

## DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The principles of democratic governance and social responsibility require that the legitimacy of an elected representative given by popular mandate, should translate into effective representation of the hope and aspiration of the citizenry to guarantee decent living standard in terms of effective service delivery. In this regards, policy documents on economic empowerment were produced to guarantee good governance and ensure the fulfilment of electoral promises made to the people during campaigns. In the light of the above, this paper interrogates the doctrines of democratic governance and service delivery as essential elements in Nigeria's political trajectory. It considers the structure of governance and the imperatives of reforms in the realization of the set objectives of government business to engender efficiency. The paper posits that campaign promises in many democracies especially in developing countries like Nigeria are less-binding on political leaders who emerge victorious after elections. There is therefore the need to develop and operationalize the vital ingredients of governance that can enhance effective service delivery including: decentralization, popular participation, responsiveness, accountability and transparency. The study concludes by advocating the institutionalization of a systematic process of good governance control, which focuses on goal achievement and accountability to secure greater efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. In terms of methodology, secondary data were explored for the analysis of this paper based on the case study.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, democracy, good governance, service delivery, transparency, accountability.

fulfill such responsibilities with a view to ensuring the discharge of effective service delivery.

Following this introductory segment, the paper is further structured into four sections, including: conceptual discourse, reforming the "business of governance" for effective service delivery, recommendations and concluding remarks.

### **Conceptual Discourse**

In alignment with the paradigms of positivism and interpretivism, coupled with inductive as well as deductive approaches (Creswell, 2003; Collis and Hussey, 2009; Yin, 2009: 17; Saunders et al., 2007; Velde, 2004; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008), this section examines the concepts of democracy, government, governance and good governance cum effective service delivery. Democracy offers the prospect to participate in decision making in the political process. It repudiates arbitrariness and dictatorship. It extols the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and ideals (Ake, 1991: 2-3; 1996). Democracy whether liberal or African or modern includes basic recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, right of choice between alternative programs, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and more essentially periodic elections (Oke, 2005). The concept of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision by all adult citizens (Oke, 2010). The citizenry enjoys wide spread participation in the political process. Democracy provides a veritable platform for the entrenchment and consolidation of good governance through institutional arrangements for citizens' participation (Apter, 1991; Touraine, 1999; Held, 1993; Clapham, 1994; Ghali, 1995).

There is an appeal to use governance and government interchangeably. As governance is still equated with government for many people, the difference between these terms is of interest here. David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's study: *Reinventing Government* (1992), has greatly influenced public policy makers for decades. They established that governance was at the heart of what government was about. They argue that services can be contracted out or turned over to the private sector but that governance cannot. Governance is the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society's needs. In effect, government is the instrument we use. It refers to the formal institutions of the state which makes decisions within specific administrative and legal frameworks and uses

(good) governance or performance and management processes. Hence, good governance forms the philosophical foundation upon which democracy and democratic theories are built.

Governance has been used to describe the entire body of the activities traditionally associated with government and the management of public affairs and the ways and means by which their efficiency and effectiveness may be enhanced. This explains the emphasis on good governance as the quintessence of governance, though currently, the qualifier is no longer considered necessary since most of those who use the concept regard bad governance and its correlates of corruption, legitimacy crisis, non-accountability, secrecy and bewilderment, to list a few, as contradictions in terms. Even so, there is such a thing as bad governance, which simply means the reversal of good governance (Osaghae, 2006).

The current accepted view in the development community is that democracy and good governance are reciprocally supportive; yet, this is more of a theory than an empirically verified fact, and we cannot validate the correlation if we define one to include the other (Fukuyama, 2013). The subject of good governance has captured the interest of development agencies as well as international institutions, including the World Bank and several inter-governmental organizations like the G8 (The G8, 2005). These institutions have made this concern a critical precondition in their aid and donation policies to countries with poor track records on governance. Governance is defined by the World Bank as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (The World Bank, 2000; 2004). In this framework, good governance, will in effect mean the use of power by the government, i.e., the President, and his ministers, senators, members of House of Representatives and how the public service operates: (a) to promote democracy, accountability and transparency (b) to formulate and implement good policies (c) to effectively and efficiently manage the Nigerian human and financial resources in order to achieve sustainable national development, to achieve economic prosperity to ease poverty (Yahaya, 1999). Good governance includes "both a broad reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more democratic" (Minogue, 1997: 4).

Kjaer also addresses the notion of 'good governance'. She attributes the rise of the term to a policy requirement of the World Bank in providing loans

succession to power, popular participation and mobilization, fiscal capability, cohesion, and protect the state from challenges or threats to its very existence and authority. Evidently, if these ingredients were lacking, there would be no basis for good governance. Rather, there would be bad governance characterized by political instability and state fragility arising from exclusionary rule, state coercion/terrorism, violent conflicts and contestation over (unequal) citizenship and state authority, disorderly succession to power, as well as denial and suppression of human rights.

It is relevant to note that, Daniel Kaufmann *et.al* (2006: 4) have identified six dimensions of good governance which are:

1. Voice and accountability (VA), the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media.
2. Political stability and absence of violence (PV), perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including political violence and terrorism.
3. Government effectiveness (GE), the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies
4. Regulatory quality (RQ), the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permits and promotes private sector development.
5. Rule of law (RL), the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.
6. Control of corruption (CC), the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as *capture* of the state by elites and private interests.

The corollary to the foregoing is the concept of service delivery which could be conceptualized as the relationship between policy makers, service providers, and poor people. It encompasses services and their supporting systems that are typically regarded as a state responsibility. These include

organized private sector constituents, the state has lost the monopoly of service delivery previously bestowed on it (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Peters and Savoie, 1998; Mutahaba, Baguma and Halfani, 1993). Nevertheless, as the bastion of the authoritative allocation of values, the state remains the key actor in service delivery at the macro level. Accordingly, the service delivery activities of all non-state actors are to be regarded as complementary to, and not substitutes for, governance and effective service delivery. From a sequential cause and effect perspective, it seems obvious enough that good governance is necessary though not sufficient condition for effective service delivery. In what ways then can governance be strengthened to bring about and boost effective service delivery? This is the subject that we address in the rest of the paper.

### **Reforming the "Business of Governance" for Effective Service Delivery in Nigeria**

In order to appreciate the nexus between democracy, governance cum good governance and service delivery in Nigeria, this section explores some key elements of governance including decentralization, popular participation, responsiveness, transparency and accountability. It contextualizes institutional governance and the "whole-of-government" initiatives as a sine qua non in reforming the 'business of governance' for effective service delivery and development. On the other hand, the notion of the 'business of governance' suggests that beyond the usual activities and routine of government in upholding the social contract between the state and citizens, governments should: steer, not row service delivery; empower communities to solve their own problems rather than simply deliver services; encourage competition rather than monopolies; be driven by missions, rather than rules; be results-oriented by funding outcomes rather than inputs; meet the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy; concentrate on earning money rather than spending it; invest in preventing problems rather than curing crises; decentralize authority; and solve problems by influencing market forces rather than creating public programs (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Whereas, this could be summed up under the category of market-oriented government, markets are only half the answer. Markets are impersonal, intolerant, and, even under the most structured circumstances, inequitable. As such, they must be coupled with "the warmth and caring of families and neighborhoods and communities." Hence, 'entrepreneurial

possibly 'isolate' the vital ingredients of governance that can enhance service delivery, while holding the other corresponding variables constant. These would include the following: decentralization, popular participation, responsiveness, accountability and transparency. We shall in brief elaborate on how each of these can be developed and harnessed for the purpose of effective service delivery.

### **Decentralization**

Decentralization entails the devolution of power and resources from the centre to other levels of government (Laski, 1964). This philosophy was largely responsible for the Nigeria local government reforms of 1976 by the Murtala/Obasanjo administration (Ola, 1978). As much as possible service delivery should devolve around the level of government closest to the site of the service. Thus, grassroots deliveries such as primary school education, markets, dispensaries, to list a few, should be left to local government. To ensure the success of decentralization, some constitutional guarantee of devolution, one that does not leave the system entirely to the whims and caprices of the central government is required (Ola and Tonwe, 2009).

### **Popular Participation**

This inclusive view of governance is evident in Hyden (2002) where governance is portrayed as "conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm". In this notion, governance provides a framework within which legitimate institutional activities are conducted. Governance thus conceptualized, goes further than mere government effectiveness to include the social basis of authority. In a nut-shell, the top down governance practices in Nigeria tend to exclude public input (Zhou, 2013).

If services are to be effectively delivered, the end users or those for whom the services are meant should have a say in the what, when and how of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Without the development of a sense of 'ownership' of the process and product of government interventions by the people; service delivery is unlikely to be effective. This is the spirit of popular participation or the route by which people get involved in the management of their own affairs "a la self-determination and self-government" (Maipose, 2011; Bratton and Wale, 1992). These views reflect bottom-up institutional governance approaches. Good governance is linked with better-off welfare scenarios. It is responsive

dissatisfied citizens, they may be sanctioned and lose their positions (for elected politicians, withdrawal of support in elections should be what that accountability truly means). Transparency and accountability require strong oversight institutions and functions such as are performed by legislatures and civil society organizations especially the press, labour and professional organizations, that people have access to justice and can seek redress through judicial, constitutional and systematic processes. Sound institutional governance thrives where accountability frameworks are clearly defined. Accountability is essentially about being answerable for own behavior or actions (Olowu and Sako, 2002). It animates institutional openness and responsiveness. Institutional practices are not always in the public interest. Accountability frameworks in this way provide a system of checks and balances on the public service for corruption prevention. Too strong a bureaucracy in a society where the public is relatively unorganized may stifle institutional accountability (Brewer et al., 2007). By and large, this scenario is generally reflective of the Nigeria political milieu where the doctrines of transparency and accountability are glossed-over particularly by the political class. At the risk of repetition, it suffices to note that the challenges of socio-political and democratic transformation in Nigeria are well documented (Joseph, 1987; Osaghae, 2011). Indeed, arising from such challenges, it could be argued that the country is in a state of "democratic paralysis" (Chirot, 1977). In its modern sense, accountability is both vertical and horizontal. Vertical accountability (the traditional and authoritarian version of accountability emphasizes adherence to rules, regulations, orders, and processes) to include being answerable to subordinates. There is therefore a vertical and horizontal dimension to accountability. Vertical accountability structures stress professional/organizational interests over those of stakeholders. Within such accountability frameworks, primary concern is with the pursuit of organizational objectives at the expense of societal ones. Accountability structures of this nature have served very well in authoritarian rule (Schwella, 1991). There is therefore a relational dimension to accountability. It describes the relationship between the state and the people (Zhou, 2013).

### **Institutional Governance**

Present-day institutional governance should also be understood within the context of e-democracy, e-government and e-governance. These IT related developments have without a doubt transformed the institutional

In response to NPM reforms, a new generation of reforms, initially labeled "joined-up government" and later known as "whole-of-government", was launched. This approach sought to apply a more holistic strategy using insights from the other social sciences rather than just economics (Bogdanor, 2005). These new reform efforts can be seen as a blend of path dependency and negative feedback in the most radical NPM countries (Perry, 2005). As a response to the increased fragmentation caused by NPM reform programs, these countries adopted coordination and integration strategies. The slogans joined-up government and whole-of-government provided new labels for the old doctrine of coordination in the study of public administration (Hood, 2005). Adding to the issue of coordination, the problem of integration was a main concern behind these reform initiatives (Mulgan, 2005).

The "whole-of-government" denotes public services agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues. Approaches can be formal or informal. They can focus on policy development, program management, and service delivery" (MAC., 2004). Fittingly, a distinction can be made between WG policy making and WG implementation, between horizontal linkages and vertical linkages, and the target for WG initiatives can be a group, a locality, or a policy sector (Pollitt, 2003). WG activities may cover any or all levels of government and involve groups outside government. It is about joining up at the top, but also about joining up at the base, enhancing local level integration, and involving public - private partnerships (PPP) a model which is currently central to the transformation agenda of the President Goodluck Jonathan led administration in Nigeria. The WG model does not represent a coherent set of ideas and tools, just like NPM, and can best be seen as an umbrella term describing a group of responses to the problem of increased dissolution of the public sector and public services and a wish to increase integration, coordination, and capacity (Ling, 2002).

Of interest at this juncture, is not simply governance in its broadest sense, rather, the very particular facet of governance institutions that support development and efficient service delivery. These are typically government ministries and departments that are the consumers of public resources and often the beneficiaries of technical assistance interventions by donor agencies (Brown, 2008). The centrality of high-performing public institutions and good governance to socio-economic development are now well accepted in the development discourse. North (1990) suggests that institutions are the underlying determinant of the long-run performance of



the political office holders find themselves in a predicament: they do not know their own specific objectives or roles and what measures they are expected to take in the discharge of their tasks. This situation is in all probability attributable to the moral fiber of our democratic practice (Okpalaonwuka, 1997). Unlike in well-entrenched democratic systems, our contemporary political parties have no 'genuine manifestoes', which spell out their ideologies, policies and programs. As it were, many got elected without honestly telling the electorates in unequivocal terms what they hope to do when they come into government. It is no surprise then that the electorates do not know what to expect of their government and its agencies, and that government functionaries themselves have no clear thought about their own role within the bigger scheme of things? By any standard, this is a fundamental defect in our system of governance and unfortunately, it is the prevailing norm at all tiers of government.

According to the Thomson Report (2004), a Survey of Households, Enterprises and Public Officials, commissioned as part of a Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Study, suggests high levels of distrust of government, the political process and the executive, and the need for confidence building. Households and enterprises rated most public services as poor or very poor, and no services were consistently rated as good. However, the postal service rated less badly than most, and enterprises rated Standards and Safety Inspection including the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC) relatively highly. On the other hand, the police service was rated by 46 percent of households and enterprises as -very poor- and by 41.2 percent of public officials as -very inefficient-; 39.5 percent of households and 41.4 percent of enterprises placed electricity provision in the same category; and Water Board performances were rated very poor by 28.9 percent of households and 35.1 percent of businesses interviewed. Public health and public education were also generally rated as poor. Public officials rated the Police (41.2%) as the most inefficient agency, followed by the energy provider formerly called Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), but now privatised and broken into different units under the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), with (35%). Enterprises were asked whether they had had cause to complain about public services, whether they had actually complained, and how effectively this was dealt with. The Energy and Telecommunication Companies, the Police and the Water Boards attracted most cause for complaints. Few people had actually gone to the trouble of complaining, and the vast majority rated their complaints as completely

discourtesy sometimes exhibited by almost all these front-line officers interfacing with the public are disturbing.

Anyone familiar with Nigeria would agree that some of the challenges facing the country are poor social infrastructure and institutions: bad roads, erratic power supply, limited access to potable water, lack of basic healthcare, ineffective regulatory agencies and much more. The plethora of policies in the society is ineffective due to broken institutions and dilapidated infrastructure (Hoff, 2003). The multitude of political parties devoid of visible political ideologies is a component of the problems facing Nigeria today. As a result, the politicians prosper on the people's ignorance (Newman, 2013). Lack of 'ethical politics and values' as well as politics of hate and destruction are the main drivers of the nation's systemic decay.

The roles, functions and powers of all tiers of government ultimately derive from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). It is imperative for all political office holders to familiarize themselves in the first instance with the detailed provisions of this important document. After that, comes the manifesto or program of action, which the relevant political party may have put out to the electorates, on the basis of which it was elected.

Governments generally have the fundamental aim to improve the well-being of their citizens through the provision of certain services and amenities. In the Nigerian milieu, the services provided at the state and local government levels generally lie in the domains of: primary, secondary and tertiary education; health, sanitation, works and transportation- building, roads and bridges, including waterways; land and natural resources; Agriculture including aquaculture and horticulture; Environment; Culture, Sports and Youth development; Industry and Commerce, to list a few. The current dispensation in the country appears to be one of liberalism and deregulation in view of better service delivery. Government seems to be leaning towards a policy of leaving the mainstream economic activities (the provision of goods and services at commercial rates) to the private sector, while retaining to itself responsibility for those goods and services where the economic incentives are not sufficient for the private sector to provide them at the quantity, quality and price considered acceptable to or affordable by the average Nigerian.

This perceived economic posture of government was what inspired the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) document and its codicils: the State Economic Empowerment and

- appointing, training and rewarding the right staff with the skills and attitudes needed for service delivery;
2. Clear objectives should be set out for individual organs of government. Where such objectives exist already, effort should be directed towards updating them to reflect the current needs, priorities and circumstances of the people and to reflect these in their programs.
  3. Provision of adequate briefs to public office holders on what is required of them. There should be less emphasis on political patronage as determinant of who may be elected or appointed to what positions. There should be due process and regard to relevance of background, qualifications and experience to the position in view.
  4. Institutionalization of dynamic and supportive culture or style of management in government institutions. The administrative systems that are contemporary must be instituted.
  5. Introducing a targeted "two-way" communications approach to bridging the gap between what governments intends, what is actually delivered and what people perceive.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have advocated the institution in every government concern of a systematic process of good governance and control, which focuses on goal achievement, accountability and drawn attention to the need for politicians to seek to gain clarity, in the first instance, concerning their specific goals and objectives. We have also proposed how re-strategizing the "business of governance" could be improved to secure greater efficiency and effectiveness in order to improve better service delivery. We believe that the political elites should be within the limits of their responsibilities and in the position to implement many of the ideas advanced in this discussion. They could also, by virtue of their being part of government, collectively constitute a pressure group (catalyst) that can instigate advocated reforms. This is imperative if accountability is to be secured and if society is to derive full benefits from the resources which government administers in trust on its behalf.

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