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TAXATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: POLICIES, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.

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Abstract

Taxation as a crucial fiscal policy measure is a factual tool for social economic development, which has been adopted by various countries around the world to improve their economic goals. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of taxation on national development in Nigeria. Exploratory research design was adopted with comprehensive review of related literature that addresses taxation and national development. The findings confirmed that taxation is a stimulus for economic growth and development, as seen in other developed and developing climes. In Nigeria context, the effect of taxation on national development has not been felt the way it should, considering the relatively low revenue generation over the years and its minute impact on infrastructural development. This setback in infrastructural development was attributed to factors such as tax evasion, poor sensitization of tax payers, corruption, tax law loopholes leading to tax avoidance, poor accountability of tax revenue, fragmented data base of tax payers, impede electronic medium of tax collection among many others.Against the foregoing, study recommends that the Nigeria government should embrace the system employed by most developed countries in tackling the needs of its citizens through the effective use of tax revenue visible to all. This is enough awareness to the populace and will in turn generate high compliance rate. In addition, stringent measures such as effective financial control and value for money audit should be taken seriously by the government to boost national development, curb corruption and inefficiency in Nigeria's tax system, and minimize the incessant rate of tax avoidance and evasion among tax payers.

Keywords: National Development, Nigeria tax Policy, Nigeria tax system, Taxation

Introduction

The significance of taxation in promoting economic growth and national development cannot be overemphasized. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that resources are properly used for socially critical projects. According to Emmanuel (2010), economists around the world have previously claimed that no country can develop effectively without an existing tax system. Nwokoye and Rolle (2015) stated that taxation embodies the major source of revenue to both developing and developed countries. This was closely supported with the study of Prince and Kelechi (2013) which pointed out that, considering the importance of taxation to national development, taxation as fiscal policy tool, can influence national development. World Bank Group (2004) once stated that, the main focus of any development objectives is the quality of life of the people inhabiting the country. This can be determined by access to basic social amenities such as quality education, employment opportunity, good health care delivery, portable drinking water, live and property safety among many others.

National Tax policy (2012) defines taxation as the process of collecting taxes at a specific location. Hence, to attain success, the relevant instrument must be in place, while laws are carefully considered and align with economic climate at any point in time. In like manner, according to Pratt (2009) taxation could be defined as a compulsion to support the government. In other words, taxation is a means through which government generates revenue necessary to achieve laid down objectives. In a developing country as Nigeria, one of the vital roles of the government is poverty alleviation and the provision of necessary infrastructure such as electricity, hospitals, schools, good roads and pipe-borne waters to the citizens. However, one of the major constraints in achieving the aforementioned by the government is fund. Considering the limited resources and the much expectation from the government, there is the need to impose tax on all taxable individuals, companies or organizations.

National Tax Policy (2017) defines tax as a mandatory payment to the state with the support of law, with no direct benefit or consideration, as long as it is designated as a tax. The Nigeria tax system over the years has passed through series of reforms geared towards an improved efficient and effective process of tax collection and administration.

Few of such reforms include establishment of taxpayers identification number, which took effect on February, 2008; an automated tax system to keep updates of the position of individual tax payers and challenges encountered, emergence of e-payment system for ease of payment and reduced occurrence of tax tout. Despite these changes, and the continuous review of taxes with the aim of nullifying out-dated provisions and clarifying the main ones, there still exist pending issues to be addressed. One among several of the problems militating the Nigeria tax system is tax evasion as earlier mentioned in the study of Adum (2018). The damage from tax evasion is enough to reverse the fortunes of several developing economy. The highlighted problem has been lingering for years and thus requires quick attention.

Countries around the world have carried out several studies on taxation and its impact on economic development. Numerous studies look at the impact of taxation on Nigeria's national development. Sources of data collection varies according to study, including the ways variables were measured and analyzed, which in turn has contributed to the differences in research results. For instance, Afolabi (2017) adopted canonical integration regression to achieve the study objective; secondary data was gathered from Central Bank of Nigeria statistical bulletin. In contrast, Adum (2018) employed multiple regression analysis, using primary source of data. Adigwe, Oyadonghan and Kereotu (2020), Ademola and Francis (2017), Ironkwe and Agu (2019) and Nwokoye and Rolle (2015) measured Economy growth by Gross Domestic Product and proxied taxation with value added tax, withholding tax, petroleum profit tax and companies income tax.

Therefore, this paper was inspired based on the intrigue around the challenges bedeviling the Nigerian tax system and how the Nigerian economy continues to lose huge sums of money to unhealthy tax evasion practices and poor implementation of tax policy reforms; this is in line with the study of Adum (2018) and Afolabi (2017). The next part is the literature search. This is followed by consideration of issues, facts, theoretical and conceptual considerations, and discussions of methods and results. The final section presents the findings and recommendations of the study.

Review of Extant Literature

The study of taxation and national development has undoubtedly been a topic of discussion in different contexts in recent years. In this section, previous research findings and conclusions on the above issues are reviewed and briefly considered. This is important for identifying and filling gaps left by previous research and for enriching the body of knowledge to better understand taxation and national development.

Adigwe, Oyadonghan, and Kereotu (2020) examined the drivers of economic growth and development in Nigeria. Annual time series data covering the period 2009-2018 were used. The findings confirm a hypothetical link between corporate income tax, VAT and economic growth in Nigeria.

Research by Ironkwe and Agu (2019) examined the relationship between total tax revenue and economic growth in Nigeria. Study used time series data. Multiple regression analysis was adopted to analyse the data using state version 13. The results showed a significant positive relationship between total tax revenue and unemployment in Nigeria.
Richard (2019) evaluated the effect of the National tax policy on tax administration in Nigeria. Study findings suggested that, despite the ability of the National tax policy to identify the challenges bedevilling the Nigeria tax system, the implementation phase is far from encouraging**.**

Research by Adum (2018) examined the Nigerian tax system, pressing issues in tax reform and how they affect income generation in Nigeria, River State. Data were generated from primary sources and multiple regression analysis was used. Findings from the study revealed that tax reform is positively related to revenue generation and has a very large impact, as better reform will lead to an increase in total revenue. In addition, result from the study showed that tax evasion and avoidance were inversely associated with income generation, as an increase in the practice resulted in a significant reduction in overall income. Also, the relationship between multiple taxation and revenue generation is positive, as multiple taxation tends to increase the government's revenue base.

However, the study concluded that the Nigerian tax system cannot function effectively and efficiently unless prominent issues such as tax evasion are reduced to a minimum, while several other issues are adequately addressed.

Ademola and Francis (2017) study examined the impact of taxes and taxation on Nigeria construction companies. Extensive literature review as well as structured questionnaire purposively administered on 100 randomly selected respondents was adopted, while data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential tools. Findings from the study revealed that 85% of the respondents were familiar with value added tax and withholding tax, while the major constraints to tax payment are multiplicity of taxes, corruption, insufficient confidence in the tax system and weak enforcement of tax laws and policies.

Afolabi (2017) research examined the impact of taxation on economic growth in Nigeria. Canonical-co integrated regression analysis was employed while uses secondary data was gathered from Central Bank of Nigeria statistical bulletin. Result from the analysis revealed the presence of a significant positive correlation between taxation and Nigeria economic growth. From the study findings, it was concluded that taxation is a key determinant of economic growth in Nigeria.

Edori, Edori, and Idatoru (2017) examine the issues and challenges of the Nigerian tax system. The findings suggest that Nigeria's tax system has not been all smooth sailing, given the numerous issues and challenges plaguing the system. For example, various taxes, poor management, complex national tax system, tax advertising and so on.

Nwokoye and Rolle (2015) examined the impact of various tax reforms in Nigeria, especially the 2003 tax reform and the national tax policy during the 2012 period (1981-2012). Data used was annual series data. The OLS estimation result showed that the tax reform represented by corporate income tax and value added tax has a significant positive impact on investment in Nigeria.

Ehigiamusoe (2013) studied the relationship between the Nigerian tax system and economic growth, using correlation methods and Granger causality to establish the relationship, covering the period 1980 to 2011. The study found that the Nigerian tax system faced numerous challenges with no significant impact on economic growth. Further analysis of the components of the tax system showed that the impact of tariffs on economic growth is greater than that of corporate income tax, value added tax, and oil profits tax. The study also found that, on the one hand, there is a negative and insignificant relationship between mineral profits tax and corporate income tax, and on the other hand, there is an insignificant relationship between oil profits tax and value-added tax.

Prince and Kelechi (2013) study examined taxation and national development using a small macroeconomic model that estimates 1970-2010. The Lin-log model of the Human development index was adopted as proxy for national development. Results revealed that taxation has a positive impact on Nigeria's national development, especially in terms of its socio-economic contribution since the 1970s.

Echekoba and Ezu (2011) examined the impact of poor tax policy implementation on developing countries. Findings from the study suggested that the poor implementation of Nigeria's tax policy is one of the main constraints preventing the Federal Revenue Service from mapping expected income.

Problems for Consideration

The growth and development of a nation is greatly influenced by the amount of income put in place for the provision of infrastructure. A well-structured tax system is one of the key factors in providing revenue generation for critical infrastructure. As a result, the importance of taxation in the operations of any government is germane, considering its key role in the generation of income channelled towards the promotion of growth and development in the country.

The Nigerian tax system has gone through a series of reforms and revisions following the Federal Executive Council's approval of an executive order and amendments to the legislation. Some would say this is an important step in the right direction that will lead to better tax compliance and improved the case of doing business.

In spite of these movements, there still exist some pressing issues that require urgent attention. Tax evasion and other related offences are very paramount and have penetrated deeply into the tax system. Citizens and non-citizens alike evade tax rashly owing to the approach of the government towards taxation in Nigeria. In developed countries of America, Europe and Asia, tax evaders are not freed without being dealt with according to law. In Nigeria context, although sanctions have been increased significantly in recent times, the government's needs to do more on the implementation aspects of the numerous recommendations of the finance acts.

It is therefore pertinent to say that Nigeria tax planning and administration has endured tax evasion over the year. Generally, the country's economy has encountered large fiscal deficit promulgating from generalized rise in expenditure, poor supervision, bureaucratic control and extreme administrative involvement in the tax management committee. Therefore, underdevelopment due to tax evasion and slow implementation of tax policies cannot be ruled out. In contrast, the purpose of the study is to ascertain the impact of taxation on national development in Nigeria.

Objective for the Study

The study aim to evaluate the impact of taxation on National development in Nigeria

Theoretical Consideration

Socio-Political Theory: Socio-Political Theory developed by Adolf Wagner. Adolf Wagner believed that socio-political goals should be the main determinants of citizens' choice of tax. The theory therefore criticizes the perception or view that the tax system should be structured to serve individuals. Instead, theory suggested that the tax system should serve as a tool for restructuring the society. Although the society comprises of people, it is a sovereign entity and highly populated. Thus, the need for the state to preserve the existence of the society and proffer solution to its problems. Therefore government's right in the imposition of tax is not hinged on benefit but basically an act of exercising power. Tax system should thus be structured, such that it serve as fiscal policy measure for generating income for the governments and also reducing unemployment and income inequalities in a country.

Conceptual Consideration

Taxation

According to Appah and Oyadonghaan (2011), the tax is a mandatory tax paid to the government of a country to provide its citizens with necessary basic amenities such as security, running water, roads, etc. However, taxes are a huge source of revenue for the State; it also empowers the government to keep its obligations of providing quality life to its citizens. Adudu and Simon (2015) once stated that, the revenue generated from tax has the propensity of expanding a nation economically and socio-politically. Adams (2001) added that taxation is a veritable tool for revenue generation and amount to about 90% of the income accrued to present day governments.

Agol (2004) argues that taxation is an unavoidable burden on citizens' income, capital and consumption by government-designated agencies. These duties are levied on corporate profits, oil profits, capital gains and capital transfers, personal income such as business profits, rebates, royalties, interest, wages and dividends. However, Ojo (2008) claimed that taxation is a concept as well as science of taxing citizens. Author also defined tax as a mandatory fee expected to be remitted by all citizens. It is often referred to as public responsibility, while its imposition is expected to yield income necessary to improve the economic wellbeing and safety of the society.

Overview of the National Tax Policy and Nigeria Tax System

In Nigeria, due to over-reliance on oil revenues, taxes have not contributed significantly to the revenue profile of any level of government for many years. However, considering the high level of risk in the international oil market in recent times, government at all levels have been charged to source for non-oil revenue through taxation (Statista, 2019). Unfortunately, the new interest in taxation has led to increased taxation and abuse of taxation power. To alleviate these challenges, a National Tax Policy has been developed to set rules for the administration and tax objectives of the Nigerian tax system.

The National tax policy was heralded by the setting up of a 20 men study group in the year 2002 to carry out a comprehensive review of the Nigeria tax system and legislations, review the tax administration structure and make necessary recommendations where needed (Ifueko, 2012). In 2004, a 12-member working group was formed to critically evaluate the recommendations of the 2002 study group and propose measures to reform the Nigerian tax system. In 2010, the federal government adopted the final draft of the national tax policy. However, the required legislative action to kick start the provisions of the National tax policy was not considered.

Consequently, the recommendations of the policy to a large extent were unimplemented and thus failed to meet government set objectives. The then Minister of Finance on 10th August 2016 inaugurated another committee to review, update and make recommendations on the implementation process of the National Tax Policy. The committee in turn submitted its report on 29th September 2016 and on 1st February 2017, the new National tax policy was adopted by the Federal Executive Council and thereafter was passed to the National economic council for endorsement (National tax policy, 2017).

Tax Reforms and National Development

Challenges to the Nigerian tax system over the years have resulted in low tax revenues, prompting the federal government to introduce series of reforms to existing tax laws. According to Alli (2009) the goals of Nigeria tax reform include: closing the gap between the country's development and financing needs; proving Taxation as a tax policy tool; raising the level of taxation on non-oil activities; continuously reviewing tax laws to minimize tax evasion and avoidance; ensuring better services to the populace; improving tax administration structures to achieve its goals and other tax goals. Over the years, the Nigerian tax system has experienced varying reforms since 1904 to date. The effects of the reforms in the country are as follows:

Establishment of income tax in Nigeria between 1904 and 1926
Power of autonomy imposed on the Nigeria Inland Revenue in 1945
The Raisman fiscal commission in 1957
Emergence of Inland Revenue Board in 1958
Declaration of the Petroleum profit tax ordinance No 15 of 1959
Income tax management act declaration of 1961
Creation of Lagos state Inland Revenue department
Company income tax act establishment of 1979
Promulgation of the federal board of Inland Revenue (under CITA 1979)
Introduction of chartered institute of taxation of Nigeria (CITN) in 1982
Federal Inland Revenue service was promulgated between 1991 and 1992
Amendment of Tax Policy and administration reforms in 2001 and 2004
Installation of the Nigeria tax system study group

National tax policy recommendations and fiscal federalism

The National tax policy establishes clear rules that are germane to the administration of tax at all levels of government. The policy compels tax authorities to ascertain that all taxable persons are duly registered and issued tax identification number. Also in a bid to update their data bank, tax authorities are required to take advantage of the data base of the Central Bank of Nigeria on Bank verification number, Nigeria Communication Commission, Federal Road Safety Commission, National Identity Card Management Commission, Nigeria Immigration Service, and Corporate Affairs Commission among others. However it is hoped that the registration process by different agencies should be integrated. Also in other to ensure tax payers compliance, tax authorities are expected to make the self-assessment process simple, organize tax education and enlightenment program, develop framework for tax amnesty, reward voluntary compliance, put in place stringent measures for resolving disputes. The National tax policy recommended financial and administrative funding for tax authorities and tax authorities are to ensure that tax payment procedures are easy and convenient (Chapter 4, para 4.3).

The policy also recommended that collection processes shall leverage on modern technology (Chapter 4, para 4.4; Chapter 5, para 5.1 (x)). This is in line with global best practices and further strengthens the implementation of electronic taxation in Nigeria. Although, there is no legislative framework for the operation of E-taxation in Nigeria, the policy advocates for the use of technology in tax laws administration. The policy likewise provides that: the Minister or Commissioner of finance shall ensure that the collection and remittance of taxes by all ministries, extra ministerial departments and agencies are automated. (Chapter 5, para 5.1 (x)).

Also, to improve the ease of payment and prevent revenue losses, collection system shall leverage on modern technology (Chapter 4, para 4.3). In addition tax authorities are to ensure the, deployment of technology to support all aspects of tax administration. These provisions provide necessary policy support for the on-going efforts by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to automate tax administrative processes (Richard & Eghosa 2019). Furthermore, the NTP recognized the role of all tiers of Government in tax administration.

Drawbacks of the National tax policy and possible solution

The issue of fiscal federalism and its implication for tax administration was not addressed by the national tax policy under the CFRN 1999. The invasion on the powers of one level of government by another as well as the lack of clarity in dispersing taxing powers among the federating unit are some of the challenges confronting the Nigeria tax system. In addressing the challenges of the Nigeria tax system, it is expedient that the national tax policy tackles the issue of lack of federalism while other problems are carefully considered. Fiscal federalism is therefore concerned about how fiscal powers are shared among the federating units (that is, the design of fiscal constitutions).

Thus, it oversees the limits of each tier of government on taxation issues and how intergovernmental transfers are structured. It is germane that the national tax policy emphasizes the adoption of fiscal federalism principles in the imposition and collection of taxes and likewise suggests relevant constitutional amendments necessary to spell out limits of powers to impose and collect taxes among the federating units.

Methodology

To examine the impact of taxation on national development, exploratory research design was adopted. This was chosen mainly, to understand an identified problem more efficiently and help discover aspects that have not been studied in depth, thereby laying foundation for future research.

Discussion and implications of findings

Several studies have examined taxation as a tool for national development in different countries using different techniques. However, the findings of the surveys suggested that the results are somewhat correlated.

Nigeria's tax reform, led by the Federal Ministry of Finance through the Federal Revenue Service, aims to achieve greater tax administration, voluntary and voluntary compliance, and to break long-standing prevalent phobias among taxpayers and tax collector. Few studies have been critically reviewed and analyzed and upon which the conclusion of this study shall be based. Afolabi (2013) in his research examined the impact of taxes on economic growth.

Taxation was proxy with value added tax, petroleum profit tax and company income tax. Using canonical counteracting regression and secondary data from central bank of Nigeria statistical bulletin, result from the analysis revealed that, taxation has a positive impact on economic development. In contrast to the findings of Afolabi (2013), although in a different scenario considering the population of the study. Ramot and Ichihashi (2012) researched on economic growth and income inequality, using panel data from 65 countries within the period 1970 to 2006. Findings from the study showed that both company income tax rate and personal income tax has negative impact on economic growth and income inequality.

Similarly, Ehigiamusoe (2013) used the correlation method and Granger causality to study the relationship between the Nigerian tax system and economic growth between 1980 and 2011. Research shows that Nigeria's tax system has no significant impact on economic growth. This is due to its many challenges. Further analysis showed that the impact of tariffs on the economy is greater than that of corporate income tax, value added tax and oil profits tax. Conclusively, the paper recommended that the Nigeria tax system be reformed. In line with the recommendations of Ehigiamusoe (2013), Adum (2018) study on the burning issues in the Nigeria tax system and how it affects revenue generation in river state, confirmed the aforementioned suggestion, findings from the study indicated that tax reforms influences as well as have a significant positive relationship with revenue generation.

Findings also showed that multiple taxation contributes to increase in government revenue base. On this basis the study concluded and recommended that tax reforms should be carried out as soon as the need arises without further delay. This is expedient to address contemporary issues and also boost the earning capacity of the government. However, the study of Adigwe et al (2020) affirms the effectiveness of the national tax policy reform of 2017 and also aligns with the recommendation of Ehigiamusoe (2013). Findings revealed the existence of hypothesized connection between company income tax, value added tax and economic growth in Nigeria. The study in turn concluded by suggesting that the government should device extra measures to curb the incessant act of tax payer's evasion of tax, for proper distribution of revenue to the economy.

In addition, is Dagwom and Amina (2020) study on the contribution of tax revenue to national development in Nigeria? The study findings showed that revenue generated from tax has little contribution to national development in Nigeria. The study recommended that government should employ a more stringent financial control measure to minimize wastage in the Nigeria tax system. Likewise, Ademola and Francis (2017) examined tax and taxation in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the construction industry. 85% of respondents were very familiar with VAT and withholding tax, while tax diversity, corruption risk and lack of trust in the tax system and poor enforcement of tax laws and policies were identified as the main barriers to tax compliance. The study recommended adequate training for tax officials and investors to properly understand tax policy in order to achieve tax compliance among the population.In contrast to the findings of Ademola and Francis (2017) Ironkwe and Agu (2019) assessed the relationship between total tax revenue and economic growth in Nigeria. Findings from the study showed the presence of a significant positive relationship between total tax revenue and unemployment in Nigeria. The study however recommended that the government should distribute its social welfare in ways that enables tax payers to benefit directly, thereby encouraging more tax compliance, as suggested in the work of Ademola and Francis (2017).

Conclusion

Every government strives towards increasing its tax net, revenue as well as establishes a business environment that accommodates business growth and inspires investors. Among the problems the governments have been trying to solve are the formulations of government policies to manage excessive spending, gathering of funds to meet the aforementioned as well as proper management of funds. Businesses in Nigeria have long complained about fundamental problems plaguing the tax system, which in turn affect the ease of doing business.

The tax code appears to be out of touch with social change, and the government has responded by first reviewing its tax policy and then amending its tax code.To ascertain the effect of taxation on national development in Nigeria, this study has added to previous literatures carried out, by examining the impact of taxation on National development with particular reference on the policies, its challenges and expected possible development and outcomes in the foreseeable future.

Based on the numerous studies reviewed for the purpose of this paper, study concludes that the impact of taxation coupled with tax policy reforms in recent years, has not yet been felt in the National development of Nigeria. This set back could be liken to series of problems earlier highlighted besieging the Nigeria tax system and delayed implementations of laid out recommendations of the tax policy.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion of the study, we recommended that: The Nigerian government should embrace the way most developed countries have been able to tackle the needs of its citizens through the effective use of taxes visible to all, this is one tale the government must read itself and take its morals seriously, as the social contract between the government exists not only to serve the government's needs but the people as well. In doing so, other notable suggestions are as follows:

The government should move past the present state of budget passage, in order to encourage true fiscal growth. The budget speeches should manifest practical fiscal policies of how the country will not just drive revenue, but workable metrics of how that can be affected.

The government should initiate more financial controls and performance audits to promote infrastructure development and curb corruption and inefficiencies in the Nigerian tax system as well as increase the contribution of taxation to the development of the country. Also, stringent measures should be put in place by the government to curb the increasing rate of tax evasion among tax payers.

The government must be ready to be held accountable (trust issue) for the way and manner the tax money is being expended. Where the trust bridge can be effectively maintained there is sure to be a spike in voluntary compliance. The basic understanding of tax concepts among the average Nigerian is not yet ingrained. The taxpayer (s) will need to be engaged even more and there is need for tax clubs to be introduced in Secondary schools across the country for active participation.

Pertaining to tax administration, a good number of developed countries have recorded significant progress in terms of automated tax collection and leveraging appropriate applications to: identify the tax payers, obtain financial information and ensuring that tax are correctly paid to the treasury. This has resulted to increase tax collection, compliance level, and delivery of social services, transparency and improved accountability. Considering the highlighted reality, the Nigeria tax system will be greatly impacted if the tax administrative process to technology is adopted on a bigger scale than its current status.

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