

## THE SCHEME OF LEADERSHIP AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE TWO SIDES OF A COIN

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### Abstract

*In the popular consciousness of mankind, leadership has been one of the seminal phenomenon which has captured the concern of the citizens of the world. It is one of the most observed, practiced and thought provoking, yet the least understood. It exists in all societies both human and animals, even though in plants one cannot incisively identify this phenomenon. Leadership is seen as the capacity to influence, inspire, rally, direct, encourage, motivate, induce, mobilize and activate others to pursue a common goal while maintaining commitment, momentum, confidence and courage. Therefore, leaders in any group refine, reflect, reconstruct acceptable and agreeable standards of development. But in Nigeria, it is obvious that poor leadership is the major problem of development. So, the major argument of this paper is that for any meaningful development to take place in any nation, it requires a functional leadership. This implies that the quality of leadership in any nation determines the level of national development in that nation. Hence, what we require today are leaders with visions and missions who will move this country along the envisaged path of progress and embrace the challenges of modernization and globalization. Also, politicians who are pandering to ethnic interests should be rejected at the polling booth while hard work, good skills and intelligence should be rewarded strictly on merits, without regard to ethnicity and religion. This is an option that could lead the nation to a stable development and greatness. Furthermore, for leadership to take its due place in Nigeria, our conception of leadership must move from rhetoric to application of correct values.*

**Keywords:** leadership, development, leadership failure in Nigeria.

### Introduction

It's quite worrisome and heart breaking that despite the abundance of resources in Nigeria, her citizen still experience hardship, insecurity, impoverishment, under development etc. What we lack very much is a sufficient number of powerful leaders with the caliber, character and qualities, requisite for uniting and keeping happily together the diverse elements in our nation and for the courageous and effective assaults on the multitudinous and intractable looking problems which besets us. In essence, lack of good, honest and effective leadership explains the paradox of poverty/under development in the midst of plenty in Nigeria. Lack of development in various facets of our national life is traceable to lack of servant/leader style and this has given rise to mismanagement of public resources and corruption among the public officials. Again, the inability of Nigeria to achieve greatness like the advanced countries of the world can be attributed to her lack of deeply committed national leadership that is determined to lead her towards social, economy and political landmark.

Nigeria as a result, has registered herself as a laughing stock to the outside world with her inability to effectively manage the wealth that nature has endowed her with. Her economic system is awful and lacks the capacity to promote and sustain growth and development. Many of the killings, terrorist activities, ethno – religious violence, in Nigeria today, are a direct consequence of this festering sore of hatred as a

consequence of the collapse of the Nigerian ruling class project. The citizenry have over the years been experiencing the worst, compared with their counterparts in some other countries of the world. This is so because virtually all the means that could be exploited to extricate Nigeria from her diverse problems are being blocked with the undoing's of Nigerian self-appointed or elected leaders. As a result, the nation's political system is fast collapsing, caused mainly by lack of effective, visionary and efficient leadership.

According to Dike (2000) quality leadership is central to the attainment of development in a given polity. In an increasing changing and globalized world, leadership is the most visible aspect of management with its potential of transforming the workforce into willing and winning team, with the appropriate relations to actualize collectively determined corporate objectives in the society. It is only good leadership that can bring Nigeria out of the brink of collapse, hence the essence of leadership is about producing an environment where individuals regularly perform to the best of their capability. A careful examination of the attitude and behaviour of the leaders of post – colonial Nigeria shows that many of the civilian, as well as military leaders were mired in the pursuit of selfish personal goals at the expense of broader national interest or needs. In other words, they were 'instrumental' leaders or what David Apter called "consummatory" leaders.

However, there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else", but leadership. The lack of selfless, non – corrupt and committed leaders has contributed immensely to the socio – political and economic predicaments facing Nigeria today. So, every indicators of under development in Nigeria is due to the failure of our leaders to strategically mobilize our resources for political, socio economic advancement of our nation and people. Then the question is - what is leadership? In business, religion, politics, education, public service and families we need good leaders. Those who can take care of the common wealth and our patrimony, those who are able to give direction and sacrifice for others. Those who can provide service, motivation, inspiration and efficiency for the communities, societies, organizations and nations at large.

### **Leadership**

Burns (1978) rhetorically expressed his understanding of leadership as one of the most observed and the least understood phenomenon on earth. Leadership involves the use of power which is "the ability of one person to influence the behaviour of another. The exercise of power or influence implies "making things happen" through others. Leadership entails the ability to inspire other people to work towards the attainment of a common goal. Leadership is therefore vital in any organization or community because a manager must use it to secure the co-operation of his subordinates. With the co-operation of subordinates, decisions could be converted into actions and results obtained. Craig Johnson (2009), defines leadership as "the exercise of influence in a group context... people having the greatest impact on the group or organization. Leaders are change agents engaged in furthering the needs, wants and goals...."

Oshionebo & Ariyo (2007) uphold that leadership relates to exerting influence among a group of people so that the collective purposes of that group will be achieved and optimally too. That "group" could be the entire world, a country or a part there- of, or a club, and similar outfit. According to Munroe (1984), "leadership is like beauty, it's hard to define but you know it when you see it". More, leaders he argues are "ordinary people who accept or are placed under extra ordinary circumstances that bring forth their latent potential, producing a character that inspires the confidence and trust of others". Myles Munroe (2009), gives an insightful meaning of leadership as "the capacity to influence others through inspiration motivated by a passion, generated by a vision, produced by a conviction ignited by a purpose". Adepoju (1998) examined leadership in twofold ways, viz: (a) as an organizational position as well as (b) as an influence process. He further explained that leadership as an organizational position talks about a person who has been put in a leadership or decision making- role. The second view stresses that a leader inspires others to follow. This gives an idea of the dynamics of leadership as a way of influencing others towards the realization of organizational goals.

However, a more comprehensive definition of leadership was given by Chester Bernard as cited in legacy (2016). For him, leadership is the ability of the superior to influence the behavior of subordinate or group and persuade them to follow a particular course of action. Mamora (2012) pointed out that leadership starts with self, according to him, “if you cannot lead yourself, how can you lead others?” Countries that have leaders that are accountable are more liable to win the fight against great poverty and disease.

Ajadi & Adedeji (2009) explained that a leader is seen as the force that initiates action amongst people and guides the activities in a particular direction; maintains the activities and unites efforts towards collective goals.

### **Leaders**

A leader is a person appointed or elected by an organisation to exercise a power delegated to her by that organization. This power may be addressed to any or all of three very general and related functions: *- establishing the goals, purposes or objectives of the organization, creating the structures through which the objective are fulfilled and maintaining or enhancing these structures.* Gardner (1978) describes a leader as someone who understands the challenges that all in the society must face, to assist in the setting of goals and priorities, to work with others in finding paths to those goals chosen, maintaining public morale, and motivation and nurturing a workable level of public unity. This, implies that a leader must possess the power or influence of transforming something common into something valuable. A leader is someone who leads a group of people in the direction of the accomplishment of set goals. He argued further that leaders have duties to do and the task of leaders is to help societies “understand the problems that all must face, to aid in the setting of goals and priorities, to work with others in finding paths to those goals chosen, maintaining public morale, and motivation and nurturing a workable level of public unity”.

In line with the above, Dagaci (2009), was of the view that leaders connotes actors who create, implement or interpret the laws that are binding on existing social institutions and played a state role. So, Leaders in this nation must activate existing institutions in pursuit of the society’s goals and help redesign such institutions to achieve results which is the development of the nation. Then, John Maxwell insisted that leaders who do not possess a clear vision and communicate it well always have a difficult time empowering others.

### **Development**

Development, in its most simplistic definition means progress. It presupposes change for the better. Development is dynamic; it is a continuum, changing with situations. It represents transformation from a primitive to a civilized one. It refers to an increase in the earnings of a nation and consequent increase in its foreign exchange earnings. It also refers to an increase in the standard and quality of lives of the people. In intellectual circles, development has a multi-angular definition, though this multi-angularity converges towards same point. Mbumega (2012), stressed that development is geared towards the positive and holistic transformation of the lives of individuals in a country in its entirety. Olomola (1996) describes development as the advancement made through progressive and qualitative alterations in social, economic, cultural, technological as well as political conditions of a society, leading to an enhancement in the welfare of citizens.

Development encompasses growth and embraces the quality of life as a social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of income etc. It is the capacity of members of the society to actualize them by participating actively in the social engineering of their destiny. Adebayo (2000) argues that development takes place only when the central problem of poverty, unemployment and inequalities in a society have reduced from high levels. It is necessary to state that, the objectives of development is to extend the frontier of human lives.

### **National Development**

National development refers to the gradual manifestation of positive changes in the economic, industrial, political, social- cultural and administrative life of a country. National development according to (Ogai

2003), "deals with human endowments, natural/physical, psychological and other factors". National development goes beyond having plenty of money, it embraces all aspects of social behaviour such as the establishment of law and order, resourcefulness in business dealings, honesty in business relations, sophistication, broadmindedness, familiarity with science, modern technology and mechanical gadgets and overall positive national outlook. National development has three major aspects; economic and social aspect, political and cultural aspect and industrial and administrative aspect. National development is not an accident. It is a product of law and order and the discipline they create.

However, the tensions and explosions usually provoked by mass unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and other consequences of economic and social dislocation are the greatest threats to national development. Other impediments to national development with particular reference to Nigeria include lack of good governance/leadership, greed among the political leaders, terrorism, abduction, poverty, tribalism, Boko Haram insurgency etc.

### **Relationship Between Leadership And National Development**

In the relationship, one can argue that leadership and national development are twin engines. You need good leadership to conceive dynamic policies that will drive development at all levels. Leadership facilitates goals accomplishment by giving its team members what they need in order to be productive. Leadership plays a fundamental role in making sure that the lives and welfare of the citizens is improved through the provision of basic infrastructural amenities of life. Effective leadership is central to the attainment of success. Underscoring the issue of effective leadership in modern societies is the manner in which politics is played as well as what the people who seek power use it for that eventually shapes the outcomes of governance and development in that nation (Iyoha, et al 2015; UNDP 1998; World Bank 1989). The quality of governance/leadership is the major determinant of a country's economic development. Good governance is thus an ingredient that provides a conducive environment for foreign investors which can promote economic growth and development (Bello & Lamidi 2009).

According to Udo (2010), leadership, entrepreneurship, capital and resources, both human and physical are the basic factors of development. Leadership is a defining element between success or failure of any organization (polity). It is the thread that binds the resources of the state to people's value goals. The strength of the leadership in terms of character and quality will determine the level of success a polity will attain in its move toward the end of national and local development prospects (Todaro, 2004). Leadership help to translate development process and sustainability through various policies and programmes initiated by the leaders. Thus, without leadership there could not be development especially in the social, human and cultural dimension.

### **Leadership and National Development in Nigeria**

Development as globally defined has suffered and suffering from a stunted growth in the country. The concept of national development in Nigeria has been perverted. In Nigeria and most parts of Africa, the three key drivers of development are retrogressing because of the missing link- visionary, discipline and courageous leadership. These immense human, material and fiscal resources as well as potentials failed to transmute into visible socio-economic growth and development, instead, the huge and large petroleum oil driven national revenue and foreign exchange earnings were grossly mismanaged to the extent that Nigeria has remained stagnant economically in terms of overall national development.

(Nyewusira 2007), noted that the bane of Nigeria's development is that crucial institutions of government are administered by a ruling class that lacks governance capability and contract management culture. In line with this, Anazodo et al, (2012) also argued today most Nigerians leaders lack vision and mission what cut across all the states in Nigeria and this is the reasons why effective leadership and sustainable national development is rare in our contemporary Nigeria. To this effect, contemporary Nigerian leaders are responsible for decayed infrastructures, down turn economy, corruption and decline indicators of national

development. Also, ethnocentrism, the politics of exclusion, discrimination, political opportunism, economic woes, weak institutions and bureaucracy among several others have militate against effective leadership and national development in Nigeria So, Nigeria's main problem is not its federalism but rather its visionless and irresponsible political elite who have manipulated its politics, economy and religion to serves their own parochial interest.

Our economy failed not exactly because we embarked on extravagant spending in a bid to modernize Nigeria but squarely because we lacked functional institutions where discipline, justice and selfless-services are extolled. Our economy failed simply because the institutions were hijacked by public officers more concerned with their personal welfares than in the development of the nation. Thus the culture of poor and ineffective political leadership therefore, the country has kept jumping from one problem to another. Chirot (1977) avers that "underdevelopment of a country is the result of its deficient value system and economic structure", while Dike (2008) agreed that the abysmal failure of military rule and previous civilian administrations is associated with huge corruption in the state and the economy. Then as a solution to all these, Dickson (2011) asserts that if the sectors (power, education, health, manufacturing, etc) in Nigeria are expected to work, then, Nigeria needs good governance so as to be able to actualise its potentials and improve the wellbeing of the citizens and development in geo-political terms.

#### **Effects of Bad Leadership on Development in Nigeria**

The poor state or non – availability of social infrastructures and amenities in many parts of the country has constantly thrown the country into a state of anomie. We have become a country that seems to be occupied with engaging the throttle of our nation in reverse gear. We forage for fate in dark alleys and in a vast landscape of waste. The Nigeria nation struggle with many contradictions and self-inflicted agonies. Wanton destruction of lives through road carnages, infant mortality and a host of other issues that singularly constitute a collective nightmare in serious nations continue here without even being acknowledged by our leaders. So, the lack of selfless, non-corrupt and committed leaders has contributed immensely to the socio-political and economic predicament facing Nigeria today.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our political leaders and policy makers should initiate strategies on how to overcome the challenges of development and focus on effective leadership propelled by a sense of self sacrifice and direction coupled with transparency and accountability in government to cling to an enviable position. It takes a committed leadership to accomplish a propitious change in a society. For the nation to move forward, the electoral reforms project should be concluded, the economy must be fixed, the protracted power crises must be addressed, transportation and high cost of governance must be addressed too. In addition, we must positively change our personal attitudes to be able to change the social structure. This is because according to (Allport 1979) "the structure is the product of the attitudes of many single people".

Again, the rule of law must be a cardinal principle of any administration and the leadership in Nigeria. Nigeria leaders should be able to see, project and assemble a vision of a desired future for the nation. Leaders of our social cultural organization must ask for divine guidance and wisdom to enable them stem the tide of all challenges ahead. What Nigeria needs today is actually not more money but simply the will and wisdom for the contemporary leaders to learn the art of true leadership.

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