
Transformation Agenda and Anti-Corruption Crusade: The Public Service Perspective

Nick A. Obodo, (Ph.D)

Department of Business Management
Godfrey Okoye University,
Enugu, Nigeria.

Abstract

On his election as the third democratically elected President of Nigeria in 2011, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan rolled out his transformation agenda. The word 'Transformation' means a complete change from the status quo ante adopted by the past leaders that had negative approach to national development efforts. One of the main challenges to government is to find a way to diversify its income generating potentials rather than depending on mono oil-dominated economy; develop the local economy on international best practices; transform a passive oil industry to a more pro-active one, explore the possibility of restructuring the country along the lines of a more centralized federalism (via the National Conference). There also exists management and leadership challenges; building an efficient and effective polity, contending with youths restiveness arising from unemployment after graduation; inspiring a shared vision; reshaping a corrupt polity; building character and integrity in our leaders, inspiring patriotism and commitment in the citizenry.

Keywords: Transformation; National development; Mono oil-dominated; pro-active; Federalism

Introduction

Over the years, the Nigerian nation has been inundated with economic reforms, which did not yield much in the direction of economic development of the nation. There were plans in 1962 – 1968; 1970 – 1974; 1975 – 1980 and 1981 – 1985 respectively. These plans did not stop at mere economic prescriptions, but went further to address social, human and political goals. In 1980s the need for reforms paved way for the Stabilization/Austerity Measures of Shagari Administration. In 1986, the Babangida Administration introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme, to address the fundamental structural imbalance in the economy, diversify the economy, strengthen the currency (in 1986, the naira was exchanging at ₦1 for \$1), and build a viable, sustainable industrial infrastructure upon which real economic growth and development can be founded. The reform exercise rested on a tripod of measures: Liberalization of foreign exchange transactions, Rationalization of public sector agencies and parastatals, and Optimization of the capacity for domestic production and stimulation of non-oil exports. Osisioma (2012).

Abacha Administration introduced Vision 2010 in 1998. The aim was to “develop a blueprint that will transform the country and place it firmly on the route to becoming a developed nation by the year 2010”, (Vision 201 Report, 1998). The general objective was to transform the country into “a united, industrious, caring and God-fearing democratic society, committed to making the basic needs of life affordable for everyone, and creating Africa’s leading economy”. The policy projected that by 2010, Nigerian people would re-discover themselves and revert to being God-conscious and God-fearing, caring, sincere, honest, accountable in

their dealing with public trust, and proud of their country and heritage.

In 2002, the Obasanjo Administration came up with the Monetization Policy which was intended to monetize fringe benefits paid to workers, in order that the Administration would save a lot of money from the policy to invest in the overall development of the economy. That policy did not yield the desired result, as a result of haphazard implementation and lack of political will.

In 2004, the Obasanjo Administration introduced National Economic empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS); with SEEDS at the State level. This reform programme rested on four key strategies (NEEDS, 2004).

- Reforming Government and Institutions;
- Growing the Private Sector;
- implementing a Social Charter;
- Value Re-Orientation

The complimentary tools for the realization of the above goals included Pension Reforms, Energy and Power Reforms that led to the desegregation of NEPA into 18 success or companies, the GSM Telecommunications Reform, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Corrupt and Allied Offences Commission, ICPC, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and the Reform in the financial sector, see Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, Cap B1, Laws of the Federation, 2004.

The Yar'Adua Administration in 2007, articulated the 7-point Agenda for national development. Yar'Adua who described his position as that of a 'servant leader' came up with the policy thrust that revolved around the seven-point contract of the Administration with the Nigerian people covering Energy, Education, Agricultural, Infrastructure, Wealth Creation and Poverty Alleviation, Land Reforms, and Security. It was also intended that the reforms would take Nigerian to the rank of one of the 20 most developed countries of the world by the year 2020.

On April 16, 2011, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan won the Presidential election, and came up with the Transformation Agenda. During 2011 – 2015, the policies and programmes directed at addressing governance will focus on the public services security, law and order, the legislature, anti-corruption measures and institutions, the judiciary, economic coordination, and support for private investment... These will be addressed through the implementation of the recommendations in the areas of public service reforms, judicial reform, anti-corruption initiative, electoral reform, police reform, financial sector reform, infrastructural development reform, and information and communication technology (p.51; cited by Asobia, 2012).

It seems that the NEEDS provided the common denominator upon which the 7-point Agenda, and Vision 2020, and the Transformation Agenda rest, (Osisioma, 2012). The expectation was that all the above reform measures would culminate in the fulfilling of the 2001 Kuru Declaration:

To build a truly great Africa, democratic country, politically united, integrated and stable, economically prosperous, socially organized, with equal opportunity for all, and responsibility from al, to become the catalyst of (African)

Renaissance, and making adequate all-embracing contributions, sub-regionally, regionally and globally (NEEDS: (Viii, 2004).

Regrettably, after more than fifty years of policy reforms, Nigeria has painfully remained:

- i) A public-sector led economy with a bloated government presence in every facet of national life;
- ii) A nation with very weak private sector which has grown a “rent-seeking and unproductive culture of over-dependence on government patronage and contracts, with little or no value added” (Harneit Sievers, 2004).
- iii) A mono-crop economy with preponderant influence of one commodity in determining the nation’s revenue-expenditure profile and the balance of payment position;
- iv) An extractive and primary economy that produced unrefined raw materials for export, either in the form of agricultural products or crude oil. Manufacturing was at a very rudimentary stage, and industrialization remained an inconsequential factor in the nations economic equation;
- v) An economy with a weak and tottering national currency that was the whipping boy of the international financial community.

The mandate to reform and transform Nigeria has been communicated and/or handed over to the President in the democratic process. The expectation is for a bold and audacious transformation programme that will radically, fundamentally, structurally and massively transforms the national economy, reinvents the politics of our nation, secure the polity, care for the underprivileged, and provide responsive and credible leadership to Nigeria.

The Nation’s Dilemma

A major problem confronting Nigeria is the absence of good governance. Good governance has been equated to political and institutional processes and out-comes that support the exercise of legitimate authority by public institutions in the conduct of public affairs and management of public resources, so as to guarantee the realization of sustainable human development. The true test of “good governance” is the degree to which it delivers on promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The key question is: are the institutions of governance effectively guaranteeing the right to health, adequate housing, sufficient food, quality education, fair justice, rule of law and personal security? (Human Rights, 2007).

Management and Leadership Challenges of Transformation Agenda:

What are these challenges? Transformational leadership refers to the ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve results greater than originally contemplated, and for internal rewards. These leaders create the vision and are able to carry the people along in the realization of the vision. Transformational leaders fundamentally alter the parameters of the status quo through providing a vision for the future and then investing the time and effort in having others share that vision. Through sharing the vision, they clarify the present, explain how the past has influenced the present, and promote a view of the future. They are good listeners, and are generally consistent, persistent and focused in order both to empower others and maintain momentum.

The Essentials of Transformational Leadership:

- i) **Charisma** – the ability to instill a sense of value, respect and pride, and to articulate a vision.

- ii) **Individual Attention** – focusing on needs of subordinates and seeking the growth and overall personal development of followers;
- iii) **Intellectual Stimulation** – encourages creativity and innovativeness in subordinates and helps them rethink rational ways to examine every situation;
- iv) **Contingent Reward** – cuts a clear path between personality for performance and the consequent rewards that follows;
- v) **Management by Exception** – allows followers wide latitude of self-expression, and only intervenes to correct off-the-course performance.

Anti-Corruption Crusade:

The greatest problem in the governance of Nigeria is the issue of corruption. Transparency International has consistently ranked Nigeria among countries most riddled with corruption. It described Nigeria as a Gangster's Paradise where "...you pay a bribe to see a key official in many establishments. You pay a bribe to get a job. You pay a bribe to get the passport that is you're by birth right. If you do not give and collect bribes, you remain poor and an object of scorn despite your several degrees and cognate experience until providence intervenes for you" (T.I., 1998).

The foregoing gives the correct picture of the situation in Nigeria as it pertains to bribery and corruption.

You have the Criminal and Panel codes providing stiff penalties for offences of bribery and corruption, but the people are not deterred. There are also the EFCC and ICPC, yet people still indulge in the offences wholesomely.

Corruption pervades every aspect the Nigerian economy. It has eaten deep into the fabrics of he citizenry, and will be difficult to eradicate due, principally, to the method of investigating corruption cases by the responsible agencies, coupled with the role of the courts in trying such cases.

The Public Service

The Public Service is the engine that lubricates the machinery of government. It is omnipresent in any administration and ensures that government policies are implemented. It is presumed to be apolitical therefore non-partisan. The service has witnessed series of reforms since independence. Each administration that mounts the saddle of governance tries to reform some aspects of the service to agree with its policy. Comparative studies in the area of graft have revealed that Nigeria's Public Service is the most corrupt in the world, followed by Japan, (T.I., 1998). It is the view of the presenter of this paper that corruption that engulfed the post-colonial administration, which has now eaten deep into the fabrics of the entire society, was not a heritage from the colonial masters, but a product of the post-independence Public Service which has now permeated the Legislature, Judiciary and the MDAs. Any effort being made to tackle corruption should be directed to the Public Service on the one hand the MDAs on the other hand. That, to me, is the only way the anti-corruption war can be won.

In conclusion, the present administration deserves some praise in the area of infrastructural development across the country, the power sector, poverty alleviation, job creation, agriculture, and the health sector. The issues of security and terrorism require more concerted efforts to guarantee safety of lives and properly of Nigerians and foreigners.

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