AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF RELIGION AND EDUCATION ON GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Religion and education are two vital concepts that are germane to good governance. They are concepts that should aid the cause of good governance. This is because the more people are well educated, well informed and religiously inclined the more they are likely to become easily governed which can then be translated into good governance as they pay their taxes, obey simple rules and regulations and support government policies. The aim of this paper was to examine the impact of religion and education on good governance in Nigeria. In terms of methodology, the paper adopted both the descriptive and explorative approaches. The paper identified failure to assert legitimacy of government; social inclusion; respect for human rights; the rule of law and the division of powers; responsiveness; accountability and transparency; safety and security as some of the major challenges of good governance in Nigeria. It recommended the establishment of a more robust and comprehensive legal framework to combat corruption; adherence to rule of law; transparency and accountability in governance to be upheld by the rulers.

Keywords: Religion, education, rule of law, good governance, Nigeria.

Introduction

Religion and education are both very important variables in the lives of men, both are very useful in guiding men to the right path and desirable live. Nigerians can be said to be highly religious considering their dedication and commitment to religion. The thousands of Nigerians that visit various religious sites in Mecca and Jerusalem on an annual basis speak volumes of the very religious nature of most Nigerians, with some selling their personal effects and properties to achieve the aim of visiting these religious sites.

Nigeria is a pluralistic state with a multiplicity of religions, tribes and languages. It is also a country with many educated citizens, this situation often creates multiple challenges as many of these religious enthusiasts and educated citizens are often involved in unending arguments and counter arguments which sometimes are detrimental to the corporate existence of the country and sometimes inhibit good governance.

It is on record that Nigeria has witnessed many levels of religious fanaticism and religion violence. In essence, religion and education, which are supposed to strengthen us as nation and as a united entity has turned out as tools employed by some unscrupulous Nigerians to threaten the corporate existence of the country. The aim of this paper was to assess the impact of religion and education on good governance in Nigeria.

Religion
According to Pye (2006), one of the most interesting aspects of religion is that nobody agrees about it is meaning. In fact, people cannot even agree on the origin of the word *religion*. There is agreement that it comes from the Latin word *religio*, but there is some confusion about the origin of that word. Some say it comes from the Latin verb *relegare*, which means to "read again" or "go over again", as in the repetition of scripture or holy writing. Others say the root is *religare*, which can mean "to reconnect", but can also mean "to bind or fasten". In this last interpretation, religion serves the state and society by binding its believers to social rules and norms (Pye, 2006).

Definitions of religion vary, some are extremely broad, such as that of the American religious scholar Paul Tillich (1886–1965), as mentioned in Winston (2005) who called religion anything that deals with "ultimate concern". Some definitions are very narrow, such as those that claim religion is only a belief in God, or Allah, or the Buddha, or some other divine or spiritual being. Definitions can be so broad as to include even such "nonreli-gious" belief systems as communism (a political theory that people should live and govern communally, or as a group) and atheism (the belief that there is no God) or so narrow that they could also be narrow minded that they confine religion to only one organized form of belief and practice and leave out all other forms (Winston, 2005).

Even though people might disagree about what religion is, they show some agreement on what religion does and how it does it. In general, religion can be described as a unified system of thoughts, feelings, and actions that is shared by a group and that gives its members an object (or objects) of devotion, someone or something sacred to believe in, such as a god or a spiritual concept. Religion also involves a code of behaviour or moral conduct by which individuals may judge the personal and social consequences of their actions and the actions of others. Most of the time, religion also deals with what might be called the supernatural or the spiritual as well as the forces and powers beyond the control of humans.

In this latter area, religion attempts to answer questions that science does not address, such as the meaning of life and what happens after death (Pye, 2006). According to Pye (2006), religion deals in one form or another with salvation. This can include saving the souls of humans either in a literal fashion, with a heaven after death as in Christianity, or in a more symbolic sense, with reaching an end to suffering such as *nirvana*, Buddhism and some Eastern religions. Furthermore, religion usually function through some forms of organization and worship, as well as through sacred rites or rituals; sacred books; the use a clergy or priest that administers the religion, and places of worship, symbols, and days that are sacred to the believers.

Education
According to Asoga-Allen (2002), education is the sum total of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. Education mainly addresses itself to the development of individual personality traits which differs from one person to the other. These traits control all the activities of individuals and education develop these traits to desirable level so that one will, live happily and become a useful member of the society. Education can be defined as the tool for the integration of the individual effectively into the society, so that the individual can achieve self-actualization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological process. It is a drawn-out process through which

individual acquires skills, competences and aptitudes. It is also a process which aims to fit persons to their places in many systems in the society (Asoga Allen, 2002).

Asoga Allen (2002), also opined that, education builds individual to a level that can be useful and make positive contributions to the progress of his community intellectually and intelligently. Individuals that are able to observe the above conditions and use them are said to be educated. Through education children are made to be responsible citizens and their potentials are developed to the fullest and as such they become properly integrated into the society they belong and contribute their quota to it is growth. Education is the process by which one's mind develops through learning, in a school, college or university, or the knowledge and skills that a person gains from being taught, or a general area of work or study connected with teaching. From the above it is crystal clear that education is a process of developing one's mind, in a formal setting such as a school, college or the university. This form of education is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills as a result of being taught.

According to Adepoju (2008) education can be defined as the ability to read, write and perform some skills for one to become morally acceptable to the society. At the national level, education is the tool for building a united, independent and a healthy, egalitarian society that can maintain its values. Education, is therefore, regarded as the producer of manpower needed for the socio-political and economic development of a nation. Consequently, complete education cannot be achieved in the classroom alone, a large part takes place outside the classroom, hence the slogan "Education from cradle to grave" or "Education from dawn to dusk". For learning therefore to occur, teaching is the main purpose of activity that must take place, as socialization process is never accidental. In a nutshell, for education to take place, such education may be seen to be planned and delivered in a systematic form. Such teaching must encompass, religious, political, military, occupational and recreational institutions to mention but a few, it must be practised skilfully in a systematic fashion.

Thus, we can safely deduce that education is a way of life which goes on at all times in our societies whether such education is planned or unplanned, noticed or unnoticed, positive or negative. This way of life may be directed or not directed, guided or not guided, but is always influenced by society or community where it is practised. According to Bates & Poole (2013), education may be incidental if planned or accidental if unplanned; it must however deploy the latest technology to achieve the desired result. Therefore, to look at education only as an organized process would give a limited picture of what actually happens in the socialization process where the total environment plays a very vital role. Therefore, education must be seen to include things that are meaningful to the learners as well as provide them with necessary skills to cope with future challenges.

Meanwhile, the National Policy of Education (FGN, 2004) has unequivocally enunciated the different forms of education in Nigeria. These are: early childhood/pre-primary education, basic education, secondary school education, mass literacy, adult programmes and non-formal education. Others are: Sciences, Technical and Vocational Education, Tertiary/ Higher Education, Teacher Education, Technology Education, Open and Distance Learning Education and Special Education. The higher education in this form can be described as the teaching and learning that are obtainable in the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Governance

According to Shah (2007), cardinal objectives of governance include: transparency, representativeness and accountability. Kooiman (2003), views governance as the art of leading a set of people, guiding them to the right path, ensuring their general welfare and safety, creating enabling environment for the citizens to grow and develop, socially, politically and economically. Governance is so important because it determines what happens in all other human endeavours, such as sport, music, transportation, communication, health, education and so on.

Governance is usually associated with a given level of power and authority within a specific kind of organization. Its dimension may include public governance, global governance, non-profit governance, corporate governance, and project governance. Governance is also related to some types of actions and procedures, such as environmental governance, internet governance, and information technology governance, or a particular kind of governance, usually coined as an empirical or normative theory; involving regulatory governance, participatory governance, multilevel governance, and collaborative governance. Governance can also be described as normative or practical actions. Normative idea encompasses fair governance, or good governance, which is common mostly in political or public sector as well as private sector administrations (Lijun & Wei, 2018).

Governance in term of process is often shrouded in abstract form. This is because, governance is often perceived as a theoretical concept that denotes the activities that brings about stability in the practical sense, and the rise of formal and informal institutions (Lijun & Wei, 2018). These activities may operate in formal and informal institutions regardless of their scope, and may be aimed at achieving many objectives, decent or indecent, for profit or for non-profit motive. Looking at governance from this perspective. It can also be applicable to the idea of the states, corporations and non-profit organizations such as non- governmental organizations (NGOs), partnerships and other associations, business relationships, project teams, and any other human activities, including the family unit (Lijun & Wei, 2018).

It should be noted that there is a clear difference, between the concepts of politics and governance. Politics encompasses the procedures by which a set of individuals, perhaps with opposing views or ideas, arrive at a group decision, often perceived as obligatory on the group, and it is often prescribed as a general guide on the group. However, governance, on the other side, carries the managerial and means of achieving the goals and objectives of politics, not playing the role of hostility or opposing governance (Offe, 2009). However, the argument for and against the actual separation between politics and governance rages on among political scholars and even between politicians and administrators. However, power and accountability are related to all the terms.

Good governance

Good governance is a term usually use in the global arena to explain the different normative experience of how societal structures should be managed and the ability to be able to allocate resources effectively in the public domain. These normative experiences in most cases are explained on the basis that, they are favourable to economic needs, for example, the reduction in poverty level, and improvement in the economic conditions of the majority of the populace. It should be noted however that, various governments and administrations tends to have different

definitions of governance and good governance at different point in time in order to serve and defend different narratives and expressions (Bells, 2003).

In essence, governance is perceived as the process by which governments comes into power, effective application of rule of law and adequate checks and balances. It also has to do with the efficient ability of the government to put in place and execute excellent public policies for the overall benefits of all the citizens, protection of the dignity of the citizens, the public and the various structures that oversee the socio- economic relations in the state (Applebaugh, 2010). Governance has also been observed from another perspective as the use of state's apparatus, power and authority to allocate resources, and the creation of equal opportunity for all citizens to benefit from the economic development of the state and the overall control and administration of the economy for the benefit of all citizens (Bells, 2003).

Good governance is also described as the effectiveness of government and the ability of government to be able to arrive at democratic consensus in the midst of varying individual and communal interest and values (Applebaugh, 2010). The degree to which the individuals in the society are receptive to the authority of the legislature is also a measure of a sound administration or good governance (Diamond, 2005). Government and its establishments must, as a matter of strategy, be favourable to the poor and ought to advance human improvement at all times.

Dahl (2008) recognizes three components that distinguishes good government: the government advances individual and aggregate opportunities, it advances the needs of the individuals in the society, it recognizes the roles individuals can play to ensure and propel their normal advantages and merchandise. The quality of good administration comes from its inclinations to engage residents with the chances to utilize their circumspection and furnish them with chances of self-satisfaction and self-realization by intentionally improving the limit of individual citizens, who will in turn change the different variables of the society into beneficial purposes and for public good.

Religion and education: impacts on good governance in Nigeria
For the purpose of this work, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1999) mentioned in Muse (2016), good governance indicators shall be adopted, contextualized and analyzed within the Nigeria situation. These indicators point towards some factors which need to be entrenched in the national polity, in order to promote good governance. These have been generally referred to as the elements of good governance. They include: legitimacy of government, social inclusion of the citizenries, respect for human rights, the rule of law, government responsiveness to citizen's needs, accountability and transparency as well as safety and security. Each of them is discussed below:

Legitimacy of Government
Landell-Mills & Serageldin (1991) in Muse (2016) opine that good governance depends on the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted by the general citizenry to be legitimate, committed to improving general public welfare and being responsive to the needs of the citizens, delivering public services, being able to create an enabling environment for productive activities and being equitable in its conduct, favouring no special interests or groups.
In line with the statement above, it is evidence that our level of religion, and education has not made our leaders to help in having legitimacy as elections in the country has only become a ritual

that must be performed every four years and results of such elections are fiercely rejected and contested up to the highest court of the land. The recently concluded 2023 general election is a case study in this regard. Furthermore, the Nigerian leaders despite being either Muslims or Christians have turned deaf ears to the general welfare of the populace. The house of assembly members, governors, ministers and other public officials have continued to budget for themselves and members of their families and cronies' humongous amount of money on furniture allowance, fleets of cars, wardrobe allowance at the detriment of the down trodden.

Social inclusion of the Citizenries
Social inclusion is one of the indices of good governance and emphasizes on the inclusiveness of all and sundry. Therefore, it emphasizes participatory governance or simply put-public participation-whereby everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is given the opportunity to productively and positively participate in public decision making and administration (Shah 2007). The above description of social inclusion in governance can simply be said to be absent today in the Nigeria state, as inclusiveness is guaranteed merely on paper, particularly through the universal suffrage where the adults have the right to vote and be voted for. In reality, the direct link between the people and government at the local level is often absent, particularly where there are no local government elections and the central or state government hand pick mere representatives. In such cases, local government chairmen are directly responsible to the state government, and only indirectly to the local population.

Respect for human rights
Religion and education, has done little or nothing to guarantee human rights in Nigeria, this is due to weak legal framework that has failed woefully to provide adequate physical security for citizens. The fact that there appears to be an increase in crime rate in Nigeria is itself a challenge to the enforcement of Fundamental Right. Is there any guarantee to the right of freedom of movement, right to own property, right to personal liberty when one is not sure who will be the next to be kidnapped either by ritualist or kidnappers for ransom? What is the right to freedom of association when in the next minute one could be gunned down by political opponent or thrown into prison by those who are supposed to protect one's rights due to difference in political affiliation.? The degree of insecurity is manifested by the recent invention of the Crime of Kidnapping and "Caging" with metal rods all available opening in houses. Even electricity meters which are placed outside the residential building are "caged". (Gbonegun, 2018).

Respect for the rule of law
According to Oyediran et al., (2002), the rule of law is one of the fundamental principles of all democratic government, which Nigeria as a country is not an exemption. This means that the process of government is bonded up with laws and the law is supreme. The government and its agencies must therefore always act according to the law. This encompasses the supremacy of the constitution, the independence of the judiciary, the right to personal liberty, observance of democratic practices including the freedom of the press, thought, association and the conduct of free and fair elections as the bases for assuming power in government. It also includes the principles of equality, impartiality and fundamental human rights which are all missing in the Nigeria context.

Government responsiveness to citizens needs

This entails that the government acts swiftly, as quick as possible to the socio-political economic needs of the citizens particularly in times of needs. For instance, the trust between citizens and government, was hugely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The government was supposed to hold the position of authority as a trust for the citizens, but the Covid-19 experience in Nigeria led to the breakdown and total collapse of the trust between the government and the governed. For instance, the so-called palliatives from government, that were supposed to be distributed and shared amongst the citizens only ended up in the hands of politicians, the political party stalwarts and ruling party supporters (Agbor, 2020).

According to Agbor (2020), social palliatives such as Food stuff and other provisions did not actually get to the desired populace. Furthermore, most of the facemasks that were distributed to the poor masses were confirmed to be fake, this is because, it was not the same face marks that were used by the government officials. This shows the lack of responsiveness by the government, because the whole essence of good governance is the provision of adequate social welfare for the majority of the citizens. Nigerians that have had the ugly incidence of vehicle accidents on the roads or fire outbreak at home or in their places of work would quickly attest to the lack of responsiveness of government to the citizens in time of needs.

Accountability and transparency

Adamolekun (2008) identified accountability and transparency as strong parameters and core elements of good governance. They are catalysts for financial discipline, socio- economic growth and development. It is then logical to deduce that accountability is an offshoot of citizen's inclusion in governance. However, both accountability and transparency remain a mirage in Nigeria, this is against the back drop of budgetary allocations that are appropriated on annual basis without a commensurate level of development in the country. Contracts are awarded multiple times by successive government without any effect on health care, road infrastructures, education, and so on.

Provision of Safety and security

This is one of the major tasks any government is expected to provide its citizens. Political, economic and social development will only thrive where there is peace, safety and security. Therefore, the number of safe areas in the community should be of great concern to government. If the number of safe places is on the increase, we can conclude that the community is relatively peaceful, but if otherwise, plans have to be put in place to achieve this (Lutz & Linder 2004). Social equity and inclusion have been recognized globally as preconditions for sustainable global development, particularly by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This premise has also been upheld as one of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has earlier been enshrined in the role of public participation in economic and human development.

Conclusion and recommendations

Religion and education should serve as catalysts that should help to strengthen the corporate existence of the country and also make good governance possible and realisable. However, both religion and education has done more damage than good to the entity known as Nigeria. This paper gave a way out of this hydra-headed malaise by recommending a number of policy frameworks and the establishment of a more robust and comprehensive legal framework to promote good governance in Nigeria, adherence to the rule of law; transparency and accountability in governance.

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