader should not boast or be wicked; he should not talk so defiantly.

Paul wrote to the Romans about leadership and the nature of authority. He said let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. So that whoever rebels against the authority rebels against what God has instituted and those who rebel bring judgment on themselves. Paul in the new testament even went on to say that if any citizen wants to be free from fear of the authority, then, he should do what is right because the one in authority is God's ordained servant for the nation's good. The rulers do not bear the sword for no reason, they are there to bring punishment on wrong doers.(Romans 13:1-8). But today leaders bear the sword wrongly; they punish those who oppose them, those they see as their enemies who have not done anything wrong. They punish because power is in their hands. . But Blanchard (2012) says a leader should use his or her power in a manner that will benefit all. If a leader does what he wants by suppressing the people he is leading, he will one day face God who gave him the opportunity to lead. Greenleaf (2012) stated that a leader must do the will of God, love his people, be a servant leader, but the case is different where we see leaders seeing themselves as boss who lord over the people, usurpers, who usurp the monies of their people, in Nigeria for example, many pensioners are not paid. A leader should be a team player, be a good communicator, be a good reconciler, and be a good learner. A leader must be compassionate, put himself in the shoe of other people. He said a leader should be considerate otherwise he or she can't be a good leader.

According to Okonette (2020),when leaders become misleaders and mentors become tormentors, when freedom of expression becomes a target of suppression and opposition becomes our position, then, there is no good leadership. According to Stanko (2012), there is a difference between leaders

and managers. “Great leaders rally people to a better future. Great managers discover what is unique about each person and capitalize on it”. According to him a leader should not lie, he should be a source of justice, he should help whenever possible, avoid unjust gain, pay attention to their subjects, but these are not so among our Nigerian leaders. Today, our Nigerian leaders do not listen to the led. In Nigeria, the leaders (Politicians) will amass so much wealth, build houses everywhere in the country, build for even their unborn generations while the poor are left to suffer. When there is erosion problem to be handled by World Bank, our leaders (Politicians) will hijack it and yet they will not do it well. In most erosion sites, many poor people’s houses have been washed away by erosion and our leaders are not bothered. They are concerned with making their own profit and so anytime it will take to finish the work is okay by them.

For Northouse (2012) leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Here in Nigeria, the case is different as our leaders are becoming richer and the led becoming poorer. In Nigeria today, instead of transforming the people and bringing them out of their poor state of life, they rather are pushing the people into hard times. Today, there are no jobs for our graduates, many homes cannot feed three square meals a day, many have dropped out of school, many cannot pay house rent, many pensioners have died, people have committed suicide, and many have thrown their children into the pits because they cannot feed them. It is here in Nigeria, that you will see the citizens using the peanuts they are paid to maintain their roads so they can move in and out. No wonder Wike (2020) called them cash and cow leaders who are interested to control and take the money meant for development of the their state to themselves while their people suffer. Leaders have become a source of pain to the people they are leading. This is the situation many Nigerians have found themselves. Transformational leaders are leaders who bring in change and encourage good followership so by making governance participatory and democratic. But in Nigeria, we are not practicing democracy, rather it is politics of politicians by politicians and for politicians, some call our brand of politics “greedocracy”, that is, government of the greedy by the greedy and for the greedy. A Transformational leader is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential. But where there are no transformational leadership and without any change in the lives of the people, the result could be the ENDSARS protest we had in Nigeria because there was no good followers, good followers don’t destroy their assets and infrastructure because they have a stake in it. A country where there is insecurity and the leadership have become intolerant to public and criticisms, cannot make progress in governance. It leads to hopelessness as we can see people becoming hopeless today.

David (1967) in Okon (2004) defined leadership as ability to persuade others to seek and define objectives enthusiastically, it is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals. Stogdil (1974) in Okon (2004) Summarizes leadership to reflect the fact of leadership as the art of inducing compliance, leadership as act or behavior, leadership as a part of persuasion, leadership as a power relation, leadership as an instrument of goal achievement, leadership as an effect on interaction, leadership as a differentiated role and leadership as the initiation of structure

Public Finance

The first question that comes to mind is what is public finance? According to Ajibola (2008) public finance is the aspect of economics that deals with the determination of government activities and expenditures and the ways by which the funds to carry out these activities are raised and the effects of the expenditures and revenue measures on the economy. It can further be defined as all activities

of government geared towards generating and allocating revenue towards ensuring efficiency of the state and the general wellbeing of the governed.

Against the above back drop, it is appropriate to see public finance as all activities that generate funds whether in public or private domains which contribute funds to the common till under the control of the government which are mobilized for the day to day running of government, building of national infrastructure, payment of wages, taking care of internal and international financial obligations of government. It is the duty of government to provide enabling environment for the private sector to thrive to facilitate economic activities which create employment, open up the economic sector in all spheres to encourage citizens to get involved in activities that produce wealth for the individual and the state.

The economic space is very wide ranging from oil sector, agriculture, solid minerals, technology, automobile, commerce, education, medicals and pharmaceuticals, engineering, politics, administration, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), news media industry, hydrological sector, foreign service, banking sector, etc., are areas where financial activities take place and they are of interest to government because they constitute sources of public finance. Today, because of the substantial resources that accrue to the state through oil, other sectors of the economy have been neglected and because of this, the economic space has shrunk to the point that the only viable sectors in the Nigerian economy remain the oil sector and politics. Politics is not a productive sector but a consuming sector. The business of the political class is not to add to public finance but to suck in the public finance for personal and class aggrandizement.

A viable economy is an economy where all the sectors are contributing to the common pool of public finance. It is a system that is self-generating, self-sustaining and self-propagating. A viable economic system must be job-creating and wealth-creating. The economic activities must be such that job creation is not out-paced by unemployment and population growth. It is therefore the responsibility of government to analyze and keep tabs on the economic activities to ensure that there is profitable progress made in all the sectors of the economy.

No government can survive without finance because finance is indispensable to public administration. No government program or policy can succeed without finance. Public finance is of the crucial importance to public administrators. Public finance has been defined as an aspect of economics which deals with the raising, spending and management of public fund. It is the study of taxation and expenditure of government. It studies how government raises, spends and manages funds to the benefit of its citizens. (Nweze, 2011 in Duru, 2014).

Musgrave and Musgrave (1989) define public finance as the complex of financial problem, which operates through the revenue and expenditure process of the public budget. The scope covers the avenues from which government generates revenue, the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the various sources of revenue, the effect as well as the principles governing them.

Accountability

Conventionally, accountability refers to answerability for one's action or behaviour. Formerly, accountability involves the development of objective standards of evaluation to assist the owners of an organization to evaluate the performance of duties by individuals and units within the organization (Olowu, 1995). He went further to say that a debate dating back to Hobbes on whether the state as a sovereign, should be accountable to anyone, since it was the sole guarantor of social peace or if the

state should be treated as a moral and responsible agent. It was said that state must be accountable on the basis of the constitution and the laws of the country. The individuals who exercise state authority will be held accountable for the actions of the state they represent, meaning that all are accountable for their actions. Since power corrupts, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely there is the need for accountability. Adebayo (1984) says accountability is the requirement which subjects public officers to detailed scrutiny by the legislature over objectives, use of resources, and manner of performance. Meaning, that even a minister have to answer for his stewardship in office. Ombudsman (public Complaints Commission in Nigeria) is installed into the system to monitor and report on the activities and performance of public officers. Many public officers are looting the resources meant for the masses for their personal use and nothing is done about it.

Accountability is not only in accounting for funds or public office. Accountability also relates to how people treat or relate to fellow human beings. These days, there is no concept of time work because you see uniformed men as early as 7am in the morning staying on the road when parents are going to drop their children at school, or when people are going to church to appreciate God who has kept them alive to live to work collecting money from the public. Who are they accounting for? We see leaders who will displace the poor from their livelihood just to take those lands for themselves, who are they accounting for. I made mention in my work on Corona virus and the new wave theory, that corona came as a result of the wickedness of man on earth, to punish and to give sign and warning for greater punishment ahead if we do not change. How do you rationalize leaders collecting money from the poor before they give them jobs, some leaders go as far as telling their applicant that they will collect their salaries for a full year before they will allow the poor applicant to collect his wage, who are they accounting to.

National Development

National development is the progressive change of individuals towards conditions that are better and more satisfying than their existing states. For there to be national development in any country a goal oriented leader is compulsory. If our leaders view leadership as a collective affair and accept its responsibilities, then it will be easy for them to be committed to the goal of national development. Most leaders of countries would not allow its citizens to be involved in the formulation of national goals, the involvement of people in the development of goals increase leadership effectiveness and these raises the level of national development (Ufot and Sote,1999).

National development therefore can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious pursuit of a country. National development started in Nigeria during the development plan. Since and after the departure of the colonial masters, Nigeria has had problems of development and is still battling with development issues. Nigeria has had many development plans. Since sixty one years now and after independence Nigeria has been revolving around development but has not actually developed. Nigeria has had many development plans starting from first development plan to the rolling plan yet no concrete development is achieved in Nigeria. Ozumba (2016) in Edame (2006) opined that Nigeria is faced with the problems of development that has to do with vicious cycle of poverty, high rate of illiteracy, economic backwardness, political instability, low level of unemployment and said that these low development is attributed to bad leadership. Today, we are having insurgency, banditry, insecurity, terrorism, etc, that is hindering development, many lives and properties have been destroyed.

Ozumba (2014) stated that any meaningful development plan lies in its implementation and implementation hinges on a good committed leader who is willing to carry out the policy. The leader must have interest in development and the support of the people, meaning if a good leader have followers the followers will support the project rather than destroying the project.

The place of public finance in National Development

As the Holy writ says ‘Money answereth all things’. The importance of public finance cannot be over emphasized. The development of a nation is tied to the fluidity, availability and circulation of funds for economic activities. When funds are scarce or inflation is high, the purchasing power of individuals; states and the nation will be reduced and consequently economic activities of the nation are adversely affected. Having the funds is one thing and deploying the funds for the general profitability of the economy is another.

Funds must be deployed in areas where the nation, the state or the individual will have maximum positive or profitable returns on investment and by so doing there will be multiplier effect which stimulates the economy thereby engendering national development.

The question is what is national development? National development as a concept is not easy to deconstruct. This is so because; it means different things to different people, to different nations, etc. National development can only be meaningfully defined from the angle of understanding

1. The vision of the nation
2. The objectives of the nation
3. The ideals and philosophy of the nation.
4. The ideology of the nation and
5. The envisaged end product of our national efforts.

For instance, are we interested in achieving a sophisticated and highly developed economy? A medium ranged developed economy, an agrarian economy, a mixed economy where there is capitalism and socialism mixed up to achieve a welfare society. Or is it a wholly technologically driven economy? A Militarized economy? An egalitarian society where there is freedom? Justice and Equality of opportunities? Or do we need a society where the government aids individuals to optimize their potentials, or do we need a wholly private sector driven economy? A nation is therefore said to be developed if it is achieving the goals it has set for herself with the agreement of her citizens, that is, if the citizens are happy and at peace with how their wellbeing is taken care of.

Public finance is to be deployed to engender the necessary environment that makes funds available for the achievement of set objectives. The Environment has to be conducive for foreign direct investment, for indigenous private investment. There is need to balance out the administration of public finance to bring up every aspect of the economy to lead to upsurge in economic activities that will lead to growth of the economy. The indices of a buoyant economy will include;

1. When salaries and wages of workers are paid regularly and promptly
2. When the purchasing power of earned money is not whittled down by inflation
3. There is favorable national balance of payment
4. There is favourable exchange rate against the key national currencies like dollar, pounds Euro, etc.

5. Enough money in circulation to engender economic activities that create jobs and reduce unemployment.
6. Favourable taxation that does not stifle the private sector and reduce investment.
7. Increase in industrialization and massive employment.
8. Financial leakages through corruption are plugged.
9. There must be security of lives and property to enable businesses to thrive
10. When indigenous industries are protected through subsidies and minimal taxation.
11. Local manufacturers should be encouraged.
12. Agriculture is booming and is made an important segment of the economy. Farmers should be encouraged through supply of farming inputs like fertilizers, seedlings, machines, free land, storage facilities, etc., and these should to be evenly distributed to all the states and not to only some sections of the country.

There is need to have a return of the marketing boards of post independence era to help market the products of farmers at profitable prices. For example, the farming needs like feed for poultry, fishing and others have continued to skyrocket to the point that many farmer are withdrawing and getting into commerce. This will definitely lead to acute food shortage in the very near future. Government policy must capture how to arrest negative developments in agriculture which is one of the main stay of our national economy.

All that we have said so far is unachievable without appropriate leadership drive. Everything stands or falls by leadership. Nigeria needs a leader who will provide leadership in all spheres of our national life. A leader who with his team will provide security, give justice and equity, be interested in the performance of the economy. How are the people faring economically? Do we have jobs for the teeming youths? Is the economy properly diversified and ventilated to boost economic activities.

In Nigeria, the only two sectors that are booming are the oil and gas sector and political sector. Other sectors are almost comatose. A good leader will ensure that all the sectors are working in synergy to produce economic growth which leads to national development. The manufacturing, extractive sector, agriculture, tourism, industries, commerce, transport sector, export of locally manufactured goods and services, media businesses, etc., are all supposed to be aided to be at their best with the provision of the needed infrastructure like roads, electricity, water, schools, hospitals, affordable houses, rail system, etc. A truly democratic servant leader is what Nigeria needs at present. A leader that is transparent, that will fight corruption and channel resources to the amelioration of the sufferings of the masses. Social services and welfare packages are needed to lighten the burden of the poor in the nation. There cannot be national development without food on the table, jobs for graduates, provision of basic needs and amenities that make life worth living.

Evaluation of leadership Role in National Development

The main line of consideration of leadership in Nigeria is not so much about positive traits. It is all about social political religious pedigree. The circumstances of birth, political connection, the position in society, religious affiliation, the nobleness of schools attended. There was a time when only those who attended Barewa College dominated the leadership position in Nigeria. You must be a Sandhurst trained soldier to rule Nigeria. Today, it is wealth and political connection that pave way for leadership position in Nigeria level and quality of education.

The fact that positive leadership traits are no longer very much considered, it has become easy for hooligans, misfits and criminal money bags to find their way into leadership positions. The consequences is that they do everything to recoup what they spent to gain political power and even go beyond to manipulate the political process in order to perpetuate themselves in power. Leadership trait theory insists that leaders are born but in a rare feat of hard work and personal development, a person can develop leadership traits. Leadership trait encompasses the physical, mental and a social characteristic of individuals (Ndum, 2013). My position in this paper is that the leadership that will lead to national development will involve a whole lot of traits. The leader must be knowledgeable, strong and courageous, visionary, determined, focused, hardworking, having initiative, transparent, exemplary, selfless, proactive, people-oriented, servant-like, humble, broad-minded not nepotistic, goal or achievement oriented, not ostentatious, down to earth, patriotic, nationalistic and a good harnesser of good leadership qualities in others. He has the capacity to understand the varying sub-national interests and articulate them into policies and action plans that will unify rather than divide the nation.

We have not been lucky in Nigeria to have leaders who possess in substantial quantum the traits that we have listed above. The absence of the above much needed trait have continues to hinder our national development. According to Chinua Achebe Nigeria's problem is squarely hinged on leadership. We have not been lucky to have good leaders. Those who possess the leadership traits are eclipsed because of either lack of money or lack of political connection or both. Others, it is the wrong place of birth, tribal origin or other disadvantages which being a Nigerian, belonging to a religious body or being poor brings. All in all, I am of the view that the consciousness of the electorate should be enhanced so that from now only those with credible leadership traits should be voted into power in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is a complex phenomenon that involves many categories and incidences. It involves education, morality, physical and spiritual endowments, the nature of tasks to be carried out, the nature and make-up of the ruled, the diversity of the nation, the social political, economic situation of the nation, the challenges, confronting the Nation and so on. This means that there are no set of fixed leadership qualities that a leader must possess in order to be a good leader. But the bottom-line is that a good leader must have some basic qualities for him to do well in leadership. He has to be educationally balanced, morally sound, selfless, patriotic, ready to serve, ready to add value, sincere, hardworking, must be transparent, ready to fight corruption, put round pegs in round holes (use qualified hands as subordinates) entrench proper oversight, ensure accountability, etc. When these basic qualities are there, devoid of hypocrisy then, we will have the type of national development we are looking for. Today, corruption in all its forms has permeated our national life. It will be difficult to get the type of leader that will lead us out of our many ignoble woods, political, social and economic. It is only an act of providence or the conscious exercise of the people's will in solidarity to right the many wrongs in our polity.

Nigeria is blessed, the only problem is leadership disaster, leadership earthquake and leadership tsunami. This is a country where leaders do not obey the law because they go with government plate numbers, they don't pay for driving license, they don't obey traffic laws. It is only the poor that obey the law, pay for driving license because they don't have government number plate numbers. It is in Nigeria, that leaders can eat their cake and have it. This is why things are not working well in Nigeria.

Most of these leaders forget that as they accept responsibility, ultimate expectation from them is accountability, but when they refuse to be accountable, they show they are not responsible.

Today, most leaders do not account for any fund given for any assignment. It is the winner takes it all mentality. Most federal Universities in the country are having problem because during accreditation nothing good comes out of it because it is all deceit. Some panel members take gratification in order to give favourable reports. The panel go and come back year after without any substantial positive outcome. Today Nigeria is borrowing not even to invest and make profit for development or for infrastructure, but borrowing for consumption.

Alamayesia once said that while the “white are borrowing to build roads in the moon, Africans are busy borrowing to build roads to their villages and those roads are not even of good quality because of corruption and bad leadership. Today in Nigeria, it is divide and rule, they give positions to their friends and those who are loyal to them. They are ready to kill if you stand on their way to corruption. Some past African leaders like President Nyerere, left worthy legacies for African leaders. Kenneth Kaunda is said to have only a moderate house. The president of Germany, a woman, is said to have left office without substantial change to her wardrobe. So we agree that our leaders (politicians) are there to govern themselves for their good and not for the good of the people. This is what is leading to all the problems of youths restiveness we are having in the country.

Like Ekanem (2021) put it, Nigeria cannot grow and prosper under the atmosphere of injustice, inequality, religious intolerance, ethnicity, tribalism, nepotism, insecurity, impunity, police brutality, Boko Haram, social imbalance, absence of rule of law, undemocratic practices, electoral fraud and violence, lack of visionary leadership, corruption, unpatriotic leadership, lack of integrity by our leaders, the phenomenon of sex for marks in educational institutions, examination malpractices, a government that is lusterless and clerically drudgery including the socio-linguist insularity of the top echelon of the polity and other unending socio-economic and political vices that have suffocated the people for the past six decades, and have resulted in the Nigerian spirit of ENDSARS revolutionary movement.

Summarily, we have looked at the place of leadership and public finance in national development. My position is that leadership and transparency in the generating and utilization of public finance for national development form an inextricable nexus that must work in concert with other aspects of the economy to bring about national development. If there is good leadership without sufficient finance, leadership will be futile and there will be no development. And if there is finance with bad leadership, the money may be squandered, misappropriated and frittered away without coordinated effort towards national development.

RECCOMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that leaders must be people who are tested and who have shown evidence of being patriotic. Who understands what development is all about and knows what to do to achieve development. He should set up robust mechanism for ensuring accountability in our national life which should include sincerity at fighting corruption. There should be good development plan which enables the leader to know how to channel public finance to the achievement of the development plan he has set for the nation.

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