Towards Alternative Strategies for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT
Development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when she is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. Nigeria in the last fifty years has been battling with the problems of development in spite of huge human, material and natural resources in her possession. The paper discussed the problems affecting national development as well as strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper adopted secondary data as sources of information. The paper concluded that faithful implementation of development plan, commitment on the part of the leaders and absence of corruption are required for the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: National development, development, developing society, governance,

INTRODUCTION
The pride of any government is the attainment of higher value level of development in such a way that its citizens would derive natural attachment to governance. However, for a nation to be in a phase of development there must be some pre-requisites, which include socio-political and economic stability. The gap between the developed and the developing countries is not static or narrow but is continually widening. 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 face less developed countries, which Nigeria belongs. Hopes of accelerated development are difficult to realize. This gloomy situation is of great concern to stake holders and the concerned citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender 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 nook and cranny of the country.

Development is essential and critical to growth and sustenance of any country. In order to successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must be evolved. Here, we examine the trend of national development in Nigeria, and provides a workable method of approach to national development. The paper is divided as follows: First, we introduce the study and clarifies some key concepts. Next, we look briefly at some attempted development strategies in Nigeria and the problems of national development; then we examine briefly models of development across Asian continent. Finally, the concluding aspect, provides recommendations based on the study of Asian model of development as a viable option for Nigerian national development aspirations.
Development

Development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development. Some of these definitions will be explored for the purpose of this study.

Obeyega (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 improving the individual and collective quality of life (Naomi, 1995). Omotoso (2008) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate 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 aspects of societal life.

National development plans in Nigeria

We have had series of development plans in Nigeria. Nigeria is permanently hunted by the spectre of development. Its forty-nine years of independence actually are rolling by daily in search of development. The myth of growth and development is so entrenched that the country’s history passes for the history of development strategies and growth models from colonial times up to date. No term has been in constant flux as development. This seems the only country where virtually all notions and models of development have been experimented (Aremu, 2003).

Two years after independence, the first National Development Plan policy was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of development opportunities in health, education and employment and improving access to these opportunities, etc. This plan failed because fifty percent of resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources, and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received (Adelman, 1995).

Collapse of the first Republic and the commencement of civil war also disrupted the plan. After the civil war in 1970, the second national development plan 1970 to 1974 was launched, the plan priorities were in agriculture, industry, transport, manpower, defense, electricity, communication and water supply and provision of social services (Adelman, 1995). The third plan, covering the period of 1975 to 1980 was considered more ambitious than the second plan. Emphasis was placed on rural development and efforts to revamp agricultural sector. The fourth plan 1981 to 1985 recognized the role of social services, health services, etc. The plan was aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people.

The specific objectives were: an increase in the real income of the average citizen, more even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increased dependence on the country’s material and human resources, a reduction in the level of unemployment and underemployment (Adelman, 1995). During these periods, Nigeria’s enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country and for launching an agrarian revolution to liquidate mass poverty. For instance, the Green Revolution Programme that replaced Operation Feed the Nation failed to generate enough food for the masses. In the recent past, various strategies for development have also been tried with little or no result; among these were the structural adjustment programme (SAP), Vision 2010, national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS), creation of development centres, etc. currently, seven point agenda of the present administration with vision 2020 without any clear methodological approach towards achieving them. It is obvious that the current results so far are not what development connotes.
The problems of national development in Nigeria

In spite of series of development strategies, put in place by successive governments, and sometimes with good intentions, all attempts to generate meaningful development proved futile. Based on this, one is now confronted with these puzzles: “Were those previous development plans or strategies bad in their context, or wrongly projected?” If nothing was wrong with the plans, then why is it still difficult to generate meaningful development in spite of the huge resources at our disposal? The solutions to these puzzles are not far-fetched. A lot of factors have combined together to fetter nation’s development.

One, there are in most cases, no executive capacity responsible for the formulation and implementation of the plan. What we usually see are officials entrusted to such a position but without any meaningful executive authority. Some of the previous development plans failed because; there was little or no consultation of the general public. Planning is supposed to involve even the peasants in the villages. Even, the Local Government officials who are close to the people were not consulted. Planning is not an edifice where technocrats alone operate (Mimiko, 1998).

Lack of good governance also militates against national development. Where there is no good governance, development becomes a mirage. This is as a result of bad leadership in the country. Most of our leaders have no sense of commitment to development. Mimiko (1998) captures the situation this way: “The decolonization allowed the crop of leaders that aligned with colonial power to take over Nigeria. This ensured the sustenance of a neo-colonial economy even after political independence. These leaders on assumption of power quickly turned up the repressive machinery of the colonial state rather than dismantling it. Significantly, they have no vision of development to accompany the efficient instrument of repression they inherited. All they were interested in was access to power and privileges and not development”.

High level of corruption and indiscipline is another barrier to development. Nigeria state is corrupt, managed by corrupt leaders until quite recently, who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation, rather than using it to project the interest of the citizenry. A very good plan supervised by a thoroughly corrupt state can hardly do a thorough good job (Mimiko, 1998). Corruption and development are antithetical to each other, the two cannot cohabit, and so, where one is present, the other suffers.

Another important factor is the mono-economic base of the country. The country largely depends on crude oil for her survival to the detriment of other resources. All other sectors of the economy are neglected. For instance, agriculture, which constituted the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the 1950s and 1960s, has been thrown into limbo over the years. How would government encourage export promotion when there is virtually nothing to export? The economy is not diversified and this is not suitable for a sustainable development (Mimiko, 1998).

Models of development: Asia in context

The enviable growth and development patterns of several Asian countries are well known. East Asia is the only region in the world that has been able to maintain strong, consistent growth patterns over several decades, led first by Japan and the newly industrializing economies of Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, etc (Adelman, 1995, Mimiko, 1998:).

Apart from the homogenous nature of these societies, other several factors were responsible for their development. These were: development of agricultural sector, a system of mass education, development of indigenous industries, export-oriented strategy, the Spartan discipline of their leadership, existence of efficient bureaucracy, (Ogwumike, 1995).
STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

In this section, we argued strongly that despite these failed strategies, Africa has a window of opportunities to move ahead, if its leaders and people engage in practical strategies for her sustainable development, some of which include:

1. Overcoming Western Prejudices and Improving Africa’s Poor image
The die-hard prejudices in the Western world that are hampering the efforts at a committed international support for the sustainable development of Africa, requires an internal building and an external marketing of Africa’s image. This cannot be effective if there is no attempt by the Africans, the ruling elite and the oppressed masses alike, to overcome their internal contradictions using effective dialogue, communication and negotiations on a horizontal basis to give peace a chance. It is important to establish avenues and mechanisms for sharing sensitivities, resources, research findings, discoveries, information and experiences on sustainable development issues, (Eyong & Foy, 2006). These require active and committed involvement of all stakeholders who think Africa and act as Africans. The region has human resources that must be given the opportunity and support at all levels.

2 A Crosscutting Strategy is that of Education for Sustainable Development
International policy documents like the Dakar framework on ‘Education in Africa’ urge member states to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes, (Tolu & Abe 2011). The Ubuntu Declaration on ‘Education, Science and Technology for Sustainable Development’ identifies a global need to integrate a sustainable development focus into the curriculum at every level of education, (Eyong & Foy, 2006). The declaration emphasizes curriculum development; North-South networking; strategic educational planning and policy-making; and capacity building in scientific research and learning. All these are warning signals that the development relevance of education in the region is highly questionable. Multi and inter-disciplinary should be central in every aspect of curriculum development and delivery. There is a need for learning for work, citizenship and sustainability for all sexes and genuine commitments to assure equity for all ethnic groups, (Eyong & Foy, 2006). This will reduce the problems of early childbirth, overpopulation, intellectual capital flight and lack of participation. Media awareness campaigns and environmental mass mobilization programmes should cover topical issues including soil conservation, agro-forestry, wetland management and waste management. African countries should carefully and skillfully adapt these propositions to suit their local situations, (Aremu, 2003).

3 Alternative/Sustainable Development Model
Alternatively, we think Africa (Nigeria) can move from its current state of underdevelopment to sustainable development by adapting policies, programmes and projects, which ensure that the resource base is not depleted. That is, the Economic Growth Model, which has championed the development agenda imposed by Westerners and which perceptibly destroys the life support system of the earth (land, air and water bodies) should be avoided. The wise use of resources ensures their equitable long-term availability for both present and future economic activities and avoids new poverty, (Omotoso, 2008). The key to this path is crosscutting and broad-based policies that guarantee inter and intra-generational equity for all sexes, social acceptance, improved quality of life for the masses and their full participation in development policies, programmes and projects, which should begin from the inception to the implementation phases. It calls for modesty and equity. The African ruling elite should recognize that Africa’s economic salvation cannot solely be guaranteed by the developed countries and donor funds. Continuous begging and aid dependence are not sustainable solutions to the problems of Africa. This attitude has engendered bad policies and turned Africans into human photocopying machines, uncritically copying and implementing Western development models and life styles that are inappropriate in the African context. Youth must work hard to change their current attitudes or perish (Mimiko, 1997).

4 Concrete action-driven Development Agenda at the Local, National and Global levels
There has been sufficient debates and knowledge on Africa’s challenges. It is time to match words with action. At the local level, community members should be empowered with functional skills through
value-creative education to effectively contribute their own quota to the sustainable development of their areas. Local people need to understand that governments are unable to unilaterally run development projects, and so need support from them. This means the politics of lies-for-votes should be abandoned for more sincerity. This breeds trust and cooperation that is necessary for any sustainable development venture. At the national level, governments have to transform their poverty reduction strategies from paper policies to community-based action projects (Eyong & Foy, 2006). The support for small and medium enterprises through micro credits and soft loans should be encouraged. The international community has its own role to play. Africa needs money to render lectures practical. Libya’s bailing out of 11 poor and heavily indebted African states with the charged fee of $55 million and other arrears for the transformation of the OAU to the AU is highly applauded, (Tolu & Abe 2011) The realization that unsustainable in Africa is affecting the sustainability of the West should drive concrete actions in the richest countries to make the current brain drain instead benefit the region through an organized way of labour exportation.

5 Revitalizing Traditional Coping Mechanisms

We shall explain this in relation to biodiversity conservation especially in the management of the natural resources and the ecosystem. Conservation initiatives in African hot spots always end up creating new poverty and mass misery amongst local communities who become ‘conservation refugees, (Tolu & Abe 2011).’

Displaced villagers know that the ownership of their source of livelihood (forest) has changed hands and so there is ‘no need to protect what belongs to the government’ since ‘government’s’ property is no man’s property, (Tolu & Abe 2011).

Thanks to indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants, a total of 36 medicinal plants discovered in the Korup National Park in Cameroon are new to science, and the medicinal vine, Ancistrocladus korupensis shown (in vitro) to be active against the HIV/AIDS virus was discovered in the area. This is suggestive of a link between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ medicine.

To this end, we recommend southern NGOs to network by partnering with one another to look for better local solutions rather than only chasing foreign aid that is yet to bring desired outcomes. This is what we call ‘type III relationships, (Tolu & Abe 2011).

6 Need for Detailed Community/Regional Studies

A robust research agenda for community/regional studies is a necessary condition for a meaningful path to sustainable development to enable the Africans and the development partners to fully examine the realities and the aspirations of the ordinary Africans. It is recommended that interdisciplinary research teams headed by African anthropologists should conduct extensive fieldwork Anthropology is recommended because it provides a powerful portion in the curing of some of the development malaises of contemporary society. It is an interdisciplinary science and the least dogmatic of all the sciences, (Tolu & Abe 2011). These studies should adequately examine the functions of what we call Life Support Strategies (LSS) such as reciprocity, obligation and levelling in communities because they manifest the true African culture, (Tolu & Abe 2011).

Differences are glaring when it comes to state politics. Greed and egoism are setting African elites, who emphasize individual happiness and competition, against each other and their masses with violent outcomes like wars. The introduction of Western-style education, religious practices, mass media and governance structures reminds us that all that was African was replaced. These vehicles of Western civilization and individualism are firmly ingrained in the life of the population of SSA and are the net contributors to the region’s impoverishment. The quality and quantity of African schools are never like their Western counterparts. Another reason is that economic pressures are relegating group behaviors to the background, especially in the cities where everybody is not farming and food self-sufficiency is a joke. Western religion is fast crushing traditional beliefs and practices that encourage a social security system based on kind, which fosters inter and intra-generational contracts for sustainability. Further research into the revival of these coping mechanisms is highly recommended.
Strategies for Sustainable National Development: The Nigerian case

The beauty of any development plan is the faithful implementation of such plan, which its success lies with the implementers. In our previous discussion, it was mentioned that most of the past development plans failed as a result of implementation problem and lack of committed leadership etc (Tolu & Abe 2011).

Based on this fact, new development policies and strategies are currently in place as alternative strategies for development, such as Seven Points Agenda, Vision 2020, etc. These policies and vision appear to be all embracing but they are not sacrosanct in their totality. But if faithfully implemented, the nation at least will move towards path of development, (Tolu & Abe 2011).

It is in our opinion that to successfully implement the current development Agenda of the present regime, there some lessons we can learn from Asian models of development.

First, development requires total commitment on the parts of the leadership. The need for discipline and honesty on the part of the project implementers cannot be compromised; such officials should show enough discipline, interest, willingness, dedication and honesty. Without these attributes and the will to pursue set economic goals, all other ingredients of development present would amount to nullity, Eyong & Foy, 2006).

Second, this country should learn that wholesale liberalization; the type advocated by the apologists of orthodox SAP is not necessarily synonymous with development. It goes without saying therefore that a level of state involvement (heterodoxy) is imperative even in the face of the crucial need for structural adjustment. But whatever the degree of state involvement, private owner-ship of properties must be guaranteed for investment to get stimulated (Mimiko, 1997). Although, it is another question whether Nigerian state as presently constituted can play this critical role given its embarrassing level of corruption, inefficiency and incapacitation by commitment to sundry primordial values. Be it as it may, the goal should be to evolve a process of reformation of the state to make it able to play the type of highly constructive role that its counterparts are playing in the whole of East Asia (Mimiko, 1997).

Third 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, (Eyong & Foy, 2006).

Fourth 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 crude oil succeeded in putting agriculture into state of oblivion.

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 very 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 development needs. Literature on development stresses the axiom that it is the people who develop and that unless there are large numbers of suitably qualified people, development cannot take place.

Fifth 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 Nigerian 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 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 rapid economic development. It is reasonable that Nigerians should inculcate a high sense of patriotism as demonstrated by the Japanese and Chinese, (Lawal et al., 1976).
Sixth Importantly, citizenship should be promoted over indignity 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 sets 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 development 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, (Mimiko, 1998).

Seventh Additionally, the need to reform electoral process is imperative for socio-economic and political development. Electoral fraud is one of the banes of Nigeria’s 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, (Mimiko, 1998). 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 effort to generate meaningful development. This is due to the fact that such illegitimate leaders tend 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 products of their consent through voting. Based on the foregoing, the electoral process should be reformed in such a way that nobody assumes power (political) through crook or fraudulent means. The process should be made opened, free, fair and competitive. All legal battles preceding the elections must be concluded before any swearing in. This, it is believed, will create genuine environment conducive for development. Lastly, development plan should not be exclusively regarded as economic issue it should be seen as holistic and encompassing national issue that cuts across economic, social, political and psychological aspects of human endeavor, (Mimiko, 1998).

CONCLUSION
This paper has carefully discussed national development in Nigeria. It examined the problems of national development in Nigeria, and carefully outlined the driving forces of development in some of the Asia countries as models for Nigeria’s development. The paper also suggested some viable strategies needed to engender sustainable development in Nigeria. It is the belief of this article that if these options and models are faithfully and judiciously pursued and imbibed, Nigeria will be well positioned in the global economy by the year 2020.

Sub Saharan Africa requires strategies for sustainable development, which must be initiated from within. This is because decades of development cooperation have not benefited the region in any significant way. The development strategies imposed on her serve the interests of donors. It can be concluded that the economic growth model imposed on Africa is largely responsible for her non-resilience. A sustainable economic growth model is required to allow the region to withstand internal and external shocks. This can only be achieved within an atmosphere of peace, good governance and mutual cooperation. It is the duty and call of every African to generate an awareness of the current malaises of the region with a view to actively contribute to solving them. Priority in research into these problems will require the use of global knowledge to generate new local knowledge on how to revitalize the traditional coping mechanisms of Africans. However, this requires freedom of knowledge or the propensity to fall back onto the traditional knowledge societies of the past that were killed with the advent of dictatorships. South–south NGO networking remains the vital tool to accomplish this mission, since they are grassroots organizations that reflect the best interest of the ordinary African.
REFERENCES