

Good Governance Theory and the Quest for Good Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper is based on good governance theory and its implications for good governance in Nigeria.. It elucidates on the principles of good governance theory and uses the principles to analyse governance situation in Nigeria. The objective of this paper is to analyse the good governance theory, enunciates its principles and adopts them as indices to assess governance in Nigeria. The paper evaluates governance in Nigeria and concludes that there is no evidence of good governance in the country and that in actual fact poor or bad governance is the order of the day. It therefore recommends that good governance should be embraced in Nigeria through governance reforms and by adopting the time-tested principles of good governance theory.

Keywords: Good governance, poor governance, responsible leadership, rule of law, transparency, zero corruption tolerance.

1. Introduction

Governance theories have to do with the various perspectives of governance and how they evolve. The most relevant of the governance theories to the Nigerian governance situation is the good governance theory. Its tenets can be used as searchlight for good governance and its principles can be adopted as indices for assessment of governance in Nigeria. The good governance theory is associated with governing methods and structures in developing countries and it is particularly relevant to governance in Nigeria because Nigeria is a developing country. Good governance theory develops from a set of principles or policies first introduced by the World Bank in relating with and in assisting developing or third world countries. The World Bank usually requires good governance practice, among others, as a condition from the developing countries. Good governance is about how the public sector in third world countries can be developed. It has been realized that a modern form of government is not just only about efficiency, that governing is also about accountability between the state and its citizens (Bjork and Johansson, 2001) Good governance is about how people are treated not merely as customers or consumers (as in the new public management approach) but as citizens, who have the right to hold their governments to account for the actions they take or fail to take. The demand for efficiency in the public sector should not be allowed to lead to bad service. When there is bad service, citizens have the right to protest and hold politicians accountable.

Good governance theory, therefore, is a governance theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form, must be run. Such principles include accountability, control, responsiveness, transparency, public participation, economy, efficiency etc. In sum, the theory of good governance is created to reflect all the principles enunciated above and many more (Minogue, Polidano and Hulme, 1998). In view of the foregoing and in line with the World Bank principles and policy interventions in third world countries, good governance involves an efficient public service, an independent judicial system and legal framework to enforce contracts and responsible administration of public funds. Other requirements for good governance include an independent public auditor responsible to a representative legislature, respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government and a pluralistic institutional structure. Apart from the above, good governance is predicated on three segments of the society which have direct effect on governance as highlighted. The type of political regime, the process by which authority is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources with a view to development, and the capacity of governments to formulate policies and have them effectively implemented (WorldBank, 1992:3) (<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/gov>).

In addition, IMF (2012) declares that good governance, in all its aspects, is by ensuring the rule of law, improving efficiency and accountability of the public sector, and tackling corruption as essential elements of a framework within which economies can prosper. Adding to the essential elements of the good governance perspective, UNDP (2007) also espouses eight attributes: political participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, equity and inclusiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, and accountability. From the various principles, ideas and conditions enunciated by the above-mentioned international organisations, the theory of good governance originated. Today, the theory is very relevant in that the normative question of how to create or ensure good governance remains a central concern in considering governance. This is based on the assumption that the quality of governance can be enhanced by adopting the principles of good governance as enunciated above and by reducing the role of the state in governing. It is also important to note here that several of the strands of thinking in governance have been deliberately introduced in order to achieve enhanced good governance (Khan, 2008; Peter, 2010). As a result of the World Bank policy, all ideas enunciated by the IMF, UNDP and scholars, some of which have been referred to earlier, constitute the principles of good governance theory in addition to independent judiciary, accountability, transparency, rule of law, human rights, among others. Therefore, good governance theory is aimed at achieving efficiency in public service delivery, encouraging competition, privatization, civil service reforms, decentralization, out-sourcing of services to key private suppliers among others (Williams and Young, 1994). Furthermore, it will be duly emphasized that good governance theory is geared towards enhancing ways and means by which state bureaucracies carry-out state activities and utilise state resources so as to protect individual and personal liberties (Sheng, 2008).

The theory is very relevant as its principles will aid the understanding of this study and will also be used as indices to measure or assess governance in Nigeria from the first to the fourth republic. Therefore, a proper understanding of the theory of good governance and its principles is sine qua non to a proper understanding and assessment of governance in Nigeria. This is very necessary with a view to making far-reaching suggestions for improvement as well as the likely implications for policy and practice on governance in Nigeria. Unfortunately, when it comes to good governance practice in the contemporary world, it is observed that Nigeria, like most African states, is seriously lagging behind when compared to the advanced democratic countries in Europe and America, using the principles of good governance or democracy as yardsticks or indices. It will therefore be emphasized here that good governance theory like the democratic governance theory espouses such ideas and principles as civil society, decentralization, peaceful conflict management and accountability. Both theories of governance enunciate virtually the same or similar principles, where they are not totally the same. Hence, they are often inter-changeably used when the two types of governance are analyzed. No wonder why they are inter-changeably used as they reinforce each other. While the theory of good governance seeks to promote effectiveness and efficiency as well as stable and predictable economic growth through public service institutions, the theory of democracy or democratic governance deals with political freedom, equal right and justice as main focus. Nevertheless, democracy is the philosophical foundation of good governance and they are therefore synonymous (Idada and Uahunwuangho, 2012).

In the final analysis, the question of how to create or ensure good governance is normative and it remains central when the issue of governance is considered. It has been pointed out that governance as a minimal state is based on democratic governance and on the assumption that the quality of governance and democracy can be increased through a reduction in the role of the state in governing. It is also a common knowledge that many new thoughts in the area of governance have been aimed at modifying and re-modifying democratic governance in order to achieve enhanced democratization and good governance (Khan, 2008; Peter, 2010). Therefore, in view of the similarities in their principles, democratic governance theory is synonymous with good governance theory because most countries with good governance practice in the contemporary world are liberal democratic states concentrated in the West, particularly, in Europe and America. In summary, democratic governance is synonymous and interchangeably used with good governance, both in theory and practice, as most successful countries in the contemporary world in Europe and America practise good governance and run democratic governments. It is therefore not surprising that those countries set the standards for other countries to follow based on the principles of good governance theory.

2. Principles / Indices of Good Governance Theory

2.1. Participation

This is an essential element of good governance theory. It entails the involvement of every adult in the politics of his or her society. It could be either direct participation by individual citizens or indirect participation by their accredited representatives. Kaufman, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2006) echoes the World Bank's view on the principle of participation as a principle of good governance theory. According to them, participation is the degree of involvement of the citizens of a country in the election of their political leaders and ultimately their representatives in government. Participation, as a core characteristic of good governance, stipulates every adult must have a say in the process of making decisions either by him or her directly or by his or her accredited representatives (Osmani, 2007; Rotberg, 2004; Weiss, 2000).

2.2 Rule of Law:

This is an important principle of good governance theory, which guarantees equity, fairness and justice in the society. Good governance theory stipulates complete entrenchment of individual and group rights and unbiased observance of the laws which in turn require an independent judiciary as well as an impartial and incorruptible Police Force (Harrison, 2005; Moloney, 2009; Oestreich, 2004; Sheng, 2012). The rule of law also emphasizes that it is the law that rules not man. Therefore, the laws of the land should be fair, impartial and no respecter of any body. There must be emphasis on fairness to all as well as impartial enforcement of laws and rights. According to Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2006), rule of law is one of the World Bank's six principles of good governance theory. It is the degree of confidence that citizens have in the rules of the society and extent by which they abide in them. Rule of law emphasizes that it is the law that rules and nothing else. It is also the impartial enforcement of transparent laws, regulations and codes in the society.

2.3. Transparency

Another key element of good governance theory is transparency. It emphasizes that the process of decision-making, the ultimate decisions reached and the observance of such decisions must be carried out in conformity with rules and regulations. It stipulates that sufficient information is freely disseminated in such a way and medium that can easily be understood and directly to the people that will be affected and who will ensure compliance (Sheng, 2012). The principle of transparency is predicated and built on free information flow and dissemination. Institutional processes and information are to be made easily available to the people affected and adequate information in particular should be accessible in understandable and monitorable form. To guarantee good governance practice, therefore, government policies are to be openly disseminated to the entire citizenry and the policies should be such that citizens can easily develop confidence in their intentions. In fact, the processes of decision-making, the ultimate decisions reached and government actions taken are expected to be made open and subject to check by other organs of government and other non-governmental organizations (Andrews, 2008; Apaza, 2009; Gisselquist, 2012).

2.4. Responsiveness

Another important index is responsiveness, which requires that all institutional processes should serve all concerned citizens in the society within an appropriate period of time. Responsiveness, as a key principle of good governance theory, stipulates that a good government requires the ability and elasticity to accommodate rapid changes in the society, with due consideration to the views of civil societies on what should be the overall interest of the general public and also with the will to constantly re-assess its activities in the society (Gisselquist, 2012). As a matter of fact, change is the only permanent feature of any society and it is inevitable. Therefore, good governance through the principle of responsiveness is required to accommodate this inevitable change. The capacity as well as the flexibility of the government to respond to and accommodate societal change is referred to as responsiveness (Nanda, 2006; Rotberg, 2004). This is an important principle of good governance theory.

2.5. Broad Consensus

In any given society, there are several view points as there are several actors (individuals or groups). Good governance practice requires consensus orientation, coalition building and mediation among the different interests and social forces in society in order to have a general agreement as far as a country's overall interest can be defined and achieved. In addition, it emphasizes general agreement on socio-economic and political issues, such as human development as well as its attainment. However, the principle of consensus can only be achieved through a proper knowledge of the history, culture and sociology of a society.

Thus, good governance theory emphasizes broad consensus or mediation among the contending groups in the society in order to reach a general agreement that will completely and satisfactorily accommodate the differing interests and views of the various groups, and where possible, on policies and procedures (Harrison, 2005; Sheng, 2012).

2.6. Equity and Inclusiveness

This is an important principle of good governance theory. The principle guarantees the following: dignity of the human person, equal rights and freedom from any discrimination. It is all embracing and encompassing for all members of the society. It also emphasizes the well-being of the society which is generally nurtured by the sense of belonging to the society by all citizens as well as a feeling of belongingness as stakeholders in the society. This principle stipulates that the various groups especially the most susceptible to attack must not only be protected but also given opportunity to enhance their well-being. This therefore stipulates or ensures that every citizen is given equal access to better his or her lot and also to enhance his or her well-being in the society (Grindle, 2004; Harrison, 2005).

2.7. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effectiveness is primarily the process of doing right things while efficiency is primarily the process of doing things right (Cole and Kelly, 2011). Therefore, the principle as it applies to good governance means doing right things and doing things right within the society by the government, using the resources available. It emphasizes that governance must come up with action plans which address the necessities of the society as the resources available are put into the best use. Whereas, efficiency as an element of good governance theory embraces the long-lasting use of god-given resources of the society and most especially environmental protection, the principle of effectiveness emphasises the good use of the natural resources of the society by the government (Doornbos, 2004; Grindle, 2004; Kurtz and Schrank, 2007; Nanda, 2006; Rotberg, 2004; Rothstein and Teorell, 2008).

2.8. Accountability

The principle is the cornerstone of good governance theory. It emphasizes that all actors, particularly those in government, business, voluntary agencies, civil-societies, among others are to be made answerable to the society (Rotberg, 2004; Rothstein and Teorell, 2008). This principle differs from organization to organization and depends on the source of the decision which could be within or without. The principle stipulates that political actors and civil servants are to be made answerable to the society for their actions. Hence, public officials including elected and appointed, are to be accountable for their political actions and answerable to the source or organ from which their power originates. It also emphasizes that public officials invested with political power are to be answerable for their actions to the source or organ from where their mandate is derived (Williams, 2009). The principle of accountability in the real sense, emphasizes answerability for the use of state resources and assets earmarked for specific purposes, subject to the laws and their requirements (Grindle, 2004; Harrison, 2005; Kurtz and Schrank, 2007; Nanda, 2006). This principle is the degree by which political actors have the ability and willingness to demonstrate consistency between their activities and the constitution (Gisselquist, 2012).

2.9. Strategic Vision

This is another important principle of good governance theory. The principle of strategic vision stipulates that the government should be liberal and futuristic in its thinking about governing issues. A government is said to be good, when it takes a liberal and futuristic direction on governing matters or issues, with the urgency required and also with the knowledge of history, culture and sociology of the direction. The principle emphasizes the need for a good government to envisage future challenges based on the present and future implications (Gisselquist, 2012). According to Koffi Annan (1997), this principle guarantees all subjects a stake in the future of their society in all ramifications. This is because the principle of strategic vision is all about securing the future and planning for the multi-various uncertainties and unforeseen contingencies attendant to it. A good government should be strategic and futuristic in its planning, direction and orientation (Doornbos, 2001; Grindle, 2004; Nanda, 2006; Williams, 2009).

3. Analysis of Governance in Nigeria

In view of the foregoing analysis on the theory of good governance, the time-tested principles of the theory will be adopted in evaluating governance in the context of Nigeria since independence. Therefore, an attempt will be made to contextualize the theory of good governance in Nigeria and adopt the principles as searchlight for good governance in Nigeria since independence and from the first republic to the fourth republic (1960 to 2015).

The theory of good governance and the principles or criteria by which they can be assessed, have been elucidated upon. There is, therefore, the need to further analyse, juxtapose and evaluate governance in Nigeria based on these principles. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), section 14(1), stipulates that Nigeria is a state based on the principle of democracy and social justice. It further stipulates that the primary purpose of government should be the security and welfare of Nigerians in order to guarantee the majority of Nigerians decent living standards which any political leadership that derives its mandate from the people ought to subscribe and preserve.

Good governance is also well-entrenched in Nigeria's Vision 2010 document to mean transparency equity, honesty, rule of law, accountability, independent judiciary, justice, public participation and good standard of living. However, the question to raise and answer is to what extent do the governments in Nigeria comply with these principles? To answer this question and to do any meaningful analysis, it is necessary to turn to the literature for a review on governance in Nigeria. Barely five years after independence in October, 1960, the first republic in Nigeria, was abruptly put to an end by the military in January in 1966. This was probably due to bad political leadership and bad governance. Nigeria is one of the colonial legacies in the African continent. Therefore, as an offshoot of the colonial rule, the Nigerian state no doubt retained parts of the colonial administration. Rather than being at the service of the people, the Nigerian state was at the service of the ruling oligarchy (Fagbadebo, 2009). Thus, as reported, bad leadership and bad governance were the major reasons why the first republic collapsed, the take-over of government by the military and the civil war of 1967 to 1970.

Bad leadership and bad governance in Nigeria were further aggravated by the autocratic military rule of over thirty years. The military, by its nature and rule, was a misadventure into politics and an aberration to democracy. The military was also reported to have used every means and device to remain in power and dominate the Nigerian political landscape for not less than three decades out of the close to six decades of its existence after independence. The period of over thirty years' military rule was observed to be a period of sheer political misfits, bad leadership, bad governance and aberration to good governance. According to Okene (2011), military rule was a period of coups, counter-coups, corruption and instability in Nigeria. Thus, during the military era, as observed, there were lack of justice, transparency, accountability, responsible leaders, public participation in government, efficiency and effectiveness, freedom and civil liberties. The above challenges posed by military rule reportedly made the military era a period of bad leadership and poor governance in totality. It is as interesting as it is curious to note that the first and second republics in Nigeria were not so different from each other apart from some of the dramatis personae. The same political scenario played out in both republics, meaning that there was no clean and clear break in the political process between the two republics, despite the thirteen years of military rule in between them. The conduct of affairs in both republics was observed to have engendered non representativeness, political authoritarianism, intolerance, endemic corruption, electoral malpractice and economic exclusivity (Jinadu, 2011). As part of the aberration of the military referred to earlier, the third republic was aborted in 1993 by General Ibrahim Babangida with the cancellation of the presidential election observed to have been the most transparent and credible ever. Currently, the fourth republic has been observed to be a semblance of the previous republics in terms of leadership and governance. It has also been observed that it is very difficult for one to distinguish military leadership from civilian leadership in Nigeria, on the basis of performance. According to Lawal, Imokhuede and Johnson (2012), there is no evidence of leadership performance to differentiate civilian leaders from military rulers in Nigeria.

4. Assessment of Governance Situation in Nigeria

To assess governance situation in Nigeria, the principles of good governance theory as earlier analysed and otherwise known as international indices for assessing good governance globally (Ibrahim, 2010) will be adopted. Obviously, the same principles and indices will be used in assessing governance as far as Nigeria is concerned and as follows: Rule of Law is one of the principles or indices of good governance to be used. It requires that people must be governed according to the constitution and not according to the dictates of their rulers or the leaders. Good governance is said to require that the laws of the land are enforced impartially. It has been observed and reported that Nigerian leaders, military or civilian, do not respect the rule of law particularly the constitution and court decisions. This has seriously affected the rights of individual citizens and the independence of the judiciary (Lawal and Owolabi, 2012). Accountability or transparency is another important element of good governance. It emphasizes accountability in the public, private and voluntary sectors of the society.

In Nigeria, it has been observed that there is no accountability as well as its twin element of transparency by political leaders in particular. Observably, this is not limited to the current fourth republic and has been in existence since the first republic. When government leaders are accountable, it means that such a government is a listening government and is always prepared to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens or accountable to them for its actions and inactions. Unfortunately, it has been observed that no government in Nigeria whether military or civilian, has been responsive, accountable or transparent (Lawal, Imokhuede and Johnson 2012). Corruption-free is another important index. This is because corruption is said to be antithetical to good governance. It has been revealed that the two words are opposites, the presence of one means the absence of other.

Unfortunately, Nigeria's leadership since independence has often been said to comprise individuals most of whom are stinking corrupt and completely enmeshed in corruption. It is also generally acknowledged that there can be no good governance in Nigeria, if corruption is firmly rooted and well cultured in the country. It has been posited that corruption is everywhere in the world but the magnitude seems to be ridiculous in Nigeria and that it appears in the form of kickbacks, payoffs, bribery among others (Nwagboso and Duke, 2012). Free and fair election is a major index to be assessed. It has been observed that there is no free and fair election in Nigeria. It is also noted and that almost every Nigerian politician or leader believes that elections cannot be won except they are rigged. Reports have also revealed that the above is the extent to which the electoral system or process has degenerated in Nigeria. It has been variously reported that electoral malpractice has been in existence since independence continues to exist in the fourth republic, even with a new and modern dimension (Lawal and Owolabi, 2012). Good leadership is another key index. It is more or less a truism that the key factor to good governance is good leadership. Unfortunately, development of the society seems not well imbibed and acceptable by a greater number of Nigerian leaders as their major responsibility. Therefore, leadership and governance crisis in Nigeria since independence is said to be traceable to poor leadership. Absence of visionary leaders in Nigeria has been observed as the strongest factor militating against good governance in the country (Nwagboso and Duke, 2012).

Political or public participation is one of the international indices or principles of good governance. In a democracy or any political system that exudes good governance, power belongs to the people and it is exercisable by them directly and or by their representatives indirectly. The masses supposedly decide their rulers, those who rule them and also have a strong voice on governance in their fatherland, directly or indirectly, through their representatives (Ushe, 2012). Unfortunately, this may not be true of the Nigeria political system. It is observed that the people's votes do not count during elections, their views and opinions are not respected or considered in law or policy making by their elected leaders or representatives.

Constitutional rights or civil liberties constitute another principle or index to be considered. The constitution of a country stipulates the various forms of human rights exercisable by her citizens which are reportedly some of the hallmarks of democracy and good governance. Generally, where there is democracy, human rights and equality before the law, usually co-habit and co-exist with other forms of rights and liberties as necessary requirements. Unfortunately, Nigeria has been reported to have a bad record of human rights violation. At a time in Nigeria's political history, the country was ousted from Commonwealth of Nations because of Nigeria's incessant violation of fundamental human rights (Idada and Uhumwuangho, 2012).

Sustainable economic opportunity for the entire citizenry has been pointed out as one of the indices for assessing good governance globally. This seems to be guaranteed through prudent economic management, well organised private sector and adequate provision of infrastructural facilities as well as sound agricultural and rural development. Good governance has its economic dimensions which cover decision-making processes on economic issues in a country as well as their interactions with world economies. It is reported to have serious effect as far as socio-economic issues are concerned like means of production, wealth creation, standard of living, equal economic opportunities, among others. It is, therefore, posited that a country's economic resources should be prudently administered in order to raise the standard of living of all citizens to a sustainable level. In economic and development parlance, all things being equal or *ceteris paribus*, the amount of resources that is applied for societal development should be equal and proportionate to the standard of development attained. Unfortunately, it has been observed that Nigeria has not fared well in the area of economic governance which is the bedrock of democracy and good governance (Ogundiya, 2010).

Human Development is another important index and critical factor for good governance, which is reportedly measured by the level of poverty and disease eradication attained in any society. This has been observed to do

with the percentage of people living with epidemic, endemic and pandemic diseases as well as other forms of eradicating poverty and diseases. Also important to human development, as pointed out are: access to educational opportunities, quality of educational facilities provided, pupils/teachers ratio as well as progression and attrition rates at higher levels of education (Yusuf, 2013). Unfortunately, Nigeria appears to be recalcitrant and have a low human development index. Majority of Nigerians are observed to be wallowing in poverty, disease and illiteracy. The governments of Nigeria since independence have also been observed to be paying lip service to human development which is sine qua non for real development. The people are the greatest and most important assets upon which all developmental activities hinge.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Having analysed the important indices and critical factors for good governance, the position of Nigeria in terms of good or bad governance can be better understood as summarised below: While good governance, in its political and economic and social dimensions, underpins sustainable human development, mass participation, economic empowerment and poverty reduction; poor or bad governance can be observed within the Nigerian context as prevalence of poor service delivery, ineffective public-complaints mechanisms, ineffective anti-corruption mechanism, lack of faith in the integrity of public office holders (politico-bureaucracy) lack of effective popular participation in policy making, general corruption in all spheres of public life due to materialistic value or poverty, heightened insecurity, mass unemployment at all levels, high cost and poor standard of living, general inflation and rising costs, lack of business capital and adequate business financing, endemic and rampant corrupt practices at all levels, pervasive and abject poverty in the land et cetera (Yusuf, 2013:10). In conclusion, the foregoing analysis and assessment of governance in Nigeria since independence are mostly based on time-tested principles and international indices of good governance. Therefore, based on these principles and indices, as enunciated above, the assessment clearly shows evidence of poor governance in Nigeria. There is abundant scholarly evidence from the literature as provided above to show that poor governance does not only exist but also thrive in Nigeria due to poor political leadership and observable flaws in the political leadership recruitment process in Nigeria. It will be concluded that no matter what, good governance does not exist in Nigeria. Rather, bad or poor governance is the order of the day as none of the governments that hitherto had come to power from independence ever conformed to the principles of good governance. Therefore, to have good governance in Nigeria, governance reforms in line with the principles of good governance theory are strongly recommended. All the principles of good governance theory must be embraced in all ramifications, ranging from justice, transparency, accountability, responsible leadership, public participation in government, efficiency and effectiveness, freedom and civil liberties, zero corruption tolerance to free, fair and credible elections among others. To have good governance practice in Nigeria, governance must reflect all the principles of good governance theory.

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