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The Mass Media and Nigerians' Quest for Leadership and Good Governance

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Abstract: Leadership and good governance are topical issues in Nigeria. Ordinarily, the country should have evolved a system of governance that would benefit its populace. Regrettably, the country lacks leadership and good governance continues to elude the populace. This paper, thus examines the quest of the citizens for leadership, and good governance and discusses the role of the mass media in this quest. The paper submits that the media are unable to play their role effectively due to several challenges confronting them. Suggestions are therefore made on how the media can improve their performance of this role. The paper concludes that, it will be difficult for the media to improve since the media would always reflect the society in which they operate.

Key words: Leadership, Good Governance, Mass Media.

I. Introduction

The issue of leadership and governance has always been quite topical in Africa in general, and Nigeria, in particular. This stems from the socio-political experiences of the continent. Nigeria is regarded as the giant of Africa in terms of its population and economy. The country is more populous than several countries put together. However, the country has remained in the doldrums in terms of meaningful development in all spheres despite its enormous human and economic resources. This underdevelopment does not stem from lack of individual capacity or zeal to embark on the process. Neither does it result from intellectual poverty with regards to evolving meaningful ideas that would foster development in the relevant sectors. The continued underdevelopment of the country with the attendant impoverishment of the populace is rather, the result of societal failure, epitomized in a debilitating systemic emasculation of the populace by a leadership made up of those who are inexorably focused on a morbid destruction of cherished social values in order to protect their selfish interests. Unfortunately, these people continue to remain at the helm of affairs as they have put structures in place to ensure their perpetuation in positions of authority.

It should be noted that whatever system a country adopts in the administration of its society must be founded on a sound philosophy of altruism. This means evolving a good ideology that is geared towards getting the greater good for the greater number of citizens. This is irrespective of the methods of administration and distribution of the national resources. Thus, whether a government is socialist or autocratic, if such a government does not act to protect the interests of the greater number of its citizens, it will not stand the test of time. It would be plagued by instability.

An evaluation of the Nigerian political situation indicates a system fully situated among the fragile and unstable democracies in the global political configuration. The system continues to be static without any reasonable ideological orientation. The country continues to remain on the brink of disintegration. In the past, the military had saved the country from such disaster by forcing its way to governance and forcing everybody to remain together. However, when the military hand over to civilians, politicians would take over and replicate the acts of those the military chased out of power. Thus, it is highly believed that while political profligacy will continue to go unpunished, the country will still not disintegrate. Yet it is only a few individuals that continue to be enriched by the political system to the detriment of the generality of the Nigerian people. The system is stoutly supported by the endemic corruption that has become entrenched as part of national values. In fact it is a norm now cherished by virtually every government official. It is hereby submitted that unless there is a change towards the adoption of such social and political norms that would serve the interests of the majority, disintegration would be the ultimate end.

It is in the light of the foregoing background that this paper proceeds to analyze the problem of leadership and absence of good governance in Nigeria as the bane of meaningful development. It is the opinion here that the quest for leadership and good governance in Nigeria requires the contribution of the mass media which must aid the realization of the process. The role and challenges of the media in this regard are hereby discussed.

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Concept Of Leadership And Good Governance

Leadership and good governance have become challenging factors in meaningful development as the absence of both continues to foster the odious state in which the Nigerian state has found itself. Leadership can be contemplated in terms of a process whereby a person enlists the aid or support of others towards the accomplishment of a task. In this context then, it connotes the enlistment of the support of the generality of Nigerian citizens towards the accomplishment of the task of development of the country into a stable democratic state. Such stability should indicate an effective economy, a stable political process as well as effective security and welfare of the populace. Leadership therefore, can be viewed as a process whereby one person (known as the leader) directs others (referred to as followers) in the performance of a task.

Several definitions abound as regards the concept of leadership. Stogdill (1948, cited in Stoner et al, 2011:496), states that "there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept". Flowing from Stogdill's submission, Stoner et al (2011:496) declare that leadership is "the process of directing and influencing the task – related activities of group members". This, however is from the management perspective relating to corporate firms. Urhoma (2009:43) defines leadership as "an influence process whereby the leader exercises influence over the behaviour of one or more other people". Again, Obikeze et al (2005:252) define leadership as "simply, the ability of a superior to influence the behaviour or attitudes of subordinates towards a particular end". A more elaborate definition is, however, given by Stahl. According to him, leadership is:

The ability to influence people toward the accomplishment of goals. Leadership is associated with the determination of the goals, a vision for the future, and the process of change to reach the goals and the future. Leadership is about helping people to do things they would not normally do. (Stahl, 1995, cited in Obikeze et al 2005:252).

It could be seen from the foregoing definitions that leadership has two trajectories – the leader and the followers. One leads and the others follow and this must be towards the accomplishment of a task.

There are also several theories regarding the process of leadership. For example, Foti and Howestein (2007, cited in Wikipedia en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/ leadership), discuss the leader attitude pattern approach which is based on theorists "argument that the influence of individual characteristics on outcomes is best understood by considering the person as an integrated totality rather than a summation of individual variables". In the same vein, Fiedler (1967) propounds a situational theory of leadership, stating that leadership is contingent on the situation (cited in Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/leadership).

However, most relevant to this paper is the functional theory of leadership which combines the trait theory that states that a leader is born and the situational theory. The functional theory has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Kouzes and Posner, whose approach has been referred to by Stoner et al (2011:513) as the behavioural approach. By this is meant the particular methods that may be adopted by a leader who displays his inborn traits in different challenging situations in the process of accomplishing a task. A leader would, therefore, be deemed to have done his job when he has contributed to the group's effectiveness and cohesion in the face of challenges. The relevance of this theory is glaring when the Nigerian situation is critically analyzed. Nigeria is a country of over 300 tribes and languages. The country, despite its independence in 1960, is still grappling with the problem of unity. Leadership in such a configuration should be towards effective coordination of the polity through the equitable distribution of resources, leading to the general improvement of the social life of the people. Leadership in the context of the Nigerian state should therefore connote a process whereby there is a set of political goals (which is a true, peaceful, and long-lasting democratic system) towards which the political leaders should lead the people.

Governance on the other hand, is the result of functional leadership. It is derived from the particular way a system of government is operated in a country. Governance, in the first place, according to Wikipedia, refersto "all processes of governing whether undertaken by a government, market or network, whether over a family, tribe formal or informal organisation or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language" (see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/governance). This definition is quite extensive. Seemingly recognizing this, the United Nations Chief of Poverty Reduction Yap Koe Sheng defines governance as "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). (see URL www.unescap.org/pdd). He goes further to state that the term "governance" "can be used in several contexts, such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance" (Ibid). The concern here is national governance. And relevant to this, is the definition of the World Bank. According to the bank, governance is "the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs" (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/worldbank). This definition obviously notes that fact that national resources should be utilized to solve the country's problems whether economic, political or social. This involves sovereignty and legitimacy which are conferred on an authority to enable it act on behalf of the people. Here, it is the political authority that possesses such rights.

In regard to the foregoing concept of governance, good governance would then, connote the efficient implementation of policies and the effective use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs. It is therefore a way of comparatively viewing effective or efficient economies or political systems as opposed to ineffective or inefficient ones. According to Wikipedia, "the concept centres on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society". (en.m.wikipedia.org/.../Good Governance).

Based on the above, good governance, in the Nigerian situation should be seen in the context of the efficiency of its political system in its bid to adequately provide for the welfare of citizens including engaging in such developments that would place the country on the right pedestal among the comity of nations. This obviously demands good and effective leadership – a leadership that should know the needs of the people and direct effort and resources toward the provision of such needs. What this translates to, include a peaceful political system, strong economic base as well as satisfaction for the majority of citizens.

An analysis of the Nigerian situation would reveal a serious incongruence with the indices of leadership and good governance which have so far been enumerated. This is as a result of serious challenges confronting the country. Most of these challenges have been induced by the leadership constituted by a cartel of selfish and corrupt politicians.

Challenges Of Leadership And Good Governance

The challenges that beset Nigerians' quest for leadership and good governance result from several factors. According to Olowu (1999:15) "there is need to evolve a governmental regime which provides opportunity for all to make input into the governing processes without compromising the integrity and effectiveness of those processes". When this happens, there would be peace and stability. But the situation is hardly so in Africa, generally, and Nigeria, in particular. Realizing this fact, Saliu (2010:83) declares:

....it will be hard not to give a hard knock to the African governance system. Anytime an election is to hold in the continent, the world watched with an increasing palpitation because of the needless controversy and disputations that follow.

According to Saliu, the main problem has been the reluctance of the ruling class that is the beneficiary of the decadent system and which is notorious for its promotion of primitive accumulation to work for a better governance environment (83-84). The leadership in Africa thrives in the politics of exclusion. The political system has evolved into a closed one, revealing nothing to the people. Hence Meredith (2005, cited in Saliu, 2010:88) submits that "governance becomes a cult issue which only the initiated can have access to". A system such as this can hardly serve the purpose of leadership and good governance in a multi-ethnic and multi language country like Nigeria which needs integration into a unified whole. Yet the kind of leader the country needs, as Joachim Chissano (former president of Mozambique) notes, is one "who is with them, who discusses their problems and applies his or her mind to solve their problems. That is what they would call accountability and accessibility" (2014:60). This corresponds to the functional theory of leadership that this paper has adopted as ideal for the Nigerian State. Because of the politics of exclusion, the political system remains unstable. This instability has become a feature of Nigerian politics since the geographical entity became the country called Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo had noted the lack of integration as at 1945 when he proclaimed then that "Nigeria is not a nation but a mere geographic expression used to distinguish the various national and ethnic groups within the boundaries from those who are outside" (cited in Sklar, 1983:223). According to Awolowo, each of these erroneously called tribes is a nation. His statement was echoed by TafawaBalewa in 1948 when he said that many people, especially pressmen engage inself- deceit by thinking that Nigeria is one and that the feeling of unity is mere pretence as the North would continue to look upon the southern people who are pouring into the North to be domiciled there as invaders (cited in Coleman, 1963:267). The country has not made any substantial progress in terms of advancing towards unity and away from the two statements by Awolowo and Balewa. This explains why every region struggles to get at the strong central government that controls all the national resources. The struggle for leadership in a system that thrives on exclusion and translates into a winner-takes-all has resulted in a consociational leadership which now fosters what Richard Joseph (1991) has referred to as the politics of prebendalism. In discussing the term, Ibagere and Omoera (2010:69) opine that:

The concept of prebendalism aggregates the Nigerian polity around the struggle to control and exploit public office. The appropriation of state power is therefore seen as providing the much needed access to the control of the state treasury which is then administered for self aggrandizement.

Since prebendalism connotes the pursuit of personal economic interests by the appropriation of the state treasury effected through the acquisition of political power, the Nigerian democratic system now wears the garb of Kleptocracy which, in its simplest meaning is, a system of government administered by thrives. According to Ibagere and Omoera (69), prebendalismthrives best in a consociational system of administration because consociationalism builds and encourages divisions in the society thereby entrenching diversity as an essential ingredient of democracy. Prebendialism rewards cronies with juicy appointments and contracts. Some

of such contracts may never be executed even when the total sum has been paid. They would be proclaimed as completed on paper. This is why political leaders use all weapons they can muster to sustain themselves in office even when it is clear that those they lead have become tired of their style of leadership.

Elections are thus very bitter with every loser refusing to accept defeat. Even then, the electoral process has continued to remain incredible with usual reports of rigging as corruption remains entrenched deep in the national psyche. Such claims of incredulity have been proved right as many office holders today got their victories after they challenged their defeat in the court and won. The courts have also been entrenched in the quagmire of corruption as people are now losing confidence in the courts' ability to dispense justice, in this regard.

In such a situation whereby the emphasis is on national cake sharing, leadership can hardly be towards the realization of national goals and aspirations. The leadership that would operate and sustain a kleptocracy through the politics of prebendalism can only be self-serving. There is therefore, no thought about the diversification of the economy. Thus the country is now a mono-economy, relying principally on oil revenue, which the leadership continues to mismanage through deliberate malfeasance. The Vanguard newspaper reports the extent to which the country has degenerated with regards to governance. According to the paper: [the] Ibrahim Index of African Governance (ILAG) has rated Nigeria as one of the worst governed countries in Africa. In its 2014 report... Nigeria is rated 45.8 percent – lower than the African average (51.5 percent) and ranked 37th out of 52 in the overall governance scale. The country scored lower than the regional average for West Africa which stands at 52.2 percent and ranked 12 out of 15 in region. (Vanguard, 2nd October, 2014:5).

To buttress the fact of mis-governance, the healthcare system could be analysed as a paradigm. Any political office holder today rushes abroad (even to other African countries such as South Africa) for treatment of the slightest ailment. For example, late PresidentYar'Adua was rushed first to Germany, then, to Saudi Arabia for treatment before he died. Recently, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs (GbengaAshiru) died in a South African hospital where he had gone for treatment. Yet Nigerian hospitals remain derelict, without facilities.

Despite the gloomy picture, our self – serving leaders continue to claim that they have performed excellently. President Goodluck Jonathan for instance, on his independence Day Speech on October 1, 2014 claimed that he has delivered on his promises (See Vanguard, October 2, 2014: front page).

It is therefore clear that the country still gropes for leadership and good governance. Any hope of abatement of the dire situation continues to fade away as corruption continues to be elevated to the level of national norm. Majority of the people feel isolated from governance. So there is a vicious struggle to be part of government and get a share of the national cake. Hence there are defections from opposition parties to the ruling one both at state and national levels. The future therefore remains bleak. In all this, the mass media are expected to playa role. It remains to be seen whether they have acted in promoting the decadent system or served to protect the majority.

Role Of The Media Toward Instituting Good Governance

It is obvious that for Nigeria to attain the goal of good leadership and good governance a number of factors should be taken into consideration. The definition of the World Bank of governance as the "use of institutional resources to manage society's affairs and problems" has been well noted. The mass media constitute one of the institutions needed to pursue the goal of effective management of society's affairs. The mass media can play its contributory role in a number of ways.

First, as has been stated by Odigbo (2003:176), "the mass media serve as the focal point of information to the society in diverse areas like government, politics programmes and projects". The first duty, then, of the mass media is the provision of adequate information about the need for the Nigerian society to evolve good leadership and good governance. In the provision of this information, the media should enhance the integration of the populace into the political system. This is what may be referred to as political socialization. Explaining how this socialization can enhance good governance, Umechukwu (2003:246) opines that it "includes the learning of basic values and orientations that prepare individuals to fit into their cultural milieu". According to him, the media "should present political values that will lead to reforms since media – cultivated facts and values are standards by which we can judge". (246).

In the creation of values, the media should hold the government accountable to the people. This is the social responsibility function of the mass media. In performing this function, the mass media should expose the ills inherent in the political system. It has long been established, and, in fact, it is fast becoming a cliché that the problem of Nigeria is corruption which has been elevated to the level of national norm. This continues to affect even the electoral process whereby a good number of voters continue to be disenfranchised through manipulation in order to favour some favoured candidates during elections. In most cases, such manipulation results in violence and loss of lives. The media have the responsibility to expose the electoral ills as well as the

evil of the prebendal system and those perpetrating those ills. The media must, therefore encourage the protection of the country's constitution and laws from any form of violation. The officials of government (including the executive and legislative arms) have consistently violated constitutional provisions. Yet no action has been taken against any of the persons involved in the violation. Regrettably, the president has led in some of the violations. For example, President Jonathan has refused to declare his assets and liabilities. This is contrary to the provisions of section 140 (1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states that:

A person elected to the office of President shall not begin to perform the functions of that office until he has declared his assets and liabilities as prescribed in this constitution and he has subscribed to the Oath of Allegiance in the seventh schedule to this constitution.

The media in this case owe the populace the duty to mobilize action against the president for this violation as well as against other political perfidies. The country should know the extent of the President's wealth whether legitimate or otherwise. The President, as leader, has thus, led the country further into odium because his violation has now been emulated by other officials who have now refused to declare their assets and liabilities. They therefore continueto cover up their corrupt enrichment, thereby fostering the Kleptocratic system that has become the country's version of democracy. This particular role has been performed by the media in the past. In 1999, for instance, the media mobilized action against the then senate President, Evan Enwerem when it was discovered that he had falsified his age. The resultant action led to the impeachment of Evan Enwerem with ChubaOkadigbo elected in his place. The same was the case in 2008 when the first and only female speaker of the House of Representatives to date (Patricia Etteh) was impeached after being accused of corrupt enrichment.

The media, therefore, should help the public to form opinions about the government because as Patterson and McClure (1976:22) have observed, "the public does not evaluate presidential candidates on their personal looks or skills as entertainers, but on their political records…" The media should help shape public opinion about the country's leadership while upholding relevant norms and values. Writing about television (in particular), Ibagere (2009:14) opines that:

While not remaining neutral by helping to define and sustain our political values in the face of threats of deviant ideals, television should be "objective" by remaining the impartial arbiter in the contests between candidates for political office. And after elections, it should continue to uphold our values and the government's responsibility and accountability to the people.

The above stated role of television should be adopted by other mass media to enhance the institution of good governance in Nigeria. If the mass media are able to perform this role effectively, the problem of leadership and good governance would be solved. But the media cannot be expected to perform their role without contending with some challenges. It is the extent to which such challenges are surmounted that would determine the success or otherwise of the mass media in this regard. Part of the problem stems from the peculiar nature of the Nigerian environment in which booby traps are set to continually hamper the media in their quest to perform their role effectively.

Challenges Facing The Media

The challenges facing the media in their contribution to Nigerians' quest for leadership and good governance are quite formidable. These challenges range from constraints within the media themselves to societal factors. The societal factors impact on the media and become serious hindrances to the performance of the media. It must be noted that the media are a reflection of whatever environment in which they exist. Their performance therefore is an exercise in the portrayal of such a society's values. Therefore, the situation in Nigeria is a reflection of the norms and values of the Nigerian society even though such performance is at variance with the conventional rules of practice in most parts of the world.

It has been stated that corruption has been elevated to the status of national value. So it is part of the operations of the media especially as they concern the political system. A situation in which one would pay to have a particular news item published or broadcast cannot be said to encourage media operations. Yet this is a normal practice in the Nigerian media system. Most news media are owned by politicians or their associates. In this regard, it becomes difficult to engage in objective dissemination of information or even carry out objective analysis of events that are associated with politics. The "brown envelope" syndrome is still part of the operations of media men. A news event can only become relevant depending on the size of the brown envelope (amount of money inside it). Otherwise, such an event may never be broadcast or published.

Another challenge faced by the media is lack of trust as a result of corruption. This point has been well noted by Ibagere (2011:209) in relation to the Niger Delta people of Nigeria. According to him, the people can "hardly trust anybody coming to give them information that will compel them to adopt new norms that are necessary for their development". This is as a result of their suspicion that they are being deceived with such information with the disseminators having a lot to gain from the exercise. In this regard, an important

information or analysis of an event might be taken without serious consideration especially when it comes from a media organisation suspected to be sympathetic to those politicians the people do not want as leaders.

A corollary of the above is poverty and unemployment. A good number of Nigerian citizens live below poverty line as the national wealth is concentrated in a few hands. In such a situation, it becomes difficult for the media to exercise any influence over the populace who can easily be cajoled into supporting illegality with little money. Thus a phenomenon like thuggery would be quite difficult to eradicate from Nigerian politics as the teeming army of jobless youths are ready tools as political thugs who are used by politicians to unleash violence on the people in order to protect their selfish interests. The media cannot succeed in swaying the minds of these youths from such activities since there is no other viable alternative means of getting a meal. Poverty even compels some people to disenfranchise themselves by selling their voter's cards to politicians who will then utilize such cards for election rigging.

One major constraint in using the media to institute good governance is illiteracy. Majority of the people, especially the rural dwellers are illiterate and do not understand how the political system affects them. They, therefore do not understand media messages about politics and governance. These people are easily deceived by politicians. Such people may not understand why they should not sell their voters' cards or vote for a particular person who has not bribed them. Here the failure of the rural media becomes a challenge. The rural media should bear the responsibility of adequately informing the rural populace. But it appears that they have equally been caught in the vortex of corruption whereby politicians at the local level have also "captured" them. So, they seem to replicate what the national media do.

Another serious constraint is the society's ineptitude. Ibagere (1995:144) submits that "....the mass media cannot perform efficiently if the society continues to be inept as the Nigerian society now seems", because, according to him, the mass media usually take to the colouration of the particular society in which they exist. Societal ineptitude can only weaken the media's capacity to perform efficiently. For example, despite the wide publicity given to President Jonathan's refusal to declare his assets as demanded by the constitution, the entire society has remain indifferent and passive. Nobody has even considered it necessary to take the legal action of mandamus to compel him to declare his assets. Thus, the media seem to be on their own. A journalist may be unjustly haunted by government officials without any help from the society. Many media men were jailed in the past without any outcry from the public. In such a situation, the media men would rather think of survival than be patriotic.

It is clear from the foregoing that it has been a very difficult task for the media to function efficiently in Nigerians' attempt to install good governance through leadership. This is in view of the formidable challenges they have head to contend with. In view of this, a few recommendations are hereby made that would enable the media to improve on their performance.

Suggestions For Better Media Performance

For the mass media to be effective in their role as tools used to institute good governance, a lot of sacrifice must be made first, the media must cleanse themselves. Newsmen and other personnel should extricate themselves from the corrupt system and place themselves at the service of the Nigerian masses. They should not lend themselves as agents of corrupt politicians. In this way they would be more objective in their information dissemination. This is a great sacrifice that is difficult to make in view of the fact that corruption is endemic and deeply etched in the national psyche. But the situation is redeemable.

Having made the sacrifice, the media should sensitize the populace on the need to rise against constitutional violations so that they (the media) can have further impetus to carry out their social responsibility duty. When the society rises to uphold what the media have told them the government would refrain from acting with impunity like it currently does.

One important way of effective dissemination of information in the rural areas is the combination of the modern mass media and traditional media of the people. This suggestion has been made by Ibagere (2011:211). According to him:

Since it is virtually impossible to rely solely on the modern mass media, such traditional media as the gongman, royal bard, and other modes of traditional communication should be employed to disseminate information about attitudinal change.

Such a development would definitely reduce the problem of understanding and apathy to media messages. The people would then be able to have a sense of belonging and be better integrated into the political mainstream, rather than feeling isolated.

II. Conclusion

It has been clearly observed that Nigerians' quest for leadership and good governance has been on since Nigeria became a country. The hope of success in this regard has continued to recede by the day as any new leader appears to be worse than the one he succeeded. The country has been in the continued quest for this

goal. The mass media have been shown as having an important role to play in this quest. But they have been unable to play this role effectively due mainly to the kind of society in which they operate. The media reflect the society. Sowith corruption having become a national norm, it would be a difficult task for the Nigerian media to be effective in their performance of this role. The society must change first and the media must also change for the country to have good leaders and institute good governance.

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