

Sociological Analysis Of Elitism And Development In Nigeria: a Vilfredo Pareto's Perspective

IYESHIM, MONDAY

Department Of Sociology

Rivers State University

Port Harcourt

meezaresources@gmail.com/+234 8063646187

Abstract

This study is an appraisal of the elite theory, governance and development in Nigeria with specific attention to Vilfredo Pareto's theory of elite circulation. Elites in Nigeria are the few privileged individuals both military and civil, technocrats, business tycoons, merchants and professionals who control the levers of power, influence and the political landscape of the country. They constitute and determine the helms of affairs. The research is succinctly descriptive and analytic. It adopted critical phenomenology for the data collection using secondary methods with the specific objective of analyzing elitism and the setting of schools, tenuration of public office holders and their pension schemes. Since irrespective of political affiliations, the political elites are of the same characterization, therefore, the exercise recommended rule of law, good governance, equal political participation, free and faire election and respect to fundamental human rights as a recipe.

Keywords: Elitism, political development, academic institutions and resources.

Introduction

The term elite connotes social classism and the superior ranking of people who possess certain fundamental features of life, capacity, personality, skills and aristocracy (Zeidan, 2023). It is derived from Aristotle's nobility and Plato's aristocratic rationality and shifted to superior groups of medieval period (Yawa, 2020). But since the advent of liberal democratic institutions in the 20th century, the term has come to be associated with development, democratic elements and how they assert control and dominance in society generally. Weber (1922) as cited in Yawa (2020) viewed the elite through the prism of power just the same way Reis & Moore (2005) see elites as people in possession of power, material and symbolic resources. Citing Pareto (1935) and the Machiavelli's philosophy, Akanle et al (2021) drew a typical analogy of elite but in terms of material conditions, intellectualism and moral superiority. Given that political relationship between elites and the masses dictate development outcomes, delivering development involves working with the power dynamics

that has citizens' welfare as focal focus because government have the wherewithal to direct the tenets of development. But contrarily, the power dynamics of Nigeria have endangered educational development, increased the cycle of poverty among the populace, sustain fragile citizenship and stagnated the general well being of the people. Elitist culture in Nigeria with its multiplier effect has thrown development to the bottomless pit (Osuji et al, 2022). Historically, Nigeria elites have been a faulted bourgeoisies shaped by colonialism. Specifically, they include the president, Vice President, State Governors, Deputy Governors, Local Government Chairman and Vice Chairman, Federal and State Legislators, Judges, Officers, Federal Ministers, State Commissioners, Chairman of Boards Parastatals and Permanent Secretaries (Ogbeide & Aghahowa, 2005).

Elitism and development have been a contenting academic topic in Nigeria. Scholars such as Osui and Bolarinwa (2022), Ogbeide and Aghahowa (2005), Cambell (2014) and Julius (2014) have all expressed their views through pen on paper without a sociological analysis that expatiate the implication of elitism on the contemporary Nigeria and have not suggested the need for a legal framework that spell equitable distribution of resources, hence, the gap in knowledge which the present research wish to fill. The Nigeria elites are more of politician whose chronicles from independence revealed failure and unable to live up to expectation in delivering Campaign Promises (Idowu & Etinosa, 2013). Comparably, the status of Nigerian economy and the living condition of the people is a paradox. The citizens are wallowing in object poverty just the same way insecurity is threatening national security. Based on the statement of the problems, the researcher raised the under listed questions:

Research Questions

1. To what extend do Nigerian elites adhere to rule of law and public interest while setting up schools?
2. What is the justification for the recurring political office holder's pension and increase in recurrent expenditure?
3. What are the bases of the tenure of public office holders in Nigeria?
4. Which legal framework is used in spelling out equitable distribution of development?

Objectives

In lieu to the above, the research aimed at:

1. Analyze Nigerian elitism in relation to rule of law and the setting of schools.
2. Finding out political office holders pension and the reason behind endemic increase in recurrent expenditure.
3. X-ray the periods and tenures of every political office holders.
4. Suggest the need for a legal framework that spells equitable distribution of development.

The Chronicles of Nigerian Elitism

This research discovered that the period between October 1, 1960 to Jan 15, 1966 is generally referred to as the first republic in Nigeria. By October 1, 1960, Nigeria became independent and by 1963 became a republic with a parliamentary democracy modeled along Britain. Sequel to the 1959 colonial election, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the Governor General, and President after the country became a republic in 1963 with Alh. Abubakar Tafawa Belewa as Prime Minister, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Opposition Leader), Ahmed Bello (Premier Northern Region), Samuel Akintola (Western Region), Michael Okpara (Eastern Region) Dennis Osadebey (Mid-West Region). History ville (2022). Though the major indices that collapsed the first republic Nigeria were the 1962 – 63 census, Western region crisis of 1963 and the 1964 first Nigerian general election, but members of the Nigerian elites abinitio

lacked a material base for their aspirations and political cultural to sustain democracy, play the game according to established rules, resorted to hijacking of state resources (U.S. Library of Congress, 2020).

The long agitated and anticipated joy of nationhood lasted for less than three years. Akanle et al (2021), further stated that the self-democratic government was cut short when by 15th Jan. 1966, the military took over power and Late Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi became the first head of state. Six months after, July 15, 1966 the newly independent state ran into another trouble and administrative truncation. Given that Late Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu the coupist who led the first coup was an Easterner and ushered in another Easterner as head of state, Late Major Murtala Mohammed a northerner also in a reprisal ousted the Ironsi's administration and instituted Gen Yakubu Gowon as the new head of state till 1975. In a bloodless coup, Gen Murtala Mohammed whose effort was much in the last coup in same manner chased out the overstayed Gowon. But sequel to the assassination of Murtala, his deputy Gen Olusegun Obasanjo succeeded and handed over power to Late Alh. Shehu Shagari and Dr. Alex Ekweme to kick start the second republic of Nigeria (Adebanwir, 2023). Formed after the fall of the first republic, the second republic started according to Isaac (2022) in 1st October 1979 and ended in 31 Dec. 1983. Again, the long expected democratic governance was toppled by another military takeover by Gen. Mohammedu Buhari.

Akanle, et. al., (2021) recorded that Gen Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on Aug 27, 1985 cut short again the Buhari administration. The third republic, after an intense pressure started. The Nigerian third republic 1992 – 1993 according to Jibrin (2022) was an unsuccessful attempt to restore Nigeria to democracy. The popular June 12. Babangida allowed the elections of civilians in January 1993 and Late Chief M.K.O. Abiola won the presidency. By its annulment Late Gen Sani Abacha became the head of state. Because of Abacha's death, Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar resumed as the head of state. He returned the country to democracy, set up the Independent National Electoral Commission that conducted the 1999 general election (Compbell, 2010).

This present fourth republic started in 29, May 1999 with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the president and Alh. Atiku Abubakar as vice president (Ojo, 2019). Chief Olusagun Obasanjo's 1999 – 2007 administration witness the 1999 constitution, recruitment of professionals, technocrat and bureaucrats from all works of life and the structural domination of the masses by the elite. It saw the political hegemony of PDP (Adesola & Ako – Nai, 2010). The fourth republic also demonstrated high propensity for elite's and the entrenching of some new sets of classes (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015) who made caricature the basic tenets of equal political participation and accountability. The chronicle of Nigeria transition is the origination of elitism and those sets of military and political elites who formed the foundation of Nigeria. Elites in Nigeria wielded determinant power that resulted into these aged long elites and masses dichotomy, a bourgeoisie and proletarian relationship. In the fourth republic, elections were reduced to a mere charade and mockery, a do or die affair, might for right and desperate capturing of state power and resources to enrich themselves. This republic also ushered in Umaru Yar'adua, Goodluck Jonathan and Mohammedu Buhari as presidents. Given that Dr. Goodluck Jonathan declared for the 2015 presidential election, former vice president Atiku Abubakar, leading five serving governors, serving senators and members of federal House of Reps defected and with the existing ACN and CPC members, formed the All Progressive Congress because of in ordinated political ambitions, conflicting interest and power shift agenda (Yawa, 2020).

Elite Circulation in Nigeria

Pareto (1968) and Casstevens (1989) cited n Akanle, et. al., (2021) defined elite circulation as the turnover in power of socio-economic classes. The process in which one elite replaces the other (Sakthi, 2023). Insofar that all societies and civilization have a class of elites and all have similar distributor patterns, the chronicle of Nigeria's transition is the origination of Nigerian elitism. The sets of military officers and politicians who formed the foundation of Nigerian elites wielded determinant power that resulted into the aged long elites-masses dichotomy. Akanle et al (2021), Recently opined that power in Nigeria is concentrated in the hands of minority few who holds the reins of governance (Sanda, 1992).

Since independence, leadership in Nigeria had emerged from the same sphere of elites majorly military and politicians. Ex-military head of State Gen Olusegun Obasanjo that ruled Nigeria from 1976 – 1979, came back to power as civilian president between 1999 – 2007. He was both the 5th and 12th head of state. In continuation, Late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua was the brother of Late Gen Musa Yar'adua, deputy head of state 1975 – 1979. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan alongside Late Diepreye Alamieyeseigha (1999 – 2005) governor, Vice President, acting president and president 2011 – 2015 (Mckenn, 2023). Atikue Abubakar a former Nigeria Custom deputy director 1969 – 1989 (Premium Times Nigeria Dec. 29 2018), was elected as governor of Adamawa State 1998, became the vice president of Nigeria 1999 – 2007, ran unsuccessfully for president of Nigeria six times 1993, 2007 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 consecutively (Tribune, 2023).

By the enthronement of Muhammedu Buhari in 2015, a new set of elites emerged while the lots of the people remained the same. Dramaturgically, the same attitude of elite circulation was replicated in the build-up to the 2019 election when the same group of political elites that left PDP for APC earlier in 2014 were again led back to the same PDP they dumped to continue the game of state capture where the winner get it all. The return of Atiku Abubakar, Musa Kwawkwaso, Bukola Saraki and Aminu Tambuwal among others to PDP is the affirmative confirmation that political elites in Nigeria are driven by inordinate selfish ambition and lack of decorum expected in public offices while national interest deteriorate. The sequence of cross carpeting in Nigeria demonstrate lack of ideology and desire to serve but political survival and patronage (Ajayi, et. al., 2014).

In Rivers State, Hon. Chibuike Amaechi who started as speaker of Rivers State House of Assembly 1999 – 2007, became governor from 2007 – 2015, Federal Minister of transportation 2015 – 2022 consecutively. Hon. Henry Serieki Dickson was a member of Federal House of Reprs, governor in Bayelsa State and a serving senator. Sen. Godswill Akpabio started as commissioner, governor, senator, minister of Niger Delta affairs and senator re-elected during the 2023 general election (INEC, 2023). The current governor of Sokoto State Aminu Tambuwal was a speaker in the Federal House of Reprs, while his predecessor Aliyu Wammako upon leaving office joined the house of senate. In Kwara State, Abubakar Olusola Saraki family is a pattern. The progenitor was a second republic senator (1979 – 1983). His son Abubakar Bukola Saraki became a governor (2003 – 2011) and senate president 2015 – 2019 (News wire NGR, 2022). The daughter Gbemisola Saraki was first elected into the Federal House of Reprs 1999 – 2003, and senate (2003 – 2011), appointed minister of state for transportation and mines, steel development 2019 – 2023 (Nigeria Galleria. Com).

At assumption of office, APC accused PDP to have misruled Nigeria for sixteen years. They forgot the support from the decamped former PDP members. Sadly, the APC government of President Buhari absorbed Gov El-rufai (Kaduna State) Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers State) Sen Ita Ennang, Godswill Akpabio (Akwa Ibom) Chris Negige, Audu Ogbe, Barnabas Gemadi,

Sen George Akume and Bukola Saraki. The Nigerian political drama is all about the circulation of elites staged by people with the same ideology and the underdevelopment of the masses. In simple parlance, the Nigerian elites are covetous. Before independence, the nationalist pledged to fight for freedom from the colonist overbearing administration. And when military took over power, they made the populace believe that they are out to bring relief to the sufferings experienced by the masses.

Prior to the 2015 general elections, Campell (2014) argued that Nigerian politics might as well become elitist politics because the players are still the elites and the non-elites as speculators. The elites are the artists as in dramaturgical analysis and the non-elites as audience engaged in recycling political gladiators (Adesola & Aka-Nai 2010). The cross-carpeting and or detecting of members of one political party to the other as seen in Nigeria is what Michels (1949) saw as the recurrent coming together of both old and new elites. Reading a compromise on how to rule as one. What is sometimes obtainable in Nigeria is a mere merger or change of political party to get back to power. Pareto (1935) cited by Aregbesola (2013), argued that the elites in Nigeria get to power through force and or electoral malpractice. This is reflected in both Nigeria's democratic and military era since independence. While the military uses coup to get to power, civilians use democratic forces of ballot box snatching, violence, crises, rigging and intimidation.

In Nigeria, the transition into elite class is usually facilitated by godfatherism. Names abound of parents who ensure their wards and family members entrance into political class was made possible. Traditional and religious leaders usually have hands in whoever that becomes political office holder in Nigeria (Okonofua, 2013). This set of elites according to Tenuche (2011) apart from involving in active partisan politics, political godfathers ensure the continuity or discontinuity of the choice candidates. In addition, Julius (2014) asserted that the Nigerian elite suffices businessmen and influential professionals. That between 1999 – 2007 military officers occupy 17.5 percent, technocrats 19.7 percent, intellectuals 18.4 percent and businessmen 13.1 percent of the Cabinet while Kifordu (2011) identified five elites networks, Okonofua (2013) reiterated the dominance of the Hausa – Fulani aristocratic elites in the national politics abinitio through the politics of numbers and might. At some point, he argued further that seven out of the nine military heads of state were from the north. Oil economy which is the heartbeat of Nigeria economy is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani elites with a large part of the oil blocks owned by the northerners (Oteh, 2012).

Elites and Educational Development in Nigeria

The introduction of university in Nigeria is remotely traceable to the 1925 Memorandum on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa, which historically set the stage for a co-ordinated colonial government's involvement in the development of higher education in British Tropical Africa. It embraced all schools leading from the village school to university (Kosemani and Okorosaye – Orubite, 1995). Nevertheless, as observed in this research, elitism affect education negatively or positively. From the abinitio of schools in Nigeria, education was tied to the political dictates of British colonial elites just the same way is tied to present elites. Prior to independence, the national elites moved for the establishment of universities in their territories (Okoli, 2003; and Aminigo, 2003). The colonial secretary, Oliver Stanley in 1943 set the establishment of university education. The elitist commissions according to Kosemani and Okorosaya-Orubite, (1995) splited because of selfish interest among themselves. Late University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Achimota Ghana and Sierra Leone were accepted but the intrigues of British 1945 general election that brought in Clement Atlee as Prime Minister and Arthur Creech Jones as the new secretary of state for colonies accepted

the establishment of a University College Ibadan in 1948 (Fafunwa, 1971) cited in Nyewusira but (2014).

Succinctly it is incumbent to mention the establishment of 1959 Ashby Commission on post-school certificate and High Education as it affects post colonial university education in Nigeria. This well intended commission was faced with intrigues and interests. While Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe Championed the creation of University of Nigeria Nsukka for the Eastern region (Dike, 1988), Ahmadu Bello university was abinitio anchored on religio-political tradition to settle the northern tradition. Adamu (2005) cited in Nyewudira (2014), quoted the insistence of Sir Ahmadu Bello that the institution must be founded on the heritage of the north. Equally, there is no better reference to the bearing of petty regional politics on the establishment of a university than in the use of University of Ife for the then Action Group because the East had got their (Anuna, 2009), same must be to the mid-west, hence the University Benin for the mid-west political warriors (Ukwu, 2002).

From the foregoing, the effect of federal, state and local government area elites as seen in today's Nigeria are consequential and determinant in the establishment of institutions round Nigeria. Its those that have successful politicians that have higher institutions built in their places (Nwideeduh, 2003) cited in Nyewusira (2014). By 1972, the Third Development Plan (1975 – 1980) of the government proposed establishment of more universities to be geopolitically distributed (Okoli et al, 2011). Federal Universities of Petroleum Resources 2007, Effurun, Delta State was established, and when Yar adua became president, he proposed to relocate it to his Katsina state (Ojameruaye, 2009). In a single swoop and quite unprecedented in this chronicle, President Jonathan in 2010 announced the creation of more 12 federal universities. But the politicization that beclouded the location of these sets of universities made Ukachukwu Awuzie, Asuu president to call the university citation a constituency projects. President Jonathan cited one in his Otueke village alongside the cabinet members each (Spur Magazine, 2011).

Aonyekakeyah (2010) submitted that throughout the 80s and 90s, it only became fashionable for every state to own a university for political considerations. Citation of schools are seen as political ventures and a status symbol. In Kogi State, former government Abubakar Audu christened the state university after himself Abubakar Audu university and when Abubakar Idris became government in 2003, he renamed it Kogi State University. Moreso Late Gov. Diepreye Alamieyesiegha established Niger Delta University in his home town Amassoma (Anuna, 2008), gov Sam Mbakwe also established Imo State University in his clan instead of Owerri municipal, Gov Ambrose Ali did the same thing by locating the Bendel State University (Ambrose Ali university) in his Epoma village (Nwagwu, 2003). All the proceeding historical chronicles portrays the hands of elites and political expedience as overwhelming factor in the founding of universities. And more of these are at the nativity irrespective of difficulties in geographical topography of the said elite.

Nwogu (2015) citing Adesun (2014) stated that between 2010/2011, Nigeria had 112 universities already with carrying capacity of 450,000 and 1,493,611 applicants. The admitting capacity was 30.13% of the total number of applications. He further stated that in the 2011/2012 session, five universities were added, bringing the number of universities to 117 with 500,000 carrying capacity amounting to 33.25 percent and 1,503,933 applied that year. Ironically in 2012/2013 session when 11 universities were added bringing the number to 128, the carrying capacity was 520,000 (29.96%) when a total of 1,735,729 applied for university space. The truth is, many teeming poor masses are denied university education every year as a result of inadequate facilities and that a good percentage of students who meet the UMTE cut-off marks cannot access the tertiary institutions in the country as a result of

carrying capacity and quota allocations to universities. These elitist policies among others are not favourable to the masses.

Elites and Development in Nigeria

The characteristics of elites toward national development are largely negative with the underlisted observations and findings:

1. **Political office holder's pension and recurrent expenditure:** The elites legislate and pass obnoxious life pension laws for every elective political office holder even though some of them as retirees of public sectors enjoy pension from government (Yawa, 2022). In addition, Sahara Reporters (2017) mentioned that 21 states of Nigeria spent 37.4 billion on pension and other entitlements such as house allowance, staff and three years vehicle replacement for life for about 47 ex-governors. And by May 7, 2023 after the federal government had failed to enforce the recovery of N40 billion double pay life pensions from former governors now serving either as ministers or law makers, SEERAP filed contempt suit against AGF (Premium Times, 2023). This means that money that could have been for development is used for serving the already rich ex-governors. This has increased the recurrent expenditure of government with few benefiting at the expenses of the majority. Overtime, the recurrent expenditure in the annual budget is always higher than the capital expenditure and annual budget performance often reflects higher percentages in execution of recurrent items (personal & overhead cost) than capital component (provision of infrastructure). The pension payment is irrespective of prescription of the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission 300 percent severance for the governors as stated in the certain political office holders and Judicial Officers Remuneration Act. Under the Act, former governors are entitled to 300 percent of their basic salary as severance pay (Yawa 2020). Given that state governors enjoy this life opportunity, Kano and Bayelsa State Houses of Assembly passed into law speaker and deputy speakers pension rights (Sahara Reporter, 2019). Similarly, the Guardian (2019) reported same but for both current and past assembly members spontaneously.
2. **Exploitation:** The research also found that Nigerian political office holders interest are to exploit the resources of the country. Corrupt tendencies such as budget padding, constituency projects and bogus allowances are their means of legitimizing corruption under officer cover (Yawa, 2020).
3. **Nepotism and favouritism:** Nepotism and favouritism had assumed official status. Allegations are rife with secret employment and recruitment in universities and public parastatals with names of relations of prominent politicians as beneficiaries (Edeagu, 2021).
4. **General discontentment:** This elitist behaviour in Nigeria is the major factor for the hardship, dissatisfaction and discontentment among the youth. It has caused insecurity, insurgency and ethnic secession among other social vices. Added to this is the crisis of both human and physical development. The economy is nose diving and at a point adjudged as world capital of poverty 2022 (World Bank), and in hunger level Nigeria ranked 103 out of 121 countries (The Guardian 17 October 2022).
5. Another complicit attitude problem of the elite group is in the conduct of general elections. From abinitio, Nigeria elections are characterization of desperation, violence destruction, death, excessive militarization and the use of security forces as eloquent testimony of do-or-die affairs.
6. Worth mentioning is education and politics. The elites use school project as constituency project to settle some selected personalities or group of persons. As already established in this research, these trends had contributed negatively to the

endemic frustration in the system, university and staff autonomy and academic freedom. The visitors of school had supplanted the senate, highly politicized and centralized government agencies have replaced well informed, respected and pragmatist citizens and university lecturers and students, the victims are blamed for fallow standards. The town-gown relationship from abinitio shows the trampling of gown and had made it the butt of penetrating criticism. And instead of turning out well rounded graduates and programmes, the schools hands are tied trying to incorporate and cope.

Summary and Recommendations

Pareto's theory has been brought to bear within the rubric of circulation of elites in Nigeria education inclusive. Importantly, the application of Pareto's theory in Nigeria needs modification. But based on the aforementioned issues, it is clear that Nigeria's future is blink and her education is Jeopardized unless there will be a paradigm shift in the elites capitalize mentality, re-orientation, replaning and the enactment of some legal base upon which development would be streamlined. Nigeria educational system can benefit from the ruling class if their values are reformed to accommodate the masses. Therefore, the research succinctly recommended the following:

1. There should be social equality in the distribution and citation of institutions.
2. Political office holder's pension should be brought to the minimum within the time frame of their office.
3. No political office holder should be allowed to occupy and retain office more than twice.
4. There should be a development distribution law to allow and determine the spread and citation of institution and social infrastructure through an articulated national strategic planning.

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