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Quest for Genuine National Development Transformation in Nigeria: Imperatives of Ethics of Leadership Practices

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Abstract:

The paper examines the quest for genuine national development transformation against the backdrop of development crisis in Nigeria. It x-rays Nigerian successive development failures and core-ethical disconnect in leadership practices despite the fact that Nigeria has huge development potentials. It concludes by advocating genuine national development transformation anchored on ethics of leadership practices for sustainable national development

Keywords: National Development, Genuine Transformation, Ethics of Leadership

1. Introduction

Genuine transformation has become essential impetus for sustainable national growth and development. It has also remained the most critical ingredients for any nation that desire meaningful growth. Whether for individual, society, group or country; the idea of genuine transformation is about wholesome and regenerative commitments to positive development values and growth. It deals with sincere self appraisal of one's situation and impartial assessments of available capabilities, strength, weaknesses, opportunities and possible threats. It is also about making right and better choice out of myriads of alternative choices when one is faced with critical decision making about development priorities. Genuine transformation does not stop or end at the level of choice making. It also include unrepentant will and commitments to actualize desirable choices that have already been made.

Scholars have been able to establish correlation between genuine transformation and the sustainable growth of most developed countries. It is apparent from studies that most developed countries have realized long ago the necessary interface between genuine transformation and sustainable national development. Some of the key attributes of genuine national transformation template is that it takes time to analyse situations and this is done without preconceived sentiments either personal, or any extraneous considerations (Michael W. et'al 2014). Genuine national transformation involves approaching national issues with an open mind. It involves setting right priorities. It is also about countries coming up with better and well-thought out development alternatives. It is about choosing better and desirable alternative among other alternatives.

Whenever alternative is chosen such development oriented countries ensures that chosen development alternative is rigidly implemented.

Beneath these chains of activities, lies the critical role of genuine and transformational leadership.

National development transformation requires transformational leadership. Developed countries have systems which ensure that their crops of leaders are development oriented, passionate and strongly committed to genuine national development transformation. They take time to groom transformational leaders who are sincere, competent and possess strong will to turn national development ideas into practical accomplishment. It is about leaders that are accountable and truthful (Akosile 2014); leaders that are forthright and have passion for true independence and growth. Leaders for genuine national development transformation are not corrupt, but fearless and even prepared to lay down their lives for the greater good of their people. Such leaders are genuine and are not obsessed by primitive material accumulation.

The genuine leadership approach to national development transformation is predicated on tested national development principles overtime in which only leaders that have strong character, will-power and sufficient knowledge to successfully propel society towards desirable growth and genuine transformation is given the opportunity. It is an established rule that in the quest for genuine national sustainable growth and development, there can be no room for reluctant leaders. There is also no consideration for mundane issues and parochialism; neither there are considerations on extraneous pettiness such as zoning, god-fatherism in leadership architecture. Leaders for genuine national development transformation are expected to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the dynamics of national development. They are expected to be visionary. They should be able to see far beyond their immediate generation. They often develop and crystallize beautiful and desirable future. Genuine national leaders for development transformation must have

capacity to develop achievable action plans so that desirable future growth can eventually come into limelight. Above all, leaders in the context of transformation often endeavour to understand, imbibe and practice ethics of leadership which is a *sine qua non* for genuine national development transformation.

The implication of this is that there is direct link between genuine development transformation and the quality and caliber of leadership to effectively and successfully drive national development process. The caliber of leadership in term of how leaders have imbibed and practice ethics of leadership is critical to how a nation can achieve desired development goals. Leaders in developed countries appreciate this fact early enough.

The major differences between developed countries and other countries that have not successfully propelled their national development problems is that while leaders in developed countries are epitome of genuine transformation and practice ethics of leadership; their counterparts in most underdeveloped countries are not genuine in their transformation; they never allow ethics to influence their development practices. Although, it has been confirmed through various studies that societies contribute to shaping ethics of leadership practices, if a society for instance, accepted corruption as national value that is cherished by all, one may not expect leaders in that society not to be corrupt. Nevertheless, it is also possible for leaders themselves to develop acceptable character for the society through appropriate leadership architecture that involves ethics of leadership practices. This is when leaders think and operate above societal milieu thinking to develop, reshape and mould new realm of development horizon for their countrymen and women using the benchmark of ethics of leadership and high character quotient for development practices. Most leaders in developed countries are leaders that are prepared for genuine national development. A key attribute of such leaders is that he or she is not a charlatan. He is not an Accidental leader. Accidental leaders according to (El-Rufai, 2013) are leaders who got to position by chance.

The road to genuine national development transformation is often well-planned and thoroughly articulated. Leadership in that context is products of hard work, resilient and consistency. They are constantly searching for answers to myriads of development problems. Their activities involve developing models of solutions to perceived national development problems. Far more important, leaders in the pursuit of genuine national development transformation are embodiments of ethics of leadership. They operate with leadership ethos, which keep them focused and ensure that they achieve set goals.

The focus of this paper is to examine the Nigerian quest for genuine development transformation against the backdrop of the challenge of ethics of leadership. It is not in doubt that Nigeria is in die needs of genuine national development transformation. This is due to recurring under development crisis that have permeated the country despite huge available development potential.

2. Nigerian Underdevelopment Crisis and the Challenge of Development Transformation

After almost six decades of Nigeria existence as a nation, the development score-card does not correspond with desired development expectations. Although Nigeria has great development potentials (abundant human and natural resources); the country paraded various negative values that are glaringly anti-development. These include the culture of corruption, resource profligacy, little attention to education, excessive religiosity that does not correspond with good work among others. Added to this is the fact that Nigeria has not risen to the challenge of developing in critical areas of human endeavour such as food security, technology, health, standard of living, social and political inclusiveness among others.

The audit report on Nigeria development scenario submitted to expert group on alternative development framework post-2015 gives Nigeria below average in her development ratings (Adeyeye, 2013). The report which compared basic minimum requirement for national growth with actual Nigerian development indices are as follows:

Development Variable	Minimum Basic Requirements	Nigerian Development Scenario
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crease in GDP • Increase in average income per head • Opportunity for improvement in income and purchasing power • Diversification of economy • Massive investment in infrastructure • Enhancement in the quality of life • Investment in agriculture • Food sufficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of investment in regenerative sector • High level unemployment (about 70% of youth) • Monolithic economic structure. • Lack of enhancements in the quality of life despite huge earnings from oil • High inflation that continue to wipe off disposable income • Increase incidences of hunger due to low income • Massive importation of food that can be cultivated in Nigeria • Large expanse of uncultivated arable lands. • Moderate increase in GDP without corresponding effect on quality of life.

Politics/Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen's participation in the political process • Human Rights Enhancement • Responsiveness of government to social contractual responsibilities • Extent of security and peace • Degree of impartiality of the judiciary so as to promote justice, peace and equity • Prevalence of the rule of law • Degree of stability in succession to power • Transparency • Accountability • Probity • Political and social inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average Nigerian does not have a say in the political process • Lack of transparency, accountability and probity • High level corruption across the executive, legislative and the judiciary • Gradual descent to anarchy and disorder • Palpable fear, insecurity and threat to national and individual safety. • Judiciary is more or less for sale in Nigeria • An average Nigerian is hopeless • An electoral contest has become a theatre of acrimony, tension and instability • Low level of political and social inclusion.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Basic Social Amenities (pipe borne water, electricity, health facilities) • Prevalence of crude death • Degree of social cohesion/social mobility • Life expectancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no access to basic social amenities • Most Nigerians are still victims of preventable death such as accidents, malaria and during child birth etc. • There is no social cohesion in a way that someone can wake up one morning and decide to relocate from South to the North or vice versa. • Life expectancy in Nigeria is about 46 years
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of Science and Technology education • Existence of Adaptation Technology • New inventions in various field of human endeavour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of adaptive technology • Poor scientific culture • Abysmally low levels of inventions
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of awareness of the citizenry • Level of superstition • Extent of sense of social responsibility among individuals • Extent of interconnection between education and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of awareness • High level superstition • Absence of nexus between education and development

Table 1: Nigeria Development Audit-Pre-2015

FIG 1: Report on Nigerian development audit presented at International Conference on Alternative Development Agenda for Post 2015 organized by German Government in collaboration with DMZ at Boon Germany, November 2013.

It was the position of the report that Nigeria is never in a position to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that sets 2015 as deadline. Nigerian is described as a case-study in wasted development opportunities, policy inconsistencies, misplaced priorities, social and political instability, high-level corruption, increased level of poverty, low standard level of living among citizens and their is tendency towards becoming a failed state.

The report also identified some of the major lacuna in Nigeria past development efforts. These include of lack of development-inclined political culture, ignorance, improper understanding of the meaning of political independence, over-dependent on monolithic economic structure for development facilitation, lack of citizenship participation or political non-inclusiveness. Of all the above challenges, the problem of leadership occupies the front banner.

3. Role of leadership in the quest for genuine National Development Transformation

The leadership architecture that has evolved in Nigeria over the years are by-products of under developed Nigerian society. Nigeria leaders have merely subscribed to existing development ethos as determined by socio-cultural and political exigencies. Hence, the country paraded leaders that are not only corrupt but have consistently isolated or removed ethics and morality from their personal engagements and public accomplishments. Most leaders in Nigeria believe in resource profligacy with little attention to education as a springboard to development. The average Nigerian leader is outwardly religious but not ethical.

Nigeria did not have template for the type and qualities of leadership that are required for genuine development transformation. Rather, the nation has engaged various shades of leadership models that could not in any way enhance her development potential. Some of these negative leadership approaches include concessional leadership approach, reluctant leaders, leadership by good luck, accidental leaders, tribal leaders, leaders through non – cognitive years of experience, manipulative leader, leader by godfather, leaders by thugs, leaders by good governance tour. All these approach cannot bring about development transformation. In Nigeria, most leaders don't understand their inherent purpose and worth. Hence they ride only on reassurance through the praise of others. (Aina, 2014).

The truth of the matter is that these variant of leadership approach could not have brought about desired development transformation. It has never done so in any developed country of the world. This has made it very difficult for the country to dream dreams. Most Nigerian leaders are visionless and there is no reference to competence, ability, capacity and merit when it comes to leadership selection. In fact, merits are sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity and knowledge, capacity and integrity which are necessary for genuine development transformation have never been regarded as benchmarks for leadership.

If Nigeria is serious about national development transformation, it is imperative for Nigeria to follow the line of global best practices in her quest for genuine development. What is required for genuine national development transformation is a combination of enlightened followership in addition to leadership architecture that upholds key attributes of integrity, capacity, vision, zero-corruption and consistency as major hallmark. Developed countries for instance, individual human element within the society as the main focus of development activities. Genuine development transformation in those countries does not place self above the entire society. It also does not encourage corrupt practices and primitive material accumulation. Sustainable development management approach which is a key feature of genuine transformation places greater emphasis on ethical value system.

The implication of this is unambiguous. It indicates that in a truly national development transformation process, all strata of politics, economy, social, educational and technological facilitation operated based on ethical principles in which leadership is an embodiment of ethical practices and the moment a nation fails in this direction, it will be impossible for such a nation to achieve genuine transformational development.

The main reason why there is persistent development failure in Nigeria is that most Nigerian leaders do not have personal ethos either before they become leaders or after they have become one. The average Nigerian leader lacks personal discipline, strong moral character and ethical stature. This is why no sooner than they become leaders, they fall flat to the caprices of their offices and are unable to withstand moral and ethical pressures. They also lack vision which is often enshrined in ethical principles.

An average Nigerian leader does not have personal moral sensibility and discipline to stand for what is right. For instance, it is very rare for leader in Nigeria to resign his or her appointment based on moral principles. In Nigeria when it comes to personal morality, Nigeria leaders are "Anything goes", they lack capacity to clearly draw a line between what is desirable and what is not desirable. Where it becomes apparent that they have the knowledge of what is desirable, they are nevertheless afflicted by the disease of Aristotelian Moral Akrasia. Moral Akrasia is a disease of moral sickness in which someone knows what is right, but lacked sound moral will to stand for it in the face of fierce pressure, opposition or threat.

If Nigeria truly desires to transform beyond rhetoric's, there is therefore urgent need for present and potential leaders to understand, imbibe and practice leadership personal ethos. Some of the basic features of personal ethics for leadership effectiveness are as follow:

- Adequate knowledge of what is desirable as distinct from what is not desirable;
- Strong believe and commitment to ideals that are desirable;
- Possession of will power to stand against all that is not desirable;
- Personal discipline that is taken very seriously;
- Strength of character;
- Being guided by reason and not by emotion when it comes to critical decision making;
- Being humane;
- Honesty of purpose and in deeds;
- Abhorrence of all manners of primitive accumulations;
- Transparency and accountability;
- Not taken to mundane things of temporary gains, particularly drunkenness, sensuality and indulgences;
- Courage to quit whenever one is faced with seemingly critical situations that contradict one's principle or when it is obvious that one cannot make any useful impact;
- Being honourable i.e. a true person of honour;
- Never taken to fake glory i.e. honorary PhDs, titled chief etc.;
- Moderation in public and personal activities;
- Altruistic;

- Pursuant of all that is noble, loving, righteous and edifying God;
- Detest all manners of corruption;
- Non-deception.

Until when Nigerians are able to see the mandatory connection between leadership architecture and the attainment of genuine transformation in national development process, the Nigerian people and country may not get it right. Leadership is supposed to aggregate common vision. It is the embodiment of societal values and is supposed to propel towards desirable level of development. In Nigerian context there is critical challenge of ethics of leadership practices to propel the nation and citizens towards genuine transformation and development.

4. Ethics of Leadership Practices for Genuine Development Transformation in Nigeria

By ethics of leadership, we refer to a model of development practices which comprises of personal ethos for aspiring or potential leader; it also encompasses a model of leadership practices that engender and inspire best development management practices towards desirable national growth and development.

Leadership role has its own ethics of operations. Every leadership practice has fundamental ethical underpinnings. There are nuances and benchmarks for successful leadership practices. This is why leadership can never be an all-comers affair. The success or otherwise of any leader is a function of how much the leader knows and practices ethics that are embedded in leadership operational context.

Nigeria urgently needs new crop of leaders. Nigeria needs leaders that combine attributes of personal ethos with ethics of leadership practices in development context. Nigeria needs leaders that have the capacity to aggregate collective destiny and its ethical underpinning, leaders that understands the imperatives of leadership ethics for genuine national development transformation. Nigeria needs leaders that have what it takes to drive collective destiny into the direction of desirable development and are genuine by transformational in orientation, character and practice. The Nigeria nation may never achieve genuine development transformation in situation when her leaders are not sufficiently knowledgeable lacking in basic ethical hygiene, corrupt, obsessed with primitive accumulation; and are pathologically selfish.

It will be difficult to achieve genuine development transformation when leadership qualities that are anchored on sheer stroke of luck; tribal or religious bigotry when leaders that are not principled, and they do not believe in service. But see leadership position as springboard for self enrichments, it will be difficult to achieve genuine development transformation. For Nigerians to achieve desired growth and genuine development the leadership architecture must acquire appropriate measure of the following ethical characteristics.

- Sufficient knowledge of the Nigerian development challenge and its dynamics
- Clear understanding of the ideals of development that centre on promoting aggregate individual well being
- Sufficient vision as to what the country should look like in near and distance future.
- Eagle eye for excellence in the choice of development alternatives and decision making.
- Broadmindedness in development aggregation.
- Personal discipline on the part of leader
- Incorruptibility and decency in appearance and thought.
- Excellent strength of character
- Strong believe in the Nigeria project
- People-centered in terms of activities and by making Nigerian people as the focus of activities.
- Radiate love and commitment to service.
- Being above board
- Transparency, accountability and sincerity
- Being honourable in the true sense of the word
- Absolute commitment to legacy projects that stand the test of time
- Epitome of sustainable development
- Achievement oriented and placing others or the country above self.

5. Conclusion

Nigeria has suffered persistent development failures due to lack of injection of ethics into her national development practices. This is in view of the fact that the country has huge potentials. The critical missing link is absence of genuine development transformation that is appropriately propelled by leaders with ethical benchmark for successful operation in national development and growth process. The way out of this doldrums is for present and potential leaders to adopt ethical template and endeavor to practice core-ethical values in national development management processes. Nigeria leaders need to wake up and entrench ethical path in their national leadership accomplishment. The nation should also stop propping up leaders that are ethically deficient while current leaders should heal themselves of the disease of moral Akrasia which is sustained by crave for primitive material accumulations. Nigeria may have been made prostrate by unethical crave for self indulgences by her leaders thereby precipitating underdevelopment crisis over a long period of time. If the country truly desire genuine development transformation, present and future crops of leaders should inject core ethical values into their development leadership practices.

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