

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A CATALYST FOR NATION-BUILDING

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Abstract

This article identified the problem of corruption, injustice, downward trajectory of education, terrorism, kidnappings and bad governance in Nigeria which are signs of a failed nation that needs reconstruction. Anchoring on Karl Deutsch's Theory of Nation Building, it employed qualitative method (based on experience and written records/research) and critical analysis, discovering that the superstructure has been destroyed through bad leadership. A strong leadership style must be introduced in the country for rectification purposes. To rebuild the nation, it is recommended that transformational leadership style which is not about short-term gains but requires commitment from political leaders and prioritizes the nation's interests over personal gains is ideal for handling the affairs of this country. To this effect, ethical leaders should be allowed into office and enabled to adopt a holistic and inclusive approach to development, for ensuring that nation-building efforts are guided by principles of morality environmental sustainability, social equity, and intergenerational justice.

Key Words: Transformation, Leadership, Governance, Nation-building, and Equity.

Introduction

Our country (Nigeria) is presently at a crossroad both politically, economically and otherwise due to bad governance. A multicultural nation blessed with rich natural resources and human talents is unable to harness the resources it is endowed with. It needs urgent and proper reconstruction and transformation as a lasting solution. This was caused by the evils of corruption which erodes and destroys a system, reducing it to shambles and nothingness. Transformational leadership plays a crucial role in nation-building, especially in a diverse and dynamic country like Nigeria.

However, the attempt to explore how transformational leadership principles can transform and reshape Nigeria's development, foster positive change, and build a stronger nation is the main thrust of this article. Following this trajectory, the level of theoretical awareness of the citizens, scholars and nation builders needs improvement regarding the meaning of transformational leadership which is a good transformative tool for nation building, owing to the urgency of rebuilding our nation to stand again for a comfortable living experience.

Conceptual Explorations

The major concepts of this article are briefly exposed herein for proper clarifications.

Understanding Nation-building

Nation-building is very important in every nation especially in countries like Nigeria where things are not moving well. The term nation building is generally used simultaneously with state building, democratization, modernization, political development, post-conflict reconstruction, and peace building. However, each concept is different, though their evolution is intertwined (Stephenson, 2005). Nation building process has been variously defined and adopted at different times and contexts. Gellner (1995) sees nation building as the process whereby ruling political elites attempt to make the political and the national units overlap.

Continuing, it has to do with the process of constructing or rebuilding a national identity, infrastructure, institutions, and social cohesion within a country. Bendix assumed the extension of citizenship to members of ever-larger groups as the very hallmark of successful nation building (Bendix, 1996). Generally, nation building entails efforts aimed at uniting diverse groups of people within a nation, promoting stability and governance, and fostering economic development and social progress.

Understanding Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a game changer and more than just a management style. It is a style of leadership and a mindset that inspires followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. James MacGregor Burns was the originator of this leadership style. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation. Burns (1978) defined the characteristics of a transformational leader in moral terms and positioned transformational leadership style as moral leadership. He noted that, in transformational leadership approach, leaders and followers further take each other's motivation and morality to higher levels for

optimum achievements. Burns' theory focused on moral leadership which is ideal for the restoration of moral values where needed. Its centrality on moral and ethical values shows its relevance in rebuilding our nation Nigeria from moral and political collapse.

Additionally, it focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and reach their full potential. It involves creating a vision for the organization or group, as well as fostering a culture of innovation, creativity, and continuous improvement. Its emphasis on motivation, inspiration, influence, and intellectual stimulation on followers makes it an ideal leadership style for effecting change on the country and all the citizens which will restore normalcy on all the sectors in the country.

Theoretical Framework

This article briefly highlights Karl Deutsch's Theory of Nation-Building which unveils some of the things that have gone bad in our country and the need for rebuilding it as a lasting panacea.

Karl Deutsch's Theory of Nation-Building

Karl Deutsch who was the proponent of this theory was a prominent Czech political scientist and communication theorist who contributed significantly to the understanding of nation-building through his work on political communication, national integration, and the role of social and political dynamics in the formation of nations. His ideas, specifically, those presented in his influential book entitled "Nationalism and Social Communication" (1953), shed light on the complexity of nation-building processes which is the reason for embarking on a strong leadership style to rebuild our shattered country because it is a complex assignment. Karl Deutsch's theory of nation-building provides a multifaceted understanding of how nations are constructed and maintained through communication, political integration, and shared values.

According to him, uniformities, which have been found in the growth of nations, include the following:

- (a) Shift from agriculture exchange to economies,
- (b) Social mobilization from rural areas and integration in the core areas and more intensive exchange,
- (c) Growth of towns, mobility and ties between town and country,
- (d) Growth of business communication grids linking rivers, town's trade routes,
- (e) The differential concentration of capital, skills and social institutions,
- (f) The rise of the concept of self-interest and the experience of national symbols (Deutsch, 1979).

One can easily see why the lack of these uniformities are putting our country asunder owing to lack of cohesion and good governance. The citizens are also not carried along owing to corruption, poor communication and dialogue.

Deutsch argued that effective communication is essential for promoting social integration and creating a shared national identity. He noted that with improved communication systems, citizens can easily engage with each other and develop a collective consciousness, which is a

vital component of nation-building. He suggested that successful nation-building significantly relies on fostering a civic national identity that transcends ethnic divisions and promotes inclusivity. Deutsch equally posited that nation-building is intimately linked to political development and integration. For him, a nation is formed not only through historical events but also through ongoing political processes and institutional frameworks that enhance cooperation among diverse groups which must be embraced in our country Nigeria. Political development, in this context, involves creating strong and stable institutions, effective governance, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts going on everywhere in Nigeria through transformational leadership.

The Problem in Nigeria

The problems of Nigeria are countless, and the aim of this article is not to enumerate all of them but point out some of them as measurable indicators of the ills in the country showing that they need special attention to reconstruct the country for the good of all citizens. Nigeria is strongly becoming synonymous with corruption, injustice, terrorism, kidnappings and bad governance etc. Education which is ideal for enlightenment in creating a modern society where citizens can coexist comfortably as in many advanced countries is on a downward trajectory due to corruption and bad governance. Governance in Nigeria has resulted in self-interest that has impacted government responsibility to the public (Yagboyaju, 2019), making growth and socioeconomic development unattainable to lift half of the population out of poverty. What worsens the case is that the citizens of the country have been made to lack their inherent rights and privileges that should neither be subjugated nor denied. Imagine the kind of poverty in the country now since the inception of Tinubu's regime when one dollar has risen more than in the past. A look at past records show that an average Nigerian couldn't meet daily needs beyond 1.9 dollars per day (Dauda, 2017; World Bank, 2020), because the country lacks effective execution of various government policies, as reflected in the Vision 20: 2020 policy (Awofeso & Irabor, 2020). It is worse presently because of the high rate of the dollar exchange. No one can question today about the socioeconomic development of the nation that has been impacted, leading to high level of poverty, unemployment, high inflation, poor infrastructure, excessive spending, inequality, poor education, misappropriation, and deficient economic policies everywhere.

Following this trajectory, the absence of justice and equity is glaring. Even the plights of those living in the Southeast, where inequality is high because no proper attention is being paid to the people talk much about the situation of the country. The federal character, for instance that stipulates the use of quota system poses a threat and problem to the people. The northerners gain admissions into the Nigerian public universities with low marks while it is not the case with the south easterners that require high scores.

Numerous cases abound during Buhari's regime about massive expulsions of the south easterners from their jobs, even those in the military, civil service, and bankers, etc., without solid reasons which is not the case in other parts of the country. This is bad and a sign of a divisive country. Unjust acts like this raise the poverty level and unemployment among the people even in their struggles for survival. Tinubu's regime has highly increased the Nigerian problems making it pertinent for the country to be rebuilt through good leadership. For years Nigeria has high poverty rate despite its abundant resources and yet rated the sixth largest

crude oil exporter (Dauda, 2017). Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa and a resource-wealthy developing country (Mesagan et al., 2019), but the citizens of the country are languishing in poverty. This is a contradiction. It is also on record that the Nigerian government depends on oil revenue, which accounts for above 95% of export earnings, 25% of gross domestic product (GDP), and about 90% of its revenue to service its economy (International Monetary Fund, 2012; U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2020). Is there any hope for a country like this if there no intervention to rebuild it?

Further, unemployment and underemployment rates combined in Nigeria are at 55.7% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020), and as of 2019, 40.1% of the citizens lived in abject poverty (World Bank, 2020). If this was so in the past, what of today when the economy has totally collapsed? Unemployment rate is undoubtedly high today because even the businesses of the Igbos in some parts of the country like Lagos have been destroyed and set ablaze. Though Nigeria has an abundance of oil exploration and gas reserves, it lacks governance structure to convert resource wealth to economic development, and the government has no accountability (Mesagan et al., 2019; Waziri, 2020). Bad leadership (governance) is summarily Nigeria's major problem because everything has been in chaos owing to lack of proper leadership and control. That is why there is corruption, terrorism, kidnappings etc., everywhere. ASUU had embarked on series of strikes in the bid to rectify the education sector, but their demands landed on deaf ears because the president and his leadership crew are not interested in education, order and justice, rather on self-gains through corruption.

That bad governance policies had impacted socioeconomic development in Nigeria and led to issues such as unemployment and other problems (Bolarinwa, 2018; Ekundayo, 2017) can no longer be questioned, though those who benefit from the bad governance continue to hail the corrupt leaders. Those who were bribed and given peanut to vote Buhari and Tinubu to power are also suffering in the country today, paying heavily for fuel and transportation. One can equally see the high rate of exclusion and conflicts in the Southeast that are so alarming and nothing is done about it. Dauda (2018) noted that the high unemployment rate in Nigeria emanated due to poor infrastructure, deficient human capacity development, unproductive educational system, agricultural neglect, the impact of globalization, and several other factors. The southeastern people have been abandoned for decades in a country that claims to be one without proper infrastructure, not allowed to test the presidential position and are marginalized. If government officials have mishandled the funds apportioned for development in Nigeria since 1999 when the country assumed democracy (Adamu & Rasheed, 2018), why can't they allow the South Easterners to have their freedom as they have been abandoned? These are signs of a nation that needs lacks good leadership.

Today almost all the regions are gearing towards division and independence, not only the Igbos. Though no one is interested in being a citizen of Nigeria, there is the need to rebuild it for people to have a better living condition before parting ways through independence by the various regions gearing towards self-rule like the Biafrans. It is so necessary to put everything in order because of insecurity also, as many people have been terrorized, kidnapped and killed. The civil servants, business men and women, students, the poor and rich are all passing through the hard economic situation of things today the country.

No one knows if the government wants to destroy education completely in Nigeria because no proper attention is given to it and the working conditions of the lecturers are in a worrisome situation. Nothing is working and there is no hope for a better future, and running to other countries is not the best solution because someone's country is always the best.

Most importantly, these unjust acts are affecting the human development of the Nigerian citizens. Human development involves improving welfare or standard of living (Ita, 2020), and Nigeria has invested little of its annual budget on social development, crucial to human development (Kubalu et al., 2017). There is no significant improvement in the country's human and socioeconomic developments (Elumoye, 2020) and it can't continue like this endlessly because it is human beings that are passing through the sufferings. Keeping quiet won't solve it, rather through conscious efforts by mounting pressure on the government to introduce a better leadership style that upholds justice and equity, especially the transformational leadership style owing to its great impact in effecting change.

Transformational Leadership as a Catalyst for Effecting Change in Nigeria

Nigeria is the biggest country in Africa. With its rich cultural diversity, historical complexities, and economic challenges, our country requires effective leadership to navigate its path toward progress. There are many conflicts erupting from many angles owing to injustice. In Galtung's theoretical postulation, public welfare services were established and nation-wide policies for the equalization of economic conditions (Galtung, 1980). He further noted that there is conflict, or disharmony of interest, if the two parties are coupled in such a way that the Local-Centre gap between them is increasing. And there is no conflict, or harmony of interest, if the two parties are coupled in such a way that the gap between them is decreasing down to zero. (Galtung, 1971). It is the case with Nigeria. The gap between public welfare services and nation-wide policies for the equalization of economic conditions is increasing. The gap should be bridged. In trying to transform our country Nigeria, there is the need to bridge this gap through a transformational leader who will handle these conflicts, establish, restore or work on the key components of nation-building through the utilization of the key elements of transformational leadership to establish a strong nation. The pertinent question is, what are the necessary qualities needed or expected of the would-be leader?

A good leader must have vision. Transformational leaders always create a compelling vision for the future. They articulate a shared goal that resonates with people across different backgrounds and interests devoid of bias. Such a leader must have vision and essential qualities and have emotional Intelligence that will enable him/her to connect with the citizens on an emotional level. He/she must listen actively, empathize with the feelings and perspectives of others. He/she must build strong relationships based on trust, respect, and mutual understanding, which helps to foster a positive and collaborative work environment in all spheres of government through strong policies and rules.

At this critical moment in Nigerian history, leaders who can unite Nigeria's diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups under a common vision is needed. Transformational leaders are in the better position for this because they can inspire citizens to work together for a better future. This is so because transformational leaders have a clear and compelling vision for the future of their country. Through effective articulation of this vision, they inspire and

motivate citizens to work towards shared goals, fostering a sense of unity and purpose in the nation-building process.

Our country is facing numerous challenges such as corruption, infrastructure deficits, and security threats. Transformational leaders normally encourage innovative solutions. Whether it is about improving healthcare, education, or infrastructure, creativity is always essential. Transformational leaders are known for encouraging innovation, creativity, and adaptability in addressing the challenges of nation-building. Because they are open to new ideas and approaches and empower others to embrace change and explore new possibilities for development and progress, they are needed at this moment for the reconstruction of our nation.

Also, the leader must have inspirational motivation as a quality to be able to motivate and inspire the citizens by setting high standards, demonstrating enthusiasm, and showing confidence in the people's abilities. He must be able to encourage the citizens to go above and beyond what is expected of them. For instance, as the country is presently passing through hard economic times, he should have that love in him to encourage everyone to have some patience if really the solution to the problem is beyond him. And he must make frantic effort to rectify some anomalies and make the people. To achieve this, he must possess charisma and charm that attracts and inspires others. He must have a magnetic personality developed through good behaviors and the ability to influence and persuade people to rally behind his vision and goals.

Individualized Consideration is another element of transformational leadership which is important for a would-be leader for rebuilding our nation. This is a positive trait which enable a leader to treat everyone the same, helping him to recognize individual strengths and needs of the citizens. This leadership style tailors its approach to each team member. This is why it is important in Nigeria because it will enable each citizen of the country to be well treated and recognized as a human being with some strengths, needs to be taken care of as well as inherent rights and privileges.

The hard economic and political situation of things in our country have affected the citizens intellectually, to the extent that thinking rightly, making rights judgements, and having big dreams and plans are becoming difficult. This is why intellectual stimulation as an element of transformational leadership is necessary for an ideal leader in the nation-building agenda. It enables the leader to encourage creativity, critical thinking, and innovation. By challenging the status quo, the leader elevates the citizens' problem-solving abilities for better performances.

However, one can see why the concept or idea of nation-building involves a lot of things. Urgent attention must be paid to nation-building at this critical time when our nation's economic and political situations are in a state of quagmire. Nigeria needs an ideal transformational leader that can aim at reconstructing and solidifying the key components embedded in nation-building. If the key components of nation-building are properly put in place in the country, things will be better. To put things in shape, the restoration of national identity is of primary importance. National identity is one of the major components of nation-building. It involves the establishment of a shared sense of identity, history, culture, and

values among the population aimed at promoting unity and cohesion within the nation. In a multicultural nation like ours, it requires promoting the cultural heritage, language, symbols, and traditions that represent the collective identity of our country Nigeria.

Additionally, governance and institutions should be put in order as well. This entails the building of strong and effective governance structures, institutions, and systems that will uphold the rule of law, promote transparency, accountability, and good governance, as well as protect the rights and freedoms of our citizens. This involves establishing strong democratic processes, an independent judiciary, and efficient public administration within the country to forestall excesses and unjust practices.

Infrastructure development is another component of nation-building that is in disarray. This component deals with the process of investing in physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and utilities that will support economic growth, improve living standards, and enhance connectivity within the nation. It is very crucial for stimulating economic activities, attracting investments, and ensuring a high quality of life for all our citizens.

Education and healthcare have been neglected in the country. The rich send their children to other countries for studies, while others travel outside for medical care. Nigeria needs serious concentration on investing in education and healthcare systems with the purpose of promoting human capital development, improving literacy rates, enhancing skills and knowledge, as well as ensuring access to quality healthcare services for all citizens. It is a clear fact that a well-educated and healthy population is key to driving economic growth and social development. This is very essential in our country Nigeria. This is what it means to have proper nation-building.

There is poor economic development in our country today. Economic development on the other hand deals with the promotion of economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction through policies that support entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment in key sectors of the economy. A country like ours requires strong and diversified economy for generating wealth, creating opportunities, and reducing disparities within the nation which has not been the case for decades.

Social Cohesion is very important in Nigeria and needs attention. This is concerned with fostering inclusivity, and harmony among diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups within the nation. This also involves promoting social integration, tolerance, and respect for diversity to prevent conflicts in the country and promote peaceful coexistence. Nation-building is a complex and long-term process which needs the involvement of government institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, and citizens themselves. It is very essential because of its usefulness for the promotion of stability, unity, and progress within a country like Nigeria, and for achieving sustainable development and prosperity for all our citizens.

Furthermore, Deutsch (1978) argued that crises can act as catalysts for nation-building, in the sense that in times of crisis, such as war or economic collapse, the need for cohesion and cooperation among different groups within a nation can strengthen national identity and unity. For him, responsible leaders ought to capitalize on these moments to promote policies aimed

at nation-building, but our leaders are ignorant of it, and rather prefer to create more conflicts to keep the eyes of the citizens away from their corrupt practices. This is why transformational leadership should be used now that the country is in crises and turmoil for transformative purposes.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has become obvious that Nigeria's journey toward nation-building will be effective hinged on the use of transformational leadership approach. By fostering a sense of purpose, inspiring innovation, and promoting ethical conduct, transformational leaders can shape a brighter future for all Nigerians. It can play a crucial role in nation-building by inspiring people to work towards a shared vision, fostering collaboration and innovation, building trust and accountability, developing human capital, promoting social cohesion, and pursuing sustainable development strategies. By embodying these qualities and values, transformational leaders can help to create a more prosperous, inclusive, and resilient society that is equipped to meet the challenges of the future. Deutsch's insights on nation-building as briefly highlighted herein encourage a consideration of the dynamic interplay between social forces and political structures in the ongoing process of building and sustaining nations. This leadership approach ought to be embraced to collectively build a stronger and united nation.

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