

Philosophy and Good Governance: A Road Map for National Development

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Abstract: This paper is an exposition on the theoretical and practical relevance of philosophy to good governance as a tool for achieving national development. It contends that philosophical ideas have been responsible for determining development tempo in modern society. Its take is that development is the product of men's capacity to think more critically and reflectively, and that national development can be achieved if people, both the government and the governed, can adopt a philosophy to do well for the generality of the people. Using descriptive analytic method, the paper tries to form a nexus between philosophy and good governance. It finally recommends, following some implications of philosophy to national development, certain measures to be adopted in formulating national philosophy.

Keywords: philosophy, philosophical ideas, good governance, national development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Good governance is what everybody desires. Successive governments in Nigeria have always promised good governance at one point or the other. Good governance is believed will bring about national development, which will be manifested in the rule of law, respect for human right, political stability and economic advancement. In Nigeria, it can be said that good governance is an illusion following successive failures of various governments to fulfill their promises to bring about good governance and development to the nation. Chinua Achebe in his famous work, *The Trouble with Nigeria* identified leadership problem as the sole reason for backwardness in the country. Umez(2000) corroborated with this and went ahead to itemize other problems which hinge on lack of good and applicable national philosophy. According to him lack of healthy national philosophy is the major problem of development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Thus the need to examine the relationship between philosophy and good governance as a panacea for national development.

2. WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY ?

Philosophy, it is said, is the mother of all knowledge. It is considered a cornerstone in any meaningful intellectual enterprise. Its subject matter is so vast that it cannot be trapped in a single definition. Its classical definition as love of wisdom always calls to mind as first attempt to clarifying its meaning. Abiogu(2014) corroborates with this in his attempt to define philosophy. According to him, "...philosophy which is coined from Greek words *philo*(love) and *Sophia*(wisdom). The combination of the two words gave birth to the word *philosophia*, meaning love of wisdom". Philosophic wisdom is an intellectual engagement which enables man, to a large extent, assess his ideals as well as his life aspirations. Okoh(1998) on his own sees philosophy as "A method of reflective and constructive thinking and reasoned inquiry". Philosophy makes inquiry about existence. It concerns itself with what is and what ought to be. This makes life more intelligent, meaningful and purposeful. This it achieves by clarifying, verifying and justifying issues through criticism of concepts and principles.

By its very nature philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters. It seeks to find the best way of doing things, through development of attitude or theory that would serve as guide to the objective intended to achieve. In general sense, philosophy is associated with wisdom, intellectual culture and research for knowledge. It always seeks for a better way of doing things, be it in moral, political, social and economic spheres. That is the reason Kwesi(1993) opined that, "Philosophy deals with the intellectual foundations of life, interrogating and evaluating the foundations of our beliefs and actions".

In a more loose sense, and it is in this sense that philosophy is used in this article, philosophy can be understood as a world view. According to Funk, (2001) “A worldview is the set of beliefs about fundamental aspects of [R]eality that ground and influence all of one's perceiving, thinking, knowing, and doing”. A people's worldview is their mindset, outlook on life, formula for life, ideology, faith, or even religion. In fact it is how they see life – what should be celebrated and what should be frowned at. Most times world view is implicit as people don't decide what should be their world view. It is an elaboration of all the elements in people's value which have their implications in their thought and action. For instance in Nigeria, the success in fighting corruption will be determined by how wealthy people are celebrated. Is the emphasis more on the wealth or on the means of acquiring the wealth? If the former is more cherished than the later, then there is tendency that people will throw caution to the wind in pursuit of wealth. Therefore for good governance to be achieved, there is need for healthy philosophy – a world view that will encourage more virtue than vice.

3. GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance requires an integrated, long-term strategy built upon cooperation between government and citizens. It involves both participation and institutions. The word governance came from Latin word *gubernare* which means to steer. Therefore, etymologically governance means the manner or act of steering a state or a group of people which includes directing and controlling their affairs at various levels. If governance involves management of the state resources, it implies that it is a task which is either taken or given in whichever case there is need for accountability. It is the extent this accountability is achieved will determine whether a governance is good or bad. To achieve this, The Rule of Law, and Transparency are found to be very important ingredient at both technical and legal level in order produce government that is legitimate, effective, and widely supported by citizens. Also needed is a civil society that is strong, open, and capable of playing a positive role in politics and government. This paper contends that this can only be achieved if there is a sound and healthy national philosophy. Johnston(no date), defines good governance as “The exercise of power or authority by political leaders for the well being of their country's citizens or subjects”. Governance is the complex process whereby some sectors of the society wield power, enact and promulgate public policies which directly affect human and institutional interactions. In good governance, the power exercised by the participating members of the society is always for the common good, which suggests that the most important in governance is the proper and effective utilization of resources.

Vital (2013) posits that the basic dimensions of good governance are rule of law, probity in public life, dignity of every individual and reduction in wastage of resources. Atodo and Obiora, (2017) see good governance from the point of effectiveness. Effectiveness in public will involve those principles that encourage better decision making and efficient use of resources which strengthens accountability for the stewardship of those resources. Therefore they defined effective governance as a type of administration which is characterized by “robust scrutiny, which provides important pressures for improving public sector performance, gaining transparency and tackling corruption”. This in their opinion will improve management, effective implementation of policies, better service delivery and operation which will lead to better outcome.

From the discussion above, it is observed that good governance does not easily come by. It requires a strategic and well thought out plan which hinges on systematized philosophical ideas. A state without a philosophy can be compared to a ship, without a captain, which sails on the high sea at the mercy of the storm. Philosophy seeks the conditions in which all the constructive tendencies of man such as social marriage, education and culture, can provide maximum possible opportunities to produce the people who can save the world from future catastrophe. To demonstrate this further let us look at some indices of good governance in order understand that its actualization is not possible without philosophy.

4. INDICES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance is an art in the sense that there are processes that must be followed for its efficiency. For a governance to be considered good, the following indices need to be in place.

1. Participatory: Good governance requires active involvement of all affected people and interested parties in the decision-making process. For people to participate there is need for a participation philosophy which will encourage the flourishing of an enabling environment where crucial information can be disseminated and people having opportunity to respond unconstrained and in a truthful manner. There should be no discrimination on any ground with regard to

information people are able to withhold or divulge. There should be no government monopoly of powers and responsibilities. While government remains the most powerful actor in the process of governance, the participation of other sectors are also important and of utmost necessity because of the complexity and ever growing needs of the society, especially in the financial sphere.

2. Rule of Law: Good governance is also hinged on the rule of law. It is through the rule of law that people express their will and exercise their sovereignty. Therefore, obedience to the law by everybody should be seen as an underlying democratic principle, which puts no one, however rich or powerful, above the law. The people in government should take the first bold step in this area by leading a life that will encourage the people and civil society to render habitual obedience to the law. They should act within the limits of the powers and functions prescribed by the law. Nobody should be seen living a life above the law no matter how highly placed. This will be achieved if servant-leader philosophy is imbued into the psyche of the citizens.

3. Effectiveness and Efficiency: This means the ability to deliver or meet the necessities of the society in a way that the available resources are well utilized. When the needs of the society are met in good time means there is effective governance. When such needs are met without wasting or underutilizing the resources, it means there is efficient government. Good governance needs to be both effective and efficient, that is, timely delivery and proper use of resources in order to ensure the best possible result for the community.

4. Transparency: Good governance must go with transparency. Transparency means that people are free to access information regarding decision-making process and implementation of the same without constraints. This will imply that information on matters of public concern is made available to the citizens or those who will be directly affected. In which case, all transactions involving public interests must be fully disclosed and made accessible to the people. Transparency is necessary not just for from government transactions but also in those transactions of the civil society and private sectors imbued with public interest. Transparency is necessary to promote and protect democratic ideals. When there is transparency, people are placed in a better position to know and protect their rights as well as denounce corrupt or fraudulent practices in the public and private sectors.

5. Accountability: There is responsibility attached to every position being held by anybody. Therefore, good governance demands that both the people in government and those governed are answerable for all their actions, especially when such actions affect public interest. This suggests that every individual has an obligation to explain and be answerable to the consequences of decisions and actions made on behalf of other people. To achieve this, a system of rewards and punishment must be in place to strengthen the process and institutions of governance.

5. NEXUS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

So far, in this work, it has been able to demonstrate that there is a connection between philosophy and good governance. Philosophy has been found to be the bedrock of every law. This is because every law has to be based on logic. The laws are systematically formulated to address problems arising from various facets of life in the society. In making the laws, efforts should be made to instill good value system in the society. The value which the people pursue determines their way of life and what they cherish or abhor. Philosophy as a way of life helps to formulate and direct people's behaviour to pursue ideals of good governance in order to bring national development. Healthy philosophy will promote social, political, moral and economic life of the people. For instance, the way wealthy people celebrated in the society will affect the way and manner the citizens go about pursuit of wealth. Therefore it is important to promote hard work even when less is seemed to be achieved than wealth that is easily made from questionable sources. Ugbo(2014) suggests that those in government should live a life that will encourage followership. Their lives should not suggest they are above the law. For instance, driving against the traffic is a traffic law that has been regularly violated by government officials. Following their actions, many road users join in this violation as those in government try to instill the philosophy of impatience in the people.

6. CONCLUSION

Philosophy, as a critical way of looking at issues, is very important for national development. As it has been explained above, philosophy involves the way a given people sees reality around them. The way and manner they go about solving problems arising in the community is determined by the value they place on those issues. The contention of this paper is that a healthy national philosophy is important to bring about national development. Without philosophy there cannot be

direction to the national life. There must be collective agreement by the citizens on the values to pursue. This agreement should be demonstrated in the way they pursue the aspirations and goals. As a way of life good philosophy will help to encourage discipline, rule of law, respect for human dignity and many other national virtues. Therefore, there is an urgent need for national philosophy as a way of bringing about sustainable national development.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Nigerians should be encouraged to develop healthy philosophy to bring about national development.
2. Those in government should encourage followership by leading an exemplary life
3. Respect for the rule of law imbued in philosophy of equality for all should be the hall mark of national life.
4. Healthy values that will encourage hard work should be encouraged.
5. Efforts to success, no matter how little, should be encouraged more than the outcome of the process.

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