

Leadership, Accountability and Performance of Political Industry- State of Infrastructures in Nigeria

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Abstract

A surgical intellectual insight on development of every society is argued to be a function of leadership that imbibes the principles of accountability. Government at all levels in Nigeria have failed in driving development in critical sectors like power, roads, health, education and employment. The infrastructural deficit is tied on the unreadiness of political leaders to exhibit culture of honesty, credibility and transparency as core values of accountability to spark development. sources from journals, internet, newspapers and relevant books were used to elicit information on leadership and accountability as they relate to inability of our political leaders to improve the living conditions of the citizens. Poor management of public resources, godfather syndrome and corruption were seen to be militating factors against development at various levels of government. Authentic leadership assumptions were anchored, with recommendations that godfather syndrome, poor management of resources and corruption should be checked to enthrone development.

Key words: Leadership, Accountability Performance, Power Sector, Education Sector, Roads Network, Health Sector and Employment.

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Introduction

The progress and development of any society is dependent on the ability of its leadership to channel the available resources in a prudent manner. No matter the quantum of resources available to a given society, it is the leadership that determines the benefits that shall accrue to the general public. Many scholars have postulated that leadership that is ready to deliver the dividends of the managed resources to the populace is the leadership that subscribes to the principles of accountability (Otinche 2007, Ninalowo 2003). It is strongly asserted by many scholars that proper accountability culminates in effective representation and leadership (Edoho, 2007, Kuada 2010). It is strongly argued that where accountability principles are upheld, achievements with public resource become inevitable. Nigeria as a country since independence in 1960 has made very little progress and achievements in relation to the available resources at the disposal of past and present leaders. This backwardness and underdevelopment is attributed to leaderships failure propelled by mismanagement of public resources, godfather syndrome and corruption among public officials. This is evidence in untold hardship, hunger, frustration and infrastructural deficit in the country faced by citizens. (Richardson, 2008).

Notably, prevalence of social vices manifested in arm robbery, kidnapping, stealing, incessant killings and the recent #endsars protest are expression of grievances by the frustrated populace over mismanaged resources. This points to the fact that citizens believe that our nation is blessed with crude oil and other natural resources that if properly managed and controlled, the county will become better than what it is today (Gberebie, 2011). Government at all levels (Federal, State and Local) have failed in their constitutional duties to advance the welfare, security of lives and properties of the citizens. This simply entails that those managing the

resources of the nation at federal state and local government levels have failed as political leaders. Poverty indices fly all over the country with no distinction between the urban and rural dwellers.

Consequently, this paper argues that lack of accountability by our leaders at all levels of government accounts for lamentable state of underdevelopment at the federal, state and local government levels. It is of the assumptions that development is inevitable in a society that the leadership subscribes to principles of accountability. Also, that those leaders who are not accountable are drivers of underdevelopment as envisaged in Nigeria. Accountable leadership entails a culture of proper management of resources through transparency, integrity and credibility. Hence, effective representation and better living conditions for the masses (Osunde, 2017). These better conditions of citizens manifests in good roads, health services, quality education, stable power supply and employment opportunities. This is mirage in Nigerian propelled by godfather syndrome, mismanagement of resources and corruption exhibited by our political leaders, hence failure.

Conceptual Issues

Leadership

Unarguably, leadership is the driving force and life wire of any group, it is of critical importance therefore not to underestimate its role in shaping the nature of society. Just as blood is to every living creature, so is leadership to any organisation or society that strives for success. A call for leadership is anchored on the fact that human and material resources are unidirectional, unfocused and unproductive without being coordinated, organised and directed towards set objectives (Akwu, 2018). Again, differences in ideas, perceptions, character and interests, often makes conflicted social interactions. Therefore, a mechanism of control, management, direction and orderliness justifies the essence of leadership from the ancient days.

Today, leadership is seen to be a vital component of success as it entails the ability to promote a section of the populate in the direction of attaining some set goals. Leadership hinges on the welfare and wellbeing of its subordinates. This is because there can be no leadership without followership. The essence of leadership is to manage and control both human and material available resources for the common good (benefit of all).

Accordingly, Ngabi (2010) and Ngabi (2011) sees leadership as a process of persuading others in the direction of understanding their entire potentials in accomplishing a value-added collective purpose with zeal and honesty. No doubt this stressed a relationship that must be cordial and guided by honesty to achieve a collective purpose. A leader is therefore, seen as one who sets the tune of activities and events in the society. This simply means the behaviour of citizens are shaped by the attitudes and character of their leaders.

Indisputably, leadership is among the oldest preoccupation worldwide and a general occurrence in human race (Bass, 1990). From the olden days till date, leadership has contributed significantly to the growth of factions, communities and nations. As development and administration elaborately and closely expand through history, leadership as well come into view (Okafor, 2001). It has been observed that there exist a theoretical and operational discrepancy for decades on the concept of leadership. Some see it as a process of social influence in which the person in charge works in understanding with other members of a group for the attainment of collective goals, while others look at it from the angle of giving directives to followers in feelings of superiority. The former school of thought, considers a leader as one who encourages subordinates communicates with them and listens properly to them in the way and manner they feel, while the later passes instructions that suits only his feelings.

Therefore, good conduct, motivation or lack of motivation, cooperation or lack of cooperation, good relationship or bad relationship in any organisation or society are all said to be the function of leadership style. There is a succinct distinction between the democratic leadership and other forms such as dictatorial and liberal. Leaders in the democratic framework depend on decision making through group participation of active members, sincere commendations, honesty

and strong companionships with followers. However, those utilizing other methods are either bossy or simple unnecessarily (White and Lippert 1960).

Accountability and performance

Performance is actually a function of proper accountability at the individual, organisational and national level (Nninalowo 2003). Accountability implies that government functionaries should be able to justify their actions at the level of moral and ethical standard. In the same opinion Otinche (2007) posited that “accountability demands that the public should know when money comes into government treasury and how it should be used”. Richardson (2008) holds that accountability is a critical component of proper management of resources for development in any society. In the same vein, Koppel (2005) captured transparency, liability, responsibility, controllability and responsiveness as key attributes of accountability. These attributes he said “are fundamental for the proper management of resources in any organisation or nation to enhance performance. More so, accountability is vital to good governance which seeks to improve the capacity of the state containing numerous measures to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of government performance. For Adamolekun (2005) an accountability government is when the leaders respond to the yearnings and aspirations of the masses, respect the rule of law and give opportunity for citizens to seek redress in the courts for acts of omission and commission by the government and its officials. When political powers are constitutionally appropriated and policy purposes systematically implemented through the exercise of powers entails accountability (Gregory, 2007). There is a strong relationship between leadership, accountability and performance. Leaders who are accountable exhibit strong sense of responsibilities and commitment, thereby ensuring better living conditions for the masses. The performance of public functionaries is manifested in the provision of good roads, potable water, standard education, stable electricity, and job opportunities for the citizens at the federal, state and Local Government. Therefore, performance of political leaders at federal, state and local government is measured by the availability of the aforementioned critical infrastructures.

Political Industry Performance and State of Infrastructures in Nigeria

Power supply

In the area of power supply, the political industry is said to have performed below average. This is because power supply remains epileptic in all local governments, states and regions of Nigeria. Evidently, many Nigerians who depend on power to run their businesses rely on to generators with high price in fuel. Countries we supply power to, like Niger Republic are reported to have stable power supply than us. This poor power supply affects the growth of our economy because the efficiency and effectiveness of other sectors are determined by power supply. For instance, health sector needs power supply for surgery, diagnosis and testing. Education sector also needs power especially in this era of COVID-19 where e-learning is recommended. Electricity tariff has been increased even when supply of power remains unstable. This points to failure of political leadership in Nigeria.

Health Sector

Health is one of the most critical sectors of every nation. This is because absence of standard health services implies threat to life. This is because once citizens cannot access better health services, their lives are at risk, since any serious health challenge demanding standard equipment may lead to death as managing such cases may be difficult where health equipment are poor. Our health sector is one of the poorest in the world (Punch, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole country had less than 2 ventilators, so also was the case with other sophisticated equipments for managing complications of the pandemic. Many politicians and other Nigerians died for reason of poor health facilities in the country. The poor state of health accounts for medical vacations by our leaders who have failed in responding to yearnings of the masses. Lack

of accountability is a serious hindrance in this regard as billions of Naira allocated to health sector annually is yet to reflect in the lives of Nigerians in health service delivery. For instance, 365.77 billion was allocated in 2018 and more in 2019 and 2020 but without corresponding impact on the citizens. This is simply attributed to lack of accountability by political leaders who are to be held accountable (budget office 2020). If leaders were sincere and accountable enough, Nigeria would have been one of the countries with best medical facilities, considering what is approved for the health sector annually.

Education sector and performance of political industry. The development and progress of any society is dependent on human capital development (UNICEF, 2020). What manifest in the society is what the children obtain from schools in the course of their studies. Quality education guarantees high level of productivity upon graduation by students. Poor educational foundation also entails low performance when saddled with responsibilities upon graduation. Nigeria again, is one of the countries with poor educational practices. This is reflected in inadequate lecture rooms, poor libraries, and insufficient manpower (UNICEF, 2020). This is also traced to lack of accountability where public officials in education sector divert funds allocated to educational projects to their private pockets without being questioned. Education is one of the sectors with decreasing budget projections and even the little voted for provision of facilities are suffocated (Yunusa, 2018). Moreos, the poor level of our education sector manifested in the inability of schools in Nigeria to key into e-learning during COVID-19 pandemic because e-learning facilities are lacking in our schools.

Roads Network

Though roads are one of the infrastructures that is always favoured in the annual budget of the nation, it is surprising that many communities and major cities have no access roads in Nigeria. The ministers of Roads and transportation have done less than what government has been allocating to them. For instance, Itu and Calabar road in the south-south region remain a death trap for travellers on that road. According to premium time (2020) the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (PMB) pointed to some critical stakeholders that the road is completed against what is in reality. This revealed that money was released for the completion of the road but diverted into private pockets by our sanctimonious political leaders. This pitiable situation would have been impossible if our leaders are accountable enough. The sorry-state of roads in Nigeria affects not only those who travel with their private cars but including farmers who find it difficult to move their produces from farm to available markets for sale. This has serious negative impact on the economy of the nation. Also, the COVID-19 prevention measure of contact-tracing was greeted with failure as many officials could not execute their assignments due to bad roads.

Employment opportunities

The outbreak of COVID-19 revealed that more than 65 percent of Nigerians are not gainfully employed by government. It was discovered that hardship and hunger increased as soon as lockdown was recommended as a measure to curb the spread of the pandemic. Many who depend on daily hustlers for survival were affected and their families. This led to increase in stealing and arm robbery as this was the only option left for daily hustlers to arrest their hunger. Street begging of arms was seen to have increased as parents and children who were not government employees were left with only this as an option for survival. Notably, this culminated in the #endsars protest that led to lost of lives, wanton destruction of properties and looting. It is the failure in leadership that culminated in this deadly action by the Nigerian youths who see unemployment as an outcome of mismanagement of resources by the political elites. Though government is trying to arrest the situation through many social intervention programmes such as NYIF, SPW and SF etc. Much is still needed to be done to curb the blow of joblessness in the country (Punch, 2020).

Factors responsible for poor infrastructures in Nigeria

The poor state of roads, hospitals, schools, power supply and employment in Nigeria is attributed to leadership failure. This is due to lack of proper accountability and transparency in the handling of our resources by the political leaders. Poor management of resources, godfather syndrome and corruption are seen by this paper as major obstacles to development in Nigeria as perpetrated by our political leaders as thus:

1. **Godfather Syndrome:** Most Nigerian political leaders owe allegiance to “godfathers who support and bank roll their campaigns to win elections into various offices. On strength of this, those in offices struggle to first, satisfy the ‘godfathers’ even at the detriment of the nation’s development (Otinche 2007). This however, according to him makes Nigerian politicians to play “politics of belly” and not development.
2. **Poor management of resources:** Poor management of resources by the political leaders is another obstacle to development. it is very lamenting and disappointing that a major exporter of crude oil like Nigeria is still having most population languishing in poverty without any meaningful means of livelihood and shelter (Soyinka, 2012). Despite this disheartening situation, over 70 percent of recurrent expenditure in the national budget goes to maintenance of political office holders annually. For instance, the approval of N1 billion for feeding of presidency, N280 million for bullet proof car and N300million for dinning set is nothing but high level of financial misappropriation and indiscipline by the politicians. Moreso, each member of the 306 Federal House of Representatives receives N128.4 million as annual salary, while 109 members of senate receives approximately N3billion each in 4 years (one tenure). Worst and most painful is their fringe benefits which include worldrobe allowance, recess allowance, accommodation allowance utilities allowance, domestic staff allowance, entertainment allowance, personal assistance allowance, maintenance of vehicles allowance, constituency allowance, furniture allowance severance and newspapers allowance (Nnabuie, 2010). Another instance of mismanagement of funds by politicians was displayed in 2005 by president Olusegun Obasanjo where he spent over 2 billion US Dollar for National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) which was of no impact to Nigerians other than an avenue to loot resources in favour of politicians. 2015 CONFAB by Goodluck Ebele Jonathan is another example of wasting resource on programmes that are not meant to improve on the living condition of Nigerians. This unwholesome state of affairs exists at both federal, state and local government level.
3. **Corruption:** Corruption amongst public officials is another ill that has hindered human and infrastructural development in Nigeria. It is observed that once those at the helm of affairs are corrupt, the subordinate become afraid of reporting any fraudulent activities. This is because the ones who appear to be disciplined and reporting unethical activities are always transferred since they are obstacles to them (politicians) . Corruption is seen to be in the blood of Nigerians, “it has grown 32 teeth with complete two legs capable of breaking the hardest bone” (Adesina, 2007). This has caused so many policies with laudable objectives to fail in different administrations since independence in 1960 till date. Monies budgeted annually for projects implementation are suffocated and emasculated by corrupt politicians, thereby hindering the growth of our nation to the detriment of the masses. Former president Olesegun Obasanjo and former senate President Bukola Saraki once as politicians lamented the magnitude of damages done on our nation by corruption. They described corruption as “the greatest enemy of development and human growth” as it is capable of bringing governance to collapse by gearing lack of confidence. This is the sorry-state of affairs in Nigeria perpetrated mostly by politicians and their cohorts.

Theoretical framework

In this paper, the authentic leadership theory is adopted as justified appropriate by Luthan and Avolio in 2010. The basic assumptions of this theory is that a leader who is authentic draws from

positive psychological capacities and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of the leader and associates, thereby fostering development. It argues that authentic leaders at any level tend to exhibit transparent and proper ethical behaviour that focuses on accountability which is required for efficient and effective management of resource towards development. Leaders with traits of honesty, transparency and accountability motivate their followers to share information and ideas freely with them and with other members of the group, resulting in the realization of the organization or nation's goals.

This is in line with the assertion of this paper which is premised on accountability of leadership as a bedrock for proper management of resources towards development in some critical sector of the economy; like roads, power supply, education, health and employment.

Conclusion

It was concluded from the finding of this paper that Nigerians are facing high level of hardship geared by lack of good roads, poor health service, unstable power supply, lack of quality education and unemployment among others. This is attributed to some factors such as poor management of resources, godfather syndrome and corruption among public officials. Therefore, it is concluded that lack of accountability by our political leader's accounts for the unwholesome state of affairs in Nigeria, manifested in hardship and infrastructural deficit. The political industry is left with much to do as the country is yet to see the light of standard living conditions for the citizens and the development in some critical sector of the economy as pointed in the paper.

Recommendations

1. Opportunity to serve in a political office should be seen as a call to serve the masses by responding promptly to their yearnings and aspirations other than an opportunity satisfy 'godfathers'. A culture of electing people based on credibility should be instituted to replace politics of buying positions with money during campaigns. This is because godfathers come in when money is needed to by consciences to frustrate credibility.
2. Transparency should be enthroned in the practice of politics and governance in Nigeria. Leaders who are not accountable enough should be voted out in subsequent elections as deterrent to others. This is because transparency ensures that whatever is budgeted for the execution of any project is appropriately channelled. This helps in converting government policies into concrete reality with positive impact on the masses.
3. The anti-craft agencies in Nigeria should be strengthened to curb the excesses of corruption in the country. The existing framework to check corruption of public office holders seems to achieve but a little. A more sophisticated approach is needed to curb corruption, since curbing corruption promote development and ensures improved living conditions for the masses.

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