DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT: THE COMMON GOOD AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract: **The performance of the Nigerian public sector leaders both elected and selected has been a major concern to researchers. Thus, the fundamental impute of this paper is to contribute to our understanding of the meaning and nature of democratic government and its linkages to the common good and nation building through ethical leadership. Furthermore, it reviewed the purpose and the forms of government dynamics and functions, as well as the objectives and aspirations of the people. The Defining Issues Test (DIT-2) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ X5) was used to obtain the necessary data. Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) software (Ringle, Wende, & Will., 2005), and the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) were applied in the analysis of the collected data. Nigeria is endowed with wealth of rich and varied human, natural and cultural resources which are great asset to her nation building. A positive statistical significant relationship was established between leadership style and post conventional reasoning. Nevertheless, we conclude that the very existence of some national malaise as violent crimes, civil unrest, kidnapping, terrorism, political and electoral malpractices, ethno-religious fragmentation, deteriorating economy, mirrors on relational perspective of the interface between ethical reasoning, democracy and its dividend to the people. We proffer the use of higher cognitive moral development and advocate other measures which would serve as beacons for achieving the desired goal of government.**

Keywords: **Democratic government, Ethical leadership, Common good, Nation building.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The normative ethical theories provide moral rules that guide ethical reasoning and other human resources activities in an organization with regards to what is right or wrong. Most studies on ethical principles centers on its application to business organizations and moral behavior (Kimberling, 2008; Toor & Ofori, 2009). The emergence of nation states makes government necessary. Individuals in a nation as ours cannot on their own hold themselves together for meaningful progress. Therefore, the need to have a central power from where the affairs of the nation states are managed cannot be overemphasized (Felix, Ahmad, & Arshad, 2015). The government per Oxford Dictionary means the act or manner of governing, of exercising control or authority over the actions of subjects, a system of regulation. Therefore, governance is about how people are ruled whether good or bad, how the affairs of the states are administered and regulated (Achebe, 1983) Democracy on the other hand is of Greek origin and means "rule of the people". Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United State of America defined it as "government of the people by the people and for the people.

Adebayo (1984) and Adamolekan, (1993) maintained that democracy rests on the belief in the fundamental dignity and importance of the individual. Democratic governance is a broad concept which could be best understood by taking them one after the other, as would be done later in this paper. It is equally on record that the last quarter of the 20th century

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witnessed the greatest expansion of democracy in history (Ake, 1981), that is if democracy is defined in the minimal sense as a system of government in which the popular and principal positions of political power are filled through free, fair and regular elections and Nigeria is part of this development, though in its infancy stage.

Governance on the other encompasses the capacity of the state, the commitment to the public good, the rule of law, the degree of transparency and accountability, the level of popular participation and stock of social capacity. Against the above background therefore, in this paper, the major aim is not an analysis of the Good luck's or Buhari's regime per-se, but to identify the institutional elements of democratic governance, the relationship between leadership style in democratic government and the common good based on cognitive moral reasoning at the post conventional level, and how true it is that democracy leads to development of the country. Suggestions are offered on best leadership style to achieve common good ethically through democratic process and finally how to sustain them. Burns (1978) posited that one primary objective of an organizational leadership was mentorship and to increase awareness about ethical issues, motivate and inspire ethical leadership processes. (Avolio, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2009). Mai tained that 'leaders and followers carry along one another to higher levels of morality through shared ethical values thereby motivating each other to post-conventional reasoned thought. (Avolio, & Bass, 2004),argued the differences between transformational and transactional leadership while buttressing thier unique dimenssions. On ther hand, Ciulla (2004) gave us an insight into it this distinctions which increased our knowledge and understanding of what is ethical leadership and other leadership styles.

2.   ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

One big challenge among practitioners and organizational theorists is the capacity to create and maintain an integrity based, strong and reliable, effective and efficient public sector that has been a mirage in Nigeria (Felix, Ahmad & Arshad,2015). It is close to becoming an elusive venture. Some mechanism put in place to achieve these are the nation's transformation agenda incorporated in the Vision 2020 (2011-2015) which was aimed at the growth of the socio-economic activities geared to meet up with the citizen's expectations on provisions of the dividends of democracy by the government. Increasing number of research on leadership and ethics underscores the importance of these constructs and the public-sector organization remains a vital tool through which any legitimate government formulate and implements her programs and policies (Felix, Ahmed & Arshad, 2016).

 Similarly, several agencies and parastatals were created to carry out the objectives of the government with integrity, transparency and accountability (Adejumobi, & Momah,1995). Although most of these agencies were put in place like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC; 2009), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC, 2010) and the National Planning Commission (NPC, 2011), but their combined impact has been minimal. Thus, these commissions were solely established to tackle the increasing level of unethical conducts in public sector (Nwabueze, 2013). Given the magnitude of ethical lapses and porous leadership moral judgment, efforts are being made to discover factors that propels ethical transformational leadership style and ethical reasoning in the public administration as predictors of moral behavior (Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milner,2002).

Leadership and ethical lapses has no boundary because their effects permeate the daily business decisions of government, including those in the private sector (Turner *et al*., 2002, 2007). Democracy is not only a normative concept, but an extremely important instrument that triumphed following the collapse of the Soviet (Marxist) ideology. Liberal democracy made it possible for mankind more than any other creative system on earth to organize, foster their capacity and their opportunities to think, wish, and do as it may be imaginatively possible within the parameters set by social norms, convention and law (Achebe, 1983). What mankind has witnessed with the advent of Liberal democracy is truly phenomenal and epoch making (Felix et al., 2015). In modern political societies as Nigeria, agreed that we are generally larger and more complex than the ancient Greek City state, the democratic system of government is without exception indirect and challenging.

Even in micro-system where it could be possible for bona-fide members to participate directly, often, the execution of accepted, agreed or adopted policies is done directly through those vested with executive powers as may be specified within the basic law (constitution) guiding such action (Felix et al., 2016). Democracy is a government system that involves the widest spectrum of participation, either through election or through administration of the accept policies. The

envisaged broad participation enhances not only a sense of belonging by members of the political community, but also improves the quality of both input and output of policies that may require implementation thereby enhancing its dividend.

Against the above backdrop therefore, democratic governance is invariably a government that is founded on the principle of the rule of law (Yukl, & Mahsud, 2010). It is a limited government which tries to distance itself from arbitrariness, high handedness and dictatorship, autocracy. Therefore, democracy is a direct opposite of military government or militarism. Democracy is associated with accountability and transparency. To ensure this, there must be credible opposition, capable of replacing an incumbent government by offering alternative outline of policies and strategies that is likely to appeal to the electorates and for common good. Another feature of democracy not often stressed in the literatures is its capacity for fostering civic education due to continuous practice, it becomes embedded in the political culture of the people.

Democratic institutions are universal in both content and essence and therefore cannot be localized or Africanized. We must agree that we are still at the kindergarten or infancy level since the country has not been generally endowed with democratic system of governance even with the present experiment. The limited experience and experiment in civil (democratic) governance in 1960 – 1966, 1979 – 1983, and 1999 to date, seem to be an appearance and not reality of what democracy has been defined to be. The reasons often offered for sacking most civilian governments in Africa especially in Nigeria toes same line of argument. Olagunju, Jinadu & Oyovbaire (2013), summarized it thus:

That civil rule in Nigeria (i.e. its practice) has largely been antithetical to democratic norms, principles and even policies. The two experience and experiments now have brought the worst in political thuggery and brigandage, unmediated and unrestrained violence, a lack of accountability and transparency, misery to the people as well as the lack of fulfillment of the existential and welfare expectations of the citizenry. Recently the so-called democratic polices in Nigeria has been likened to a do-or dies affairs (warfare). To this extent, it is often the case that at the highest point of this kind of politics (election time) the Nigerian people look to it with trepidation, even a kind of exodus takes place across the country. It appears that we have learnt nothing over the years and this collaborates the importance of this topic, democratic governance and common good in Nigeria through transformational ethical reasoning.

3. DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONAL ELEMENTS

The three pre-eminent institutions of democracy remain the executive, the legislature and the judiciary are also referred to as the three estate of realm. The press is considered by Edward Burke as the "Fourth Estate of the ream". Per Dare (1997:535) a former foreign correspondent and lead writer of the TIMES has argued that the press as an estate of the realm is more powerful than any of other three estates. Harold Laswell also gave the press a role to play in a democracy and its major task per him is surveillance of the political environment.

As for Felix, et al., (2015) the press is an informer, interpreter and instrument of government as well as a participant in the public policy process. It is a representative of the people, critics of government, advocate of policy and policy maker. Due to the fundamental role, the press play towards enthroning and ensuring the survival of democracy and good governance, the American Press has specifically played a major part in making liberal democracy thrive in that country. Herein Nigeria, the press confronts some ethical lapses and other poor technical standards thereby suffering from lack of basic skilled manpower, perennial shortages of vital materials, harassment by government, civilian or military (Felix, et al., 2015). It is acknowledged that the Nigeria press fought heroic battles for democracy during the anti-colonial struggles (Achebe, 1983). The regimes of Gowon, Moh'd / Obasanjo, Babangida, Abacha, Abubakar, and Obasanjo again carried out democratization processes due largely to the efforts of the press, civil action and mass protests.

On the other hand, political parties are central to democratic politics by articulating and aggregating the diverse opinions, stand point, expectations of its members as well as that of electorates into meaningful policy opinions and choices for the people (Sanusi, & Martadha, 2011). Against the above backdrop therefore, the most unfortunate thing for our democracy and common good is unethical conduct and behaviour manifested in both the attitude of the parties in power and that of the opposition parties themselves. The former fosters a culture of harassment in a bid, apparently to continue the politics of warfare as already defined above. The later never accepts losing and election instead they are prepared to fraternize with extremists to bring down the government.

The preponderant control of PDP previously, have been replaced by that of the APC spreading their drag nets to possess all states and the central government. Against this backdrop, Nigerians are not likely to see credible opposition politics which is an essential ingredient in a true democracy (Felix, et al., 2015). The ease with which the politicians can for-sake principles, ideology, parties. Line and other personal values and attributes for a mess of pottage cannot be for common good in Nigerian. Again, elections and how they are conducted by any government are important components and vital institutional elemental features of democracy (Felix, *et al.,* 2016). Elections must equally be held regularly and per stipulated intervals in the books. The body charged with the task must ensure that it is free, fair and a reflective wish of the people for credibility.

However, in Nigeria, this body has never been quite free from criticisms as at now INEC is being accused of monumental corruption, electoral fraud, rigging, inadequate preparation of election time frame, inefficiency and frequent incompletion of elections due largely to haste preparations for the coming elections. Some even went further to accuse INEC of being partisan and patently corrupt. The judiciary and the civil society are fundamental institutions of democracy. Therefore, all the institutional elements of democracy must have an attitudinal change, because each segment has had its own share of the blame for political instability and democratic failure which negates common good of the citizenry hence the need for ethical leadership in all sphere of our democratic governance.

4.   COGNITIVE MORAL REASONING, DEMOCRACY AND COMMON GOOD

At this point we need to address what attitudinal changes the politicians and those in power must undergo or cultivate for the benefit of the democratic institutions, stability and the common good of Nigeria. Nigeria politicians do not morally attune themselves to the spirit of sportsmanship in politics, hence our electoral process and politics has been likened to a do-or –die affair (Felix, *et al*., 2015) To the Nigerian politician, every election must be won or else hell would be let loose on their opponents or on themselves. Not only would all manner of subterfuges, chicaneries and jingoism be mobilized by all the sides on the competition to win, but the opponents must to an equal extent be also denied any decent treatment (Felix, *et al*., 2015). Therefore, the philosophy of win at all cost and winner takes it all while the political opponent must be left worse than they were before he/she made an intention to partake in the competition. The question is of what common good is this practice? The Nigerian electoral politics is a zero-sum game, characterized by the corruption of the electoral process and the erosion of political stability. Felix et al., (2016) posited that this unethical political conduct that negates common good has usually been stated as follows: -

Literature shows that both the political leaders and the other contestants generally look forward to gain a foothold on the accumulation process and to have unlimited access to the National cake (Oil). Nigerian state has become the only avenue for an unethical accumulator accomplishment. The entrepreneurial spirit which is often deployed to exploit the state, to corrupt the political system could be attributed to unethical leadership lapses and myopic moral reasoning. All these engender common interest (common good) and promotes private, ethnic and family interest. Corruption has over the years become a hydra-headed monster and a serious impediment to economic progress, development as well as efficient administration, irrespective of the efforts of the anti-corruption crusade. It is on record that the bulk of Nigeria corrupt practices are traceable to unethical reasoning and bureaucratic irrationalities for example making policy statements or more worrisomely embarking on development projects without feasibility, project cost or benefit analysis nor basing same on sound ethical judgment, all these cannot and will never promote common good (Felix, *et al*., 2015).

Leadership attitudinal change being elicited from the political class is not only because democratic institutions cannot by themselves check each other, but because they are the creation of man. For example, electoral process and politics should not be a contest of person, a physical fight to see who is stronger, rather it should be how best a party's programmes has been packaged, its evaluation by the electorates and the realistic chance of successful execution to common good in Nigeria. Therefore, what constitutes democracy is not only free and fair elections but it is central, though not enough. Other essential elements of representative democracy, separation of power, transparency, probity, respect for social rights, freedom of expression and participation. Kofi Annan the Former UN Secretary- General maintained that good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development. Here in Nigeria, political parties like elsewhere are among the core elements of democracy. They are the only tested vehicles to structure electoral competition, organize government and recruit leaders.

Moreover, the reality on ground suggests that both the APC, PDP and the rest, all stand in disrepute, their client, the electorate do not believe they truly represented their interest or work for the common good. There are so many examples as insecurity of life and property, to downsizing and right sizing that do not follow due process. Today, parties are often seen as internally authoritarian, corrupt, (Felix, *et al*., 2015). They are required to develop and improve access to justices, administration, greater capacity to deliver basic services to those most in need. The critical importance of democratic governance in developing world was highlighted at the Millennium Summit of 2000, where leaders resolved to "spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen rule of law, as well as respect, for all internationally recognized human right and freedom, including the right to development". The consensus was that developing and improving democratic institutions will reduce poverty, sustain the environment and promote human development.

5.   IMPERATIVE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND COMMON GOOD

Over the years, there have been assumptions that countries are poor, because they lack resources, infrastructures, education and opportunity. Hence the need to transfer enough resources and technologies, build school (Felix, *et al*., 2015). The fact remain that no amount of resources transferred or infrastructures built can compensate for or survive bad governance. Rotten, corrupt, wasteful, abusive, incompetent governance is the fundamental bane of development and common good in Nigeria. Where military and civilian governance in Nigeria has been endemically bad, rulers do not use public resources effectively to generate public good and thereby improve productivity and wellbeing of the citizens. More often the leaders appropriate these good for themselves, their families, their parties and cronies. Achebe (1983) posited that until we improve on our definition of democratic governance; we cannot foster development and common good. These improvements should be in the areas of capacity of the state to function in the service of the public good, which requires re-training and professional civil service commitment to the public good, this must be re-enforced by institutions that reward public spirited ethical conduct and punish betrayals of public trust and unethical behaviour.

Transparency and accountability are some essential attributes of an ethical leadership, the business and conduct of the state must be open and responsible to the scrutiny of the state actors and of the public. State power must be accountable before other counter veiling monitoring institution in the state and civil society with rule of law. Governance can only be good, effective and for common good when it is restrained by the law and when there are professional independent authorities to enforce the law in a neutral, predictable faction based on higher post conventional reasoning. All actors, public and private must have the confidence that rules, regulations will be observed and enforced. Participation and dialogue through appropriate institutionalized channels enables the public to make input in policy formulation and implementation, example public hearings by the legislative committees. Social capital which includes associations, networks that draw people together in trust and risk to common needs.

The question here is, whether Nigeria has met some or all the above factors needed for democratic governance and common good. These factors provide legitimacy and stability which appeals to investors to risk capital in the effort to create new wealth for the benefit of the citizen. Democratic governance provides the instrument for the people to remove corrupt unaccountable or merely ineffectual leaders at regular intervals, this compels some leaders to prove and produce visible and broadly distributed improvement in the quality of life the citizens to enable them seek re-election (Felix, *et al*., 2015). Electoral democracy helps to promote commitment and responsiveness to wider society's interest. Leaders must explain and justify their actions, decisions and to consult a broad range of constituencies. The benefit of democratic governance applies to specific sectors and various levels of democracy. The greater the scope of public participation the greater the legitimacy of the government policies. When individuals are free to participate and express themselves, when organizations are free to mobilize and protest and when the media are free to investigate and expose, government is more likely to be ethical oriented, accountable, lawful and geared towards common good. The issue of intimidating and banning opponents, using agents of government to suppress political opponents cannot be for common good. We know that democracy alone do not necessarily mean good governance, but is provides an alternative climate and factors equitable growth. Therefore, getting the democratic institutions right through ethical reasoning at a higher level, is the key to ending poverty, fostering prosperity and general good in Nigeria.

6. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was adopted to examine the influence of moral reasoning on leadership style and democratic government in the Nigerian public sector, using 300 employees of the Kebbi State public service as the target population, while the population frame was obtained from the State's Civil Service Commission Kebbi that controls the various ministries in the state.

Research Question 1: What is the stage of moral cognition of public servants in Nigeria?

Descriptive Analysis of the Respondents Cognitive Moral Development: This study used *Defining Issues Test* (DIT-2) by (Rest, Narveaz, Thoma & Bebeau, 1999), which focuses on the schema used by individual in solving ethical issues and which determine the respondent's stage of moral reasoning. The result shows that the major proportion, 151 of the respondents are at the pre-conventional stage of moral reasoning, 48 are in the conventional stages while those at the post-conventional stages of moral reasoning are 101. Table 1 presents the summary of the moral reasoning level of the respondents

Table: 1 Respondents Mean DIT P-Score by Moral Reasoning Stages/schemas (N=300)

Cognitive Reasoning Stages	Frequency	Percentages	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Preconventional	151	50.3	0.00	36.67	14.393	8.214
Conventional	48	16.0	30.00	40.00	35.069	3.369
PostConventional	101	33.7	43.33	73.33	53.171	5.743
Source: survey.2015. **Note.** DIT = Defining Issues Test						

Research Question 2: To what extent does stage of cognition relate to leadership style and common good?

Structural Model: In testing the stated research question in this study, the structural model was assessed through the PLS path analysis. The result of the standard path coefficients (β), standard error, P-value, and the decision taken on the Research Question found that there is statistical significant relationship between cognitive moral development (CMD) and Ethical transformational leadership style (ETL) ($\beta = -0.214$, P= < 0.12) in the Nigerian public sector.

Table 2: Relationship b/w Path Coefficients	Beta	Std Error	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
CMD -> ELS	-0.214	0.051	4.199***	0.012	**Supported**

Note. The decision was based on *t* values and *p* value recorded. CMD = Cognitive moral development. ELS = Leadership style

7. DISCUSSION

This study gave an insight into cognitive moral development and leadership styles and observed significant statistical relationships between them as perceived by followers. Leaders operating at a higher stage of cognitive moral development normally exhibit the dimensions of an ethical leadership which instills sense of direction, respect, dignity and trust on subordinates through good governance geared towards common good of the entire citizenry. Ethical leadership and transformational leadership dimensions are all moral agents (Rubin, Dierdorff, & Brown, 2010). which attracts admiration of followers by demonstrating holistic features of a moral individual and moral leadership qualities (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Felix et al., 2016) Thus, it contributed to the ethical foundation of leadership dimensions with contingent reward being perceived as a moral procedure in leader and subordinate relationship especially in the Nigeria public sector which relies mainly on prescribed rules and regulation and individual initiative rarely counts in administrative processes. On the other hand, transformational ethical leaders apply intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration in appreciation of follower's individual personal needs, aspirations and other personal potentials to foster good governance and common good for greater majority of the populace.

These discoveries seem more predictive as ethical leadership dimensions being moral agents in nature and in all ramifications, blends favorably with the tenants of democracy, good governance and common good. As mentors and motivators of their followers unlike the transactional leadership that is prevalent in Nigeria public sector that is more assertive and more goal oriented as they apply more of pre-conventional and conventional stages of cognitive moral reasoning. Against the above backdrop, leaders with low level moral cognition are less ethical and exhibit less transformational or ethical leadership (e.g., Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Turner et al., 2002; Kimberling, 2008; Felix et al., 2015). Thus, we argue that elected or appointed public officials with higher level of cognitive moral development will usually exhibit more ethical type of leadership that transcends myopic egocentric political aggrandizement thereby being able to deliver the dividends of democracy to the citizenry.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has been concerned with ethical leadership in a democracy and common good in Nigeria to buttress our understanding. It is essential to state that the concern is well intentioned and well focused, as it gives citizens the need to develop ethical values, progress and even aspire to greater dignity as Nigerians. Democracy may be costly to produce common good, especially in terms of the processes of building and sustaining it, but it is as argued earlier, it remains a justifiable political vehicle, more effective, and accountable system of governance anywhere. Democratic governance is a normative value irrespective of unethical leadership lapses, its time has come for the edification in Nigeria administrative system. Therefore, we argue that it is through the strengthening of democratic institutions analyzed in this paper that common good could be given expression through ethical reasoning.

Against the above background therefore, the re-orientation of leadership attitude of significant segments of the Nigerian polity is advocated, which must be commensurate with the proper functioning of the administrative institutions themselves. Ethical leadership has more potentials to guarantee common good in Nigeria through a democratic government. At its face value, democracy had the capacity to bring about common good to all in an ideal situation. This is because it is poised to inter-alia, address the issue of justice and equitable distribution of the Nation's commonwealth via a fair representation of the people in divers' chambers of the houses. This is in addition to bring about solid and qualitative policies and strategies occasioned by the in-depth debates and opinions that usually proceed the final verdict (Yakub, 2002). However, whether this is the case in our situation depends on the ability of the representation of the people to seek the common good of the citizenry rather than their whims and caprice.

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