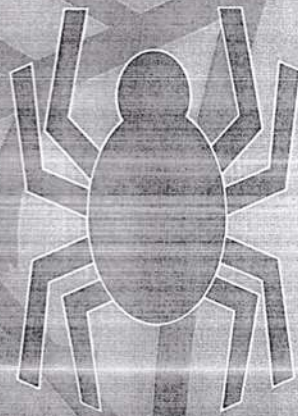


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## IMPERATIVES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

By

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### Abstract

The paper examined the relationship between good governance and sustainable development. The question is; how is good governance and sustainable development relevant to a country? The answer lies in the fact that good governance lays the foundation for sustainable development. The paper discovers that the criteria that determine good governance are the rule of law, accountability, government legitimacy, popular participation in government and transparency among others. On the other hand, sustainable development is not all about environmental resource use but also socio-economic resource and how it is utilized by the present generation and by extension, the foundation laid for future generations. The paper concludes that good governance and sustainable development are complementary. Good governance lays the foundation for sustainable development to strive. The paper recommends that governments at all levels in Nigeria should entrench good democratic principles to enhance good governance based on the rule of law, accountability and transparency. The paper is not empirically based. The study is based on secondary sources – books, journal and newspaper articles and it employed historical and descriptive analysis as its methodology.

### Introduction

Of recent, the issue of good governance and sustainable development appears to capture the attention of many right-thinking people in almost all climes than ever before. This stems from the fact that poor governance has been a common experience observed in many parts of the world especially in developing countries such as Nigeria, Syria, Yemen,

Democratic Republic of Congo Sudan, Somalia, Libya, among others. Thus, poor governance is characterized by such poor indices as lack of the rule of law, lack of accountability in governance, lack of transparency, poor or lack of freedom of information, impunity and sometimes government illegitimacy.

On the other hand, sustainable development is a product of governance. Good governance will promote sustainable development through the promotion of economic, social and cultural activities that enhance the welfare and standard of living of the people and by extension preserve our environment. The creation of economic enterprise through the building of factories for production of goods would, in turn, create job opportunities for the teeming unemployed graduates. Wealth creation in the system would aid the building and funding of educational and health institutions and make people have access to these institution for their benefits and that of the nation. In this regards, poverty would be reduced and the pillaging of the environment would be lessened. This is only possible through the building of strong institutions to propel those indices or indicators. Poor governance will also undermine sustainable development thus sowing the seed for the population to pillage the land (environment) which may lead to poor standard of living characterized by low life expectancy; lack of good and affordable education; lack of access to good medical facilities which may hinder productive capacity of individuals and by extension encourage vices that may undermine the security and culture of the people.

Indeed, poor governance may not be linked to lack of resources in the land, but often time poor governance may be a product of corruption or ineptitude or poor leadership and this leads to a failure, on the part of government, to deliver quality and quantity services to the citizenry at the right time. This is better illustrated in the politico-economic happenings within the present day Democratic Republic of Congo where governance is not in accordance with the rule of law and constitutionalism. Nigeria is also another classic example. The Democratic Republic of Congo is very rich in natural resources such as gold, petroleum resources, bauxite, coal, cassiterite, wolframite, iron ore, diamonds, monazite and yet the people are very poor, thus ranking the country as one of the poorest in Africa (Meredith, 2006). Nigeria, also, is very rich in natural resources such as petroleum resources, gold, coal, bauxite, tin, columbite, lignite, marble, clay, to mention but a

few. but yet, the people are worse off in terms of good living conditions. Nigeria is also ranked as one of the poorest nations in the world (Akpan, 2015).

Central to this paper is the fact that sustainable development, as a new paradigm in international relations, would not make meaning to national economies without good governance. Good governance is the bedrock of sustainable development. Besides, the issue of poor governance is ringing a bell in developing countries especially in Africa, Middle East and some countries in Central America. Indicators of poor governance include oppression, lack of access to good and affordable education, health facilities, unemployment among others. Poor governance was a factor that caused the Arab Spring which started in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. Developing economies of Africa need to be watched, and Nigeria has a role to play by showing a good example of good governance. It should also prepare to lead others in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nigeria is a regional power in West Africa. Her example through good governance may be emulated by other countries in the sub-region and this would engender peace, order and development.

This paper is divided into three sections: Section A is the introduction and clarification of some concepts applied in this work; Section B espouses the linkage between governance and sustainable development; and Section C discusses the conclusion and made recommendations.

### **History, Focus and Concept of Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is an aspect of modernism and the expression was first mentioned in the World Conservation Strategy in 1980. As Falola (2015) puts it, as an idea and practice; there is nothing new with sustainable development. It has been with us for more than two decades. He goes further to state that

A report by the World Commission on Environment and Development published in 1987, entitled, 'Our Common Future', zeroed in on the linkage to argue that governments can improve the standard of living of their people, improve relations between countries, meet current needs, but without compromising the abilities and needs of future generations to also benefit from the

environment. The report, now known as the Brundtland Commission Report, touches upon poverty, gender inequality, human rights, local economics, agriculture, industries, healthcare, and the environment. Concerns were also expressed about global economic and climate change.

Sustainable development, therefore, has a global dimension, the idea that nations must do similar things with respect to a number of issues including economic growth, management of poverty, global interactions, and global inequalities. In 1992, for the first time, a world summit dealt with sustainable development issues, at the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Three documents were adopted by more than 178 countries: Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the statement of principles for sustainable management of forests (Hussain, 2004, Falola, 2015).

Agenda 21 represents a comprehensive action plan for sustainable development to be adopted globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the United Nations system, governments, and major groups. The 40 chapters of Agenda 21 reflect an all-encompassing approach organized in four main areas; the social and economic dimensions, the conservation and management of resources for development, strengthening the role of major groups, and means of implementation. Two other important documents were agreed to in Rio; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Biodiversity convention aimed at responding to increasing global environmental threats.

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, took stock of achieved goals established in Agenda 21 and concluded that the process of implementation was slower than expected. Nevertheless, governments strongly reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of Agenda 21. Declarations that delegates signed. It is stated in the declaration thus:

Poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns, and protecting and managing the natural resources base for economic and social development are overarching objectives, and

essential requirements for sustainable development... The ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds poses a major threat to global prosperity, security and instability. The global environment continues to suffer .... globalization has added a new dimension to these challenges. The rapid integration of markets, mobility, capital and significant increases in investment flow around the world have opened new challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. But the benefits and the costs of globalization are unevenly distributed, with developing countries facing special difficulties in meeting this challenge (Hussain, 2004).

A Johannesburg Action Plan was launched in 2004 and it focused mainly on the reduction of "biodiversity loss and the restoration of fisheries to their maximum sustainable yields by 2015. It also emphasized the establishment of a representative network of marine protected areas by 2012, and the improvement of developing countries' access to environmentally sound alternatives to ozone-depleting chemicals by 2010".

The term sustainable development has become a new paradigm on the development strands among economies especially the developing ones. The concept is being adopted as a way of encouraging nations to see beyond now by developing institutions that would propel advancement in economies. Sustainable development is a concept that evolved from environmental issues. Man's activities are merely concerned and centred around the environment; sustainable development becomes a key word that opens environmental issues. Environment is important because it is the custodian of social, economic and political structures that add value to human civilization. Every social interaction, economic production and political activities concentrate on the environment. Thus the 1970s saw the beginning of international summits on environment and a proliferation of international agreements on environmental issues. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (itself established in 1972), there are over 144 regional and 97 global environmental agreements relating to the environment, more than three-quarters of which were signed after 1972. The first major global environment summit was the United Nations

Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. It initiated a number of inter-governmental investigations, meetings and agreements on global environmental problems. These merged with parallel investigations into development and common security, and culminated in 1987 in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) with another declaration titled "our common future". The World Commission on Environment and Development popularized the term 'sustainable development'; and introduced the term 'environmental security' (Collins, 2007).

Sustainable development is a concept which involves the utilization of available natural resources, the preservation of genetic diversity and the maintenance of the ecosystem. The Brundtland Report's view of sustainable development implies that future generations should be compensated for the damage caused by the present day activities for development to be sustained. For development to be sustainable, it is necessary to sustain the ecosystem and strengthen the social and economic fabric that underscores development (Collins, 2007; Egwu, 2008).

Viewed from another perspective, scholars such as Robert O'Brien and Marc Williams in their interaction on Global Environmental change see the concept of 'sustainable development' as being a subject of diverse definitions. Consequently, it has come to mean different things to economists, ecologists, politicians and even public policy planners. Sustainable development is no longer necessarily identified with increased production and consumption but with an improved quality of life where the state of the natural environment is taken into consideration. Sustainable development may also imply a commitment to sustainability with a consequent reduction in economic growth while the concept also applies to other integral new era of economic growth (O'Brien & Williams, 2010). Economic growth is a product of good governance; it stimulates the economy and adds value to the welfare of the people positively.

Politically, sustainable development has its focus that is anchored on economic growth of nations solely for the improvement of well-being of people through good policy formulation and implementation for the present generation and for posterity. Socially, sustainable development portrays the systematic development of education, health facilities, entertainment and adaptation of positive cultural orientations that transform the present quota

and maintain the status quo for future generations. This should be a common practice in all climes – be it developing or developed.

There are those voices which support O'Brien and Williams who think that the arguments in support of sustainable development are being exaggerated. Such voices are drawn from Peter P. Rogers, Kazi F. Jalal and John A. Boyd and Toyin Falola. They summarized the counter-arguments by the critics of sustainable development, grouping them into four clusters; that

- (a) Future generations are likely to be much better off than the present generation... This is primarily the contribution of modern technology... These critics therefore concluded that the greatest favour that the present generation can make to the future is to establish peace and security on earth and the principles of human rights and democracy.
- (b) When natural resources, be they fossil fuels or others become scarce, economic forces come into play; such scarcity is always related to a certain price, existing technological expertise, and substitutes... the world will not run out of natural resources.
- (c) The real state of the world is much better and healthier than many environmentalists claim.

Other critics are of the opinion that Sustainable development can be damaging for the poor. On the pretext of promoting sustainable development and environmental protection, many rich countries are adapting protectionist policies by restricting imports on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other products from poor countries... They believe that resources released by not adopting such precautionary principles could otherwise be utilized to satisfy the basic needs of the poor in developing countries.

### **Conceptualizing Governance**

Governance is often associated with administrative power usually by those who are elected or who won an election – to form a government. It has to do with the exercise of authority being provided by either the constitution or other means in which one in authority functions or is in

control of other people or persons under his/her command. Thus, governance determines the use of power either legitimately or otherwise. It is pertinent therefore to examine the concept of good governance as it is used in this paper.

Governance is the art of governing a people within a given territory or state. It is made up of essential features that determine the structure of the state, the procedures of the executive, legislative and judicial functions of the three tiers of government. According to Adegoke (2015) governance is related to politics; it is however, conceptually different. He expressed that, as a human phenomenon, governance is exercised within a given socio-cultural context and belongs to the department of politics. Politics is the art of service to the people through authoritative allocation of values of who gets what, when and how. Governance is the process and mechanism of allocating the values without jeopardizing the principle of equity, justice and fairness. Meanwhile, it is through the application of the authority and the process of governance that the powers of the state acquire meaning and relevance.

The World Bank sees governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1999) sees government and governance as being synonymous. But, it defined governance as a complex mechanism, process, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. In this connection, government and governance are siamestic. Thus government as an art of governance surf on four important attributes which include sovereignty or territory, power, authority and legitimacy (Adegoke, 2015). These attributes are the instruments by which the state exercises effective governance; they provide the necessary balance and legal/moral justifications to the government.

Governance defines expectations and performance – the way rules are set and implemented. The World Bank further describes governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economy and social resources for development (Punch Thursday, October 31, 2013. P. 22).

In this context, governance deals with the allocation of resources, through the instrumentality of the state, for the public good. Thus governance includes institutional and structural arrangements, decision making processes, policy formulations for the running of the state, decision making, development of human resources, free press and information flow and the style of leadership within the political system. Governance; therefore, is the process of improving the welfare of the citizens and the advancement of civilization through many ways.

Governance has economic, social, administrative as well as political dimensions (World Bank Institute, 2003). Economic governance embraces the various processes of decision-making that directly or indirectly affect a country's economic activities or its relationships with other economies. It means economic governance has a major influence on societal issues, such as equity, the level of poverty and the quality of life. Political governance here deals with decision-making and policy implementation of a legitimate state.

According to World Bank, administrative governance is a system of policy implementation carried out through an efficient, independent, accountable and open public sector. Those elements therefore form the governance system, which implies the formal and regular institutional and organizational structures of authority and decision making in the modern state. Systematic governance encompasses the processes and structures of society that guide political and socio-economic relationships to protect cultural beliefs and values, create and maintain environmental health, freedom, security and allow individuals or groups to exercise personal or group capabilities that lead to a better life for all people (World Bank Institute, 2003).

In sum, governance refers to the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the production, management and distribution of a country's economic and social resources for the benefit of the citizens. However, the nature and manner of this distribution of resources make governance a bad or good one. Indeed, when resources are distributed to promote ethnicity, or to achieve personal or group structure, the essence of governance loses its bearing and generates conflict which, in the long run, breeds rebellion and insecurity. Thus, the resources need to be distributed

equitably and fairly for the realization of the essence of the state. This leads us to the idea that describes governance as being good or bad.

### **Good Governance and Sustainable Development: The Nexus**

There is the need to consider the fact that good governance as a value system cannot make meaning unless it is seen on the lenses of presupposition that the experience and knowledge of bad governance is possible or exist. On the basis of this, the value of good governance is the political ethics that work to challenge and replace the reality of bad governance (Adegoke, 2015).

Good governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of society such as the government, legislature, judiciary, media, private sector, corporate sector, trade unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). But the larger society needs to co-operate to make the institutional structures put in place to function (Olaniyi, 2015; Adegoke, 2015). The elements of good governance involve provision of basic amenities to the people – portable water, good infrastructural facilities such as good networks, provision of energy (power), building and funding of education and health facilities, motivation of workers by paying living wages, provision of security and stimulation of the economy through building of economic structures for production and marketing. When the above indices are not fairly, justifiably and equitably distributed, there is no basis for good governance in that connection.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1999) sees good governance as a commitment and the capability to effectively address the allocation and management of resources to respond to collective problems. UNDP also contend that good governance promotes sustainable development including the aspects of "poverty reduction, job creation, and sustainable livelihoods, environmental protection, and the advancement of women. Development experts (Todaro & Smith, 2009) describe "good-governance" as the way public institutions conduct public affairs and manage resources. The key criteria that determine good governance are rule of law, accountability, government legitimacy, popular participation and transparency, equity and honesty among others (Todaro & Smith, 2009).

Good governance as an administrative paradigm is applicable to all sections of the society such as government, legislature, judiciary, media,

private sector, corporate sector, trade unions and non-governmental organizations. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, (OECD), good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable, all-inclusive, and follows the rule of law. The locals must adapt the OECD content for governance to be meaningful and sustaining.

On the contrary, bad governance involves a failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behaviour in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations and licensing requirements which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and an excessive narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making.

### **The Nigerian Experience**

Nigeria is a developing nation. Sustainable development has become an enduring concept in the development lexicon although quite a number of it is not different from the preceding notions of economic underdevelopment. In this connection, many scholars, especially of African descent have linked sustainable development to virtually all aspects of underdevelopment. Sustainable development is now anchored on four cardinal points: economic, social, political and environmental. Nigeria has a population of about 170 million people, but the population of the poor keeps rising and is most time put at about 70 per cent of the entire population; 50 per cent of the population live below poverty line; 33 per cent live in abject poverty (Falola, 2005). Nigeria needs enough food to feed the large population. That explains why Nigeria imports more food for the teeming population. However, as a country needs more food to feed a growing population, it has to construct "functional irrigation and drainage systems, use fertilizers and pesticides and clear forests, all of which can damage the environment (Omoragbon & Okeke, 2010; Falola, 2015).

The Nigerian economy, driven by the petroleum sector since the 1970s, has brought great wealth to the nation, but this wealth has, over the years, been unequally split among Nigerians. Some government officials and "people who had access to state power" became the sole beneficiary of the wealth, creating a separation between the government and the people. Over-concentration on the oil economy has led to "neglect of other sectors in what is necessary for a stable and balanced economy". Thus the economy relies on the export of raw materials and the importation of finished goods. Currently, Nigeria is a trading nation; she imports nearly everything from the Western and Asian States whereas profitable economies such as Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Canada use their resources to export finished goods, thus reducing or minimizing their dependence on others, and curtailing abusive and deficit trade relationships.

Currently, sustainable development has become an unavoidable phenomenon. Every nation has to key in because sustainable development is human centred. Increasing population implies that more and more resources are needed, and some resources are not renewable. Industrialized countries consume much to maintain their status quo and generate more economic growth, while Nigeria and other less industrialized countries keep supplying the natural resources to meet the demands of developed countries, thus depleting their resources to cater for others. For Nigeria and other less developed nations, they must develop to assert themselves, to compete with the wealthy ones, and to create structures and strong institutions that can withstand global exploitation.

Viewed from another perspective, sustainable development has to touch on the social angle of Nigerians. For instance, the Nigerian educational sector is in shambles, thus creating challenges for future generations. Education improves the character of the society and the quality of the social, economic and political decisions. Recently, according to Adegoke (2015) in a 2013 UNESCO report, Nigeria has 10.5 million out-of-school children, the highest in the world. Five years ago, and even in the 2015 West African Examination Council results was not impressive it was the same mass failure that cannot see a child through to University or Polytechnic education. It is an indication of poor governance – the manner our schools and learning materials are put in place, the motivation on the

part of teachers – all these are not indices for sustainable education and by extension sustainable development.

On the other hand, Nigeria is a country that has health challenges. The country has been ranked poorly in major health care indices globally, accounting for some of the worst cases of outbreak of pandemic. Nigeria is persistently ravaged by diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, typhoid fever, cholera, guinea worm and cancer. Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that Nigeria records 300,000 malaria deaths annually and has been categorized as the country with the highest malaria burden in the world. That is just on malaria alone. The state of health of the citizens indirectly determines the level of productivity and consumption of goods and services. If the health situation is this bad, would the citizens sustain the new economic and environmental order? The answer is no (Akintunde, 2009; Osuagwu, 2011).

Governance, therefore, to a large extent determines the priority which government gives to education, health, infrastructural facilities, agriculture, and how these would impact on the citizenry either in positive or negative ways. Sustainable environment is all-embracing; it evolved solely from the environment. It refers to the policies of government, and to a large extent has become the pillar for growth and development of the Nigeria economy. Policy somersault and abandoning of some policies by new administrations do not always augur well for development because of lack of continuity. Government is a continuous process; every regime wants to make a name, showcase its contribution but sometimes at the end, the impact on the society becomes infinitesimally negligible. Good policies of government need to be carried along by new administrations for development and sustainability.

## Conclusion

As a country, Nigeria is eager to become one of the twentieth strongest economies on the global relations. But the challenges are that she has not been able to make efforts to formulate and implement some policies to attain modernism. Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa and yet one of the world's poorest economies. Conversely, in human development the country is worse off because of poor governance owing to contradictory in resource distributions and general welfare. The citizenry are poor; there is a

high rate of youths unemployment, poor infrastructural development in the area of power generation, road and transport; lack of access to good and affordable food, health facilities and education. There are millions of displaced Nigerians owing to terrorism. This leads to a high level of insecurity in the country. Thus, there is not enough done to meet the needs of the present generation of Nigerians, and there is certainly a limited focus on the future generation. In the area of environmental challenges, it would appear that there is no political will to address the issue. For instance, the issues of oil spillage and gas flaring in the Niger Delta have been a thorny challenge because of the incalculable damage done to the ecosystem, health and livelihood of millions living in this region. This is the time to key into world development. The trends for sustainable development should also be closely comprehended and imbibed.

### Recommendations

By way of recommendation, the paper espouses that every government thinks about services to her citizens and the maintainance of sovereignty. But it is often observed in Nigeria that the people meant to be served by officials of government are always worse off. Government should entrench good democratic principles based on the rule of law; it should be accountable to the people through periodic interactions with their representatives in the legislatures. The people would use the opportunity to express themselves, their needs and the way forward. But to a large extent this has not been done. Nigeria is said to be one of the most corrupt nations on the global ranking; the proceedings of government require some level of transparency. Transparency is an index of accountability which every functionary should imbibe. Nigeria as a nation should also diversify her economy away from oil to create room for job creation and by extension wealth for the people. This, it is expected, may reduce over-dependence on land, which currently is being abused through deforestation, bush burning and over-cropping.

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