PRODUCTION OF POVERTY STRICKEN CITIZENS: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA'S SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

The wellbeing of citizens, in any human society, is expected to be the major concern of the leaders, in whose possession the societal resources lies. The trust given the social administrators is prudent management of the finances especially in ensuring the attainment of the capital and recurrent expenses of the citizens. In Nigeria's situation, the reverse is the case where administrators loot and embezzle the fund meant for social upkeep. This in essence create loggerheads between the leaders and the labour leaders who feel that periodic increment in labour emolument should be a normal thing free from rancor or work to rule. This paper contest the administrative style implored by the average Nigerian leaders towards their workers welfare especially as it concerns the determination of an ideal minimum wage for the average worker. It however conclude that if looting must be a thing of the past, the leaders must put in place stringent laws that will deal severely with any leader that misappropriate any fund meant for social upkeep.

Keywords: Poverty, Workers, Citizens, Leaders, Embezzlement, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The classification of nations into underdeveloped, developing or developed was not based on the level of their resourcefulness, but the extent to which they successfully managed the resources for the betterment and well-being of their citizenry. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the eight in the world with a population of over 140 million people by 2006 census. With a nominal GDP of $207.11 billion and per capital income of $1.401, it has the second largest economy in Africa (Salami, 2011). As impressive as the above figures may appear, youth unemployment has been one of the major problems facing Nigeria. The inadequate employment situation of youth has a number of socio-economic political and moral consequences. This has resulted in poverty in Nigeria. To aggravate the poverty situation, workers in the Nigerian Society are not kindly treated by the leaders, but paid take home, which could hardly take them home.

Oseni et al (2012), said it is unbelievable that man can be thirsty in the middle of water. Water here and there but there is none to drink. Some have argued that the story of Nigeria is one of the paradoxes since the beginning of the 1980s. Nigeria, according to Obadan (2002), is endowed with human, agricultural, petroleum and large untapped solid mineral resources and earned over US $300 billion from oil during the last three decades of the twentieth century. But the country had retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries at the threshold of twenty-first century whereas she was among the richest 50 in the early 1970s in the world. More than half of Nigerians are poor despite living in a country with potential wealth. Revenue from crude oil have been increasing over the pass decade but Nigerians have been falling deeper into abject poverty due to the leaders looting and embezzlement of the revenue.

2. POVERTY: A CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Aiyedogbon and Ohwofase (2012), stressed that poverty is not an easy concept to define. As a result, a range of definitions exist, influenced by different disciplinary approaches and ideologies. The dominant western definition since World War II has defined poverty in monetary terms, using levels of income or consumption to measure poverty and defining the poor by a headcount of those who fall below a given income/consumption level or 'poverty line'. However, this economic definition has been complemented in recent years by other approaches that define poverty in a more multidimensional way (Subramanian, 1997). These approaches include the basic needs approach (Streeten et al, 1981), the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999), and the human development approach (UNDP, 1990). Their acceptance is reflected in the widespread use of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP), Human Development Index (HDI), which is a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: (i) life expectancy, (ii) educational attainment and (iii) standard of living, measured by income in terms of its purchasing power parity (UNDP, 2006).

Inability to achieve a certain minimal standard of living according to Aigbokhan (2000), is poverty. Narayan et al, (2000), quoted in Oseni et al (2012), posit that poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent, and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when help is being sought. This is termed to be a condition of deprivation or want in which somebody is not able to satisfy the minimum basic human needs like food, housing and clothing in order to ensure a decent life or existence.

3. NIGERIA'S SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Administration according to the international students' edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary (2010), is the process or act of organizing the way that something is done. It involves the activities that are done in order to plan, organize and run a business, school, institution or the larger society. Going by this description, every reasonable society always ensure the welfare and peaceful existence of its members. This is done by ensuring judicious use of their resources for the benefit of all. But, the administration of the Nigerian society is such that is against normal human reasoning. Obuah (2010), stressed that corruption is a complex and persistent cancerous global phenomenon which bedevils Nigeria. In Nigeria, corruption in the form of misappropriation, bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, money laundering, etc. by public officials have permeated the fabric of the society. Major political parties' office seekers top the list of unfit or corrupt officials. Elected officials of high echelon and public officers use their position of authority to actively engage in corrupt activities.

Achebe (1988), said that anyone who say that corruption in Nigeria has not reached alarming proportion is either a fool, a crook, or else does not live in Nigeria. Further still, he posited that the situation has become worse to the extent that as far back as 1993, keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt was like preventing a goat from eating yam. It is not an exaggeration of the tragic events of the country since independence to say that all efforts to establish a just and efficient administration have been frustrated by the system (Keeper, 2012).

It was Ake (1995), quoted in Fagbadebo (2007), who painted a gloomy picture of the African continent saying: "most of Africa is not developing". This apt description of the decline in nearly all African countries underscores the depth of underdevelopment ravaging the people in the midst of abundant natural resources. While most of these countries gained independence in the 1960's, the struggle to ensure national development and political stability proved negative. According to Ake (Ibid), "Decades of effort have yielded largely stagnation, regression or worse. The tragic consequences of this are increasingly clear: a rising tide of poverty, decaying public utilities and infrastructures, social tensions and political turmoil, and now, premonition, of unenviable drive into conflict and violence".

Scholars have described Nigeria, as an "unfinished state", (Joseph et al, 1996), and as "a truculent African tragedy" (Ayittey, 2006), in the midst of abundant human and material resources, which are propelled in the vicious cycle of poverty and autocracy. Efforts at building a democratic polity further entrapped it at the "political crossroads". With enormous wealth from oil resources, and economic, social and political strength, Nigeria is qualified to be called the giant of Africa as Kew (2006), noted that:

"the giant was brought to its knees by 20 years of brutal and corrupt militant rule, which left a legacy of executive dominance and political corruption in the hands of Nigeria's so-called "god father" – powerful political bosses sitting atop vast patronage networks who view the government primarily through the lens of their own personal enrichment".

Ake (1995), further asserted that "well meaning development projects are regarded with suspicion, indifference or even hostility and at best, as an exploitative resource, something to be taken advantage of rather than something to be committed to".

Saying that, Nigeria politicians are corrupt is a bit of understatement, but their exploit in Maladministering the social life of the Nigerian nation is grossly responsible for the poverty that is ubiquitous in the country. Table I expressed the spate of looting and embezzlement by Nigerian politicians which if put to good use would have translated the lives of many citizens positively.

Table I: Names of Nigerian Corrupt Politicians, Their Political Parties and Their Loot

Names of Corrupt Nigerian Politicians	**Amount Looted or Embezzled**	**Political Party Affiliated to**	**Designation or Office Held**
Iyabo Obasanjo Bello	#300 million	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Chairman, Senate committee on health (2007 – 2011)
Lucky Igbinedion	#19 billion	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Governor, Edo State (1999 – 2007)
Dame Patience Jonathan	$13 million	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2011 till date)
Chief Bode George Alhaji Aminu Dabo	#100 billion	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Former Chairman, BOD Nigeria Port authority (NPA) Management Director
Jolly Nyame	#2.4 billion	Peoples democratic party (PDP)	Former Taraba state governor (1999 – 2007)
Chief Joshua Dariye	#700 million	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Former Governor Plateau State (1999 – 2007)
James Ibori	£356,250.00 £374,000.00 £200,000.00 £157,895.00 £112,000.00 £110,000.00 £105,000.00 £44 billion	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Former Governor Delta State (1999 – 2007)
Boni Haruna	#100 million	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Governor of Adamawa State (1999 – 2007)
Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	$100M (£51m)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Vice President (1999 – 2007)
Alhaji Saminu Turaki	#30 billion	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Jigawa State Governor (1999 – 2007)

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	#16 billion	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	President (1999 – 2007)

Sources: http://saharareporters.com
http://www.punchontheweb.com
http://allafrica.com
http://www.tribune.com.ng
http://news2.onlinenigeria.com
http://www.guardian.co.uk

4. PROCESS OF PRODUCING POVERTY STRICKEN CITIZENS

Governance for Akinwale and Aderinto (2012), entails the process of making decisions and implementing them based on different considerations such as popular participation, respect for the rule of law, observance of human rights, transparency, free access to information, prompt responses to human needs , accommodation of diverse interests, equity, inclusiveness, effective results and accountability. Most surprisingly, Nigerian leaders consider political activities as investment which must profit the investor, hence the transactive approach towards social administration and masses welfare. Ironically, nothing aggravates labour union, civil societies and the general public most than the refusal of our leaders to pay eighteen thousand naira (₦18,000.00) minimum wage for workers in Nigeria while we have several cases of celebrated loot and embezzlement which no serious attempt towards alleviating or curbing it had been taken.

After more than four decades of developmental efforts and management, Nigeria is still being classified as an underdeveloped poor country of the third world. Despite being one of the richest countries in the world, in terms of human and natural resources, with one of the seventh largest reserves of crude oil, the country is still living below the poverty line with a gross national product per capital of ₦1,220. For instance, over the past twenty years, Nigeria has generated approximately $360 billion from oil revenue, yet, she remains poor. The indexes of development for Nigeria proved this. For instance, Nigeria's maternal mortality rate remains one of the highest in the African Continent standing at 100 for every 100,000 births. Life expectancy remains 52 years as at 2008. Less than 67 percent of Nigerians have access to good health services. Only 19 medical doctors are available per 100,000 persons as against 16 nurses. Only 42 percent have access to safe water (Bakare, 2011).

The 2005 UND Human Development Index ranks Nigeria 158th out of 159 countries of third world Nations in terms of underdevelopment. The under developmental situations of Nigeria, in spite of its enormous natural and human resources, are worrisome. If Nigeria could be classified as poor with her level of resourcefulness, then it could be inferred that the Nigerian leaders deliberately calculated the impoverishment of Nigerian masses considering, the embezzlement which had been perpetrated and is still continuous.

If the production of poverty-stricken citizens was not the aim of the Nigerian leaders, it would have occurred to them that paying workers ₦36,000 minimum wage should not be subject to debate in the national assembly before approval. Ironically, the discussant of the approval debate earns over ₦15.2m and ₦10.6m monthly respectively. Even, the yet to be approved ₦18,000 minimum wage is less than one percent (1%) of the lawmakers monthly pay. Alege, Kareem and Bolaji (2011), said that for a worker to earn an annual pay of the Senator, he will have to work for 777 years. This confirms that the leaders had set a standard which will be practically impossible for the ordinary citizens to meet in crossing the poverty line.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps the most profound definition of leadership thus far comes from Anazodo, Okoye and Ezenwile (2012), who have stated that leadership is an influence process. They opined that leadership is the exercise of influence on the part of the leader over the behavior of one or more persons. In other words, leadership involves one person trying to get others do something that he wants them to do. Stogdill (1948), agreeing with Anazodo, Okoye and Ezenwile (2012), added the concept of goal attainment when he contended that "leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal attainment. Having said that, control mechanism as in the manner of conferring the power of approval to some activities of the leaders by the masses should be put in place. This become imperative considering the fact that Nigerian leaders had grossly betray the trust repose in them by the masses. The minimum wage should be made to be a substantial percentage of the president's wage so that whenever the president salary is increased, the minimum wage automatically increases with the least acrimony.

Having investigated leadership – corruption as the bane of Nigeria's development, this study has shown that corruption of the Nigerian leaders has affected grossly the level of infrastructural, educational, economic, health, promote unemployment and inflict the entire society with poverty thereby leaving the citizenry with all the symptoms of poverty. Corruption by Nigerian leaders has brought scorn and disgrace to the country (Anazodo, Okoye and Ezenwile, 2012). To review this trend, Nigeria just need to take a simple and firm decision to punish the perpetrators fraud. Just like the China republic that resolved that any embezzlement to the tune of ₦5 million attracts capital punishment (i.e.death penalty), Nigeria should emulate the same. This will automatically halt the celebrated loot that has been producing poverty wretched citizens.

6. CONCLUSION

If the level of poverty must drop and the standard of living improve in the Nigerian society, the average Nigerian leader must turn a new leaf and be truthful with the administration of the society. They must stop being law makers and breakers at the same time. Finally, as earlier mentioned, if looting must be a thing of the past in the social administration of the Nigerian nation, the lawmakers must put in place stringent laws that will deal severely with any leader that misappropriates fund meant for social development.

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