



**ASSESSMENT OF THE CHALLENGES OF INSTITUTION BUILDING IN NIGERIA
UNDER FOURTH REPUBLIC**

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Abstract

Nigeria's efforts at sustainable development have yielded less than commensurate results over the years. A major hindrance has been policy discontinuity: Frequent changes characterize the development landscape; policies and programs are not pursued to their logical conclusions because they change with every new administration. This instability in policy environment is very often attributable to weak and dysfunctional institutions. Institutions- whether they are economic, political, social, bureaucratic, etc. are stabilizing factors in the development equation. In Nigeria, experiences have shown that institutions have, owing to their deliberate weakening, failed to ensure meaningful continuity of policies across regimes. Weak institutions are therefore culpable in the country's development failures. What are the factors responsible for weakening of institutions in Nigeria under fourth Republic? How can Nigeria's public institutions be strengthened and repositioned to deliver the country's development objectives on a sustainable basis? What are the hindrances to institution-building in Nigeria under fourth Republic? The goal of this paper is not to proffer solutions to the problem of dysfunctional institutions in Nigeria, but rather to enrich the discourse through analysis of the depth and complexity of the issues involved. The paper identified challenges to institution-building under fourth Republic as elite resistance, conflict of interests, lack of political will and constitutional rigidities. Leadership is also identified as a critical element in the institution-building process. But the emphasis should be on informed leadership -with a vision and the commitment to its pursuit- rather than strong leaders.

Keywords: Challenges, Development, Institution Building, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Development scholars are in agreement that institutions are sine qua non to a country's progress. Institutions are the vehicles with which countries pursue and realize their long-term, medium, and short-term goals and objectives. Not only are they required in achieving time-framed goals, they are necessary in delivering current/daily requirements of a country in all spheres of human endeavours. Esman (1967) sees institution as a change-inducing and change-protecting formal organization which has become meaningful and valued in the society in which it functions. Also, "Institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience. They are composed of cultural, cognitive, normative and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life. Institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artifacts. Institutions operate at different levels of jurisdiction from world system to localized and inter-personal relationships. Institutions by definition connote stability but are subject to change processes both incremental and discontinuous" (Scott,



1995). Institutions are also persistent and connected set of rules that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activities, and shape expectations (Keohane, 1988 in Kalu, 2011).

What can be gleaned from this description is that government itself, together with its various organs and agencies constitute an institution. "A government is an institution entrusted with making and enforcing the rules of society as well as with regulating relations with other societies." (Wikipedia) Government is an institution that functions through other sub-institutions (i.e. organs and agencies). Government and institutions are two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. Institutions such as the bureaucracy, an economy, judiciary, civil society organization, etc. in a broad sense, symbolize the political entity (Kalu, 2011). At this point, the main objective of this study is to assess the challenges of institution building in Nigeria under fourth republic.

2. The Role of Institutions

Institutions are an integral part of any society. They evolved out the need to overcome the inherent limitations on the capacity of individual members of society to achieve desirable objectives and goals. An institutions, therefore, created and empowered with resources which enable it render services to society on a scale that would otherwise be unattainable by individuals. It is not difficult for anyone to imagine what will happen if each member of society were to provide for himself such social service as defence/protection, maintenance of law and order, health, education and all forms of public goods such as roads, sanitation power and so on. The collective and common aspirations of any community/society whether ancient or modern are best articulated and achieved through specific institutions. Institutions help not only to preserve the common good of society but also serve as protection against their subversion by any individual members or groups. The common good permeates all societal endeavours such as economic, political, defense, legal/judicial, private ownership, etc (Kalu, 2011).

Institutions are the custodians and preservers of the values of society. Values such justice, equity, and fundamental human rights, etc. only become meaningful because of the institutional arrangements through which they find interpretation, expression and implementation for the benefit of citizens. Without these functions, it will be impossible to maintain societal cohesion. Institutions therefore give meaning to our collective existence in a nation-state (Kalu, 2011). Institutions determine and apply the rules and guidelines of interactions among individuals and groups across functions and endeavors. Conflicts arising from these encounters are also resolved through institutions under the same rules (Kalu, 2011).

These roles are as diverse as societal needs and requirements. Gambari (2008) opines that "whether nations are able to manage their political and social disputes peacefully, without lapsing into conflict, or sustain economic growth without creating huge inequalities, critically depend on the quality of the relevant national institutions." Accordingly, the scholar identified four categories of institutions necessary for democracy and development. According to Gambari (2008), the categorization is based on the roles and functions are as follow: Institutions for fostering public integrity e.g. Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Institutions for public service delivery e.g. the civil service and Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs); The Judicial Institutions e.g. courts; and Institutions for Economic Governance e.g. the Stock Exchange, CBN, fiscal authorities, etc. Institutions are the driving force maintaining national cohesion and ensuring sustainable development.



2.2 The Imperatives for Institution-Building in Nigeria

The quality of institutions and the values they help shape determine the strength of a country. Aside the aforementioned needs for institutions in every society, three compelling arguments can be made in support of the need for institution- building as a national priority in Nigeria. First, is that the general clamour by Nigerians for the emergence of a strong leader on the political scene indicates that our national institutions are ineffective in delivering on national development goals and objectives. For instance, the popularity and eventual victory of President Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 general elections was based largely on his image as a strong, stern and incorruptible personality. The belief among the general populace was a need, given the country's circumstances and conditions at the time, to correct the many ills plaguing the country and to stir the Nigerian ship back on the path of stability and progress. Whether or not the voters were right in their judgment still remains to be seen. But this desire and clamor for strong leadership is, in itself, a sign of the pervasive weakness/failure of national institutions to deliver on their statutory mandates. Rather than strong leaders, what Nigeria needs is strong, viable and sustainable institutions. "Nigeria cannot grow or achieve much if we depend on individual genius or personality cult and passion to run public institutions." (Okwuchukwu, 2009)

By the same token, there is a growing concern that the anti-corruption crusade of the President Buhari's administration may be abandoned by his successor because the philosophy has not been institutionalized. A country needs leadership with vision but it is strong institutions that ensure the continuity of this vision after the tenure of every leader. The second argument is the existence of a paradox of development. Nigeria has notoriety for being backward in spite of huge resource endowment. Efforts to develop the country have yielded less than commensurate results. A major factor responsible for this failure is weak and dysfunctional institutions saddled with the task of serving as catalysts/vehicles in the development process. From the Marketing Boards to state owned power, energy as well as railway companies, the story is one of persistent failure to promote the general development objectives of Nigeria. They are characterized by policy inconsistency and often susceptible to political manipulations. In the rare cases of noticeable and significant performance, they are usually the direct result of the character of the individual heads of the affected organizations; such that a relapse to status quo occurs once the performing heads leave the scene. Individual head of an institution should not be strong in determining the overall effectiveness in the discharge of its statutory objectives. Third, when compared with their peers in other countries with similar development history, Nigeria's institutions are lagging behind, under-performing, or completely dysfunctional (Okwuchukwu, 2009). For example, the Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) and the Brazilian Defence Corporation were established in the mid-1970s to manufacture and supply ammunitions and light weapons to their respective armed forces. The Brazilian corporation grew in leaps and bounds over the years and is today credited with exporting military hardware like tanks and projectile vehicles; the Nigerian counterpart, however, can only show for its years, the importation and packaging of salt (i.e. Union Dicon Salt) and manufacturing of furniture items (Okwuchukwu, 2009). Similarly, Petrogas of Brazil and Petronas Oil Company of Malaysia can be considered as major players in the international oil market. But the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) can hardly cope with domestic supply of petrol (Okwuchukwu, 2009). These examples illustrate how many institutions in Nigeria have become "rent-seeking enterprises and corruption nest-beds". (Okwuchukwu, 2009). The high level of alarm raised by these cases underscores the urgent need for institution- building in Nigeria. Accordingly, Gambari (2008), posits that Nigeria needs to create or strengthen institutions that would help achieve the goals of democratic governance and sustainable development.



2.3 The meaning of Institution-Building

Institution-building is a social engineering process which has induced social changes as its end-results. It refers to attempts to improve the functioning of a country by creating, strengthening or changing organizational values, rules, and practices. Organizations are structures within which people co-operate according to accepted and recognized rules. When specific values are embedded into an organization, institution-building is said to have taken place. In other words, organization plus value equals institution. A good example of this combination is the military which inculcates patriotism, discipline, valour/gallantry, and other similar values into its membership cadres and activities. Chief among the purposes is to engender the appropriate policy environment particularly one that supports the efficient deployment of resources for national objectives (Ekanayake, 1998).

According to Ekanayake (1998), institution-building is the “planning, structuring and guidance of new or reconstituted organizations which embody changes in value, functions, physical/ social technologies; fosters new normative relationships and action patterns; and obtain support and complementarities in the environment.” Furthermore, institution-building must produce a number of outcomes in order to be meaningful. These include: technical capacity-the ability to deliver technical services at an increasing level of competence; normative commitment- the internalization by it staff of the innovative ideas, relationships and practices for which the institution stands; innovative thrust-the ability of the institution innovates continuously; environment image- acceptability by the environment with which it interacts; and spread effect- the ability to impact positively on all segments of its environment

On his part, Gambari (2008), considers institution-building as part of nation-building; and lists the three important components viz, “setting the rules; hiring persons with the technical expertise and moral competence to interpret the rules or implement the goals of the organizations; and ensuring that the institutions inspire public confidence by being transparent, fair and consistent.” These also constitute the indices for evaluating the performance of the institutions in question. It can be inferred from this that “the act of creating the organization itself is not as important as its proper functioning and overall effectiveness.”

As enunciated by Moore et al (1995), institution- building involves five key issues in order to be successful. These are that: institution-building is a long-term activity; institution-building is a process rather than a blue print activity. It cannot be programmed in detail and will require flexibility and adaptiveness on the part of the people involved; institution-building is not a mechanical activity, but requires adaptiveness to the specific political, cultural economic, etc. context; institution-building involves changes in social relationships. Such changes often generate resistance. Therefore, there should be substantial commitment to the process on the part of the people directly concerned and (with scope for trade-offs) the people who have power over the organization/institution; successful institution-building requires effective, proactive leadership.

Recognizing and addressing these issues will determine, to a large extent, the success of any institution-building project.

2.4 The Challenges of Institution-Building in Nigeria

There are four main challenges to institution- building in Nigeria (Esman, 1967; Carlson, 1998; Manjumbar & Mukand, 2004; Tang, 2005; Gambari, 2008). These factors are inter-related and complementary in their effects; and together act as obstacles to the effective functioning of public institutions on the one hand, and attempts at strengthening them and improving their effectiveness on the other. They include:



2.4.1 Elite Resistance- the Nigerian elite can be described as a rent-seeking one that seek to tighten their grip on political and economic institutions for personal gains. This has aptly been described as “elite capture of government”. The current backward institutional structure is conducive to rent extraction by the elite. Therefore, any change/ improvement to the existing institutional set up is likely to adversely affect the rents earned by the elite (Manjumbar & Mukand, 2004). This is why the elite have persistently and surreptitiously resisted the existence of strong institutions in Nigeria. And the elite stranglehold is not just on economic institutions; they have also cornered political, judicial and law enforcement institutions in order to consolidate their positions and to protect themselves against any possible backlash. The elite are not only powerful, but they are reach is ubiquitous. Today, one can hear terms such as “cabal” or “vested interests” in virtually all critical sectors of the Nigerian polity and economy. For instance, “fuel subsidy cabals” and “turn-around- maintenance cabals” have been fingered as being responsible for the persistent fuel scarcity and the comatose state of the four refineries respectively. Similarly, the “diesel cabals” and “haulage cabals” are suspects in the collapse of power and rail infrastructure respectively.

2.4.2 Conflict of Interests-A major discernible obstacle to institution-building is the existence of actor-goals. This refers to conflicts between the objectives of individual actors involved in the organization and those of the organization as a whole. In most cases, individuals who run and operate national institutions in Nigeria pursue personal goals that diverge from those of the body corporate. This incongruent goal situation produces two adverse effects: it prevents optimal performance of the organization; and engenders an internal gang- up against attempts at strengthening the institutions. The huge opportunities for personal material gains create incentive for institutional actors (leaders and operators) to entrench themselves overtime while weakening the institutions. Institutions, therefore, remain compromised from within, as it were. Hence, a major challenge is how institutions can be insulated against attempts to compromise them by those in charge of them.

2.4.3 Lack of Political Will- this refers to the motive force that generates political action. Institution-building requires for its take off, continuity and success the intention and commitment of those who are vested with the statutory authority to control and run the organization; in other words, those responsible for governance. These include political heads, such as Directors -General (DGs), members of the board, Ministers and Commissioners, etc. Usually, the tenures of these political appointees are short;and because, institution- building is a long-term activity, it is unattractive to them. The officers are more interested in short-term and more financially rewarding activities such project conception, design and execution; which offer greater opportunity for personal enrichment than focusing on strengthening of the institutions. For example, it is clear that members of the National and State Assemblies are usually more interested in constituency projects and other similar matters than sponsoring motions or bills that have bearing on enhanced legislative performance. In the same vein, DGs and other heads of MDAs are likely to show greater enthusiasm in contract awards than in designing and implementing training programmes for capacity building of the staff.

2.4.4 Constitutional Rigidities- the Constitution of Nigeria is the supreme law of the country. The enabling laws for all institutions are derived directly or indirectly from the Constitution. Therefore, an amendment of the enabling laws or the Constitution itself is often required before far-reaching changes like restructuring, re-organization etc. can be made to most institutions. However, the process and procedures for amending the constitution is very rigid and difficult. Apart from this, the support of legislators is not easy to obtain for such amendments particularly where the intended goal is strengthening of target institutions. Nigerian lawmakers as a group are not known to be patriotic. They rarely act to promote national objectives. Being an elite group, the lawmakers’



allegiance/loyalty is owed to their individual and group interests. One instance of this, is the approval and passage in February 2018 of a bill which purports to changing the order of elections in the time-able approved by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). This has received widespread criticism and condemnation by informed Nigerians; who described the action as unconstitutional and self-serving. The proposed law, rather improving the effectiveness of INEC will undermines its autonomy and overall effectiveness in the conduct of elections.

2.4.5 Leadership and Institution Building- Because institution-building is essentially a group process, leadership is one of its important elements. The critical role of formulating the doctrines and programs as well as defining the set of values to which the organization attaches itself, all rest on leadership. Doctrine is simply the expression of what the organization stands for; and this has pervasive influence on the activities. Leadership is the process by which one member of a group influences other members of the group towards the attainment of specific group goals. The concept connotes the ability to lead others with the aim of causing a movement and change in an organization (Carlson, 1998).

Esman (1967), believes that leadership is critical to institution- building because induced-change process requires intensive, skillful and committed management of both the internal and environmental relationships. So, what roles do leaders play in championing institution-building? Besides the conviction that the set goal is achievable, Tang (2005), suggests that four important ingredients or set of skills necessary for effective leadership in institution-building. These are also contiguous with the role of leaders in the process: optimism – the belief that the ultimate goal is attainable; devotion- willingness to pursue the goal with relentlessly and with vigour; pragmatism- setting time lines and deadlines for achieving certain goals and reaching the goals before the deadlines; and skill- possessing the intellectual and technical capacity for understanding and grasping with every issue germane to realizing the set goals.

Leadership, therefore, is akin to a bow which gives thrust, guidance and direction to an arrow to help it reach its target. In this regards, what Nigeria needs is not a strong leader, but one with the right mix of vision, intellect, commitment, etc. to initiate, drive and champion the reform process that will position critical national institution for performance, resilience and sustainability.

Institutional Corruption; the civil services, parastatals, ministries and departments have at the end of the year budget estimates and they submit to the National Assembly and make their defense. But appropriation of the funds and execution of projects take different tunes. Most of those institutions don't even expend their budgetary allocations and budget is not been implemented on time. Official corruption has taken over the zeal to serve well and render oversight functions to the satisfaction of citizens. The ministries, departments and agencies never execute their target allocations nor even return unspent funds. Budget padding and allocation of unwarranted funds as constituency projects have been the bottle necks of the Nigerian society Guardian Editorial Board (2016). This is coupled by judicial and administrative weaknesses and injustices; the case of Ghanaian Judges and corruption exposed by a journalist and Nigeria's Chief Justice (CJN) on non declaration of his assets to the Court of Conduct Tribunal, are a few, and lack of punitive regimes and outright corruption and impunity (Daudu, 2016). Most of the African countries behave in similar manner and the consequences have been poor state of affairs of the social and economic infrastructures and pervasive poverty and dependency on few that work and massive unemployment on an import dependent and massive unemployed youths. The youths serve as cannon fodders for vicious cycle of violence and conflicts during elections and transitions of governments from one ethnic group to another.



Furthermore, uneducated youths and drug addicts and unemployable persons with massive child labour becomes challenges that most of those institutions are faced (Daudu, 2016)

2.5 Bureaucratic Bottlenecks and Duplication of Duties and Roles.

Our institutions in Africa are much with bureaucratic swamp weeds and duplication of duties and roles. The institutions are set up to provide employment and generate revenue rather than provide essential services to the generality of the citizens. There is no distinction between essential/ necessary services and Luxury, most states in Africa, have no capacity to provide necessary infrastructural services to their citizens such as power supply, clean pipe borne water, standard gauge roads, Educational institutions, Health Services, agricultural extension services that will lead to abundance food supply and food security, social security services and adequate economic assurance of their career after retirement.

Those services have been privatized and in most cases, the highest bidder gets the companies commercialized and privatized to them. After much failure and duplication of duties and heavy employment and outstanding salaries and allowances, with most of the liabilities outstripping the assets, the companies are or become concessionised by Government to the individuals in government that are rich and can afford to operate with high prices and taxes. Those institutions and companies fail to deliver at the end as they were rift offs and not true reflections of institutions that really need privatizations on private partnership participations to boost a developing economy on Investments with legal framework that will protect the investor. Example is Power Holding Company of Nigeria. and National Telecommunications Company, (NITEL) that were sold far below their value and yet no value addition and steady supply/services and many companies that were privatized and commercialized have witnessed crisis as such.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

African states and Nigeria's institutions are generally weak and dysfunctional: persistently incapable of delivering on broad national goal of promoting growth and development. However, any process aimed at their strengthening must first grapple with a number of hindrances and challenges to institution- building. These include elite resistance, conflict of interests, lack of political will and constitutional rigidities. Leadership is also identified as a critical element in the institution-building process. But the emphasis should be on informed leadership -with a vision and the commitment to its pursuit- rather than strong leaders.

As part of recommendation, we must believe in transparency, accountability and dignity of labor. Transparent leadership and accountable records in everything institutions in Africa must be encouraged. Also, their must be proper separation of powers and independence of the judiciary in terms of funding and administration.

Most institutions should stick to their target when delivering their goals and deadlines. Ministries and departments and agencies, need to work on strict budgetary provisions and time lines. Ministries need to publish their activities and be accountable to the people they represent. They also need to render open their salaries and emoluments and need to be all inclusive in governance.

Lastly, as earlier said, political good will is very critical in implementing Sound governmental policies and strengthening institutions in Africa and Nigeria in particular, we have witnessed that in South Africa after the Apartheid regime and we have seen how the former President Xuma (2016) was pressurized by a very young Julius Malema for trial on corruption and other related charges that is ongoing, this strengthens the rule of law, stabilize the judiciary and make the citizens and the world



have confidence in the leadership and transitions. Stable political systems reinforce economic prosperity and national sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national security.

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