NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA AND THE INDISPENSABLE LESSONS FOR NIGERIA TO LEARN FROM THE ASIAN TIGERS

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Abstract

This paper is on national development in Nigeria in comparison with the Asian Tigers. The objective of the paper is to capture development plans in Nigeria and development efforts in the Asian Tigers and draw lessons for Nigeria to learn. It presents a review of relevant literature and conceptual analysis on development and national development. It chronicles development plans in Nigeria as well as development efforts in the Asian Tigers. It observes that all development plans failed in Nigeria while development efforts in the Asian Tigers were very successful. It attempts further to proffer or adduce reasons for these differences. The paper therefore presents a comparative analysis between Nigeria and the Asian Tigers in terms of development efforts and draws indispensable lessons for Nigeria to learn.

Key Words: National Development, qualitative life, infrastructural facilities, economic stabilization, national transformation, visionary leadership, consistent policies, Asian miracle, resource mobilization, self-reliance, food security, good governance.

Introduction

A country is classified as developed if it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. Unfortunately, Nigeria in the last fifty four years and above has been battling with the problems of development in spite of huge human material and natural resources at her disposal. Therefore, development can be said to be a critical factor and a desirable phenomenon in the sustenance and growth of any nation (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). However development is not a free gift as can be learnt from the indispensable lesson provided by the Asian Tigers. It is a product of careful design, effective resource mobilization and collaborative action with the people and their leadership. It entails sacrifice and dedication coupled with careful observation and openness to change efforts (Akume, 2012).

Asian countries like Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and China are the envy of the rest of the world today, on account of their technological advancement and progressive economies. Of course, they did not attain this height overnight. Hardwork, toil and sincerity of purpose made this possible. As a corollary, Nigeria can also attain as well as surpass the feat of the new famous Asian Tigers, if it is determined to do so (Durojaiye, 2013). Also important for mention is the pivotal role played by their political leadership in directing the growth paths of their countries towards ensuring economic progress and development. Another important lesson provided by these Asian countries is the systematic and co-ordinated policy intervention by the government to steer the economy to the right path (Sanusi, 2012).

The Concepts of Development and National Development

From the experience of the Asian countries, development can be defined as an encompassing process involving the steady and systematic change in the cultural, economic and political
spheres of society in a way that increases production, empowers the people and their communities, protects the environment, strengthens institutions, grows quality of life and promotes good governance. This implies that it is possible to speak of social, cultural, spiritual, institutional economic and political development. As distinct from growth, development is about people and how their lives and institutions can get better (Igbafen, 2012; Ihonvbere, 2012).

According to Adeyeye (2002), the earliest approach to development was monolithic and economically biased, however, the social dynamics of society as they affect socio-cultural, economic, political and technological well being of people brought into fore the deficiencies of the monolithic and economic approach. Today the economic development of the society is just a part of societal development and cannot be synonymous with it. No wonder recent development models or paradigms conceptualized by development economists, the World Bank and United States International Development Agency (USAID) do work without other disciplines such as politics, sociology and technology. Hence a more holistic view of development began to take centre stage especially in organisations such as UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank, USAID and so on. From this perspective, development is not just measured in terms of the economy but also in terms of freedom, equity and access to education, health and other social services, public participation and quality of life (Alam, Hoque, Khalifa, Siraj and Ghani, 2009).

Today, modern approach to development is firstly multi-disciplinary, and covers the entire socio-cultural, political, economic and technological factors leading to overall societal transformation. Secondly, apart from the multi-disciplinary nature of development, it is both holistic and totalistic. Thirdly and finally, modern approach to development must encourage and accommodate modern values which include foreign aids, politics and technology transfer (Ziai, 2013).

In view of this and for the purpose of this paper, development will be defined broadly as a kind of change that is defined in the direction of capacity building towards self-sustenance growth and self-fulfilment as it affects individuals or institutions in a society. National development therefore can be defined as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political and technological advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning which can be described as the country’s collection of strategies, policies, plans, programmes and projects and others, mapped out by the government (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Development Plans in Nigeria

As earlier pointed out, a country is said to be developed if it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. In this regard, Nigeria, through various governments, has embarked upon numerous development policies, plans, programmes and projects, in her quest to improve the material well being and welfare of the citizens. According to Sanusi (2012), the following are some of the notable developmental efforts of various governments in Nigeria since independence:

* First National Development Plan (1962-1968);
* Second National Development Plan (1970-1974);
* Third National Development Plan (1975-1980);
* Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985);
* Structural Adjustment Programme;
* Vision 2010;
The first National Development Plan (1962-1968) was formulated by the Balewa Government as a policy two years after independence, with the objectives of development of opportunities in health, education and employment as well as improving access to these opportunities. This plan was designed to put the economy on the path of accelerated growth by prioritizing agricultural and industrial development as well as training of high-level and middle-level manpower. The plan failed partly because 50% of the required resources was to be sourced from outside the country, whereas, only 14% was received. Other reasons were poor leadership and governance that characterized the first republic, the emergence of the military in the political landscape of Nigeria that brought the first republic into an abrupt end and the commencement of the civil war (1967-1970) also disrupted the plan (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

The second National Development Plan (1971-1974) was formulated by the Gowon Administration under the Military with five main objectives of building; a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant economy; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (Eneh, 2008; Onah, 2006). According to Eneh (2009), none of the five objectives was achieved. Under the cover of addressing poverty and the food needs of the nation, the Gowon Administration in 1972 introduced many programmes including the Import Substitution Programme, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank. However, with all these programmes in place, the country is worse off today, with import dependency and food insecurity (Eneh, 2008 and 2009).

The third National Development Plan (1975-1980) was formulated as a policy to further cushion the effect of the civil-war, to reconstruct and rehabilitate infrastructure that were destroyed during the civil war years. The plan was conceived and considered to be more ambitious than the second National Development Plan because of the massive investment of resources into the rehabilitation and construction of new infrastructural facilities (Sanusi, 2012).

The fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) was aimed at developing a broad-based economy with emphasis on technology. It was also designed at reducing the over-dependence of the economy on a narrow range of economic activities. The objectives of the plan were to achieve; an increase in the real income of the average citizens, more even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increased dependence on the country’s material and human resource and a reduction in the level of unemployment and under employment (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Unfortunately, the objectives of the second, third and fourth National Plans like the first plan were not achieved despite the fact that a greater part of the period (1971 to 1985) fell within the oil boom in Nigeria. The problem was not lack of resources as adduced for the failure of the first plan but lack of good and effective leadership to invest the Nigeria’s enormous oil wealth to build a viable industrial base for the country and for launching an agrarian revolution to liquidate mass poverty (Sanusi, 2012). During the oil boom Nigeria’s problem was not money or inadequate resource, but the problem as declared by one of the Nigerian leaders then was how to spend the money (petro dollars) accruing from the oil boom. However, the truth is that the problem of Nigeria was bad leadership and corruption. The money eventually disappeared into the foreign accounts of the leaders and the entire...
leadership was pervaded by corruption while the entire citizenry was ravaged by abject poverty.

The real problem was not lack of resources during the oil boom but that of bad leadership which produced bad governance through the instrument and vices of corruption. Nigeria lacked and still lacks good and effective leaders who possess capacity for self management, strong inner achievement drive, vision, a high sense of responsibility, ability for group work and personal charm. The absence of an effective leadership is a factor which has robbed Nigeria of its greatness despite enormous resources and abundant potentials. Whereas at independence in 1960, Nigeria was grouped with countries like Brazil, India and many others as former colonies which would within a little time join the front row of the world economy, today it is a different story. Ironically, those who led the nation and pulled it down the ditch of depression are still holding sway in its governance. According to Nnanna (2011), Nigeria has been wandering in the political and economic wilderness for over fifty years, justifying the saying that when the head is rotten, the body decays. This scenario again captures the centrality of leadership in governance and national development. The leader holds the key and makes all the difference by good leadership (Ojo and Ojo, 2012).

By the time the oil boom was over and the Nigerian economy slipped into depression in the 1980s, it was too late to cry. In the recent past, various types and all sort of strategies, projects, programmes and policies were put in place with little or no result. Among these were the Economic Stabilization Measures, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Vision 2010, National Economic Empowerment and Development (NEEDS), creation of Development Centres and Seven (7)-Point Agenda. Currently, there is a National Transformation Agenda and Vision 2020 in the front burner without any clear-cut approach towards achieving them. No wonder, it is opined and posited that the current results of development efforts in Nigeria so far, are not what development connotes (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Lessons from the Asian Tigers

As pointed out by Sanusi (2012), a number of East Asian countries namely, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore were far behind Nigeria in terms of GDP per capital in the 1970s. He, however, concluded that by today these countries have transformed their economies and are not only miles ahead of Nigeria, but are also major players on the global economic arena.

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Source: World Bank – Wikipedia.org
IMF estimates – past and future – GDP – nominal – per capita

Taking a cursory look at Table 1, the following explanations or illustrations can be made:
China and Nigeria

By the year 1970, China had a GDP per capita of $112 and was ranked 114th in the world while Nigeria has a GDP of $219 and was ranked 88th. Since then China has recorded and sustained a very rapid growth rate of over 9.5%, perhaps, the highest in the world and has been transformed to the second largest economy in the world behind the USA. The reason adduced for this phenomenal growth is visionary leadership and collective resolve of the citizens.

Indonesia and Nigeria

Indonesia is a plural society like Nigeria with over 200 languages and ethnic groups with over 250 million population. By 1965, Indonesia had a GDP per capita of $55. By 2010 the country’s GDP has risen to $2,986 while Nigeria’s GDP was at $1,465. Indonesia today is the largest market in South-East Asia. The reason given for this tremendous growth and development is good leadership that introduced wide ranging reforms.

Malaysia and Nigeria

By 1960, Malaysia had a GDP per capita of $299. Since then the country has recorded and sustained an outstanding economic success. By 2010, Malaysia had a GDP of $8,634 compared to Nigeria’s per capita income of $1,465. History has it that Malaysia in the 1960s procured improved oil palm and rubber seeds from Nigeria and later became the world largest palm oil producer/exporter and a major exporter of rubber, while Nigeria has now become a major importer of these commodities. The reason adduced for the Malaysian success has been linked to a variety of pull factors; good political leadership that created political stability, business friendly policies, prudence and influx of foreign investors, productive workforce and developed infrastructure (Sanusi, 2012).

Singapore and Nigeria

By 1960, the GDP per capita of Singapore was $395 and it grew to $925 in 1970 while Nigeria’s GDP per capita rose from $91 to $219. By 2010, a miracle had taken place. Singapore’s GDP per capita had become $44,697 while Nigeria was far trailing behind with $1,465. Today, Singapore was said to be the world’s 2nd most open economy in the Asian Pacific Region, a highly developed and successful free market economy devoid of corruption. The reason adduced for the miracle is the many years of successive visionary leadership that were able to transform the economy through consistent policies and good governance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Alluding to the success factors of the Asian miracle, these can be summarised as good leadership and good governance; both of which have brought about the development of the agricultural sector, a system of mass education, development of indigenous industries, export-oriented strategy, existence of efficient bureaucracy, human resources development, research and development as bedrock for technological advancement, encouragement of a dynamic private sector working in co-operation with the government towards a society-wide vision of development, institutional capacity building and good governance through policy consistency and continuity and political stability. All these are success factors and lessons that can be gleaned from the Asian experience.

The above-mentioned factors notwithstanding, the leaders of those countries were true and uncompromising leaders, nationalists, visionaries and development conscious. The Spartan
discipline of those leaders cannot but be mentioned. It will not be out of place to mention some of those leaders who championed their countries. They are; Mohammad Mahathir of Malaysia, Jiang Zemin of Peoples Republic of China, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Suharto of Indonesia, to mention a few who were reformers and change agents or champions in their own right.

In the analysis on why earlier development plans failed in Nigeria, it was pointed out that lack of committed political leadership and lack of proper implementation were responsible. Therefore, the current development policies and strategies such as vision 2020 and national transformation agenda of the Jonathan administration must be pursued with full commitment and vigour by the Nigerian political leadership. To implement these development policies or strategies and to formulate and implement new ones, we have great lessons to learn from the Asian Tigers.

References


