EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The success of any sustainable development effort is dependent upon many factors, but none is more important than the impact of its leaders. They make the decisions which determine both organizational purpose and the means by which that purpose is fulfilled. Their actions determine whether the potential of the organizational members will be activated or lie dormant and whether the emotional tone of the organization will be characterized by warmth or enthusiasm. This paper examined the relationship between effective leadership and the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria, through the development of a leadership-impact-effect conceptual model. The findings from our paper revealed that the attainment of sustainable development requires transformation leadership style; a leadership that is creative, credible, affirm shared values, create a climate of trust, foster collaboration and model the vision. The above leadership traits and practices no doubt will lead to economic efficiency, social cohesion and environmental responsibility- the hallmark of sustainable development. The paper recommended that the nation must begin to "rely more on talented and less political appointees" to run ministries, agencies and departments of government. Talented people can be relied upon to be creative, innovative and entrepreneurial in their approach to public service in line with global best practices.

Keywords: Effective leadership, sustainable development, transformational leadership.

Introduction

The performance of any nation, in seeking to achieve its set goals to a large extent depends on its leadership. The reason is that effective leadership translates into prudent public policy formulation and implementation, as well as good public service delivery to meet the needs and aspirations of citizens. Some Asian economies (South Korea and Malaysia) that were in some decades past faced with similar development challenges are currently been hailed as "economic miracles" (Akyuz & Gore, 2001 cited in Kuada, 2010), while the situation in Nigeria is been described as a "disaster" and a "tragedy" (UNCTAD, 2004 cited in Kuada, 2010). Olayiwola (2015) asserted that in Nigeria, we are confronted with a worsening poverty, hunger, ill health, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, killings and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystem on which our wellbeing depends.

Efforts at integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfilment of basic needs, improved living standard for all, better protected and managed ecosystem and a safer, more prosperous future, this to a greater extent is referred to as sustainable development (UNCED 1992).

Nevertheless, achieving sustainable development requires attention given the myriad of social, economic, political and environmental challenges regularly experienced in Nigeria. These challenges have been caused by leadership failure (Ochola, 2007; Everest-Philips, 2012). It is obvious that Nigeria is painfully in need of quality and effective leadership in order to achieve the aims, objectives, visions and aspirations of the founding fathers vis-à-vis achieving sustainable development.

While the Nigerian government is desirous of achieving sustainable development, it has failed to realize that effective leadership is a key ingredient in the eradication of poverty and the maintenance of sustainable development. Studies have shown that to promote political stability that could engender development of Nigeria and other developing nations in the West Africa sub-region, there must be an effective leadership.

In contemporary Nigeria, effective leadership is a prime value, the most valuable 'public good' but yet the most elusive. Leadership can also be seen as the most visible aspect of management with its potential of transforming the workforce into a willing and winning team with the appropriate synergy to actualize collectively determined corporate objectives. It is pertinent therefore, to note that we cannot function without leaders and that our quality of life depends on the quality of our leaders and the stability of our political administrations.

Given the importance of effective leadership in achieving sustainable development, this paper attempts to discuss effective leadership as a veritable tool for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Recommendations will be given concerning the leadership style to adopt that is conducive to optimal human resources productivity to achieving the much-desired sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues

Concept of Leadership

The whole art of managing involves leadership, whether in a formal or informal organization. The leader makes the decisions, which determines both organisational purpose and the means by which that purpose is fulfilled. His action determines whether the potential of the organization's members will be actualised or lie dormant and whether the emotional tone of the organisation will be characterized by warmth and enthusiasm or coldness and apathy (Williams, 1978). Leadership is the process of influencing people and providing an environment for them to achieve team or organisational objectives (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000). According to Robins (2004), "leadership is the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals". It is the process by which one person induces others to work towards predetermined goals (Baridam, 2002). If we agree that the leader influences the behaviour of others, then conditioning, motivation, recognition of personality differences and group dynamics, to mention a few, is part of leadership. Leadership has to do with the dynamic quality of relationship-the action-reaction phase of managing others. From the above definitions of leadership, a common trend that can be seen among the various interpretations of leadership is that, it relates to exerting influence among a group of people so that the collective purpose of that group will be achieved optimally.

Studies on leadership have usually fallen under one of the three general headings: trait theory, behavioural theory and contingency theories. Each of these seems to contain some elements of truth but has always in the final analyses failed to explain enough of the difference between effective leadership to be generally useful in a variety of situations (Handy, 1983 Quoted in Baridam, 2002). The trait theory assumes that the individual is more useful than the situation; that there are certain distinguishing characteristics or traits, which differentiate successfulleaders from unsuccessful leaders. The behavioural theories believe that leaders may be best characterised by behaviour pattern rather than by individual traits. The first contingency model developed by Fred Fiedler argues that leadership effectiveness is dependent on the favourableness of the situation. While the above theories have made significant contributions to our understanding of leadership and organisational performance, there are still some limitations inherent in each of the approaches.

However, more recent developments in leadership theory include leader-member exchange model, substitute for leader, charismatic leadership, and transformational leadership. The leader-member exchange model recognises that the leaders may form different relationships with followers, thus, having the in-group and out-group. The substitute for leadership model argues that sometimes situations can neutralise or even replace leader behaviour. For example, when a task is routine, and there is an objective standard by which the subordinate can measure his performance, leader behaviour is irrelevant. The charismatic leadership results when a leader uses the force of personal abilities and talents to have profound and extraordinary effects on followers (House & Baetz, 1979). Transformational leaders inspire and excite their subordinates to high levels of performance by relying on their personal attributes instead of their official position to manage followers (Nelson, et.al., 2003). They create, communicate and model a vision for the organisation and inspire employees to strive for that vision.

Of all these variants of leadership theories, studies by Greenberg (2002), Bennis (1990) and Podsakoff et. al (1990) have shown that transformation leaders are more successful because they encourage, inspire and motivate followers to innovate, create change that will help grow and shape the future success of the organisation. They have the drive- the desire for achievement, the tenacity, initiative and high energy. They are morally driven, credible, self confident- that is, they trust in their own abilities, and are able to adapt to the needs of followers and requirements of the situation. Transformation leadership is very ideal in situations that require strategic change since it is the behaviour of the leader that counts and not his personality. Effective leaders, therefore, are those who are capable of persuading others to move enthusiastically towards the achievement of the organisational and group goal. Such leaders possess unique qualities such as integrity, communication skill, self-awareness, agility, credibility, empathy and ability to delegate.

Concept of Sustainable Development.

Development is a word that has continued to receive diverse interpretation and explanation among scholars and researchers. The concept, as a result, suffers from a surfeit of meaning. Also, there is no generally acceptable operational definition of what development is, nor is there a consensus regarding how development can be pursued. This can be attributed to the multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary and value

orientation of the concept. Development, in its most simplistic definition means progress. It presupposes change for the better. Development is dynamic; it is a continuum, changing with situations (Eisha, 2020).

The origin of the term sustainable development came into use in 1972 at the United Nation Conference on Human Environment at Stockholm. However, the publication titled, *Our Common Future* in 1992 by the World Commission on the Environment and development (WCED) in 1987 at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janero was the most important publication on Sustainable development. (Retrieved https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org). The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (sustainable-environment.org.uk). Ugo (2008) also describes sustainable development as a construct, which envision development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future.

From the foregoing definitions we can rightly say that sustainable development is the marriage of economy and ecology to attain economic development without compromising the ecological balance. This attained by rigorous policy and strategic change. Sustainable development is a conglomerate of three basic aims:

i. Economics - to attain balanced growth through creation of new markets and efficiency in the management of resources.
ii. Social - guarantying improved living conditions, equal opportunity, equity in resource distribution, culture and identity and social connectedness.
iii. Environmental responsibility- efficient management of waste and resources, value for environment.

One can understand the concept of sustainable development better if one considers the various dimensions of development identified by Chaka (1989). These include economic growth, distributive justice, social-economic transformation, modernization and redemptive hope. Thus, sustainable development is a rapid and sustained rise in per capita real output, reducing poverty level among the masses, transforming a country's mode of production, including wealth oriented behaviour and values in individuals and making them to be more "at home" and with oneself in the community. The need for sustainable development includes among others- prevention of environmental degradation, ensuring the safety of human life, checking the over exploitation and waste of natural resources, and exploitative technology and finding alternative sources; and finally, regeneration of renewable energy resource.

Effective leadership and sustainable development nexus

The performance of any nation, in seeking to achieve its set goals, to a large extent depends on its leadership. The reason being that effective leadership translates into prudent public policy formulation and implementation, as well as good public service delivery, to meet the needs and aspirations of citizens- sustainable development (Kwasi, 2014).However, Mckeown (2002) proffers that the central tenet of sustainable development reveals three distinct components: environment, society and economy that are intertwined and not separated. Thus, achieving sustainable development requires a more balanced relationship among the environment, society and economy in pursuit of development and improved quality of life. Solow (1999) summarizes the concept of sustainable development by suggesting that sustainability

cannot be expressed by any means less than a sanction that preserves productive capacity for posterity.

Sharma et al. (2009) conducted a study that examined the constructs that affect sustainable development among Village Development and Security Committee members in Malaysia. The study revealed that leadership was perceived as imperative in promoting sustainable development by the rural community leaders. The study identified that effective leadership helped the villages to develop in times of peril the capacity to overcome the social and community challenges that confronted them and granted them the ability to meet the needs of the people. This points to the fact that it is important for leaders to be visionary and have a wider perspective of issues that confront them beyond their immediate environment to satisfy the tenets of sustainable development. This attitude grants leaders an edge to conquer the challenges and problems of current times while having the ability to implement decisions that are timely, complete and responsive. The study also revealed that the absence of good leadership could lead to situations where activities in the villages would stagnate and move out of order. This construct could be supported by the need for management control in organizations that shapes individual behaviours, coordinates resources, both human and material and directs the efforts of the individual workers toward the achievement of the organizational goals. This helps to produce maximum benefit and helps in the growth and survival of the organization. The same could be said of effective leadership if it is replicated at the national level. Effective leadership has the propensity to coordinate the resources of a country to promote sustainable development.

Subsequently, Kwasi, (2014) conducted a study to review the concept of leadership as practiced in the West and in Africa, and goes on to establish the link between these two approaches and sustainable development in Africa. It does this with the view of assessing their implications for the attainment of sustainable development on the continent through a developed leadership–impact– effect conceptual model. In seeking to achieve its purpose, the paper uses a literature review approach to assess the leadership orientation in the West (particularly in relation to effective leadership) as against the studied leadership situation prevalent in the African continent to find out their impact on development (sustainable). Findings from the paper reveal a great disparity between the leadership situation in the African continent and the attainment of sustainable development. It also affirms a link between effective leadership approaches, like the transformational leadership approach, and the attainment of sustainable development. Based on the findings, it is recommended that African leaders resort to effective leadership styles, with a great emphasis on the transformational style, which integrate creativity, vision and participation, as it attempts to create sustainable development for the citizenry in the continent.

Similarly, Perren and Burgoyne (2001) identified a set of key management and leadership abilities from a study that was conducted by the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership on leadership qualities that impact upon sustainable development. From the study, eight meta-groups of three generic categories were deduced from 83 distinct management and leadership abilities that were identified.These three categories and groups were as follows:(1) Thinking abilities: ability to think strategically.(2) People abilities: self-management, managing and

leading people, direction and culture, managing relationships.(3) Task abilities: managing information, managing resources, managing activities and quality.From the findings of the above study, it is evident that peculiar leadership skills are required for sustainable development to be realized in any setting. These skills and abilities involve a leader's ability to be visionary, have control over people and also manage tasks in a way that ensures efficiency and effectiveness.

Method and Materials

In seeking to achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive research approach was adopted. The secondarymethod of data collection was adopted. Data was obtained from research papers, journal articles, web sites, and web blogs using the Internet to assess the impact of effectiveleadership on sustainable development in Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

The culture of poor and ineffective political leadership in Nigeria has been a recurring problem. It has been one of the causes of underdevelopment and failure to achieve the aims and objectives of sustainable development. The citizenry has over the years been experiencing the worst form of economic deprivation and untold hardship compared with their counterparts in developed countries of the world. The common characterisation of leadership in Nigeria is corruption, embezzlement of state resources, nepotism, lack of statesmanship, seizure of power and lack of participation. This has led to increased poverty, retarded growth and development due to policy failures and lack of trust in leadership.

This is so because, virtually all the means that could be exploited to extricate Nigeria from her diverse problems such as slow rate of economic growth, youth unemployment, problem with food import, hunger, or even starvation, injustice and economic mismanagement, high level of population growth, limited industrial investment are being blocked with the undoing of Nigeria self-appointed or elected leaders (Emmanuel, 2017). Nigerians are a living witness that in any address made by all serving and ex-presidents, they claimed to fight against corruption (Epele, 2006). "We are committed to transparency and accountability". But despite these promises from the leaders, still, corruption has eaten deeply in the country (Lloyd, 2018; Report of the House of Representatives, 2012).

Ogundare (2002) asserted that the political class in Nigeria lacks good governance, discipline, equality and social justice in the administration of the country and does not embark on any meaningful problem-solving toward making the country a developed nation. Rather, it concerns itself with embezzlement of public funds so as to corruptly enrich itself. The effect of these is the suffering, poverty and general deprivation on the majority of the people. There is also infrastructural breakdown in form of very bad roads, non-functioning railway system, water transport is neglected, and air transport is expensive and grossly unsafe. There is erratic supply of electricity, education and health care are beyond the reach of the poor. How can a country achieve sustainable development when those appointed into positions of responsibility lack the competence and moral persuasion to handle such position? How can a country achieve sustainable development where there is equity in the distribution of rewards? How can the elimination of toxic substance and the reduction of its impact on human health, which is one of the aims of sustainable development be achieved

when those charged with the responsibility of ensuring a sound and healthy environment are the people encouraging harm to be done to the environment?

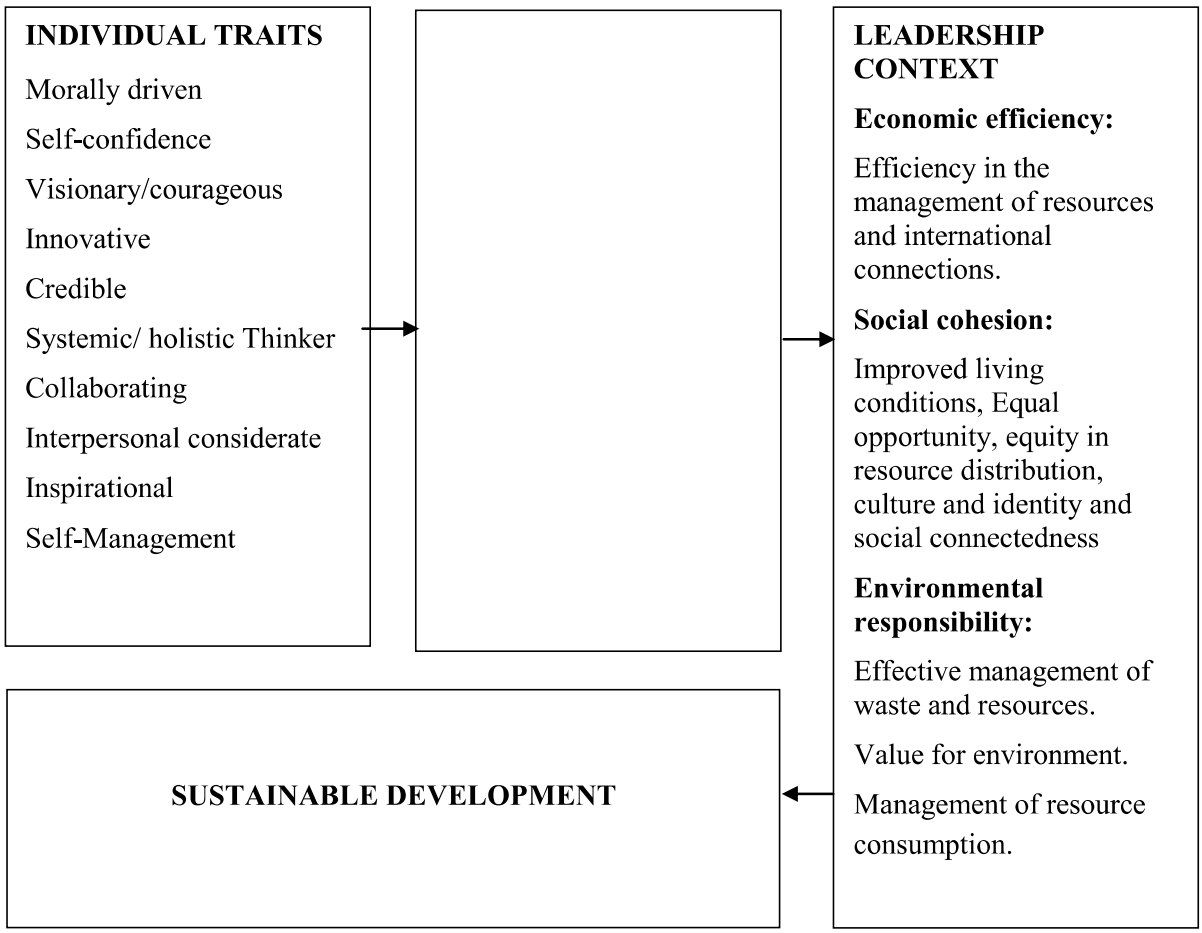
All over Rivers State in Nigeria, for example, the environment has been severally polluted because of oil spillage as a result of the vandalization of oil pipelines, or negligence by Oil companies. In a country where there is effective leadership, mechanisms would have been put in place to check against these problems. The whole objective of sustainable development is to create a human system that will live on while achieving the aims of the organisation. Achieving this objective requires having a leader who has the following leadership traits – morally driven, visionary and courageous, a holistic thinker, self-confident, innovative and good interpersonal relationship (See Figure 1).

Studies have shown that to have sustainable development that could engender development of Nigeria and other developing nations in the West African sub-region, there must be an effective leadership (Dartey Baah, 2014, Kagema, 2018). Such a leadership must have credibility as its foundation, for as Cooper and Nirenberg (2012), said, "leadership is in the eyes of other people; it is they who proclaim you as a leader." The leader must have the potential to impact and change others; this includes ensuring performance accountability, embedding learning and innovation, creating a vision and communication such vision. Effective leaders foster collaboration by creating a climate of trust and facilitate relationships. Their actions transcend self-interest because they focus on the collective good of the whole. They create a climate in which people are fully engaged and feel in control of their own lives. In other words, the leader must enhance self- determination and develop competence and confidence (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). And above all, the leader must create a strategic vision, communicate the vision, build commitment to the vision and model the vision.

Ochola (2007). submits that a system that can adapt to prevailing realities encompasses situation analysis, formulation of policies and action plans, implementation, monitoring and regular review. It is a cyclical and interactive process of planning, participation and action in which the emphasis is on managing progress towards sustainability goals rather than producing a 'plan' as an end product. (UNDESA, 2012).

The above leadership traits and practices no doubt will lead to economic efficiency, social cohesion and environmental responsibility. These three are the hallmark of sustainable development.

Figure 1: Leadership and Sustainable Development Model



Source: Author Conceptualization,2021.

The above framework shows an effective leadership style that manages resources, is visionary and ethical, and more oriented toward long-term goals without compromising human values and principles. Furthermore, it is motivated by a vision to achieve goals in the midst of changing environmental factors and the need to involve all stakeholders in the governance process. It reflects the characteristics of the Effective leadership style. The effects of this kind of leadership lead to improvement in economic viability (efficient resource utilization), social solidity (improved living conditions) and environmental sustainability (Value for environment) which are the three basic dimensions of sustainable development (World Bank, 2011).

Conclusion.

The importance of leadership is commonly judged in terms of its impact on the entity that is led. Leadership plays critical role in the success or failure of almost every aspect of an organization, be it profit and non profit making, poor leadership leads to failure, and good leadership to success. Thus for leaders in Nigeria to succeed in their pursuit of sustainable development, it must adopt an effective leadership style that is skewed towards transformational leadership. This is because this leadership approach is more strategic, collaborative, adaptive, ethical and sustainable thus,

portraying approach oriented toward correction of various weaknesses in the political and administrative systems. A leadership that is creative, credible, affirm shared values, create a climate of trust, foster collaboration and model the vision. An effective leadership that will imbibe the tenets of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that developing nations such as Nigeria must embrace to move forward. They are:

a. Partnership for collective responsibility, decision-making and planning
b. Participation and transparency among stakeholders
c. Systemic approach that addresses underlying causes and whole systems
d. Concern for the future that addresses short and long-term trends and needs
e. Accountability by all stakeholders for their actions
f. Equity and justice: economic development must be equitable, environmentally sound and socially just

Recommendations

From the forgoing results and discussion of findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. As part of the institutional reform process, sustainable development must be integrated into existing "national development strategies," rather than operating as separate blueprints that run parallel expenditure patterns. Experience has proved that the various national development plans in Nigeria did not succeed because they were not directly linked to addressing the poverty environment in which they were conceived.
2. Input from the local people is very critical to successful sustainable development. For sustainable development programmes to succeed, the importance of local authorities must be recognised in the national development processes.
3. Strong institutions must replace the "African Strongman" to ensure popular participation by the people. Such strong institutions must assume supreme authority over society and rulers, because no proper sustainable development can happen without institutionalizing the rule of law and accountability.
4. Talented people should be relied upon who are creative, innovative and entrepreneurial in their approach to public service to run ministries, agencies and departments of government in line with global best practices.

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