



CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 04 Issue: 05 May 2023

<https://cajipc.centralasianstudies.org>

The Philosophy of Resource Management and the Challenge of Leadership in Nigeria

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Received 10th Mar 2023, Accepted 12th Apr 2023, Online 11th May 2023

ANNOTATION

This paper examines critically the problem of the inefficient and half-hearted management of resources by successive leadership in Nigeria vis-à-vis the cost implications for the development of the country. The paper contends that successive leadership at the different levels of government and organizations do not give the desired attention to the efficient utilization of resource at their disposal towards the establishment of development projects, and worse still, in the maintenance of existing infrastructures with the result that many of such materials and heavy equipment are left to decay for want of attention. Adding to these obnoxious practices by governments are the disturbing issues of abandoning of projects half way, the starting of unrealistic, unfeasible and unprofitable projects and the under-utilization of human resource. These practices, the paper argues, put some strain on the economy as they drain such resources. Adopting the philosophical methods of analysis, criticism and questioning, the paper arrives at and recommends a workable and veritable model for the proper and efficient management of resources in this country. This model involves the adoption and practice of a way of thinking or a way of awakening the culture of promoting some set of attitudes in our leaders such that the disposition of efficient resource management is ingrained in them for the governance of the people.

KEYWORDS: Philosophy, Resource Management, Leadership, Maintenance Culture.

Introduction

Nigeria as an independent sovereign nation aspires to be among the comity of nations that are poised to meet the global challenges of improving the living standard of their citizenry. Such global challenges among others include economic underdevelopment, political instability and insufficient or outright lack of infrastructural facilities. However, assessing the level of progress Nigeria has so far made with regard to her professed aspirations to satisfy the economic, political and developmental needs of her citizenry, there is the indication that this ambition has become illusory, a dream very far from its realization. This situation has come to be because of a number of factors. These factors, of course, include lack of sustained and sincere pursuit of planned programmes of actions by our leaders, scheming by many of our political leaders for economic gains, nepotism and favouritism, engagement of mediocre and non-specialist individuals in government circles by our politicians; poor handling of youths which often results in their restiveness with the attendant spates of

challenges of insecurity; feeble and half-hearted management of security issues (for instance Boko Haram insecurity in the country) and chief of them all, the perpetual improper resource management, especially the financial resources by our political leaders and government functionaries.

It is now very obvious, even to a layman that most Nigerian leaders and administrators are inefficient in the management of resources, more especially as it concerns execution of the numerous development projects that were, and are still set by the government to be carried out. Indeed, because of poor resource management, funds earmarked for these projects have always been found to be inadequate. Moreover, this situation is worsened by the attention given to other competing programmes of government that need to be carried out. And, of course, these projects and programmes have naturally combined to put some financial strains on the economy of the country and quite often have forced Nigeria into external borrowings in order to complete some of these projects. Besides, the present practice in which material resources such as building, machinery and other facilities are allowed to decay for lack of attention and maintenance have seriously added to the drains of funds as government try to fix them only when facilities deteriorate so much. Such belated and unnecessary duplication of efforts and as well, the known tradition of under-utilization of human resource are really wasteful, and should be discontinued with.

In a similar observation of the dissipation of the country's wealth, the Rivers State Governor, Chief (Barr) Ezenwo Nyesom Wike, recently pointed to the related issue of abandoned projects, and noted with great concern the ever-increasing number of such projects scattered across the federation and the consequent cost implications of such projects, during his official commissioning of Dr. Peter Odili Ultra-Modern Vascular and cancer Center in Port Harcourt. During this commissioning, the Governor promised the people of Rivers State that he would not leave any of the projects he has started uncompleted before he leaves office as Governor. We strongly believe that if the various levels of leadership across the three tiers of government in Nigeria adopt this favourable disposition towards the completion of government projects and the management of material and human resources at their disposal, then the nation will be on the fast track for tremendous development.

Therefore, this paper advocates for the proper and efficient management and utilization of both human and material resources by the different levels of leadership in Nigeria for successful governance.

The Concept of Philosophy of Resource Management

Philosophers and scholars have defined philosophy differently depending on their perception and intellectual orientation. However, for the purposes of this discourse, we shall uphold the definition given by Titus and Smith (1994:9) which defines philosophy as "a person's attitude towards life and the universe". This definition is premised on the belief that every normal human being, in the course of his existence, is able to come up with certain principles, ideas and values by which he runs his life affairs.

Thus, building on this definition by Titus and Smith, philosophy of resource management would mean the behavior, disposition, attitudinal approach and practices that leadership applies in the harnessing of the human and material resources of the nation in such an efficient and effective manner so as to achieve some set of objectives for the benefit of its citizens. It could also mean a way of thinking, approaching or cultivating or awakening the culture of promoting new sets of attitudes for confronting the challenges of development in a country this time as it applies to Nigeria.

Put differently, the philosophy of resource management has to do with investing in the right set of attitudes to attend to national development or to carry out what in common parlance is referred to as maintenance culture.

The Concept of Leadership

Leadership could be said to be as old as the organized human society, beginning with the family setting. Philosophical history pointed out that man had lived in a primordial and pre-political era when no government or authority existed. During this era which is commonly referred to as the state of nature. Man is believed to have lived in such a manner, and under such conditions that were very true to his nature. Man was not restricted in any way by what we, today, consider as political leadership or authority.

For Thomas Hobbes, human life then rarely contrasted with the lives of beasts, as the only rule that governed the man of nature was the natural or biological instinct of survival of the fittest which invariably translated to “might was right” (Hobbes, 1968) However, John Locke differed with Hobbes about this view. He therefore contended that the state of nature was not a lawless state because, according to him, natural law dictates the right action of individual members of a society (Nnamdi in Nsirim 2017: 44).

Indeed, it is this state of nature that was said to have provided the foundation for civil society. However, even though this cannot be proved as a historical fact, it is widely regarded as the most plausible explanation for the establishment of the civil society. Thus, the man of nature opted out of the state of nature and formed the civil society with or via a contract or agreement called social contract. Social contract as a notion in political philosophy refers to the origin of society as a construct that is based on political leadership which is founded on contract.

Nevertheless, in spite of the differing notions about the state of nature, the contractualist philosophers agree that the creation of civil society resulted in some form of leadership which enable humans to experience some level of peace and harmony that could bring about the desired development in society. The social contract practice provides the avenue for leaders to readily come in as the link between the individual members of the society in a bid to cause societal goals to be actualized. The leaders thus serve the function of mediators, mobilizers or midwives in a social system.

Leadership entails a lot in human society. And because of this, leadership in a community of humans has been defined in many ways by different scholars. Ukeje, Okerie and Nwagbara (1992:169) quoted Stogdill as defining leadership as “the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal achievement”. They also referred to Donnell and Wehrich as defining leadership as “the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals”.

These two representative definitions presented here show clearly that leaders have the tactful and demanding responsibility of working with people to get them to carry out the functions of the various sectors of the society aimed at initiating and accomplishing the set goals. Leaders in this context are not limited to political leaders but they also include those that are involved at the various levels of authority, whether in the public or private sector.

Management as an important aspect of leadership

Having established the all-important place of a leader as the pivot around which authority and actions of governance revolve, it is necessary to see how the leaders harness management skills in their leadership roles to get things done in the society. Management or managerial skills as often referred to in administrative circles serve as very essential ingredients towards the achievement of some set goals in organizations or human administration when they are prudently applied. Every leader who is truly concerned with how and the best means and ways of actualizing the set goals in his sphere or domain of leadership needs to be familiar with

these skills and, as well, be able to engage them at the appropriate opportunity. A leader who is a goal getter should exercise such management functions as planning, counselling, coordinating and organizing the activities of the organization or area of governance without any passive and apathetic disposition.

In fact, because the exercise of management skills is very important to leaders, any leader who cannot effectively exercise the managerial skills could at best be described as a “ceremonial head”. As a matter of fact, it is based on the belief that a good leader should be able to exercise these skills and functions satisfactorily that Oloko, Okunola and Osisanya (2006:131) describe management “as the utilization of physical and human resources through co-operative efforts... accomplished by performing the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and counselling”.

Aliu (2006: 138) also notes that “management is a search for the best use of resources (man, money, materials, methodologies-the 4ms) in the pursuit of the objectives of the group subject to change”. Aliu’s definition, which has the caveat “subject to change” has implicitly ascribed to the leader the ability and attribute of creative thinking which should help him to anticipate, envision and discern not only successes but also challenges and where necessary adjust his plans to circumvent such challenges so that the cooperate goals would be achieved.

Resource Management: The Nigerian Experience

So far, we have considered the concept of resource management vis a vis some leadership functions or skills. We are now faced with the task of looking at the Nigerian experience of resource management by our leaders and where necessary suggest how the available resources could be harnessed and managed by our leaders for the optimum benefit of all Nigerians. In the introductory section of this discourse, we have stated that Nigeria has not been able to get her citizens to enjoy the benefits of governance because of the many problems located in her successive leadership. The most grievous of these identified problems is the improper and inefficient management of resources by leaders and administrators, at the different levels of government, in the country as it concerns, especially, the planning and execution of development projects.

In fact, many of the development projects and programmes have been known to suffer a lot of fate ranging from incompleteness, overblown estimates and quotations, use of poor-quality materials to outright abandonment in many instances. This wastage and mismanagement of resources by most Nigerian leaders has been spoken about or mentioned in many fora. We have mentioned how one of our few exceptional leaders, Chief (Barr) Ezenwo Nyesom Wike recently referred to this obnoxious practice of littering the Nigerian landscape with mounting number of uncompleted and abandoned projects. And, in many cases, it does appear that many of these projects are very unrealistic in their planning, and are contrived by many of our leaders to exploit the Nigerian populace. A planned and sincere project must be such that is well thought out, putting the needs of the citizens, and the available funds into consideration.

However, what Nigerians see is that many of these projects are hurriedly planned, without the benefit of any consultation being undertaken, before their commencement. As a result, most of these projects are abandoned as white elephant projects. At least, there are some cases of such projects in Rivers State with Governor Peter Odili’s Gas Turbine and Governor Rotimi Amaechi’s Mono Rail Projects as examples. The net result of these ill-conceived and misplaced undertakings is the loss of huge sums of funds that would have been usefully channeled to other areas of practical needs. Also, apart from the mismanagement in financial and material resources, there is the problem of faulty human resource planning and management. Many successive leaderships in the Nigerian polity do not put forward good policies that could be pursued to produce high

quality, and a good quantity of the various man-power needs that could serve the different segments of the economy with good results. And where some of these needed man-power are available our leaders would shun them and engage their unqualified relations instead. These situations, as referred to above, resulted in poor and under-performance in many sectors of the Nigerian economy, and also caused the overflow of unutilized human resources in the country, with this later situation giving rise to mass level of unemployed persons. And as it should be expected, the consequence has been the concomitant rise in the level of crime rate across the nation.

At this point it could be better imagined than told, the number of crimes that would have been averted in the country, as well as, the level of progress that would have been recorded, if the governments at the various levels of the country had undertaken to spend the needed fund on the human resource development and equally in a very sincere manner try to fix the man-power so produced in their suitable positions to drive the development and economy of this nation.

What could be the Remedies to the Observed Situations?

In fact, as it stands today, there are the urgent needs to reduce drastically or even eliminate totally the proliferation of abandoned projects across the face of the country, protect the existing structures from decay and damage, and utilize the available material and human resources.

However, in order to accomplish these, the following suggestions are necessary:

1. **Embarking on Realistic Projects:** Leaders must learn to embark on projects that are realistic in scope, such that they could be completed within a specific period of time and within the limit of the fund available, rather than depend on projected and overblown budgeting.
2. **Cultivating the Right Attitude toward Maintenance:** Leaders must learn to cultivate the right attitude towards maintaining the facilities that are already provided. In fact, it is advisable for governments and leaders at the various levels to put in place active and functional maintenance and monitoring teams whose duties would be to keep eyes on the facilities and make recommendations for maintenance when necessary and due. In this way costs would be reduced, thereby saving the governments, the unnecessary spending of money that would be utilized on providing new ones.
3. **Providing continuity in Governance:** Every successive government should purposely adopt the attitude of taking up and carrying on with every meaningful project that is left uncompleted by the past governments. The situation where leaders abandon projects started by the previous governments for flimsy and selfish reasons is anti-developmental and therefore should be discouraged. It should be a tradition that every well-intentioned project left uncompleted by a previous leadership should be continued with.
4. **Channeling Human Resources to Productive Ventures:** The wastages in human resource which result from leaders' inability or their refusal to harness and channel the productive energy of human resource in the right direction should be discouraged. Visionary leadership with the capacity to engage all normal citizens meaningfully should be highly emphasized and touted to sink into the moral fibre of leadership consciousness in the country.

The Benefits of Proper Resource Management

In the earlier part of our discussion, we have stated that proper resources management ensures skillful handling, utilization and maintenance of material and human resources at the disposal of leaders. The

importance of proper resource management in our economy is manifold and enormous such that we cannot afford to play down the pursuit and practice of proper resource management in our economy and government operations. Proper of resource management among others benefits include;

1. **Reduces wastages:** Wastages resulting from abandoned infrastructural facilities and the underutilization of human resources are highly minimized with the proper management of resources by governments and leaders.
2. **Improves funding generally:** Proper resources management ensures that available resources of the nation both material and human are put to proper use. This is clear from our discussions. This situation thus translates to the fact that the funds thus saved from prudent management of resources by leaders can also be meaningfully channeled to areas requiring government intervention.
3. **Improves quality of life of citizens:** Proper utilization of human resources of the nation will lead to high job satisfaction, meaningful reward for services rendered, pushed up motivation and less work stress of citizens engaged in serving the various sections of the economy. All these experiences and factors add up to improve the quality of life of the citizens.
4. **Stimulates citizens consciousness:** Leaders, as well as the citizens in general are motivated toward, and thus become more conscious of the necessity and gains of resource management as they put it into regular practice. This consciousness involuntarily becomes a habit with time.

Conclusion

We have so far looked at the idea of the philosophy of resource management with a view to improving both the material and human resources application, and thus advocate adequate utilization and maintenance of national resources. This is in the belief that proper management of the nation's resources would ensure and greatly improve on the meaningful handling of the ever-increasing responsibility of governments. Moreover, this could help governments to experience and enjoy some level of financial surplus and buoyancy.

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