

LEADERSHIP AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN A DEVELOPING ECONOMY: A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE NIGERIA'S' EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT: *The ability of a person to effectively and efficiently harness as well as influence the material and human resources of a country is very fundamental to the development of an organisation as a sub-system and all sectors of a country as a whole. In this circumstance it will be appropriate to state unequivocally that leadership (those who occupy public positions) 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. It is in line with the above assertion that this paper aims at studying the role of leadership in ensuring the development of a country while beaming our search light on a developing economy. The research paper approach adopted for the study conforms to qualitative research, as it reviews the literature relating to organisational behaviour and human resource management. After critical x-ray of related write-ups on the topic under study, we found out that some factors such as corruption, wrong value-system, greed and selfishness, patriotism, ethnicity to name but a few, hinder leaders in developing countries from raising the standard of living of the citizens. Finally the study recommended among other things that Nigeria leaders should be able to see, project and assemble a vision of a desired future for the nation. In addition, they should be selfless, sensitive, moral credent and engaging as these are the fundamental perquisite for mobilising followership, particularly in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society like Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Leader, Leadership, Development, Economic development and Developing Economy

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental gains of development generally are manifested in the bettered and improved of lives of the citizens of a nation through provisions of portable water supply, extreme reduction of poverty, low employment rates, high literacy rate, high quality educational system, sophisticated and well equipped health care service delivery, to mention but a few. To provide these facilities and infrastructure, countries of the world especially the developed ones like United States of America, Germany, Britain, Australia, Netherlands, Norway etc. have through their leaders, effectively and prudently managed the available resources endowed on them by providence to reduce the sufferings and pains of the average man in the society (Before its news, 2014).

Nigeria is a country blessed with abundance of human and natural resources (such as crude oil, tin, zinc, cocoa, groundnut etc.) which nature has endowed on her. The country's climate conditions favour wide variety of agricultural and economic resource activities. Additionally, Nigeria is the most populous country in the continent of Africa, with abundant economic resources, her people are still suffering in abject poverty and impoverishment, poor and ineffective infrastructural facilities, low and primitive service delivery, industrial development

still below average, and still remains a developing economy (Nigerian Observer, 2015). Stressing on the poverty level in Nigeria, Lewis (2012), stipulated that more than two-thirds of Nigerians are struggling daily for livelihood. Despite more than 600 billion in oil revenues since 1970, Nigeria still ranks among the lower fifth of countries in poverty and indicators to popular welfare. Harping on the same point above Ozor (2004), observed that Nigeria, in spite of her rich and abundant human and natural resources, so many years of economic development planning activities, countless number of public enterprises set up for the economic development of the country infrastructural facilities are poor and ineffective, service delivery is very low, and industrial development is still very much below average.

It is quite worrisome and heart-breaking that despite the abundance of resources in Nigeria, her citizens still experiencing hardship, impoverishment and insecurity. This pathetic situation has inspired scholars both local and international to investigate and find out the reason for the deteriorating state of the economy which is obvious in the myriads of literature on the subject matter. Though there are many reasons which were attributed for the economic backwardness of Nigeria, but congruent or area of convergence in the write ups among these scholars is tied to the problem of poor leadership. Arguing on the same line of reasoning, the Nigerian Observer (2015), stated that literature on the Nigeria economy has cited leadership problems as a major cause of the country's inability to effectively mobilize her resources. Critics have shown quite clearly that effective leadership is a great obstacle to development in Nigeria. Leadership problem has hampered the country's progress in the political, economic, military and socio-cultural sectors. Bendel Newspaper Company Limited (2016) not left in the argument of leadership problem in Nigeria observed that, at independence in 1960, the international community amazed at the economic potentials of Nigeria, was quite certain that if our resources were appropriately managed, Nigeria would one day become the giant Africa. Unfortunately, due to the failure of leadership to strategically mobilise our resources for political, socio-economic and cultural advancement of our nation and people, Nigeria is yet to make appreciable gains in development, worsened by a poor infrastructural base. What then is leadership?

Cole (1998) sees leadership as essentially a process in which one individual, sometimes a small group of individuals, influences the efforts of others towards the achievement of goals in a given circumstances. Leadership involves managing the external boundaries of the group, as well as dealing constructively with members of internal responsibilities, roles and relationship. Adduced in the definition above is that the leadership of every country plays a very important role in the socio-economic development of a country through effective and adequately harnessing the natural and human resources to enable the country achieve the status of a rich and developed nation. Often, leadership is associated with great political figures that inspire others because of their extraordinary vision and commitment to high ideals. These leaders seem to embody the most desirable and sought-after characteristics. They are people who are able to command loyalty, commitment, trust, dedication, respect, obedient, love or even worship from their followers (Linstead, Fulop and Lilley, 2004).

However, it is in line with the above theoretical expose on the efficacy of leadership in ensuring the effective and efficient transformation of the political, social, cultural, economic and religious environment for the betterment of the life of its citizenry, that this paper intends to carry out an in-depth study to find out the role leadership has played in ensuring development in a developing economy of which Nigeria is a typical example.

Conceptual Clarification

The following concepts below will be considered for clarification to aid a better understanding of this work.

Leader

A leader is a person who influences a group of people towards the achievement of a goal. It is also perceived as a person who that holds a dominant or superior position within its field, and is able to exercise a high degree of control or influence over others (Business Dictionary, 2016).

Leadership

The word leadership from a narrow view could be referred to as the action of leading a group of people or an organisation, or the ability to do this. A more comprehensive definition of leadership was given by Chester Bernard as cited in Legacy (2016). For Him, leadership is the ability of a superior to influence the behaviour of subordinate or group and persuade them to follow a particular course of action.

Development

The word development according to Schumpeter cited in Jhingan (2003), is defined as the discontinuous and spontaneous change in the stationery state which forever alters and displaces the equilibrium state previously existing.

Economic development

Economic development can be referred to as the quantitative and qualitative changes in an existing economy. Economic development involves development of human capital, increasing the literacy ratio, improve important infrastructure, improvement of health and safety, and other areas that aims at increasing the general welfare of the citizens. Economic development is can also be seen as an increase in living conditions, improvement of the self-esteem needs and a free and just society. He suggests that the most accurate method of measuring economic development is Human Development index which takes into account the literacy rate which in-turn has outright impact on productivity and could lead to economic growth (Todaro, 2016).

Developing economy

A developing economy is one where people have a lower standard of living and less developed industries than other countries. A developing economy is a nation where the average income is much lower than in industrial nations, where the economy relies on a few export crops, and where farming is conducted by primitive methods (Dictionary Thesaurus Translate Dictionary, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Theory is a set of statements or principles devised to explain a group of facts or phenomena, especially one that has been repeatedly tested or is widely accepted and can be used to make predictions about natural phenomena (The Free Dictionary, 2015). With above insight on what a theory is, the Functional approach to leadership will be adopted for this research. The rationale behind this approach is that attention is focused on the functions of leadership and not on the personality of the leader, or on the man or woman in the job. The functional approach

to leadership first appeared at about the same period of time (the late 1940s and early 1950s) that scientists began questioning the trait and style approach. The functional approach views leadership in terms of how the leader's behaviour affects, and is affected by, the group of followers. This approach concentrates on the nature of the group, the followers or subordinates and the content of leadership (Mullins, 2005).

By application leaders should exhibit behaviours (dedication, patriotism, commitment, high moral standards, etc.) capable of influencing the citizens to believe in their strategic vision for change, accept management decisions as well as inspire them to key into the various developmental programmes and policies initiated for growth and development. Aside that, every leader's major responsibility is to channel all resources towards the various functions that will lead to the total transformation of the political, cultural, economic as well as social environment for the wellbeing of members of the society through provisions of infrastructural facilities and basic social amenities that will in the long run increase the standard of living and reduce to cost of living to the barest minimum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an explanatory research based solely on insights drawn from the analysis of the existing literature of different studies, periodicals and books related to the topic of study in order to investigate the relationship between leadership and economic development. The research will serve as a means to help acquire useful information or knowledge about the subject area. By drawing on the existing literature, not only topic under consideration is theorized, but also formulates and discusses the proposition that will help illuminate and discuss some ingredients that are very fundamental to enable a leader ensure the social, cultural, political and economic transformation of a developing country.

The Quest for Economic Development in Nigeria

The nationalist struggle by the few educated Nigerians led to the granting of her independence on the 1st October, 1960 by the British Colonial government, consequently the country has experienced different turns of government/regimes (military and civilian) with their various development programmes, policies and projects, all geared towards the transformation of the economy for the betterment of the average man in the society through provision of basic infrastructural facilities to improve the standard of living among her citizens. Notable among these was the First National Economic Development Plan (1962-1968), which was drawn up by the representatives of the then existing four governments in Nigeria – the people of Southern Cameroons have voted in 1961, to join their kith and kin in Cameroon- who formed the National Economic Council, steered by the Joint Planning Committee, also composed of the representatives of the four government of the country. The First National Development Plan had the sole objectives of improving/increasing the standard of living i.e. the welfare, of Nigerians (Ozor, 2004). The Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), through to the Third National Development (1975-1980), were devoted primarily reconstruct and rehabilitate infrastructure that were destroyed during the civil war years. This period experienced massive investment of resources into the rehabilitation and construction of new infrastructural facilities (Sanusi, 2012). The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) was designed to reduce the dependence of the economy on a narrow range of activities and broaden the economic base as well as develop the technological base. Permit to state that the economic recession

experienced in the 1980's necessitated the initiation and implementation of Economic Stabilisation Measures and later the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which was aimed at creating more market-friendly economy and to encourage private enterprise through the removal of cumbersome administrative mechanism in economic management. The economic deregulation and liberalisation policies of the late 1980's and 1990's had the goal of fostering effective allocation of scarce resources. Furthermore, Nigeria's vision 2020 was aimed at transforming the country and focusing firmly on the path of becoming a developed nation by the year 2010. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of 2004 was a home-grown poverty reduction, value-reorientation and socio-economic development strategy for the country (Sanusi, 2012). In January 2012, the government of Nigeria, through a prudent strategic economic intervention, reduced the amount of subsidy paid on petroleum products. As a control measure, the federal government decided to channel its own share of the subsidy reinvestment funds into a combination of programmes to stimulate the economy and alleviate poverty through provision of critical infrastructure and safety net projects. The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) is thus designed to invest the savings' accrued from the fuel subsidy reduction on vulnerable populations in Nigeria by initiating a robust social safety net programme to improve their lives. It also aims to stimulate the economy and alleviate poverty through critical infrastructure and human resource empowerment projects. The scheme aims at implementation of different programmes including Maternal and Child Health, public works, employment schemes, mass transit programmes, vocational training and skill acquisition schemes (About Sure-P, 2012).

However, taking a cursory look at the different economic programmes initiated by various leaders at different periods as discussed above, obvious is the fact that the aims and objectives of initiating these programmes were not effectively and efficiently actualised due to some inherent factors posing a serious obstacle to these leaders. We shall consider a detailed discussion of these factors in the below subheading.

Leadership Problems in Nigeria

Corruption

One of the major reasons of underdevelopment in Nigeria is the tied to the word 'corruption', which has eaten so deep into the fabrics of its society to the extent that the word is now synonymous with Nigerians. Corruption according to World Bank (1997) is defined as the abuse of public office for private gains. When public office is abused for private gain is when an official accepts edicts or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribe to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. The above meaning of corruption explains a circumstance where public officials who are in custodian of public funds meant for the improvement of the life of the common man, see it as an opportunity to siphon and amass wealth for his selfish interest and that of his cronies. Observing the same point, Dorcas (2013) pointed out that in Nigeria today, leadership across the board from local to national level is about the well-being of the leaders and their cronies and the entrenchment of their rules by crook means. Their misrule is also manifested in the spate of onslaughts against perceived opponents while in this process, the interests and well-being of the society is undermined or even ignored. This ought not to be so, as the purpose of leadership is about the well-being of the society. An x-ray of some corruption cases cited by Isaac (2015) which involves some Nigeria public officials will be listed below, among which are:

1. **\$6bn Fuel Subsidy Scam:** Nigeria's parliament discussed a report said to reveal that \$6bn has been defrauded from the fuel subsidy fund in the past two years. The debate, which was televised live, made official findings that have been widely leaked in recent days and notable among members of the PDP or their families that were involved in the scam are people like Mallam Ali and Mahmud Tukur.
2. **123bn Naira Fraud- Stephen Oronsaye:** A damning report by the Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation has indicted a former Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mr. Stephen Oronsaye, over an alleged N123billion fraud perpetrated during his tenure, between 2009 and 2010.
3. **N195 Billion Maina Pension Scam:** It is believed that Alhaji Maina misappropriated billions of naira worth of pension funds, which he claimed to, have recovered from pension thieves. The senate committee probing pension funds management accused him of mopping up pension funds from banks and depositing the money in private accounts. According to the committee, this mopping of funds has made it impossible to pay thousands of pensioners across the country from months.
4. **Police Pension Fund Fraud:** The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned the ex-permanent secretary in the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, now a director in the Police Pension Office, Atiku Abubakar Kigo, the chief accountant, Mrs Uzoma Cyril Attang, and four others before an Abuja high court on an 18-count charge of conspiracy, breach of trust and embezzlement of N32.8 billion police pension funds.
5. **Stella Oduah Car Purchase Scandal:** The committee set up by former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan to probe the N255m bulletproof car scandal in the aviation ministry indicted the minister, Mrs Stella Oduah. In October 2015, there were reports that with the approval of the minister, the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority purchased two bulletproof BMW cars at an allegedly inflated rate of N255m.

Lack of Patriotism

One of the secreted or necessary ingredients needed for development in any country is when the leaders and led exhibit high level of patriotism for the country. A patriot is one who not only says he loves his country but rather he says and can even die for the country when the situation arises. Like stated earlier in this work, Nigeria is a country blessed with abundance of material and human resources, yet the masses are suffering under abject poverty and impoverishment including inadequate basic infrastructural facilities that will increase the standard of living of its populace. In this ugly situation where a country cannot provide the basic needs of the people, patriotism will almost be near impossible to exhibit by Nigerians rather any Nigerian who is opportune to find himself in a position to manage public fund for the social, economic, and political development of the country will rather syphon and garner the fund to satisfy his personal aggrandisement and that of his kith and kin because there is no love for the country.

Value System

The value system of any country is what the people of that society hold in high esteem or lay so much emphasis on. A society that places so much emphasis on handworks, discipline, achievement, truth, trust and commitment will experience development both human and

otherwise. Nigerians, during the seventies and eighties were a people that worked very hard to sustain and uphold honesty and justice in their dealings with their fellow man. They shunned every evil vice that will bring degradation to their reputation, especially to their family and cultural background. The end of the Oil boom changed the other of the day from as a result of the high rate of poverty and hardship that characterised the oil recession period. Nigerians became very desperate to survive and upheld “riches or wealth” as her value system so as to meet up with basic needs of life, consequently involving in all manner of callous and immoral activities which runs contrary to truth honesty, justice and fairness. Those who found themselves in public positions saw it as a means of securing wealth for themselves and that of their unborn generations to the detriment of the common man irrespective of the manner in which the money was acquired. The pathetic side of the story is that when this leaders loot the public treasure, the community which used to be the upholder of justice, fairness and honesty, are the ones who will end up conferring them with titles of achievement being not ignorant of the illegal means they acquired the wealth.

Greed and Insensitivity

Yet another problem of leadership in Nigeria is the greed and insensitivity factor. Greed according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary is seen as a strong desire for more wealth, possessions, power etc. than a person needs while insensitivity is taken from the adjective insensitive which means not caring or realising how other people feel, and therefore likely to hurt and offend them. The above explanation above summarises the character exhibited by the leaders in Nigeria. They are so greedy for riches, possessions most especially political power which they can do anything barbaric and uncivilised to acquire and sustain. This also goes with saying that the government of the day is insensitive to the yearnings of the people and deaf to their cry of desperations. Those who are holding the reins of power believe too much in themselves, as if they know it all and they have everything in control. In their own eyes they are doing wonderfully well, the signals everywhere are that the leaders have lost their bearing (Ehusani, 2014).

Lack of Moral Credentials

One of the ultimate reasons for venturing into politics or aspiring leadership position is to serve the masses and ensure that the available resources at ones disposal are judiciously harnessed to ensure the socio-economic , political and cultural development of the lives of the common man in the society through provision of basic infrastructural facilities and essential social amenities. However, prevalent in the minds of Nigerian leaders is that public position is an avenue to amass wealth as against serving the common man in the society. Harping on the above point, Ehunasi (2014) observed that many believe that a major factor in the Nigeria socio-political conundrum is the question of moral credentials of those at the helm of our affairs. Evidence abounds that many just have bought their way into positions of leadership. Their true motive is not necessarily out of a passion to serve the people of the country but to take advantage of the prevailing political contradictions and economic distress for personal aggrandisement. Consequently the average Nigerian political leader develops an imperial air of condescension and once in power treats people with utter disrespect, sometimes bordering on disdain.

In spite of the above highlighted and discussed problems of leadership in Nigeria, Sanusi (2012) summarised the leadership problems in Nigeria as follows:

- Inadequate motivation of subordinates and followers leading to disconnect in leadership and followership relationship.
- Lack of leadership education and skills to discharge expected roles and perform leadership duties effectively
- Prevalence of executive/legislative/judicial lawlessness and corruption within the body polity as the personal interests of many leaders override collective goals. The frenzied quest for wealth over and above all other considerations has rendered leadership most ineffective.
- Abuse and manipulation of ethnic relationship by leaders in authority by way of nepotism, tribalism, favouritism and religious bigotry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the various challenges of leadership in Nigeria discussed above, obvious is that fact that the place of a leader in ensuring the total transformation of the society for the general good of the common man cannot be over-stated. Be that as it may, leadership in Nigeria is confronted with numerous challenges as discussed in the earlier sub-heading. We shall at this point, under this section proffer some recommendations to help salvage the ugly leadership situations and the concomitant increase in corruption, poverty and socio-economic development. They are:

- i. The government of Nigeria should enforce and mobilise the appropriate anti-graft institutions or agencies with the necessary materials needed to apprehend and recover looted public funds from corrupt public officials. Lawmakers should also pass into law stern measures as punishments to prevent prospective public officials from looting public fund or involving in corrupt practices.
- ii. Nigerians, especially the leaders should imbibe the spirit of patriotism. This will enable them have that strong feeling to always want to do everything possible to ensure the growth and development of the country. By being patriotic, the leaders will not only confess with their mouth that they love Nigeria but will do all that is necessary by their actions to show that they love the country and her citizens.
- iii. For the single reason that the value system plays a paramount role in determining the level of progress in any society, the leaders in Nigeria should jettison the value system of extolling “riches or wealth” and embrace the value system which places high price value on honesty, handwork and integrity
- iv. Those that are opportune to find themselves in public offices should be very sensitive to the cries and desperations of the average man in the society.
- v. Nigerians must be encouraged, motivated and facilitated to travel widely across the continent in order to overcome the ethnic animosities that were ignited by the colonial masters, established by the post-colonial tussle for power among ruling elites, and strengthened by geographical claustrophobia (Okolo and Raymond, 2014).
- vi. The need for the establishment of the anti-corruption court that will take charge of all cases against corrupt politicians and administrators.

- vii. Nigeria government should embark on not just the deceptive increment in Gross Domestic Product but real development in terms of standard of living, health, education, food, security and infrastructural growth must be given prominence. When all these are provided, corruption and other related crimes will be reduced to its barest minimum. And lastly
- viii. Nigeria leaders should be able to see, project and assemble a vision of a desired future for the nation. In addition, they should be selfless, sensitive, moral credent and engaging as these are the fundamental perquisite for mobilising followership, particularly in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society like Nigeria. As a motivator, leadership would be able to build bridges across divides and as such be able to foster necessary harmony for collective good.

CONCLUSION

From the discussions above, it is obvious that leadership plays a very vital role in societies especially in the areas of managing the material and non-material resources towards transforming the social, political, economic and cultural environment for the improvement of the living condition of the average man. Leadership is seen as the way a person or group of persons influence the skills, efforts and knowledge of other people towards achieving a goal or set of goals. Nigeria as a country is blessed with abundance of resources, human and material, but certain inherent factors pose a serious challenge for her leaders to effectively utilise these resources to improve the life of her citizenry. Among these factors are the corruption, nepotism and tribalism, favouritism, indiscipline, godfatherism, personal affiliation to touch but a few. Although these factors directly affect the leaders in Nigeria, corruption seems to have the greatest impact because the phenomenon has eaten too deep into the fabrics of the Nigeria society to the extent that the Prime Minister of Britain, David Cameron, described the country as “fantastically corrupt”.

However, in spite of the challenges these factors pose on leadership in the socio-economic development of Nigeria, the study recommended among others that; Nigerians, especially the leaders should imbibe the spirit of patriotism. This will enable them have that strong feeling to always want to do everything possible to ensure the growth and development of the country. By being patriotic, the leaders will not only confess with their mouth that they love Nigeria but will do all that is necessary by their actions (fighting and jettisoning corruption and its paraphernalia) to show that they love the country and her citizens.

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