



LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT DEMOCRACY AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the issue of leadership recruitment in our country as central to our current national leadership predicament that results to poor governance and development processes. It alludes to the fact that, result oriented development in any society lies largely on the interplay between man's leadership skills and his environment in order to ensure self discovery that plays a major role in energizing, conscientizing, motivating and mobilizing the people both old and young towards achieving a common goal. The paper submits that, the country has been recruiting inappropriate leaders, and undermining rather than strengthening our democratic and development process. It recommends that, for Nigeria to achieve good democracy and desired sustainable development, there should be good procedure in place and be willing to explore the endowed secret wealth of our both human and material resources, taking a queue from the secret miracle of development of human engines through education and skills acquisition in Asia, Finland, China and India. The paper concludes that if good leadership is put in place, correct democratic values will cure the political system of vices and smoothen relationships and interactions between and among individuals both old and young, bearing in mind that, youths are strong composition of the future of any nation, they determine how great or how terrible the nation would be.

Keywords: Leadership, Recruitment, Democracy, Youth, Development

Introduction

The result oriented development of any given society lies on the interplay between man's leadership skills and his environment. This interplay ensures self discovery that plays a major role in energizing, conscientizing, motivating and

mobilizing the people both old and young towards achieving a common goal. Right from the time of creation, God perfected the world with major variables that will make man's life simple, easy and peaceful towards moral, physical and meta-physical prosperity. However, man lack of skills to control his sense of self love has become the major obstacle to attain nature's promise, thereby, worsening the circle of confusion and hopelessness in this world.

Over the centuries, people have been fed and influenced by their perceptions as products of their value systems, behaviour, attitude and character. Since value systems shape the perceptions and beliefs of people, it means that any society that strongly holds good value systems will have disciplined group of people who can influence rapid development, while a society with weak value system will experience chaos and serious underdevelopment be it material or non material.

In the United States of America, as well as in many other countries including Nigeria, the core democratic values are those that gear towards development, fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles which include: right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, common good, justice, equality, diversity, truth, popular sovereignty and patriotism. True democratic practice evolves other elements of democratic values such as the rule of law, separation of power, representative government, checks and balances, individual rights, freedom of religion, federalism and civilian control of the military etc. When these aspects of democracy are adequately put in place, development can flow with ease because of the country's leadership ability to tap from its natural resources in order to cater for the material and social lives of the people for production of goods and services.

Development refers to progress in health and well being of all, good reward for labour, improvement in both standard and quality of living and education for all. Contrary to the notion that development can be measured by the number of big hotels, by how many people owned cars, by how many rich people can afford medical treatment abroad etc. Development is not imposed on a people, it starts from the people, so when use technology or expertise from outside, we need to guide against blind adoption. As a multidimensional process development connotes change from a less desirable level to a more desirable state. It concerns the improvement of the total living condition of a people. Unfortunately,

however, our democratic practice in Nigeria is still crawling as we currently run a political system where impunity, rather than process, dictates things; where the rule of law operates in the breach, where key institutions such as; the bureaucracy, the electoral umpire, the judiciary that should serve as the pillar of

the political structure is not strong enough or have been so compromised that it serves only a few powerful individuals and groups, we experience a democracy where political parties are mere rallies and tools for the pursuit of narrow and private interests of the same powerful individuals and cliques. This has seriously ravaged Nigeria's democratic and political values and negatively affected our development.

This paper has examined the issue of leadership recruitment in our country as central to our current national predicament of poor governance and development processes. The paper submits that, the country has been recruiting inappropriate leaders, thereby undermining rather than strengthening our democratic and development processes. We recommend that, for Nigeria to achieve good democracy and desired sustainable development, there should be good procedure in place and be willing to explore the endowed secret wealth of our both human and material resources, because the secret of development in Asia, Finland, China and India is the miracle of development of human engines through education and skills acquisition and we can do more.

Democracy and Sustainable Youth Development:

The word democracy is derived from the Greek *Democratia*, which means, popular rule, the people's rule, or majority Government Democracy is understood today as "The government of the people by the people and for the people." Aristotle of the 5th Century BC. Who happened to be a strong advocate of democracy stressed that; "democracy is the rule of the poor majority of the citizens of a nation," for Aristotle a nation is democratic only when the poor who are usually in the majority have sovereign control of government of a nation. Democracy is like the Nigerian village system of government where all youths of the village have a share in its development. All were expected to attend the village meetings and contribute in word, cash and kind for its development (Yamsat 34). In general terms democracy is regarded as a system of government where people participate in governance directly or through their representatives. Thus, democracy is primarily a way of determining who shall govern and to what ends. In a nutshell, democracy is a form of government in which governing power is derived from the people. This presupposes that democracy has a popular base and lies upon the consent of the governed, a requirement that makes elections or the broader phenomenon of choice such a crucial element. Though, a plethora of definitions have been offered to decipher the concept of democracy, Dahl has his understanding. To Dahl, democracy is "a system of elected representative

government operated under the rule of law, where the most significant groups in the population participate in the political process and have access to effective representation in the practice of making governmental decisions, that is, of allocation of scarce resources” (11). Sand books sees democracy as “a political system characterized by regular and free elections in which politicians organized into political parties compete for power by right of the virtue of all adults to vote and the guarantee of a range of political and civil rights” (Quoted in Ukase 83). These opinions are relevant for the description of democracy; because the ultimate goal of democracy is to civility rooted in respect and justice for each man to achieve a human policy. Democracy as a descriptive term is synonymous with majority rule. This means Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives. In this system of government the common people are considered as the primary source of political power, and there exist the principles of social equality and respect for the individual within a community. Democracy embodies the ideal that decisions affecting people’s systems and social structures are taken with the active participation of all the members. A state can be said to be democratic if its government is chosen by, and is accountable to the people.

Development refers to the general improvement in the lives of individuals, groups, and environment. The concept of development is both elusive and fluid. The principal obstacle to a universally accepted notion of development has been the ideological disposition of most scholars who look at development from a preferred position of certain ideological underpinnings (Vande 78). Rodney on his part submit that development is encompassed within the idea of the ability of a society to be able to tap its natural resources in order to cater for the material and social lives of the generality of the people (20). This is simply a reference to the manner of production of goods and services in a society. According to this concept Akwen and Gever, development cannot be measured by the number of big hotels, by how many people own cars, by how many rich people can afford medical treatment abroad, etc. Rather, development means progress in the following: Health and well being of all, Good reward for labour, Improvement in both standard and quality of living and education for all. The above can be achieved when we take account of local conditions; it is not believe that what is right in one place will work well also in another place. We need to respect and use local knowledge and listen to what local people say too, and what they think their needs are. The fact is that development cannot be imposed on a people it has to start from the people. Development is therefore a multidimensional

process which connotes change from a less desirable state to a more desirable state. Its concern is the improvement in the total condition of living of a people (56).

Although there is no universally accepted definition of whom a youth is. The Nigerian National Youth Policy 2001 Document on its part defines youths as people between the ages of 18 and 35. Youth can be defined as a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives. Youths share certain characteristics that distinguish them from other generation. Such characteristic include, impatience for change, zealousness, radicalism, rebellions, curiosity, hard work, self esteem and ambitiousness as the propelling factors for national development (Jega 33). It is pertinent to bear in mind that, youths are the engine that can work to actualize national development; Health and well being of all, Good reward for labour, improvement in both standard and quality of living and education for all, provided the mindsets of the youths are set in the right direction. The actions and inaction of the youths are necessary impetus to ingrain and consolidate the vertical and horizontal integrations of any country like Nigeria. Jega further states that:

It is literally the age category during which an individual is likely to get it right or miss it entirely. The youth are essentially characterized by physical strength and agility, mental perseverance, intellectual explosions, social and sexual exertions, political and ideological consciousness, etc. Most significantly, it is the age of franchise and political activity (34).

Ordinarily, the youth of a nation should be her democratic vanguard; they are to be at the fore-front of all democratic activities, but this is not the case in Nigeria. Indeed, the youth are about the most marginalized and neglected political category. All manner of obstacles and restrictions are placed on the path of their political participation and aspirations. Some of these obstacles are even constitutional (such as legally barring most of them from vying for certain posts, including those of the National Parliament, Governorship and the Presidency) or through outright economic exclusion (politics has become so monetized that most of them cannot participate meaningfully).

Nigerian youths also suffer from deliberate denial of level-playing ground and opportunities to realize their political dreams and potentials. The female among them are restricted by cultural, religious and biological constraints, among others. The political economy, as controlled by those who run the system, has

consigned a great percentage of the youth to the background through denial of education, economic empowerment, incentives and opportunities. Millions of Nigerian youth now constitute a huge army of the destitute, unemployed, social miscreants, hopeless and hapless; they have become liabilities rather than assets to the democratic system. However, the youth themselves on another hand should accept responsibility for their predicament. This is because when they are given the trial to test important positions in the polity they tend to prove not to be better, sometimes even worse, than the old men in the aspects of perpetrating and perpetuating of negative values. Nigerian youths have not on their side actually demonstrated a willingness to initiate, instigate, propel, or even support revolutionary change. Worse still is that in the past one and a half decades, well informed youths have acquired retrogressive values and negative attitudes so much that they thrive in divisive politics, intolerance and bigotry, primordial effusions, ethno-religious and regional mobilization as well as bloody and violent attacks on one another at the opposite ends of the divide (36).

The simple, painful truth is that the Nigerian youth, in their present state, are incapable of sustaining democratic values. The reality is that the Nigerian youth, to a very large extent, neither understand these values, so it is not possible to appreciate, let alone to talk of projecting and promoting the norms and values themselves, for one can only give what he has. It is the democratic values that can build up a democratic spirit, which entails a set of habits, attitudes, disposition, temperaments, norms and values that must exist in an individual before they are translated and expressed as democratic character and personality. The spirit of democracy comes about through a process of continues interaction with democratic forces, such democratic forces do not exist here in their true forms and so the political climate is not such that can produce democrats in our youths. Unfortunately our youths get what could be regarded as negative political socialization which reduces their participation to thugs, ballot box snatching, kidnapping and rigging, etc.

Qualities for Good Leadership Recruitment

The problem of leadership recruitment in the Nigeria is central to our development predicament; and resolve this means concerted efforts must be made to get it right in order to strike out poor governance and ensure development processes. It is not yet too late to contribute to the development of the criteria to be used to mobilize for good leadership recruitment now and in the future. This can be achieved by developing a very strong consensus that

political leadership cannot remain the channel for which people illegally acquire huge sums of money. To avoid these persistent problems, the current pattern of leadership recruitment must not continue and ensure that character, competence and capacity to determine who leads. Although, good leaders have a variety of styles and personalities, there are some traits that all great leaders share, such qualities include but not limited to the followings:

- i. **Accountability:** Good leaders hold themselves accountable and are always working to improve and progress. They are never satisfied with the status quo. Accountability and continual improvement require a commitment to seeking and acting on feedback, learning from mistakes, and course correcting. When accountability is modeled from the top, everyone improves. Accountability strengthens culture, inspires excellence, sets expectations, and builds trust not only in leadership but among the team.
- ii. **Communication:** Good leaders communicate with their subordinates based on their needs and preferences. Communication can make or break your efforts to connect with your team, manage and coordinate initiatives, and build trust within your organization. Lack of open, honest communication has negative impact on the lead. But leaders who communicate thoroughly, consistently, and honestly build trust, increase confidence, this can creates an environment where development will thrive.
- iii. **Vision for the future:** Vision provides focus, motivation, and direction to move through change and obstacles. Good leaders have a clear vision and are able to articulate the path forward to their team. Leaders should be able to connect the work on the ground to the bigger picture and provide the why behind everything they do. Leaders who can do this help people understand and align their work strategically and engage with their work more meaningfully.
- iv. **Empathy:** Empathy is the ability to perceive and relate to the thoughts and experiences of others. Leaders who operate from a place of empathy, understanding, and compassion establish stronger connections among their employees and improve performance across the board. Empathy is fundamental to building trust, confidence, and engagement.
- v. **Gratitude:** Gratitude breeds positive interactions and connection, increases engagement, and builds resilience. Grateful leaders

understand that success is a team effort and they make sure to recognize the work and contributions of their team. This can be done by: complimenting employees, celebrating wins, listening to employee feedback and addressing needs, acknowledging employee contributions in private and in public. Leaders who practice gratitude in small and big ways can make a meaningful impact on employee engagement. Good leadership is about more than just managing tasks and tracking performance (37-38).

Challenges of Leadership and Sustainable Democratic Values in Nigeria

Throughout history, scholars and thinkers in both religion and secular have acknowledged the role of values in nurturing, shaping and consolidating democratic structures and systems. Despite the obvious doctrinal differences, these values when viewed at both theoretical and philosophical levels tend to have universal character and applicability. Indeed at every era, all societies operate value systems which govern human social existence. Values across cultures, communities, groups and other social formations bear similarities, though there could be differences that exist particularly in terms of specifics and emphasis. Essentially values can be defined as broad preferences concerning an appropriate course of action, they are what a people cherish and encourage their members to pursue and achieve (Vanguard 1). Values reflect a person's sense of what is right and wrong or what "ought" to be. The pre-colonial Igbo society depicted by the late Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, in addition to all the afore-mentioned, valued successful individuals like Okonkwo, the major character in the novel. Actually, all societies value success and achievement, and frown at laziness, indolence and dishonesty. Values that are commonly upheld and promoted by almost every society include hard-work, wisdom, wealth, truth-telling, compassion, justice, industry, love and kindness etc. Values relate to the norms of a culture, but they are more global and abstract than norms. While norms provide rules for behaviour in specific situations, values identify what should be judged good or evil. In other words, the value system reinforces and gives expression to the normative system of a community or society (3).

To cite a typical example within the political realm, while it is against the democratic norm to engage in election rigging, the ideal of a free, fair and credible poll is a necessary condition – hence a cherished value for a truly viable democratic polity. Democratic values refer to those principles underpinning democracy. In reality, democracy is a set of principles and practices evolved and

operated by a people. It is therefore a distinct way of life or of doing things at least as opposed to autocracy, totalitarianism, monarchy and other governance types. As a process and a system, democracy can only thrive and prosper when and if it operates within a milieu of a viable political culture. Taken collectively democratic values constitute an integral component of a given political culture. Nigeria lacks a viable political culture, which explains why our polity thrives in rancour, crises, schisms, oddities and absurdities, and why it has failed to live up to the billing and the expectation of all. This is in part a consequence of our inability to fashion out, inculcate, instill, nurture, and transmit fine democratic values with which to sustain and consolidate the polity where anything goes and where democratic principles are often observed in the breach akin to a man walking with his head. We all share in the blame, including the youth, who should have been the sentinel, the guardian angel of the republic. In fact, rather than serve as the agents of fortification of our democratic enterprise, the Nigerian youth often threatened our democratic voyage so far. According to Jega, there is a link between democracy, youth and national development. This intercourse is not only symbolically connected; but, it is true that one depends on the other for its sustenance. Therefore, the role of youth on national development cannot be over emphasis. The wheel of development of any country lies on the how productive and creative the youthful populations are. The youth in any society are the engine of growth and development of that society because they provide the labour force for production of goods and service to take effect. Youths are a significant masse of people, whose action and inaction can develop or destroy the hegemonies of their society. For instance, the 2006 census indicated that the population of the youths constituted over 70% of the total population. This strength of population of youth is great assets for the Nigerian state if their potentialities are properly harnessed and utilized in the right direction (56). The transition of society from one generation to another is significant to the formative and developmental aspiration of such society. Interestingly, a society that prepare their youth for the sake of future aspiration will not only secure her future developments but will prepare her next set of leaders with the challenges of national reconciliation and development. Therefore, the role of youth on national development is sacrosanct (holy, revered, untouchable) to the whole developmental aspiration of any society. The youth are often referred to as agents of societal rejuvenation and leaders of tomorrow. So, their mindsets and roles are of major importance to the development of any society. It is perplexing to say that no nation will experience development when the youths who have a greater role

to play on national development and constitutes the largest percentage of the population are idle and ineffective. In fact, The Nigeria youths, not oil are the future of Nigeria in the 21st century.

The current state of the mind of Nigerian youth is not encouraging and does not inspire confidence. Societal neglects and government inability to design an integrated and implementable policy framework targeting the youthful energy for national sustainable development, has left the youth without guardianship, mentorship and direction. This is because, instead of utilizing their energy, curiosity, creativity, passion and impatience for change to foster national development, the society has left the youth without, hope, guardianship, mentorship and future aspiration, if the agonies of poverty, unemployment, frustration, despondences, confusion, hopelessness, parental and governmental neglects, are anything to go by (57).

Today, due to lack of opportunities for sustainable development and support for youths in the country, the only place of consolation for the youthful minds is to showcase their talents and energy in the entertainment industry. This to any serious minded nation is a great disappointment, a minus and annoying as we continue to forecast future developmental aspiration of our dear country, Nigeria. Reacting to this, Jega states that:

Entertainment though a multi-million dollar sector in advance countries, but, is a diversionary and idle sector for the pool of human resources and creativity that lie buried in the hands and hearts of Nigeria youths. Nigeria youths have more, than, entertainment to offer this great nation. The leaders and society in general must understand that the miracles of development, lies in the development of youthful minds and souls with knowledge, strength and skills. Knowledge and skill have become the global currency of the world (32).

Unfortunately, there is no central bank in the world that prints such currencies, except, leaders and societies device their own means to prints it through harnessing and utilizing the energy, creativity and passion of their youth for national development. It is great to have oil and gas and other mineral resources, but they only weaken society in the long run unless they are used to build schools and the culture of long time learning through highly effective teachers, parents and committed students, involved in such a knowledge based century. The ability of nations to rise and consolidate the gains of globalization lies in training,

educating and well informed youths. The secret of development in Asia, Finland is the miracle of development of human engines through education and skills acquisition (40).

Nigerian Youths, Democratic Values and the Leadership Question

In general terms, democracy is regarded as a system of government where people participate in governance directly or through their representatives. Thus, democracy is primarily a way of determining who shall govern and to what ends. Democracy is a form of government in which governing power is derived from the people. This presupposes that democracy has a popular base and lies upon the consent of the governed, a requirement that makes elections or the broader phenomenon of choice such a crucial element. However, we must not identify democracy with majority rule. Democracy has complex demands, which certainly include voting and respect for election results, but it also requires the protection of liberties and freedoms, respect for legal entitlements and the guaranteeing of free and uncensored distribution of news and fair comment to freedom of expression. Even elections can be deeply defective if they occur without the different sides getting an adequate opportunity to present their respective cases, or without the electorate enjoying the freedom to obtain news and consider the views of competing protagonists.

This means democracy goes beyond merely holding periodic elections. It must enthrone and guarantee rights and freedoms. In this regards, we do not have to equate democracy with regular elections. Similarly, it can be argued that holding elections does not necessarily means a polity is democratic, particularly under the pseudo-democratic enclaves and Byzantine era-like tyrannies that dot 21st Century Africa where people seem to be voting without choosing. What is missing is really a consciousness and awareness that democracy is a business which operates based on a set of rules, and that the ultimate goal is not just to grab power but to use power and authority for the pursuit and advancement of the interests and aspirations of society. This can only happen in a setting that has evolved and articulated coherent democratic values. Democracy rests upon fundamental principles, not uniform practices because, the way democracies operate differ remarkably from one place to another. The underlying principles of democratic rule however remain essentially the same or substantially similar everywhere. The commonest of these are equality, choice, freedom and mass participation, regarded as the main features and ingredients of democracy. Modern democracies are largely plural entities, reflecting each nation`s unique

political, social and cultural life. This brings to the fore and necessitates entrenchment of diversity, dissent, deliberation and decision-making, which are a separate set of principles essential to democratic rule. However, democratic values are more than mere principles; they embrace the principles all the same, but also represent a conscious attempt to institutionalize and give practical expression to a set of ideals through political action. In many societies they are known as core democratic values. For Umar:

The political class is selfish, self-seeking, unpatriotic, manipulative, and is capable of any vice including engaging in dangerous intrigues capable of destroying the country itself. Such a class always thinks and plots for the next election rather than pause to think of how to address teething and mounting problems (898).

These unenviable characteristics of the present-day political system are a direct fall-out of lack of fine democratic values which should have guided our democratic transition, consolidation and development. Where democratic values truly take roots and influence the conduct, actions and functions of political leaders, institutions and the electorate, the above political oddities and absurdities are dispelled. The freedoms and rights of individuals citizens are respected, the rule of law and adherence to process now becomes an article of faith to be pursued by leaders and the led alike, hence the desire for our democratic process in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The paper recommends the followings as way forward:

1. Political leaders must channels their energy leadership training of the youth by in harnessing and utilizing the energy and passion of the youth through positive means, other than the current image of political thugs, assassins, agents for election riggings and prostitution.
2. Policy makers and parents should try to understand and appreciate that youth are the future leaders of this country; therefore, their mindset and creativity should be a major priority to the nation.
3. Government should provide good leadership by creating enabling environment favourable for the youths to achieve their desired objectives to achieve vision for national development by investing in knowledge and skills acquisition for youth and national development.

4. Education should be given the chance to provide leadership and be regarded as more than mere knowledge of facts and receiving recognitions for being able to attain such, but, it should be holistic in nature, it should involve understanding harnessing and nurturing of potentials from youths for proper utilization.
5. We should all work for enthronement of true democracy, because what we operate is a pseudo-democracy where anything goes. Let's understand that, there is no substitute to true democracy if we must make progress in our democratic march.
6. Leadership value Re-orientation should be put in place by setting our priorities right and defining our objectives, doing away with all negative values especially, the odious culture of impunity on democratic criminals.
7. Political socialization should be taken seriously using the agents of socialization; a process of educating, inculcating and instilling in the young ones with correct political behaviour, attitudes, manners, values etc, must as a matter of policy begin at the family level, then continue at the school and worship places.
8. The curricula right from primary school to the university should contain adequate lessons on civics and political leadership education.
9. The mass media, both print and electronic, should devote a good amount of space and airtime to issues associated with political enlightenment and education.

Conclusion

When and only if good leadership is put in place, correct democratic values will cure the political system of vices and smoothen relationships and interactions between and among individuals both old and young, organizations, institutions both traditional and legal institutions in the systems becomes strong. Bearing in mind that, youths are a strong composition of the future of any nation, they determine how great or how terrible the nation would be.

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