

Church Administration in Nigeria: Problems and Way Forward

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Abstract: This paper titled: church administration in Nigeria: problems and way forward" is meant to discuss the various problems hindering effective church administration in Nigeria. The secondary data were gathered from print materials and online publications. The paper concluded poor funding, lack of current data, insecurity, government policies, corruption, poor leadership skills and disunity among Christian's leaders have hindered effective church administration in Nigeria. Based on these problems identified, the paper hereby recommended the following; diversification of church sources of income, generation of reliable data, provision of adequate security to Churches across the Country, address issues of corruption in the church through accountability and ensure effective training for church leaders in the areas of church administration.

Keywords: Administration, Church, Challenges.

Introduction

Church administration in the 21st century is critical for doing effective ministry. Church management becomes more tedious and complex as the day goes by, the church now has to offer more than just a sermon and sanctuary for worship. Today's church has transformed into arenas that were hardly visible years back. The 21st century church is now a conglomerate, offering all the spiritual help it should and even more. For instance, churches now have day care centres, medical centres and hospitals, drug rehabilitation, drama ministry, senior citizen programs, divorce management committee, youth organization, football clubs, vocational training and skill acquisition centres, ministry to incarcerated, anger management, centres for HIV/AIDs check-up and sensitization, and welfare ministers for the widows, homeless and many more. All these facets require experienced administrators, qualified personnels to run them effectively. Someone has to be a steward of the interest of the church and its leadership. It is important that someone other than the pastor be put in place to run the administrative structure of the church while the pastor nurture the spiritual growth of the church (Duewel, 2020).

Church administration has been defined by different authors to meaning different things. (Stone 2019) and (Duewel, 2020) defined Church administration as the government of the church. The church administration sets up rules and regulations to help the Church operate to its maximum potential. Church administration is in charge of keeping the church building running, pay for

those who work, and scheduling, need planning events and church services. Church administration is the organization and leadership that happen in the church to help the church to run effectively and on a mission. The church is more than just a business, we sometimes have to act like one, but we as the Church have a global mission we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. (Klisd 2018) viewed church administration as all activities and programme designed to implement God's assignment on earth. For Deji 2016, Church administration encompasses the systematic arrangement of church human and material resources to implement the church programme with the objectives of building the church.

From the above, Church administration can be seen as the process of identifying, mobilizing and utilizing scarce human and material resources of the church for the purpose of achieving specific church goals efficiently and effectively. Church Administration is concerned with integrating the appropriate human and material resources that are made available and made effective for achieving the purposes of a programme of the church. Church administration is a broad umbrella encompassing a number of processes such as: planning, coordinating, controlling and being involved in other management processes and contribute to formulation of policies with the view of realizing the goals of the church.

The church administration is old as the church itself. The Bible perspective about church administration according (Duewel, 2020), we see the importance of communication, organization as well as other key aspects to Church administration. We can look at these Scriptures to see a better picture of how we can run our church administration today. *Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.'* John 20:21 God sends us into the world to be His hands and feet. Church administration helps us to achieve that goal. *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* Romans 12:4,5

(Duewel, 2020), noted that we all have different talents and abilities within the church, and in the organized fashion of administration, we can all use our own strengths to help everyone else. *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you*— Titus 1:5. The Bible gives us so many examples of church administration, from the first churches as they start. Paul writes to a lot of the new churches, many of which he helped plant. Paul gave instruction to the churches through elders and specifically gave Titus and Timothy as he had left them in charge of churches in Ephesus and Cyprus.

Church administration is in place to help operate the church in an effective way with accountability to help when things are not going as they should. No matter if you are the Pastor or a member of your church, you have an important role to play in your local church. Because we as humans are imperfect, working with others in the church is key to building an effective Church. Proper church administration enables the church to be who God has called the church to be (Duewel, 2020). Church administration is important to the church in three aspects. First, it calls church leaders to commit to organizing the institution to achieve its vision, focusing on the proper utilization of resources". Effective church administration is needed in different departments to enable the departments carry out their function perfectly. For example, the financial department manages tithes and reports expenses. The worship department plans events and rehearses for services. And senior leadership trains up leaders, meets with congregants, and plans sermon series. Administration well planned will help each of the department operate effectively and efficiently.

Church administration in Nigeria whether in the local or mega church is faced with many problems.

(Adeola 2019) observed that many local churches and mega churches in Nigeria have been characterized with issues bordering on mal-administration. (Mark 2017) submitted that several of

their churches in Nigeria are faced with problem of poor planning, ineffective church planning programme, poor church development, break up, leadership crisis and managerial challenges. It is disappointing that many churches and pastors have failed to grasp the importance of church administration. It is against this background that this paper discusses the church administration in Nigeria with view of providing the solutions.

Problems Militating Against Church Administration in Nigeria

There are many challenges hindering effective church administration in Nigeria. Some of the problems include; poor funding, lack of current data, insecurity, government policies, corruption, poor leadership skills and disunity among church leaders.

Poor Funding

Poor funding is one of the major problems facing the administration of Churches in Nigeria. The funds generated by many churches in Nigeria are unable to aid effective administration and management of churches in Nigeria. (Obi 2015) observed that the level of success recorded by the churches has been closely linked with the availability of resources. Among the resources needed for the effective administration of the churches, funding has been identified as an indispensable instrument. This is because funding serves as the life-wire for the church administration. (John 2018) submitted inadequate funding as one of the major problems facing the implementation of church programme in Nigeria. The sources of income of many local churches in Nigeria are limited and this has limited their financial stability. Inadequate funding is one of the greatest challenges facing the local and mega churches in Nigeria. The Christians association of Nigeria in their 2020 bulletin lamented the situation of funds available for the administration of the church and complaining of insufficient funds to carry out the various programme of the institutions in Nigeria. “Our Churches are in dire need of money....to cater for both their capital and recurrent needs of the churches. For a few years past, the incomes from local churches have been cut back from year to year due to crisis like COVID-19 and currency modification by the federal government in Nigeria. This decline has affected both capital and recurrent expenditures of local and mega churches nationwide. In many mega and local churches capital projects embarked upon few years ago, are yet to be completed due to lack of adequate funds”.

Lack of Current Data

One of the major function of Church administration is planning of church programme and projects. Planning is very vital to the realization of the church objectives. Christian religious institutions must be planned to be able to achieve her objectives and Church programme must be planned too to be able to realize its goals. Data is what is needed to plan and take decisions in church. Data is very important for planning educational programme. Without current educational data, planning is impossible. It is very sad to realize that current data on various forms of education in Nigeria is not available. (Mike 2018) noted what was challenging to obtain data with current statistics for the assessment of local churches due to the fact that current data on the churches were generally not available in the public domain. (John 2017) observed that access to reliable and complete information on church programme in Nigeria has for a long time proved difficult. The development of a national database for church statistics has been poor. National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics) often used different sample designs, methods of data collection, analysis and reporting, different modes of disaggregation and definitions of indicators of religious institutions. The absence of rudimentary data at local level in many areas is often viewed as a crisis, inhibiting the development of effective church planning, monitoring, programming and policy-making (Christian aids, 2014). Inadequate data on church activities is one of the major problem facing the administration of churches in Nigeria.

Insecurity

Insecurity in Nigeria has affected the church administration and management. Insecurity challenge is another major problem facing the local churches in Nigeria especially in the Northern part of the country. Insecurity have prevented effective administration of church programme in the country. Many missionaries, pastors, Christians have been killed. Some Pastors, mission workers and church member have been kidnapped and many church facilities destroyed by Boko Haram members and unknown gunmen. Local Churches in rural areas in some Northern part of Nigeria have suspended worship because of insecurity in the areas. The statistics are alarming. Vanguard (2021) reported that in 2021, the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law reported that an estimated 43,000 Christians were killed in 12 years (2009-2021) by Islamic radicals in Nigeria. Within the same period, about 10 million people were displaced in the North. Also 29,000 Muslims were killed, and 2,000 Christian schools lost. The Muslims, according to the report, were killed as punishment for their associations with Christians whom the Jihadists regard as 'unbelievers'. The group also pointed out that when the Jihadists abduct Muslims alongside Christians, the Muslims, in most cases, are released unlike their Christian counterparts who are "most unlikely to return alive". A good example is the abduction of 276 Chibok girls in April 2014. Sadly, till today, none of those responsible for these atrocities have been arrested or prosecuted, which further emboldens and encourages them to carry out fresh attacks. Moreover, surviving victims and families of the dead victims are also abandoned by the government. The group observed that security forces "hardly intervene when vulnerable Christians are in danger, but only emerge after such attacks to arrest and frame up the same population threatened or attacked". (Femi 2017) observed that the attacks on Pastors, Missionaries and church members will definitely disrupt the administration of church. He noted that whenever any figure of the church is attacked, the administration of the church will be affected.

Government Policies

The various government policies in Nigeria from both the federal, states government and local government councils have hindered effective church administration in Nigeria. The federal has coined some policies that have limited church administration. Recently, the federal government came out with a policy and law called Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020. The president of Federal Republic of Nigeria signed the CAMA bill into law since August 7, 2020, many Nigerian Christian leaders have condemned the law. The law makes provision for religious bodies and charity organisations to be regulated by the registrar of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and a supervising minister. Under the new law, church trustees can be replaced "if they (officials) reasonably believe there has been mismanagement, misconduct or fraud to protect its property in the public interest". In some states, there is no provision of land for Christian activities and programme while some local governments don't even want to see church. Mike (2020) described the actions of the Nigerian government in term of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020 as undermining the church development and administration. The leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has kicked against the newly signed Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020, which was recently assented to by President Muhammadu Buhari. "To say the least, it is unacceptable, ungodly, reprehensible and an ill-wind that blows no one any good. It is a time bomb waiting to explode," CAN stated in a statement signed by its media adviser, Pastor Bayo Oladeji, pointing out that it is a declaration of war on Christians (Businessday, 2020).

Corruption

Corruption is another problem facing the church administration in Nigeria. Funds generated from offering and tithe and other sources and released by the church authority for the administration of the churches sometimes ended up in the private hands of church administrators. Funds meant for the capital and recurrent services in the in rural areas are been diverted by some church leaders. (Ogunode 2018) noted that many church funds meant for the implementation of church programme in Nigeria are diverted and mismanaged. (Ola 2018) opined that Churches in Nigeria

has been experiencing underwhelming development amidst overwhelming corruption. Corruption allows a high percentage of the funds allocated for church development to get diverted into the private accounts of church leaders. Hence, there is little amount left for church administration in most local and mega churches in Nigeria. (Projectsolution 2020) noted that most of those put in this position are targeting using the church resources to enrich themselves leaving the church ridicule and litigated, which calls for faithful and trustworthy persons to coordinate these other facets while the pastor watch the sheep. Some Christian's institutions are plagued with allegation of corruption. For instance, The National Christian Elders Forum, (NCEF) has accused the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) of corruption and abuse of office. In a memo reportedly obtained by Vanguard, NCEF alleged that a CAN delegation led by Samson Ayokunle, its president, collected "transportation money" from President Muhammadu Buhari, when they paid him a visit in November. The NCEF said while CAN officials said they collected N25 million, sources claimed they received up to N40 million from the presidency. "On the 10th of November, 2017, a delegation of CAN, led by the President of CAN, Rev. Dr. Ayokunle, met with President Muhammadu Buhari and, after the visit, collected 'transportation' money," the memo read. "While informed sources claim it was N40 million, CAN officials insist it was N25 million and it was alleged to have been shared by somebody who is not an official of the national secretariat of CAN. "NCEF insists on proper investigation of how the money was shared and how much each person received. In addition, NCEF insists on proper sanction of every Christian leader that took part in sharing money from President Buhari. The issues of corruption allegation among church leaders is giving the church a bad name. It has been observed that mismanagement and misused of church funds is among the factors that have prevented effective church administration in Nigeria.

Poor Leadership Skills

Poor leadership skills among many church leaders have hindered effective church administration in Nigeria. It has been observed that many local and mega church leaders in Nigeria have poor leadership skills to ensure effective church administration. Literature asserted that most pastors are adequately trained with regards the spiritual aspects of ministry but they are not adequately trained in terms of the management aspects (Zeitchik, 2021). This lack of management skills development in the pastors leaves them exposed to many management challenges. It also leads to the ineffective management of the church's tangible and intangible resources which then results in issues like embezzlement, stagnation of the church, mass migration of congregates, removal of pastors from office over issues of mismanagement than doctrine and abuse of church resources (Projectsolution 2020). Most churches in Nigeria still have a long way to go in bringing their administrative capacity to fit into today's realities. This becomes pertinent as most of this new ministries place little or no value to effective administration and church management (Dairo, 2007). Also, (Ogunode 2018) observed that most of the Church funders in Nigeria lack the administrative and managerial skills to coordinate the church programme and activities.

Disunity among Christians Leaders

The disunity among Christian leaders in Nigeria has affected the Church administration nationally. The decentralization of Christian religion institutions has weaken the church administration from the national view point. The Primate of The African Church, His Eminence, Josiah Udoia, has observed that Christians fail to make the desired impact on the society largely because of the disunity among them. He said, "As long as there is division in the church, there is bound to be failure. We must see ourselves as brothers and sisters. We must work in one accord." (Punch, 2018). Also, Former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, has called on Christians in Nigeria to be guided by the word of God for the overall unity of the body of Christ. He lamented that the different denominations in the Church had caused dissatisfaction, stressing that the word of God should be the watchword of every believer. He noted that there was the need among different denominations to be united based on the scripture, adding that without the word of God, it may not be possible for the congress to achieve its noble objective. He enjoined

the officials of CNNC to work in harmony with other Christian bodies to propagate the true word of God for the salvation, peace and unity of the region and the country in general. Moreover, the former Speaker, House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, observed that the biggest problem confronting the Church was disobedience, adding that unless the Church realizes that, it would continue to have problems. The former Speaker observed that denominations have taken the center stage of the Church other than the unity that was supposed to help Christians work as a family irrespective of their denominations. (Rt Rev'd Asaju, 2023) concluded that disunity is borne out of discord, envy, competitive spirit, selfishness, nepotism, greed, over-ambition and schism. Disunity breeds failure and lack of strength to achieve feats that a collective should achieve easily. Disunity among the various church denominations in Nigeria has brought Christian position and influence upon modern society, to a great decline. As we face a national election in Nigeria this month, the candidates positioned to run are mostly non-Christians. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded that we must be United. Some Christian denominations have little respect for the Bible nor for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discussed the church administration in Nigeria: problems and way forward. The paper identified poor funding, lack of current data, insecurity, government policies, corruption, poor leadership skills and disunity among Christian's leaders as problems that has hindered effective church administration in Nigeria. Based on these problems identified, the paper hereby recommended the following:

- i.) Churches have to diversify their sources of income in order to be independent, for self-reliant and for self-sustainability. With the churches having sources of income, they can even give back to the society through establishing individuals and carrying out other social services according to their capability.
- ii.) There should be provision of adequate security to Churches across the Country. Insecurity in the country has made many Christians to be apprehensive in attending church activities because of fear of losing their lives.
- iii.) Auditing the churches' accounts should be a regular action in order to curb and address issues of corruption in the church.
- iv.) The churches should ensure effective training for her leaders in the areas of church administration, and there should be periodical seminars and workshops in the area of administration and other aspects of the church.
- v.) Churches should have their own laid down laws/rules and principles guiding them and should not be guided by external principles and agents.
- vi.) There should be generation of reliable data in the churches.

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