

## Leadership Question and Accountability: The Challenges of Development in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*Leadership has attracted a wider spread discourse by scholars of Political scientist who argued that development of nation social political and economic structure rest on the principle of accountability of public sector management at various levels of government. The paper based on historical research method which involves the analysis of secondary source obtained from published text books, magazines, journals, newspapers, internet and periodic government publications, to examine leadership question and accountability as they relate to the challenges of development in Nigeria with reference to public sector management. The paper observes that these challenges are premised on bad governance, corruption and poor leadership at various levels of government. The paper advocates for strict compliance of public service enforceable by Code of Bureau Tribunal (CBT) rules that will enhance transparency and accountability in management of public resources, there by curbing governance and corruption.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, bad governance, accountability and transparency, development, public sector

DOI [URL:https://doi.org/10.36758/jggsda/v6n2.2021/7](https://doi.org/10.36758/jggsda/v6n2.2021/7)

### **Introduction**

Leadership in Africa is characterized by primordial, parochial, personalized and selfish tendencies, political brigandage, ethnic rivalry and cleavages, clientelism and privatized state apparatuses (Adeola, 2007). The post-independence leaders in Africa not only personalized power but also privatized the state for the purpose of primitive accumulation, clientelism, repression and all forms of opposition. Instead of using the state for initiating development, African leaders utilized it as a vehicle for terrorizing the citizenry, thereby leading to the disengagement of the populace from the realm (Agbaje & Roberts, 2002:154). As a result, leadership and accountability crisis has tragically devastated African societies.

The Nigerian leaders have impoverished the country social and economic institutions, thereby embezzled public funds with impurity due to weak or the absence of effective institutional checks and balances (Popoola, 2011). Leadership in Nigeria take undue advantage of these shortcomings to circumvent the few institutional restraints put in place to loot the country treasury. They get involved in grand corruption and acquire wealth through questionable means which they use to bribe their ways to remain in power (Aanazodo; Agbionu & Ezenwile, 2011). It is instructive to note that all of the challenges that undermined our national development, political corruption arising from leadership failure is the greatest impediment that stifles development, produces poverty and reinforces inequality in the country (Smith, 2007).

Leadership failure and development crisis has become a recurring issue in the discourse of the nation development. This is because the governing class has been target of pillory, vilification, condemnation and disdain in view of the pervasive and persistent socio-economic and political crisis (Seteolu, 2004). However, given the importance of the rural communities in the development prospect of a developing economy, especially Nigeria, it could be observed that the communities have continued to suffer neglect. They are grossly underdeveloped and poverty has remained pervasive. While resources abound, development has eluded most communities due to lack of “the mastery of the practical wisdom (leadership) and technology to mobilize them for our overall benefit” (Ozor & Nwankwo, 2008:63). This is to say that the lack of purposeful and knowledge leadership, the catalyst to integrate and drive the wheel of development is the bane of community development in Nigeria.

This paper beams its searchlight on the strategic role of leadership in development agenda in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Adopting a qualitative approach, the paper take a cursory look at the root causes of leadership failure and accountability and development crisis, the role of ideology and corruption in underdevelopment, and proffer remedial actions for effective leadership in order to attain the expected level of development.

It is important to note that Nigerian leaders have frequently come to their position with limited experience. Though most of them have battled on, confronting their awesome problems of development and nation-building essentially not only unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been at best only a qualified success. There are no institutions in Nigeria devoted to preparing potential leaders with a global outlook, leaders who will be able to cooperate with nation and international interest (Afegbua, 2012). Therefore, Nigeria remains pegged at the bottom of the global development system. The paper is theoretical in nature drawn its argument from secondary sources such as published journals, magazines, textbooks, newspapers and internet.

### **Leadership and Leadership question as a Dynamic Concept**

Since the idea of organized society, there have been debates on who governs, who should govern, what basis of political authority in a community should be, when, why and how should political actors obtain an appropriate influence. Plato, Marx, Aristotle, Locke, Rosseau, had raised philosophical interventions on these issues (Seteolu, 2004; Cranston, 1964).

The concept of leadership is just like many other concepts in social sciences is not amendable to a single universally accepted definition. Its definition have been cross-cultural as there are those who attempt to make meaning out of it. This section aims to contextualize the meanings of leadership through a review of the relevant literatures. Therefore, for more classification and its usage in this paper, we start the conceptual frameworks with the definition offered by Munroe (1984), leadership

is like beauty, it is hard to define but you know it when you see it. More, it argues that “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”. Similarly, Anazodo, Okoye and Ezenwile (2012) explain leadership as a process of influencing, directing and coordinating the activities of organized groups towards goal setting, goal achievement, and problem solving. It necessarily involves taking initiative or initiating new structures and new procedures and that is imperatively a function of the leader and the situational variable.

Leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour (Okadigbo, 1987). This suggests that leadership process is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resources, which determines the locus of power. Ogbeidi (2012), sees leadership as the process of providing directing, energizing others, and obtaining their voluntary commitment to the vision. Okolie (2010), stated further that leadership is reserved for people who influence a group of individuals towards a common goal. It entails the ability to identify, mobilise and organize the relevant talents, expertise and experience for the performance of the expected functions of an institution or agency. Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers (Gardner, 1990).

The leadership question has emerged as a result of the dearth of credible leadership to steer growth, development and productivity. The underdevelopment level of Nigeria’s social economy and development, the stark poverty syndrome in the country especially in the rural communities/areas, the spate of ethnic, religious and tribal violence, insecurity in the land, level of criminality, educational and infrastructural decays, level of unemployment especially among youths and graduates, political instability and electoral violence. (Mbah, 2013) indicate the obvious reality that there is a serious leadership problem in the country. The underdevelopment situation in the Nigeria necessitated this exploration on leadership question.

From the above definitions, it shows that leadership involves two parties; the leader(s) and followers. However, it is obvious that the leader is more involved in the leadership process than the followers.

### **The Concept of Accountability**

The term “accountability implies that government functionaries should be prepared to be answerable for their actions at all times to members of the public and be able to justify their actions at the level of moral and ethical standard (Good, 2005).” In the same vein, Osakede, Ijimakinwa, Adesanya & Ojikutu, (2015) posit that, “accountability demands that the citizens should know when public funds came into government treasury and how it was used to achieved the designed objective.” Ahmadu & Lawan (2013) holds that accountability is a fundamental requirement for proper management of resources for development in any society. According to Adeola (2007), accountability has five strategic dimensions, namely, transparency, liability, controllability, responsibility and responsiveness. These five dimensions are fundamental for the proper management of resources in an organization or a nation for enhanced performance.

Furthermore, accountability is vital to good governance; and good governance “seeks to improve the capacity of the state, encompassing a variety of strategies to increase efficiency and effectiveness of government performance” (Akume, 2012). For Anis (2014), a government is accountable when its leaders are responsive, when they have respect for the rule of law, and when citizens can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission and commission by the government and its officials. In the same

vain, Ehiabhi & Ehinimore (2011) holds that accountability arrangements “are intended to ensure both the constitutionally appropriate use of elective political power itself, and the coordinated, systematic and planned bureaucratic implementation of the policy purposes defined through the exercise of that power.

### **The Concept of Development**

The concept of development has been one of the major preoccupations of political philosophers in the Western world from ancient to the modern period.

Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving re-organization and re-orientation of entire economic and socio-political system (Smith, 2007). Although development as a concept has acquired greater importance since the end of the Second World War. In spite of its indisputable importance, however, it has equally acquired various meanings, orientations and values (Thomas, 2000:3). In essence development represents the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, turned to the diverse basic needs and evolving aspirations of individuals and groups within that system, moves away from condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as socially, politically and economically (Todaro & Smith, 2011). This implies that development has different connotations to different schools of thought.

Development refers to main-instigated socio-economic and political transformation of self and entire structure/institutions of a given political system to a comparatively low and/or present level to a more qualitative and/or remarkably improved form (Adetiba, 2013). These transformations have at its wake, improvements of the living conditions and the material standing of the citizenry. It pointedly improves man’s potentials and capabilities and subsequently eliminates and/or reduces poverty, penury, inequality, unemployment and generally enhances the condition for human existence and self-production. In sum, development is innately associated with total transmogrification of man and entire social structure from the present form to remarkably improved status (Okolie, 2009:7). In the view of Sen (1990) development as conterminous with “capacity expansion”, and freedom. As capacity expansion, it requires adequate empowerment of the state and society such that they can adequately distill their complimentary responsibilities. It also requires enhanced state capacity as well as institutional and government stability (Omotola, 2003). As freedom, development demands great latitude of autonomy for the political community and its constituent parts, as well as the individual members of such communities. Mabogunje (1995:1) however, suggested that two ideas underline the notion of development. The first is that development is about wealth creation for the use of the citizens; and the second is that every society succeeds best when in the direction if it is able to adapt and transform its own institutions as well as its mores and the general attitude of its people towards the attainment of these goals.

For development to be achieved, Rodney (1973) argued that in any society, it must possess the ability to tap its natural resources in order to cater for the material and the social lives of the generality of the people. This notion of development points directly to the capabilities of a political system. It entails the performance of a political entity in organizing and utilizing its human and natural resources in order to accomplish the goals of the decision makers (Todaro & Smith, 2011). This can be achieved through the authority apparatus and institutions that aid in goal attainments as well as the system use of its influences internally and externally. For a system to utilize its human and natural resources therefore, it must have an extractive capability. This is the ability of a system to tap its

human and natural resources in terms of production and utilization of its resources (Ansah & Okpaga, 2007:4).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper however adopts modernization theory to analysis leadership and development crisis in Nigeria. Modernization theory as a path to development simply means “following in the footsteps of the West”, which, in effect, is to say “if you want what we have (and have achieved), then you must become like us, and do as we did (and continue to do)” (Allen & Thomas, 2000:30). This theory constructed by Political Scientists, notably Talcott Parsons, sprang from a United States behavioural revolution “set out to observe, compare, and classify human behaviour in the hope of making general inferences about it” (Rapley, 2002:15). Modernization theory is sometimes called “Orthodox theory of development” and is quite opposed to Marxist and dependency perspectives. They are mostly views of Western Economists and Political Scientists.

They believed free, unregulated markets played a mainly positive role in development and argued that developing countries’ policies of interfering with free markets were largely self-defeating. There are three historic events that led to the emergence of the modernization theory of development after World War II. First, the rise of the United States as a world power following the demise of Britain, France and Germany after that war, and the subsequent implementation of the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Western Europe. Second, there was rise and spread of the world communist movement and the Soviet Union’s hegemonic power in Eastern Europe, China and Korea. Third. There was the collapse of the European empire in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which led to the independence of many nation-states in the Third World. These newly emergent countries soon after their freedom, were in search of a model of development, that could enhance both national economy and political independence (Chiot. 1993:32; So, 1991:23).

Rustow (1990) examined the issue of modernization from an economic point of view by providing five important stage of economic growth that could lead to development. These are:

- *The Traditional Society*: This is an agrarian-dependent society with inadequate access to science and technology. In such a society, religion, customs, and natural laws determine the mode of production and distribution. Economic lack diversification. Arrangements are based on social hierarchy and clan affiliations, and nepotism plays a greater role in the management of community affairs. Political power generally rests with landowners who wield remarkable authority over the entire society.
- *The Pre-conditions for takeoff*: This period marks a transition to modernity. Developing societies become conscious of the need for advancement. The society in this period introduces innovations in education. It also develops infrastructure such as banks, and other economic establishments for capital mobilization, encourages investment, broadens the scope of commerce internally and externally and finally, encourages the establishment of modern manufacturing industries.
- *The take-off stage*: It represents the most crucial of the development processes. This is the period of rapid and technological growth.
- *The drive to maturity Stage*: This is a period of long sustained growth. It is a period when society modernizes all economic activities through technology.
- *The age of high mass consumption*: This stage is at the apex of the development process. It is characterized by economic growth when society moves toward demanding durable consumer goods and services (Osoba, 1996).

This model suggests that the development process is sequential and that in order for traditional societies in African particularly, and the Third World in general to develop, they will have to alter their current economic policies, values and social organization to meet the challenges of development and modernization.

Despite these shortcomings, modernization theory is still found to be useful in explaining and analyzing leadership and development crisis in Nigeria. As the proponents of the theory have posited that if Nigeria must develop, then it must follow some sort of procedure already adopted by the leaders in advanced world.

### **Leadership Failure and Development Crisis in Nigeria: The Nexus**

The numerous problems which have been bedeviling Nigeria State vis-à-vis ethnic and communal clashes, increasing crime wave, drug trafficking, advance fee fraud, etc. have been blamed on ineffective leadership (Afegbua, 2012:142). The more fundamental cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria lies in the vicious leadership. The comprador leadership style of African heads of state and government ensure that sustainable development and peace remain an illusion.

Leadership issues and accountability with reference to development crisis has enveloped quite a large part of Nigeria, the principal causes attributed to either a long period of misrule, absence of good leadership and a complete disregard for the yearnings, aspirations and interests of the people by those who are supposed to be leaders. From Nigeria to Ghana, Egypt to Mali, Senegal to Gambia, Zambia to South Africa etc, it has been the challenge of youths uprising, unemployment, loss of jobs, etc. Nigeria seems to be at the highest level of turmoil without being at war. A cursory review of the happenings around the continent seems to point to shortage of visionary leadership as a major factor responsible for the sorry state of our World (Popoola, 2011:2). Political leadership in the continent is characterized by disregard of the yearnings of the people and a violation of the constitution they swear to protect. In quest to remain in power at all cost, all forms of manipulations are employed.

Leadership in Africa has over the years become a patrimonial system aimed at dispensing patrimony, the recycling of elites and the use of state power and resources to consolidate political and economic power. This had led to a redefinition of the meaning of politics and political power in Africa; politics is constructed as typical extra-legal contest for political and economic domination between elites and politicians (Good, 2005:460). The failure in leadership and the lack of spirit of nationalism amongst various African leaders including Nigeria have led to the crisis of leadership and thus the situation of failed states in Africa especially Nigeria (Omale & Amana, 2014). Nigeria is still home to majority of the world's poor irrespective of the availability of both human and material resources is an embarrassment. The continent is unarguably one of the most fertile regions of the world and the richest continent on earth in terms of natural resources, but today, the image of the world's most resource rich continent has been damaged by corruption and inept leadership.

### **Leadership and Corruption in Nigeria: The Dilemma of Development**

The question of leadership has remained a vexing issue even as the treatise on Nigerian leadership history has epitomized below performance in all spheres of its characteristics (Akume, 2012). Since independence, Nigeria has continued to meander the path befitting failed, weak and "juvenile" states. A state that had very great prospects at independence and was touted to lead Africa out of the backwoods of underdevelopment and economic dependency, Nigeria is still stuck in the league of poor, corrupt and underdeveloped nations (Osakede et al, 2015). The Catholic Secretariat Forum in Nigeria gave credence to this view when it declared thus:

*Corruption is responsible in large measure for the broken promises, the dashed hopes and the shallow dreams that have characterized the existence of the multitude of Nigerians in the last decades. The choice before us is clear. We either go to war against corruption in all its ramification, or we shall soon be totally consumed by this hydra headed dragon (cited in Wolf and Gurgun, 2000:11).*

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 marked Nigeria's fifty-four (54) years of gaining political independence from Britain. Today, Nigeria is yet to attain the expected level of development, despite the availability of both human and material resources that are much needed in any developmental efforts. The inability to build a verile nation since 1960 therefore, prompted Achebe (1985) to conclude that the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.

Thus, one cannot but agree with the position that Nigeria is a victim of poor leadership and convoluted systematic corruption which has become pervasive and cancerous in the country's national life (Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013). As a result, Nigeria's underdevelopment has been blamed on its leadership with structural link with corruption. However, a careful study of Nigerian politics between 1960 and 2014 shows why it has been extremely difficult and challenging to produce credible leadership. Rather, production of weak and primitive accumulative class of leadership has been imposing itself on the Nigerian state, thus leading to national underdevelopment to almost all facets of the nation's existence (Ehiabhi & Ehinmore, 2011: 136; Dudley, 1982: 42-43)

It is important to note that Nigeria's underdevelopment cannot be attributed to lack of commitment to development by governments in state policy. Poor leadership and corruption are the major factors that led to this state of underdevelopment. Corruption has impeded development in Nigeria because through it, a significant part of the oil resources which would have aided development has been drained. No wonder, Osakede et al (2015) argued that the trouble with the country was that of leadership not corruption. To them, it is bad leadership that breeds corruption and that, "we have corruption as a problem because we have poverty of leadership who has institutionalized corruption in the country". Leadership had been largely responsible for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria, and that in addition to addressing the issue of leadership, "we must exterminate corruption in Nigeria".

Ogbeidi (2012), examined leadership and corruption in Nigeria since 1960, he opined that it is an incontrovertible fact that corruption has been the bane of Nigeria's development. Thus, without mincing words the phenomenon has ravaged the country and destroyed most of what is held as cherished national values. Unfortunately, the political class saddled with the responsibility of directing the affairs of the country have been the major culprit in perpetrating this act. Thus, from 1960, venality in terms of corruption and bad leadership have drown the destiny of the Nigerian nation, and has always been part of the Nigerian government (whether military or civilian regime). For instance, since independence, Nigeria has made US\$1 million dollars of this US\$600 billion has been stolen by our leaders, in 1999, the poverty level was 45 percent and in 2012 it is 76% all due to the management of our resources through competition, the money made from oil in 1999 to 2011 was more than all that was made from 1960-1999 (Save Nigeria Group, 2012), but squandered by our leaders with nothing to show for it in terms of improving the living standards of the people.

### **Leadership and Development Crisis in Nigeria: What need to be done?**

This paper has underlined the contributions of the Nigerian leaders to the crisis of development. This paper observed that the problem of contemporary Nigeria states is a function of bad leadership exercise by the ruling elites whose private interests overrides national interests. As a result, leadership failure has contributed to underdevelopment in Nigeria. Moreover, the paper has attempted to write-off the general belief that contemporary Nigeria states is a function of neo-colonization. However, leadership corruption has been identified as a major problem in the bid for developmental goals in Nigeria. What seems to be lacking is effective leadership to galvanize and channel the desires and energies toward productive ends (Obah-Akpowogha, 2013). It is therefore argued that a fundamental change in the nature of leaders is required as part of the efforts at repositioning the country developmentally because there is no way Nigeria can survive under the current oppressive weight of leadership and development crisis riddled with corruption. Without doubt, development will continue to remain a mirage when lip service is paid to fighting corruption in the country.

### **Contribution**

The paper has examined leadership failure and accountability with reference to development. It, however, contends following a review of the extant literatures on the subject, when effective and visionary leadership proceeds development, the tendency is higher for both to reinforce each other, than when the reverse is the case. The position is supported not only by the experiences of developed societies, but also those of the developing societies.

Evidently, the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian leaders have not learnt from history. The culture of plunder, power politics and chronic corruption still runs through the economic and political system. At present, Nigerian leaders, who are bent on hanging to power at all cost and for the purpose of primitive accumulation, have perfected the art of political expediency – election manipulation, frequent amendment of the constitution of privatized army – even when these acts threaten the stability of their respective states. Regrettably, both leadership and natural resources has turned out to be more of burden on Nigerian societies because of the conflict. It has generated as a result of the scuffle and competition by political actors who in the first place seek political power by all possible means to legitimize their greed and control of natural resources (Mba, 2013). We can therefore say categorically that despite the sixty-one years of political independence, Nigeria's aspiration and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled.

In view of the above discussion, it is concluded that, poor leadership in Nigeria has had far reaching consequences on the present and future development of the continent. Nigeria needs visionary leaders who can properly use the present situation to plan for the future, leaders who are able to do deeper analysis of the current situation and know how the present can affect the future. Until Nigeria has visionary leaders who can serve the people beyond personal interests and use available resources optimally and equitably, only then, will she have economically healthy people who can meet the current and future global economic pace which will bring about the expected level of development.

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