

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS

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Abstract

The potency of development of a country are not limited by its resources, technological advancement or by man's ingenuity to eradicate poverty and hunger rather, the central concern of development is raising the quality of life beyond mere existence as assumed by the respect of human dignity and freedom. This work therefore, looks into some of the developmental strategies mapped out to bring about an improvement in the living standard of the people, the challenges of the strategies and the misconception of the concept of development. The work concludes with such issues on the following as recommendation that if: the equitable distribution of income, increase in employment opportunities, improvement on social services, and an even distribution of available resources and with adequate planning as a blueprint for development as has been previously advocated for, will work, then the citizens and the bureaucrats should be properly watched.

Keywords: Development strategies, poverty, inequality, unemployment, resources, insecurity.

Introduction

The personal worth of any National government is the ability and capability to attain qualitative level of development as it is the bases for any nation's drive for self reliance. However, for a nation to be in a phase of development, there must be some pre-requisites which include socio-political and economic stability must be guaranteed at all level of government as this will promote citizens natural attachment to the governing process (Lawal, 2011).

The gap between the development and the developing countries or the unequal level of development in the world is not static or narrow but is continually widening. Tolu and Abe (2011) posited that a large majority of the world's population in developing world lives in a state of poverty. The problem of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment and growing inequalities continue to spread in the developing countries, which Nigeria belongs. Hopes of accelerated development are difficult to achieve. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stake holders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender any meaningful development in spite of her huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervade the nooks and crannies of the country.

Development is very important and critical to growth and sustenance of any country. In order to successfully achieve meaningful development, effective strategies

must be put in place. Here we clarifies some key concept and x-rayed the trend of national development strategies in Nigeria, the challenges of the strategies and possibly the problems of national development. The paper equally looked at the misconceptions of the concept of development.

Finally the paper draws conclusion by providing recommendations that if: there is social services, equitable distribution of income, increase in employment opportunities, even distribution of available resources with adequate planning as a blue-print for development as has been previously advocated for will work, then the citizens and the bureaucrats needs to be watched as a viable option for Nigeria national development.

Conceptual Clarification Development:

Development as a concept has no definite meaning. Due to the pluralism of its definition, it is very difficult to pin down to an acceptable definition. However, attempts have been made by some scholars and practitioners to conceptualize development. Some of these definitions will be explored for the purpose of this work. Ogbuagu (2013) captures development that it could be viewed from the economic, political and modernization, among other perspectives. In general, there is the sense of increase, change and enlargement in different spheres of life of the entity. In economic terms, it involves rise in productive factors and processes. It entails more widespread provision of goals and services and one would argue greater and more robust utilization of a nation's human resources.

Kia and Vurasi (2013) assert that the concept of development mean process that raise a nation's standard of living to free its population from a life of subsistence agriculture to improve health and health care, and to effectively join a world commercial community. It mean that people are the real wealth of a nation and the expansion of people's freedoms to live long and creative to advance other goals.

Gboyega (2003) captures development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future. It also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances.

Naomi (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services, all with a view to improve the individual and collective quality of life.

According to Meier (1988), development is the act of raising to the highest value, the Gross National Product through the process of accumulating capital and industrialization. Development can also be viewed as the capacity of a nation to increase its static economy to a level where it can generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP).

Additionally, he further stated that development is not limited to just the process of acquiring industries, but encompasses such processes as modernization, productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical know-how, improved institutions, and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy apparatus. In the same light, Oghator and Okoobo (2000) pointed out that development goes beyond the increase in per-capita income or economic growth, but also includes sustainable improvements in the living standard of the people, which is guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment, coupled with presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures.

On the part of Seers (1979), defined development by posing certain questions such as; what has been happening to poverty? Unemployment and inequality? To him if all the three indices (poverty, unemployment and inequality) are at a relatively high rate, there is absence of development, and vice versa. It follows therefore that for a country to be classified as developed, there are parameters to look out for which are: the state of poverty, unemployment, inequality. For Todaro (1979), buttressing on the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of development, opines that it is the re-organisation and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system.

Ajagun (2003), corroborates that development is a state of advancement which makes life more meaningful in its various aspects, including the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural and religious aspects. This implies that development is not about a particular aspect but it is encompassing, better still multi-dimensional depending on the point of contention. According to Onah (2005), development is not static but is a continuous improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to and manipulate the forces of nature for the enhancement of the living standard of the people in a society. This definition introduces another dimension to the meaning of development. It analyses the human aspect of development, that is, the individuals who resides in a given state. Ahmed (2007), also noted that development is concerned with the general upliftment in the material, social and psychological conditions of a given human society.

Development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people, it is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy; it is a socio-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society (Mundi, 2008).

Idike (1992) opined that development constitutes a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for improvement and or transformation of the populace. The major objective of development encompasses improved productivity, increased employment and thus high incomes for target groups as well as improved qualities in the basic needs of life which include food, shelter, job opportunities, health services, education, improved attitudes like political behaviour and so on.

According to Ohagwu (2010) development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization, but the nature, content and course of a society, it is the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential.

Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) assert that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved.

Chrisman (1984) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well being of people is generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, cooperate bodies and other groups in the society. It is reasonable to know that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspect of social life.

National Development

National, according to Longman dictionary of contemporary English, refers to a phenomenon that embraces a whole nation. National development therefore, can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government.

According to Idike (2014) maintained that national development refers to nationwide development in a nation-state. It implies the well being of a covert majority of the citizens in material terms, it implies decreases in inequality levels. Above all, national development implies the guarantee of security of lives and property in the nation state.

Unemployment

Unemployment according to Chukwu (2013) describes the condition of people who are without jobs. The international labour organization (ILO) defines the unemployed as members of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs, and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998). Also for Adebayo (1999) this exists when members of the labour force wish to work but cannot get jobs.

Unemployment can also be said to be the situation in which a worker desires to work but is unable to work. According to Unagha (2005) quoting Sharp, et al, (1978), unemployment is a situation in which people who are qualified for a job, willing to work, and willing to accept the going wage rate cannot find jobs without considerable delays.

Development Strategies in Nigeria

The following are the various development strategies that have been adopted at one time or the other. These are: Community boards of 1954, the farm settlement scheme of 1959, the first National development plan period (1962-1968); the Second

National development period (1970-1974); the third National development plan period (1975-1980), the fourth National development plan period (1980-1985); and the post fourth plan period (1985-1990), the agricultural development project, operation feed the Nation; Green revolution, national directorate for employment, mass mobilization for self reliance and economic recovery, river basin development authority, national accelerated food production programme, the national livestock development programme, the directorate of food , roads, and rural infrastructures, the integrated rural development programmes, the national economic empowerment development strategy (NEEDS), the vision 2010, the vision 2020, the seven point agenda and others (Ezeah, 2005; Ndukwe, 2005; Igbokwe and Enwere, 2001).

Brief Examination of A Few Developmental Strategies in Nigeria:

The First National development plan (1962-1968)

The plan made no clear statement on rural infrastructural development, as agriculture was still an important exchange earner, the plan's objectives were to encourage the gathering of agricultural produce for export purposes.

The Second National development plan (1970-1974)

The second plan was launched shortly after the end of civil war. The plan attempted to rehabilitate economic activities in the war-affected areas. The plan according to Ogwunike, (1995) spelt out five principal national objectives meant to achieve a united, just, strong and self-reliant nation. But just as in the first plan' government did not make any clear statement on rural infrastructural development. However, it was stated in the plan that government was committed to village regrouping. This was perhaps to reduce the cost of providing economic and social infrastructure such as health, electricity, water and educational facilities for the rural areas. The sum allocated to rural development looks too paltry, and generally like the previous once, the plan failed to achieve result.

The Third National development plan (1975-1980)

The third national development plan was considered more ambitious than the second. Emphasis was placed on rural development and efforts to revamp agricultural sector.

The Fourth National development plan (1981-1985)

The fourth National development plan according to Oye Adeniyi (2014) exhibits several distinguishing features: First, it was formulated by a civilian government under a new constitution based on the presidential system of government. Second, it was the first plan in which the local government tier was allowed to participate fully in its own right. The plan emphasized among other things the need for balanced development of the different sectors of the economy and of the various geographical areas of the country. It emphasized the importance of rural infrastructural development as a vehicle for enhancing the quality of rural life.

In terms of rural transportation development, the local government in the country planned for the provision of intercity/village bus services, for the construction of motor parks, and for petrol filling stations during the fourth plan period (1981-1985).

In order to increase the access of rural dwellers to safe drinking water, rural water supply scheme were planned apart from the huge boreholes drilling programmes. At the state level, the various state governments spelt out different policy issues in the fourth development plan. For instance, in Oyo State, the government identified four cardinal programs for itself, these include:-

- (a) Free education at all levels.
- (b) Free medical services
- (c) Integrated rural development and
- (d) Gainful employment

The post Fourth plan (1985-1990)

The post fourth plan period witnessed the establishment of the Directorate Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1985 for the purpose of providing rural infrastructure in the country side. The laws establishing the Directorate was promulgated under decree number four of 1987. The core of the Directorate's programme is the promotion of productive activities. Besides the directorate recognized the provision of rural infrastructure such as feeder roads, water, electricity and housing as essential for the enhancement of the quality of life in the rural areas.

The programme of the directorate include:-

The organization and mobilization of the local people to enhance or facilitate close interaction between the government and the people. In addition, the local communities were asked to form unions or associations for the purpose of providing common facilities for themselves.

- the provision of rural infrastructures such as rural feeders roads, rural water and sanitation, rural housing and electrification..
- The promotion of productive activities such as food and agriculture, rural industrialization and technology;
- The promotion of other extra curricular activities such as socio-cultural and recreational programs, intra and inter community cohesion activities.

The plan for the implementation of DFRRI programs was organised into two phases, the target was to provide water for 250 communities in each of the states of the federation, to construct 90,000km of feeder roads, and to promote rural housing, health and agriculture. To facilitate industrial growth and improve the attractiveness of the rural environment, the Directorate planned to commence its rural electrification programme in the second phase starting in June 1971. In pursuit of its objectives DFRRI also planned to cooperate with organization (Edwin, 1972).

In Nigeria, several attempts were made to effect both rural and national development from independence apart from the various rolling plan, they includes the

agricultural development programme, (ADP), Operation feed the nation, Green revolution, Structural adjustment programme (SAP), vision 2010, vision 2020, National Economic empowerment development strategy (NEEDS) and others.

The above mentioned strategies for development have all been the same, it is just a change of a nomenclature, their objectives and medium for achieving the various goals have not been different from one another.

Challenges of National Development Strategies

The good thing about any development plan is the faithful implementation of such plan, which its success lies with the implementers, most of the past development plans failed as a result of lack of executive capacity and political will to implement these lofty ideas.

Despite all the development plans by the Nigeria Government, a lot of setbacks have been encountered in the development process. According to Osakwe (2010) the nature of Nigeria's development strategy has contributed to the slow pace in achieving poverty and unemployment reduction in the country, as such the country has not gone through the normal process of structural transformation. This implies that the strategies employed by Nigeria government have not led to the growth of productive capacities and structural transformation which are the pivot for generating any productive employment opportunities and reducing poverty to a minimal level. Thus the efforts made by the various government has not been worthwhile as unemployment, poverty and inequality is still on the increase.

According to Ibietan and Ekhosuehi (2013), the lack of coordination and harmonization of programs/policies both within the tenure of an administration and those succeeding it has been the impediment to development.

In line with the above, the argument of this paper is that despite all efforts by Nigerian government to achieve development, why has it been difficult for its attainment, which can be visibly appreciated and undeniable by her citizens.

Again, studies have shown that there are numerous factors that challenge development strategies in Nigeria. For Makinde (2005) he maintains that the imposition of policies on citizens of a nation, lack of adequate human resources or capital to implement these plans/policies, corruption and lack of credible leadership are the major challenge to Nigeria developmental strategies. Most national developmental problems in Nigeria arises as a result of poor implementation of policies and subsequently lack of adequate and reliable human resources. Makinde (2005) further maintained that most policies of developing nations are imposed on the masses. The policies are made by the government without considering the target population, as such the masses are not given the opportunity to contribute in the formulation of policies that concerns their well being. In addition, there are no human resources or capital to implement these plans as a result of low quality of human development in the country. Records from United Nations Development programme 2014 reveals that Nigeria ranked number 152 out of 187 countries in human development, which is average quality of life and standard of living. The report puts Nigeria Human Development index at 0.381 which is below the prescribed level.

Thus in such instances, there is absence of continuity in policies when the tenure of specific governments come to an end. He also pointed that, although corruption is a global issue but Nigeria as a country is caught in the web of corruption. Often times, funds which are set aside for implementing policies are usually syphoned to the detriment of the entire nation. In addition, lack of credible leadership which can recognize and articulate the specific needs of the people also pose a challenge to development.

Nigeria still wallows in abject poverty, high level of unemployment and starvation in spite of her huge resources endowment. This has greatly affected her quest to improve quality of life of her citizens and in other to successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must be evolved with personnel that will religiously and faithfully implement it.

Seniyi (1998) Opined that the various developmental strategies failed because of lack of or insufficiency of knowledge and equipment to carryout activities that agriculture as an enterprise demands. But more to this is commitment to the implementation of the raised developmental strategies, because most of the strategies ever adopted had been the same, the major differences are just the change in the name given to each strategy. Some of the previous development plan failed because, there was little or no consultation of the general public. Planning is supposed to involved even the peasants in the village.

Another challenge is the relevancy of strategy adopted for development, considering the main purpose of development as bringing about the total well being of the people; we then say to what extent has the people benefited from the project? There is therefore a need to set priorities when talking and designing development strategies.

Again most strategies are without a home grown outlook. The Nigeria economy remains basically and structurally a mixed one, which promoted and generated underdevelopment, poverty, ignorance and diseases more than ever in the history of the country. Put differently, the series of development plans after political independence, namely the 1962-1968 National Development plan, 1970-1974 second national development plan and the 1975-1980 third national Development plan, merely translated to further underemployment, unemployment and waste, primitive accumulation of public wealth due to lack of commitment, lethargic and lackluster approach to developmental projects by successive governments. Decades after political independence was achieved, the (successive government) respective of administrations that were in power either elected or imposed did not show consistent and convincing commitment to any fundamental change in the society. Although economic reforms such as free enterprise, indigenization, nationalization, import substitution, later privatization and commercialization free export zone were either introduced or implemented; rather sad, these policies neither change production mode nor alter property ownership.

Options for National Development Strategies

The beauty of any development plan is the faithful implementation of such plan, which its success lies with the implementers. In our earlier discussions, it was mentioned that most of the past developmental strategies failed as a result of implementation problem and lack of committed leadership. Etc.

First, development requires total commitment on the part of the leadership. The need for discipline, transparency and honesty on the part of the project implementers cannot be compromised, such officials should show enough discipline, interest, willingness, dedication, honesty and commitment. Without these attributes and the will to pursue set economic goals, all other ingredients of development present would amount to nullity.

Secondly, the government should down size their control and allow the private Engineers to come into play. It is this private actors that will invest their resources and industrialize the society, thereby creating employment opportunities for the teeming population. In so doing, poverty will be reduced, employment will increase, standard of living of the people will improve, people will be economically empowered and there will be improvement on the political behaviour of the masses.

Also, stability and continuity of policies encourage investment and propel development. For instance, in Korea, when park was assassinated, his policies remained and were building on. Nigeria leadership must learn to build on policies rather than to jettison them for new ones for the sake of party politics and personal aggrandizement.

Moreso, there is the need for Nigeria to revamp the agricultural sector; this sector was instrumental in the development of Japan. Agriculture used to be the mainstay of Nigeria economy but the discovery of oil succeeded in putting agriculture to the background.

Human resources development is also a sine qua non to Nigeria national development; this was demonstrated in Japan and Korea (Lawal et al., 1976). Development depends so much on human knowledge and skills. This must be such that a high quality of education and training is achieved for a large majority at a reasonable price and the context and quality of such education and training should be relevant and adequate to the country's developmental needs. Literature on development stresses the axiom that it is the people who develop and that unless there are large numbers of suitable qualified people, development cannot take place.

There is need for attitudinal change Nigerians must as a matter of fact change their pessimistic attitude towards development. The idea or belief that "things cannot work in Nigeria or Nigeria factor" should be discouraged. Real development is achieved through internal activities rather than from external influences. Development is seen as a process generated within a society by forces propagated and invigorated by the actual members of that society. It is believed that true development can neither be started nor sustained by outsiders. Although, no country can do it alone or develop in isolation, but heavy emphasis should not be placed on foreign resources for the country's development. The models of development of Japan and China show how these countries utilize their internal resources both human and material for the

rapid economic development. It is reasonable that Nigerians should learn from this and inculcate a high sense of patriotism as demonstrated by the Japanese and Chinese.

Importantly, citizenship should be promoted over indigeneity in order to achieve cooperation and participation of all communities in the development process.

Omotoso (2008) noted that the 1999 constitution is directly or indirectly promoting indigeneity in the country. For example section 318(1) of paragraph (iv) supports indigeneity. The constitution set parameters for indigenes and non indigenes. It equally gives legal bases to various discriminatory policies that actively promote indigeneity contrary to some sections that argue against discrimination. This is very contradictory. Leadership in Nigeria must behave in a way to inculcate the spirit of patriotism in the minds of the people, so that they will be ready to stand with the government in her developmental efforts. When Nigerians see themselves as one and not as belonging to one section of the country as portrayed presently, the urge to develop Nigeria will be germinated and sustained.

Additionally, the need to reform electoral process is imperative for socio-economic and political development. Electoral fraud is one of the barriers of non-development. The role of leadership in development cannot be overemphasized, all efforts towards development must be coordinated and directed by the leaders. Therefore, the leaders must be development conscious, have genuine interest for development and the political will to propel such development. The leaders must also have the cooperation of the people, because, it is the people that develop a nation. Honestly, the aforementioned ingredients cannot be possible without a legitimized mandate for the leaders by the people. When a leader assumes office illegitimately or through electoral fraud, such leader is bound to fail in his efforts to generate meaningful development. This is due to the fact that such illegitimate leaders tends to display characters that repress development such as; selfishness, corruption, pride, thuggery and inefficiency and also, there is apathy and natural detachment to development plans by the people as they did not see such emerging leaders as the product of their consent through voting. Therefore the electoral process should be reformed in such a way that nobody assumes office through the back door. The process should be made open, free, fair and competitive.

Again, if the equitable distribution of income, increase in employment opportunities, improvement on social services and even distribution of available resources and with adequate planning as a blue-prints for development as has been previously advocated for will work, then the citizens and the bureaucrats should be properly watched.

Conclusion

This work has carefully clarified some key concepts like development, National development and unemployment. The work equally examined the National development strategies in Nigeria and the challenges of the developmental strategies. The work also further suggested some viable options for National development strategies. It is the assumption of the work that if these options are internalized and

religiously pursued and inculcated, Nigeria will be placed among the comity of nations.

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