



## **Labourism And Good Governance In A Democratic Society: The Role Of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Today, around three-quarters people affected by poverty live in countries whose economies are dominated by the natural resources sector; this leads to the weakening of state structures and the destruction of the environment, and it can give rise to or exacerbate social conflict. Political democracy is a key ingredient in Africa's regeneration or renaissance. Without political democracy, our societies are condemned to be ruled by self-appointed dictators. The broader progressive movement, including the labour movement, has a crucial role in fighting for political democracy in Africa. It is important that we root out corruption, nepotism and create conditions for popular participation to flourish. Good governance is not a luxury but a necessary condition for open, participatory, accountable and democratic governance. Studies of good governance in Nigeria have not adequately addressed how the role of the labour movement in a democratic society can bring about good governance. This study, therefore, examined the role of the labour movement in promoting good governance in a democratic society like Nigeria. The functionalist theory provided the conceptual framework while the Secondary data collection method was used to elicit information for the study.

**Keywords:** Labourism, Labour movement, Good governance, Democratic society, Political democracy

### **INTRODUCTION**

Good governance is undoubtedly the most fundamental condition for political, social and economic development in any society. This is because it creates an environment in which everyone could unfold his/her productive, political and cultural potentials (Gberevbie & Lafenwa, 2007). Governance entails the formulation and implementation of public policies across organizational and sectoral boundaries through coalitions, contracts, and networks. The search for good governance seems to be Nigeria's most urgent need at this point in its history. Most Nigerians believe very strongly that the factor which has crippled the country's progress in virtually every field of human endeavour is leadership and bad governance (Nkom, 2000: 75).

As the country staggers from one crisis to another, nobody is left in doubt that a lot of homework remains to be done on how to fashion a more effective and acceptable way of managing public affairs in the country. Most intellectual and political discourse on Nigeria has quite understandably been preoccupied with this dilemma of poor governance with a population of over

one hundred and ninety-five million (World Population Prospects, 2017). The country is blessed with abundant human, material and financial resources. More so, improving the quality of governance is one of the major pre-conditions for arresting this situation of political inertia and economic stagnation. It is one of the important requirements for moving the country forward and transforming its immense potentialities into reality. What must be avoided in the search for good governance is the temptation to go for easy solutions. To search for a way forward there must be better understanding and operationalization within the context of Nigerian history, culture, and social realities. Indeed no other country's solutions or institutions will provide an automatic panacea for Nigeria's problems (Adedeji, 2000).

The model of good governance<sup>1</sup> which can work and achieve the best result in Nigeria will necessarily require an intelligent and programmatic blending of the lessons and experience of other people and the peculiarities of our socio-historical realities. Only political and administrative solutions that are rooted in the country's indigenous culture and experiences have a credible chance of succeeding. This implies that the search for a way forward must involve a return to the grassroots to draw from the political traditions, institutions, and experiences of Nigeria's communities instead of trying to rely on sophisticated models of political engineering from Europe or America. Good governance requires responsible and responsive political leaders at the grassroots. These leaders must not only be elected but also be held accountable for their actions by their electorate (Akin, 2000). Good governance promotes accountability, entails the tolerance of divergent views for the accommodation of political opponents and the widening of the frontiers of politics through inclusiveness but not alienation and exclusion.

Consequently, good governance must involve some institutionalized mechanism for holding leaders accountable to the people, for renewing or withdrawing the mandate of such leaders, and for ensuring probity and transparency in public affairs. It has been stated that Governance focuses on the state and institutions, and the relationship between them and the people. It also emphasizes how to rule are made and implemented in society.

Good governance also embraces the values that one caught by individuals and groups within the society (Tunde, 2000). Trade unions as represented by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in the contemporary times have been the subject of considerable research and commentary, in terms of its nature, role, functionality, and effectiveness in ensuring the welfare of the Nigerian worker and the protection of her rights in industrial disputes with the public and private labour employers (Aiyede, 2004). The apparent puzzle of its longevity and continued survival despite attempts to emasculate and undermine it by succeeding regimes especially the military has often depicted it as the proverbial cat with nine lives. Despite the founded fear of its collapse into oblivion or disintegration into autonomous parts as a result of the mounted challenges confronting not only the organizational structure, but also the mechanism of its operations, the organisation has demonstrated a high degree of elasticity and resourcefulness in domestic industrial relations as well as political sagacity in the Nigerian political landscape. From the colonial period up till the contemporary times, trade unionism in Nigeria has combined industrial agitation and political activism in varying degrees dictated by the political gladiators and the exigencies of the times.

The labour movement has a crucial role in fighting for good governance in Nigeria. Labour movement, specifically the Nigerian Labour Congress has played a pivotal role in shaping the way the governments perform in terms of providing good governance to the people. Labour movement's objective is to ensure that people are at the center of governance as opposed to being mere voting cattle, which expresses its will every four years (Ntshalintshali, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup>Good governance means effective and efficient structures which provide optimal support to citizens in leading a safe and productive life in line with their desires and opportunities. Essentially, this involves a combination of democracy, the social welfare state and the rule of law.

The labour movement played a significant role in dismantling disputes both in the workplace and in broader society. During the struggle for emancipation from the military, there was a social movement galvanized against the oppressive system. As a result, Nigeria has one of the vibrant civil societies which is essential to ensure people's participation and accountable governance. This research work is, therefore, directed towards improving existing knowledge about the role of the labour movement in promoting good governance in a democratic society like Nigeria.

### **Problem**

Currently, there are two central labour organizations in Nigeria; the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) which represents the ordinary labours, and the Trade Union Federation; an organization that includes the high-rank officials (Ashraf, 2014:30). Both Organizations have a separate membership and each includes several affiliated federations in various economic sectors, not to mention the public enterprise companies. In this respect, the government plays the role of the mediator between the heads of companies and the NLC and adopts the state policies.

In an endeavour to apply terms for the discussion in the political life, the various administrations (whether the militants or the civilians) had selectively interfered in organizing the Nigerian Labour Movement, especially in the NLC, to organize the foreign and domestic relations of the trade union organizations. In this vein, the political, economic and social labour demands that had been met during the transitional period are deemed well, despite the political, economic, religious and ethnic plurality inside the Congress.

The Nigerian Labour Movement is represented in the NLC which the Nigerian government had established through amending the Labour decree No. 20 of February 28, 1978. Such a Congress includes 42 industrial federations. At the same time, the NLC seeks to realize the highest level of decisions, objectives, and strategies for realizing democracy. This is represented in the role of Congress in democratic transformation and political participation (Ashraf, 2014:30).

Most studies on the labour movement in Nigeria have always treated their roles in the democratic societies from two pivots perspectives; the role of labour in democratic transformation, in mobilizing the public and in political participation; little attention is paid to the role of labour in promoting good governance in a democratic society like Nigeria. This is a gap in knowledge which this study tried to fill, by examining labourism and good governance in a democratic society: a study of the Nigerian Labour Congress. This research was guided by three questions. Firstly, why the need for good governance? Second, what are the principles of good governance theory? And thirdly, what is the role of the labour movement in entrenching good governance in a democratic society like Nigeria?

### **A brief review of the literature**

This section reviews the literature on <sup>2</sup>labourism and good governance in a democratic society with a particular reference on the Nigerian Labour Congress. To enhance understanding of the subject matter, the convenient point to start the review will be from the concept of labourism and the need for good governance. Labourism or the Labour movement, are general terms for the collective organization of working people developed to represent and campaign for better working conditions and treatment from their employers and, by the implementation of labour and employment laws, from their governments. The standard unit of organization is the trade union. In some countries, especially the United Kingdom and Australia, the labour movement is understood to include a formal political wing, usually as a political party known as a "labour party" or "workers' party". Many individuals and political groups otherwise considered to represent ruling classes may be part of and active in the labour movement.

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<sup>2</sup>Labourism consists of the collective organisation of working people developed to represent and campaign for better working conditions and treatment from their employers and, by the implementation of labour and employment laws, from their governments.

Contemporary labourism developed in response to the depredations of industrial capitalism at about the same time as socialism. However, while the goal of labourism was to protect and strengthen the interests of labour within capitalism, the goal of socialism was to replace the capitalist system entirely (Ginn, 2008:77). Labour movement is also considered as an agent of revolution, as a business institution, as an agent of industrial reform, as a psychological reaction to industrialism, as a moral force, as a destructive monopoly, and as a subordinate mechanism in pluralist industrial society (Simeon & Bruce, 1987: 295).

In Europe, the labour movement began during the industrial revolution, when agricultural jobs declined and employment moved to more industrial areas. The idea met with great resistance. In the early 19th century, groups such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs of Dorset were punished and transported for forming unions, which was against the laws of the time. Trade unionism was active during the early to the mid 19th century and various labour parties and trade unions were formed throughout the industrialised parts of the world. The movement gained major impetus during the late 19th and early 20th centuries from the Catholic Social Teaching tradition which began in 1891 with the publication of Pope Leo XIII's foundational document, *Rerum Novarum*, also known as "On the Condition of the Working Classes," in which he advocated a series of reforms including limits on the length of the workday, a living wage, the elimination of child labour, the rights of labour to organise, and the duty of the state to regulate labour conditions (Eatwell & Wright, Roger & Anthony, 1999:83). Throughout the world, action by labourists has resulted in reforms and workers' rights, such as the two-day weekend, minimum wage, paid holidays, and the achievement of the eight-hour day for many workers.

#### **The Need for Good Governance**

Good governance deals with how those who have the authority of the state make efforts to achieve the goals or the end of the state, the maintenance of law and order, and the provision of welfare for its citizens and the pursuit of natural interest in the global arena. Governments, therefore, exist to achieve these ends. Western democracy insists that "good governance" entails the existence of democratic institutions and values (Elaiwu, 2012:24). Hence good governance must also be entrenched with zero or minimal tolerance for corruption, promote true participatory democracy and rule of law in which justice would be seen to be available and accessible by all irrespective of their class, creed or ethnic affiliation.

The promotion of good governance goes beyond the government sector and includes all relevant actors from the private sector and society. The aim is to balance interests and focus on common goals, particularly reducing poverty and providing access to state services for all, to make administrative structures participative, efficient and solution-oriented (James & Harper, 1991:202).

Good governance creates a strong future for an organization by continuously steering towards a vision and making sure that day to day management is always lined up with the organization's goals. At its core, governance is about leadership. An effective board will improve the organization's results, both financial and social, and make sure the owners' assets and funds are used appropriately.

Poor governance can put organizations at risk of commercial failure, financial and legal problems for directors or trustees or allow an organization to lose sight of its purpose and its responsibilities to its owners and people who benefit from its success. The Rights-Based Approach to governance implies that the holders of rights should also participate fully in deciding how those rights are fulfilled, such as through participation and greater empowerment. And as the Millennium Declaration emphasizes, one of the most important requirements for achieving this and the MDG is "governance" The report points out that Africa has many diverse forms of democratic governments. In some cases, these have involved highly centralized administrations that have offered limited space for popular participation.

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been significant changes. One of the most dramatic examples has been in Nigeria, which for decades until 1999 had a strongly centralized military administration. Now the democratic Governance in Nigeria has offered free and fair elections for the past nineteen years. The Government of Nigeria is determined to be more responsive and accountable to the public. A further governance priority is a fight against corruption, which degrades the quality of governance and hits hardest at the poorest.

#### **Indices of Good Governance Theory**

Democratic governance is synonymous and interchangeably used with good governance, both in theory and practice, as the most successful countries in the contemporary world in Europe and America practice good governance and run democratic governments. It is therefore not surprising that those countries set the standards for other countries to follow based on the principles of good governance theory (Woleola, 2017:4).

#### **Participation**

This is an essential element of good governance theory. It entails the involvement of every adult in the politics of his or her society. It could be either direct participation by individual citizens or indirect participation by their accredited representatives. Kaufman, Kraay & Mastruzzi (2006) echo the World Bank's view on the principle of participation as a principle of good governance theory. According to them, participation in the degree of involvement of the citizens of a country in the election of their political leaders and ultimately their representatives in government. Participation, as a core characteristic of good governance, stipulates every adult must have a say in the process of making decisions either by him or her directly or by his or her accredited representatives (Osmani, 2007; Rotberg, 2004; Weiss, 2000).

#### **Rule of Law**

This is an important principle of good governance theory, which guarantees equity, fairness, and justice in society. Good governance theory stipulates complete entrenchment of individual and group rights and unbiased observance of the laws which in turn require an independent judiciary as well as an impartial and incorruptible Police Force (Harrison, 2005; Moloney, 2009; Oestreich, 2004; Sheng, 2008). The rule of law also emphasizes that it is the law that rules not man. Therefore, the laws of the land should be fair, impartial and no respecter for anybody. There must be an emphasis on fairness to all as well as impartial enforcement of laws and rights.

According to Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi (2006), the rule of law is one of the World Bank's six principles of good governance theory. It is the degree of confidence that citizens have in the rules of the society and extent by which they abide in them. Rule of law emphasizes that it is the law that rules and nothing else. It is also the impartial enforcement of transparent laws, regulations, and codes in society.

#### **Transparency**

Another key element of good governance theory is transparency. It emphasizes that the process of decision making, the ultimate decisions reached and the observance of such decisions must be carried out in conformity with rules and regulations. It stipulates that sufficient information is freely disseminated in such a way and medium that can easily be understood and directly to the people that will be affected and who will ensure compliance (Sheng, 2008). The principle of transparency is predicated and built on free information flow and dissemination. Institutional processes and information are to be made easily available to the people affected and adequate information, in particular, should be accessible in an understandable and monitorable form.

To guarantee good governance practice, therefore, government policies are to be openly disseminated to the entire citizenry and the policies should be such that citizens can easily develop confidence in their intentions. The processes of decision-making, the ultimate decisions reached and government actions taken are expected to be made open and subject to check by other organs of government and other non-governmental organizations (Andrews, 2008; Apaza, 2009; Gisselquist, 2012).

### **Responsiveness**

Another important index is responsiveness, which requires that all institutional processes should serve all concerned citizens in society within an appropriate period. Responsiveness, as a key principle of good governance theory, stipulates that a good government requires the ability and elasticity to accommodate rapid changes in the society, with due consideration to the views of civil societies on what should be the overall interest of the general public and also with the will to constantly reassess its activities in the society (Gisselquist, 2012). Change is the only permanent feature of any society and it is inevitable. Therefore, good governance through the principle of responsiveness is required to accommodate this inevitable change. The capacity, as well as the flexibility of the government to respond to and accommodate societal change, is referred to as responsiveness (Nanda, 2006; Rotberg, 2004).

### **Broad Consensus**

In any given society, there are several viewpoints as there are several actors (individuals or groups). Good governance practice requires consensus orientation, coalition building and mediation among the different interests and social forces in society to have a general agreement as far as a country's overall interest can be defined and achieved. Also, it emphasizes general agreement on socio-economic and political issues, such as human development as well as its attainment. However, the principle of consensus can only be achieved through proper knowledge of the history, culture, and sociology of a society. Thus, good governance theory emphasizes broad consensus or mediation among the contending groups in the society to reach a general agreement that will completely and satisfactorily accommodate the differing interests and views of the various groups, and where possible, on policies and procedures (Harrison, 2005; Sheng, 2008).

### **Equity and Inclusiveness**

This is an important principle of good governance theory. The principal guarantees the following: the dignity of the human person, equal rights and freedom from any discrimination. It is all-embracing and encompassing for all members of society. It also emphasizes the well-being of the society which is generally nurtured by the sense of belonging to the society by all citizens as well as a feeling of belongingness as stakeholders in the society. This principle stipulates that the various groups especially the most susceptible to attack must not only be protected but also allowed to enhance their well-being. This therefore stipulates or ensures that every citizen is given equal access to better his or her lot and also to enhance his or her well-being in the society (Grindle, 2004; Harrison, 2005).

### **Effectiveness and Efficiency**

Effectiveness is primarily the process of doing the right things while efficiency is primarily the process of doing things right (Cole & Kelly, 2011). Therefore, the principle as it applies to good governance means doing the right things and doing things right within the society by the government, using the resources available. It emphasizes that governance must come up with action plans which address the necessities of the society as the resources available are put into the best use. Whereas, efficiency as an element of good governance theory embraces the long-lasting use of god-given resources of the society and most especially environmental protection, the principle of effectiveness emphasises the good use of the natural resources of the society by the government (Doornbos, 2004; Grindle, 2004; Kurtz & Schrank, 2007a; Nanda, 2006; Rotberg, 2004; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

### **Accountability**

The principle is the cornerstone of good governance theory. It emphasizes that all actors, particularly those in government, business, voluntary agencies, civil-societies, among others are to be made answerable to the society (Rotberg, 2004; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008). This principle differs from organization to organization and depends on the source of the decision which could

be within or without. The principle stipulates that political actors and civil servants are to be made answerable to society for their actions.

Hence, public officials including elected and appointed, are to be accountable for their political actions and answerable to the source or organ from which their power originates. It also emphasizes that public officials invested with political power are to be answerable for their actions to the source or organ from where their mandate is derived (Williams, 2009). The principle of accountability in the real sense emphasizes answerability for the use of state resources and assets earmarked for specific purposes, subject to the laws and their requirements (Grindle, 2004; Harrison, 2005; Kurtz & Schrank, 2007; Nanda, 2006). This principle is the degree by which political actors have the ability and willingness to demonstrate consistency between their activities and the constitution (Gisselquist, 2012).

### **Strategic Vision**

This is another important principle of good governance theory. The principle of strategic vision stipulates that the government should be liberal and futuristic in its thinking about governing issues. A government is said to be good, when it takes a liberal and futuristic direction on governing matters or issues, with the urgency required and also with the knowledge of history, culture, and sociology of the direction. The principle emphasizes the need for a good government to envisage future challenges based on present and future implications (Gisselquist, 2012). According to Annan (1997), this principle guarantees all subjects a stake in the future of their society in all ramifications. This is because the principle of strategic vision is all about securing the future and planning for the multi-various uncertainties and unforeseen contingencies attendant to it. A good government should be strategic and futuristic in its planning, direction and orientation (Doornbos, 2004; Grindle, 2004; Nanda, 2006; Williams, 2009).

### **The importance of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) as an organised labour movement**

The importance and the essentiality of the trade union or organized labour movement have made scholars to affirm that, it would be inconvincible to envisage a proper civil rule or attainment of industrial democracy in the absence of strong Unionism (Pool, 1981, c.f. NLC, 2017). Ball & Millard (1986:33) defined unionism as a social aggregate of people with some level of cohesion and shared aims with an attempt to influence the political decision-making process in a country. In this definition, the author gave a vivid and correct picture of the concept of unionism by embracing all its characteristics, operations and elements in such a way that it also embraces it in the layman term (Ball & Millard 1986:33).

A trade union or organized labour movements are any collections of people of the same profession who decide to join their course, to influence public policy to promote their common interest. The focal point in this definition is that it stresses the belief that any group or organisation whether professional or otherwise, that seeks the interest and wellbeing of the working class, can be regarded as a trade union (Schick, 1975:119). In the same vein, Chubb (1974:47) sees organised labour movement as the organisation of workers, which have among its functions, to press the claims of their members upon those who can make or can influence the making of policies, laws, and the decision of the state.

Perhaps, this definition was prompted by the appreciation of the fact that other institutions spoke persons and leaders in the society can in the light, articulate an aggregate interest when necessary and not only by an organisation created specifically for the purpose. Such institutions include church union and civil societies, normally Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for the improvement in public services such as the provision of water, transportation, houses, and healthy economic condition. Organised groups or trade unions have noted to exerting influence or pressure on the relevant decision-makers to obtain some benefit. In this case, one should be able to conclude that for the organized labour movement to be able to achieve its beneficial aims and objectives, it needs to mount pressure on the body from which such benefit can be derived.

To Robert & Edwards (1991:66), Unionism is seen as an organised group which has a principal purpose of exercising influence on the politics of any nation, in order to secure decisions favourable to the interest of the group its represent or out to discourage any decision taken by the government that would be unfavourable to its members. This definition reveals a certain future of an organised group or union to pursue a selfish interest in the benefits of its members only. As in the case with trade union congress, Petroleum and Natural senior Staff Workers Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU), sometimes do without carrying other union or group along. Trade unionists do wield a restricted, fragmented and sometimes a negative power over demands they are unable to coordinate. This could later lead to violence and chaos in the state.

In another sense, organised group or unionism has been defined by Okunloye (1990) as a shared attitude of an organised group of individuals that make certain claims and demands upon other groups in the society by acting through institutions of government. For example, the Nigeria Marketing Board is a statutory institution handling the nation's major agricultural products and the raw materials needed. That is an organised group of individuals that subscribed to a set of common objectives around which they want to articulate their group interests (Okunloye 1990:48).

It is necessary to state here that the numbers of trade unions that operate presently in the country are many but they are with different forms and characters. This depends on the numbers of people that had developed a concerned interest, its size could be large or small, while some are well organised and very viable, and others are loose. Some are most concerned about the political activities, some are purely economically inclined. Those with political concerns are somehow national and have nationwide based. Others operate only in a small locality; such social organisations or organised groups are only out to guarantee that any given distribution of purchasing power is in accord with the standards of substantive rationality (Ball & Millard 1986:31).

#### **Historical background of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) as a Labour Movement**

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) is a federation of autonomous industrial unions with recognized powers to bargain with the government on behalf of the Nigerian workers, masses and other unions (NLC, 2017). It helps influence the polity of the nation for the betterment of economic, political, social and the overall well being of the unionist and the masses at large (Sokunbi, et al 1996:19).

The history of Nigeria Labour Congress from the genesis of the labour movement in Nigeria has its roots in the age-long desire of people, groups and individuals, who live, work and play together, acting collectively to asserting their identity, protecting and promoting their interest as part of instincts. Some scholars have interpreted the emergence of a labour movement in Africa as an anthropological phenomenon.

Okoli (1987) (c.f., NLC, 2017) opined that it is a response to stimulants such as tribal association; industrial conflicts and political campaigns, foreign labour movements and labour administration. There is another view that the growth of labour movement is a challenge to traditional institutions in the light of membership of age, kin, clan and craft groups having loyalty to the village or the tribal chief.

Similarly, the report of the Nigerian Movement Commission of Enquiry into the Enugu Collier strike and disorder in 1949 asserted that the labour movement in Nigeria was not a native growth; it was deliberately planted on the people by the colonialist British administration as part of the international industrial system. Whatever standpoint one may take as the origin or the genesis of the Nigeria Labour Congress, the fact remains the emergence, operation and significance of the movement in Nigeria politics cannot be denied. Its root, emergence, and roles have been a basic necessity in all developing economies in the world (Tokunbo, 1985:14).

Furthermore, some scholars have identified and shown that the history of the labour movement can be divided into three phases: with the first covering the period of its formation 1839-1945; the second phase spanned from 1945 to 1966, the third phase usually referred to as the period of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) phase when it was promulgated into law with the decree 34 of 1978 (Sokunbi, 1996:46).

According to Fashoyin (1992), the Nigeria Labour Congress is the apex organisation in the labour movement in Nigeria with the 1978 military administration that established and harmonized other trade unions and the interest groups under one umbrella known since then as the Nigeria Labour Congress, recognized by the government to initiate, bargain and represent other groups of workers and general masses interest in the nation.

### **The role of the labour movement in promoting good governance in Nigeria**

The operations of the labour movement in terms of the role played in enhancing good governance are multi-variant among which include, influencing public officials through lobbying, strikes, demonstration, lockouts, etc. They influence public officials directly via the preparation of brochures and other publications informing the public officials of the group's position, personal contact with the governmental leaders, campaigns for or against major government decisions, actions and policies. This is an immense role that requires mapping out of carefully orchestrated strategies and vigorous determination on the part of the group.

Public opinion molding is also another important activity performed by organised labour groups by influencing people views both their members and the general public for or against a particular proposal at hand. This may be a short or long-term basis but often designed to secure support or opposition to particular issues and those dealing with the general attitude of the public. The organized labour movement also involves the use of slight militant actions like a demonstration to draw mass attention to their problems and course. Though most unions prefer to work quietly and in private, however, it is in the act of pressing the government into change it stands and formulates a particular policy that it adopts an overt posture that would involve actions like a protest, demonstration, picketing and in a worse situation, strike action. The influence of the election process is another method used by Nigeria Labour Congress in getting its interest or desires home by influencing not only the masses but also the government with a threat to boycott the electioneering process (NLC, 2017).

The labour movement was an important part of Nigerian political struggles side by side with political parties, radical left elements, and the media. Even what may on the surface have appeared as basically trade union struggles, as at conditions of work became important rally points in the anti-military struggle and therefore the struggle for democracy; the analyst is in the agreement that the strike of 1993, constituted a significant landmark in announcing the dawn of labour military face-off which was to change the face of anti-military struggle dramatically.

However, there are two cardinal strategies available to organised labour movements in realizing their aims successfully; these are co-operative or confliction. Organised labour movement seeks to achieve its aims with a minimum of conflicts; conflict strategy will be used when a cooperative strategy had failed. Therefore, the use of any of the two strategies or method would only be conditioned by the combinations such as the prevailing political system, the internal characteristics of the movement, the political culture and the nature of the effect of government policies as it affects the people and labour generally (NLC, 2017).

The most potent weapon among others used by the Labour movement is the strike action; the strike action is a situation of partial or complete stay out or suspension of work during workable hours. It is an action usually taken by workers to achieve their demands, workers may engage in a strike to obtain some improvement in the employment, such as high wages or shorter working hours, to forestall and adverse change of employment, such as lower wages and to prevent the employer from carrying out actions viewed as detrimental to the workers interest. It is an instrument used by organized labour all over the world, against the government or any other

employer of labour to oppose certain laws and policies. It is partial when the workers come to the place of work but refuse to work, so the strike action can be described partial when the action is not universally exercised by the workers in a particular area where the action took over (NLC, 2017).

The strike action is complete when there is a full suspension of work observed by the workers, and there is total stay away from work. This type of strike is usually taken as a measure of last resort when negotiation or mediation has failed within the period of a partial strike often termed as a warning strike. And this kind of action involves picketing, demonstration, and sometimes militant activities. Therefore, the labour movement in its fight for just and affordable working and living standards has used both the partial and the complete practices in Nigeria from the period of its formation to date to see to it that good governance is provided by the government.

### **Theoretical framework**

In this study the role of the labour movement in good governance is anchored on the functionalist theory; while the society is likened to an organism made up of various parts and each of the parts are functioning together to sustain the organism. Therefore, the development of a single cell gave rise to the differentiation of cells into parts enhancing specialization, adaptation, and integration of the organism to its environment. Thus, the greater the degree of adaptation, the fitter the organism was to survive (Durkheim, 1895:14).

In applying this to the role of the labour movement and good governance in a democratic society like Nigeria, requires a mutual coordinated link between the labour movement and the government to ensure good governance. Thus, differentiation and specialization may occur in any of the parts of society. And this requires that they are integrated with other parts of the civil society so that the entire polity can adapt to its environment. This tendency can be said to be a panacea of safeguarding societal dysfunction.

Consequently, the parts of the Nigerian society in this sense are its political and democratic institutions and the various labour movements. The democratic society of Nigeria requires the coordinate working and harmonization of these democratic institutions to ensure good governance in Nigeria. The malfunctioning of one of the above institutions means the corresponding dysfunction of the entire political landscape of Nigeria. This can impede good governance, growth and sustainable development in Nigeria.

However, the Nigerian experience of functionalism sees the ideology as soothed for the dominant political class in the society whose whims and caprices predominates such democratic institutions. The agenda of government becomes skewed to one side; hence, Nigeria experiences a high level of what can be referred to as elitist hedonism. For instance, from the beginning of the Fourth Republic in May 1999, the political climate has been a function of the powers of manipulations of the few elites in the society. With the return to democracy, trade unions most particularly NLC has gained popularity by confronting the government over the issues of energy prices, arguing that energy is so central to people's livelihoods that society needs to be shielded from fluctuation. They have called six general strikes since 1999 to protest fuel price increases, causing the government to reverse back to subsidies on several occasions. The union has in some ways filled a gap left by the absence of effective opposition.

By and large, Nigerians looked forward towards the government of unity, stability and a pragmatic approach towards good governance. This means corporate organizations, the labour unions, student bodies, and non-governmental organizations are all required to participate in the vanguard towards good governance. This is one way of ensuring the political, economic and socio-cultural stability of our nation in all its ramifications.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To realize the objectives of this study, the paper adopts a qualitative methodology and a secondary method of data collection was also used. This approach relies on official records and a

considerable volume of related literature. In respect of official records, the publications of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Ministry of Labour and productivity, National Union of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) were utilized. The review of related literature provided a wide range of scholarly reflections and arguments on the subject matter of the paper. To this end, the paper is essentially a concept paper that reflects on scholarly perspectives on the labour movement and their role in achieving good governance in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

Good governance accords the welfare of the citizen's top priorities, promotes political accountability and establishes a new partnership between the government and the people. More so, good governance is expected to build an effective relationship between the people and their governments. Good governance is an essential ingredient and tool for creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. Where good governance prevails, the government becomes responsive to popular demand. Good governance creates mobilization forces that encourage people to participate effectively in the implementation of governments programmes (Yaqub, 2000).

Thus, the essence of privatization and deregulation was to allow for private participation or simply, the handover of property and provision of services by the government to private individuals or groups. Wherever there is good governance, it provides an enabling environment for the development of the private sector and ensuring that there is no monopoly in social and economic enterprises. Olawale, (2003:35) contended that privatization democratizes ownership of the business through sales of shares to a wide spectrum of local investors. This according to him leads to equitable distribution of wealth and resources thereby narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. In a situation where good governance prevails, foreign investors are attracted to the economy.

Good governance provides a good climate for political progress and this scenario to a large extent affects business operations positively. Where there is a stable government, there will be relative peace and this will help the entrepreneurs to easily predict possible future business trends. Indeed good governance plays a regulatory role and also performs facilitating function for economic development. Laws according to Iyanda (1988) may seek to remove obstacles in the establishment and operations of a business or provide incentives to reduce investors to invest. It, therefore, means the more law-abiding, peaceful and stable a society becomes the more the expected economic progress and development.

The paper concludes, therefore, by suggesting that to promote good governance the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) should make provision for a vibrant civil society with a strong element of independent and strong progressive formations which is not an anti-thesis of democracy but a necessary condition for democracy to flourish. The events of the last nineteen years of democratic rule have vindicated the option that the NLC had chosen for themselves. At the same time, NLC should seek to play a constructive role in the democratisation process of Nigeria, where necessary the NLC would have work with and support government efforts, at the same time criticized the government and take action where necessary. Simultaneously the NLC should contribute more to the transformation of our communities and workplaces.

Though, NLC has proven to be a significant force in the economic, social and development policy debates, which have taken place since present democratic dispensation since 1999. It has to further mobilise to be the advocate of social transformation, campaigning for policies and strategies at eradicating the legacy of inequality and underdevelopment. In order to do these it will have to adopt the following objectives: 1. to represent the concerns of NLC members and the general public more purposively, 2. 'Strategic engagement': pursuing an agenda of strategic transformative unionism, which include engaging with the structures of policy and law-making,

with the aim of promoting progressive social and economic policies; 3. "Democratisation and social transformation: through social mobilisation, and political engagement, to advance the agenda of democratisation and social transformation of Nigeria, in the face of powerful conservative forces attempting to block this transformation.

Finally, NLC has to play a pivotal role in the democratisation agenda of the federal government. It has to adopt an independent posture and developed well-researched policy positions on several issues. Also, where necessary the NLC will have to embark on several campaigns to achieve their demands. One of the current campaigns is to open the budgetary processes for input by civil society. To achieve these aims NLC will have to improve on its organisational capacity at the technical, policy and mass levels. Several legislative instruments have been passed on several fronts to improve good governance. The challenge is to translate these ideas into actual reality for workers and communities at large. It is therefore imperative that strategies are designed to implement these instruments to improve the probity and accountability of both public and private institutions. Also, the NLC should see to it that they root out corruption; ensure democratic participation and accountability of senior officials, both in government and private institutions.

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