SOCIAL JUSTICE (SJ) AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A THEORITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This paper x-rayed extant literature regarding the nexus between social justice and sustainable national development in Nigeria. It observed that despite the plethora of developmental plans initiated by present and past administrations to tackle myriads of problems confronting the nation, much is still desired in the bid for sustainable national development. The paper used the prism of six dimensions of social justice: poverty alleviation, access to education, labour market inclusion, social cohesion and non-discrimination, healthcare, and intergenerational justice to advocate a sustainable national development agenda. Conclusion was drawn on the premise that justice and injustice possess negative and positive effects respectively, and these conditions eventually predict the attitude of many towards either doing good or doing bad to the nation; and recommended that as panacea, the country has to practice real, rather than mere ritualistic democracy, develop and inculcate captivating national culture and value that will encourage true patriotism and enthusiasm among the citizens.

Keywords: Social Justice, Sustainable National Development, Nexus and Injustice.

Background to the study

God, in fact, has blessed this land with human and natural wealth, and it is everyone's duty to ensure that these resources are used for the good of the whole people. All Nigerians must work to rid the society of everything that offends the dignity of the human person and violates human rights. This means reconciling difference, overcoming ethnic rivalries, and injecting honesty, efficiency and competence in the art of governing…Your country has the resources to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of progress, and to build a society of justice and harmony. -Pope John Paul 11 (1998)

Like many developing nations, Nigeria has been bedeviled with gamut of challenges that has retarded its progress as well as been consequential in its classification as a third world country. In the bid to reverse this trend, frantic efforts were and are being made by past and present administrations; examples, General Yakubu Gowon initiated the then National Accelerated Food Production Programmed (NAFPP) in 1972; Shehu Shagari in 1976 and 1979 respectively brought the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and Green Revolution Programmed. Other

related programmed were: the Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000; the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) for rural development of 1986, the Africa Priority Programmed for Economic Recovery (APER) of 1986-1990, the Africa Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmed for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) of 1989.

More are the African Charter Popular Participation for Development (ACPPD) of 1990; the Better Life Programmed of Miriam Babangida, the Family Support and Family Advancement Programmed of Miriam Abacha. More recently, the Nigeria Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS) of 2004; later referred to as NEEDS 2 and harmonized in April 2009 with the federal government's Seven Point Agenda to form the National Development Plan that covered years 2009 to 2012. One common denominator of these programmed is that they each had sweet contents that made them quite eliciting and hope-giving, however, Nigeria is still struggling for survival in virtually every sphere of our national being, and there is hardly much achievements to attracts the jealousy of other nations yet.

Be that as it may, most disturbing is that Nigeria's environment is currently under increasing threat from natural and humanly-induced disasters such as droughts, floods, terrorism and erosion (as is experienced in the South East), population explosion which is exerting great pressure, rapid deforestation, inappropriate and indiscriminate mining, oil and other kinds of pollution, gas flaring and many more, which have contributed in making the country's sustainable development project tougher. However, these have not deterred the struggle; rather efforts are being made on regular sequence to search for ways forward in the pursuit of sustainable National Development. Currently, Nigeria is on Vision 20:2020 developmental programmed which is aimed at placing the country in the list of 20 developed economies by the year 2020.

This vision as encapsulated in Guga (2014) includes but not limited to:
1	Develop efficient, accountable, transparent and participatory government.
2	Establish a competitive business environment characterized by sustainable macro-economic stability.
3	Enhance national security and improve the administration of justice
4	Promote unity in diversity, national pride and conserve nation's cultural heritage.
5	Develop sufficient and efficient infrastructure to support sustainable economic growth
6	Preserve the environment for socio-economic development
7	Promote sustainable development of Nigeria-geopolitical regions into economic growth poles (Nigeria Vision 20:2020:125).

The points captured herein are indeed captivating and enthusing to every patriotic Nigerian citizen, but it is obvious that each of these points is as at date under stiff attack. It can be recalled that Nigeria has never lacked or been in short supply of good policies or reforms; the problem has remained her inability to convert them to tangible, usable and quantifiable results. Resultantly, Nigeria still has the problem of lack of power supply, poor road networks, collapsing educational structure, acute insecurity, policy summersaults to name but a few;   this is why scholars are on rampage in the search for sustainable national development (See, Guga, 2014, Onyenemezu and Aduvo, 2014).

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of this paper are:
(1)   to examine social justice from the lens of a predictor of sustainable national development
(2)   reflect on the status of Nigeria's sustainable development pursuit
(3)   make useful recommendations that will be of practical values in the country's sustainable development agenda.

And to achieve this, the paper shall examine literature on the concept of social justice, national development, sustainable national development and the nexus between social justice and sustainable national development.

The concept of Social Justice
Social justice is a concept with multi-disciplinary perspectives. Its conceptual boundaries are continually in flux because scholars have attempted to define it in favor of their respective intellectual biases. Never the less, a modern perception of the concept that refers to the aim of realizing equal opportunities and life chances offers a conceptual ideal able to garner the consensus needed for a sustainable social market economy. Accordingly, Coninck, Culp and Taylor (2013), explained social justice as a political concept as it deals with the nature and structure of the state, an economic concept as it is concerned with equal distribution of goods and services within a society and again, as an ethical concept because it is grounded on ethical framework.

Judgement about what is "just", "fair", "deserved", or something one is "entitled" to receive are a central social judgement which lies at the heart of people's feelings, attitudes, and behaviors in their interactions with others. On the other hand, perceptions of injustice are closely related to feelings of anger (Montada, 1994; Shaver, et al; 1989), and envy (Smith, Darolt, Ozer and Moniz, 1994), to psychological depression (Hafer and Olson, 1992, Walker and Mann, 1987) and to moral outrage (Montada, 1994). Further, judgement of fairness is significantly related to peoples' interpersonal perceptions (Lerner, 1981), political attitudes (Tyler, 1990, Tyler, Rasinki and McGraw, 1985) and prejudice towards out groups (Lipkus and Siegler, 1993; Pettigrew and Meertons, 1994).

Social justice is a creation of the government in power. At independence, most African leaders pledged to develop their economies, to democratize their political systems and to promote social justice amongst their citizens (Ihejirika, 2013). Promoting social justice is a deliberate effort by the government which can be achieved by adopting and acting on the points at the left part of Gil's (1998) value dimensions differentiating socially just from socially unjust societies.

Just Societies	Unjust Societies
Equality of citizens	Inequality of citizens
Liberty of citizens	Domination and exploitation
Individuality of citizens	Selfishness and individualism
Collective Orientation and mutualism	Disregard for community
Cooperation	competition

Source: Gil, D. G. (1998). Confronting injustice and oppression; New York: Columbia University Press.

Looking at this classification, one can easily identify which strand fits Nigeria state; however, our subsequent discourses will shed more light in this regard.

Sustainable National Development (SND)
Gboyega (2003) defined development as an idea which embodies all attempts to improve the coordination of human existence in all ramifications. Similarly, Naaomi (1995) averred that development involves economic growth, some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services. Again, Chavismen (1984) in Guga (2014) viewed it as the process of societal advancement, where improvements in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. A critical overview of these definitions reveals common denominator amongst them; that is that development basically is a deliberate effort at improving the living standard of a people using systematic strategies.

In his submission, Kemper (1996) in Onyenemezu and Aduvo (2014), argued sustainable development is a concept that came into global dictionary during the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987; and ever since, there have been attempts at providing suitable and generally applicable definition to the concept. Among the definitions provided is that: it is the conservation, reservation, usage and management of resources so that what we do to improve life and living standard today does not compromise future use of such resources and improvement in the quality of life for all people (Oyebamiji and Adekola, 2008). Another is that SD is a password that cuts across all disciplines in today's knowledge industry which is associated with "Omnipotent Capacity" of proffering solutions to all the problems of man and the society (Nwaokugha, 2006).

In furtherance however, the most celebrated and widely adopted definition of sustainable development remains that which was offered by the United Nations in the Brunt Land Report of 1987-" as development that " meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (Ugwu and Ijah, 2011). Looking at these definitions, one is tempted to ponder on the status of Nigeria in view of what is now known of SD.

Nigeria and Sustainable National Development
It is recallable that since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise known as Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, the World Global Conference in Rio in June 2012 (Rio + 20) which in all ushered in numerous programmed to shape nations' sustainable developmental agenda; such as Johanesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), United Nations Millennium Declarations, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC), United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and United Nations Convention to Combat Diversifications (UNCCD) among many more,

In her attempt to align with these programmed Nigeria as a nation has engaged in several developmental plans of which the Rio +20 summit report of 2012 is one in recent times. In the report titled: Nigeria's Path to Sustainable Development through Green Economy, challenges confronting the country were clearly enumerated (e.g., Poverty, Corruption, inadequate infrastructure, poor human capital base; among others) and proposed actions for solving them defined. Seeing that Nigeria is still standing on bended knees, there is still need to search for alternative actions that will take the country to the Promised Land.

Nexus between Social Justice (SJ) and Sustainable National Development (SND)
Abraham (2012) outlined series of points he referred to as principles of sustainable development. According to him, countries or institutions seeking development that would be sustainable must ensure there are equity, social development, inclusiveness, human-environment harmony and cooperation. While these principles cannot be undermined, social justice can be a stimulating factor. Using the prism of six dimensions of social justice theory, it can be argued that sustainable national development is a possibility.

Poverty Alleviation
By poverty, we refer to a widespread of deprivation of basic elements that are necessary for human survival and retention of self-dignity (see, Fromm, 1995; Gil, 1992, and Maslow, 1970). The danger poverty poses in national development is immeasurable and colossal. In fact, living in a state of abject poverty makes it near impossible for citizens to meaningfully participate or engage themselves in the society and develop the capacity to leave a self – determined life. It was reported that countries such as Denmark and Czech Republic are found to be most successful in preventing

poverty, whereas a relative large percentage of the population of United States of America, Chile and Mexico were found as living in income poverty which puts their citizens at a disadvantage in terms of societal participation (www.sgi-network.org).

In view of these points, it deserves noting that Nigeria needs to show more seriousness and sincerity in her fight against poverty because eliminating or reducing poverty cannot be achieved just by giving citizens either raw or cooked rice during electioneering campaigns, but by creating enabling and equal environment that will guarantee citizens' affordability of basic needs of life.

1.   Access to Education: a socially just society is distinguished by the presence of equal opportunities in education for all. In today's Nigeria, education has become a status symbol. The public schools are exclusively reserved for the children of the poor, whereas the private schools are the heritage of the well –to-dos. Some of these private schools are also owned by people with questionable sources of wealth and strangely enough, lack of regulations on the fees charged in these schools is already snuffing many Nigerians who deem it a do- or- die affair to have their wards and children in those private schools.

Good education has become a function of how much is paid as fees, the higher the fee, the more confident parents are that there is value for their money. Worst still, the rich have also lost interest in tertiary education with Nigeria content, hence their wards and children are either in nearby Ghana or in the United Kingdom resulting to huge capital transfer which is antithetic to the sustainable development dream. The consequence is that the public schools have been physically and psychologically abandoned by those they were entrusted in their care. How can there be sustainable national development without a consistent and properly planned educational system that will accommodate every Nigerians who desires to?

2.   Labour Market Inclusion
Markel and Giebler (2009) posit that "so long as gainful employment remains the primary means by which not only income but also social status, self-respect and social inclusion are distributed in developed societies, inclusion in labour market must be high priority for just societies". Tragically however, unemployment is and remains a bane in Nigeria's national development project. The worst of it all is that great injustice is meted daily on Nigeria job seekers by those who are meant to hire them. The process of employment in most organizations is shrouded in secrecy; as such ima mmadu is a major qualification.

In fact, job search today can be likened to the story of a dying man who travelled across seven seas to see an herbalist who will cure him, only for the herbalist to instruct him to go and obtain tortoise's urine as part of the requirements for the medicine. Several charges are placed on applicants in the name of e-recruitments, sometimes they are subjected to indescribable, dehumanizing and

frustrating conditions to the extent that they become psychologically and physically battered. The recent example is the Immigration recruitment saga of 15th March, 2014 that consumed lives, maimed many and hitherto, justice is yet to be or seen to be done to the victims and the matter is no more in the public domain.

3.   Social Cohesion and non-discrimination
 This dimension of social justice encompasses several factors relevant in maintaining the social fabric of a nation; Such as income distribution and social exclusion- the state of origin issues are all important indices that can make or mar a country's sustainable development project. Some states in Nigeria employ non-indigenes only as contract staff, others are calling for certain kind of registration, like Edo, Abia and Katsina States among others.

4.   Health
As it relates to equal opportunities for self –realization, health is another key dimension of social justice index. Healthy living conditions depend largely on the individual's socio-economic status. Most Nigerian's live in inhabitable environments where health hazards are of immense prevalence. Yet, the public health system is in near comatose owing to inadequate equipment, incessant strike actions and lack of needed human capital. This condition has left many who can afford Medicare outside the country with no option but to travel abroad to treat ailments as common as cough and cold. It is so astonishing that dying and giving birth abroad is now the reigning thing among many Nigerians.

5.   Intergenerational Justice
Sustainable social justice can be ensured only when social burdens are shared among young and old people, and if future generations are guaranteed sound social and environmental conditions. But this may be difficult in the absence of good governance. Good governance has been reported as the foundation for national development (Indushree, 2007). Good governance cannot be attained under a political atmosphere in which those in power and their opponents dance naked in the market square in the struggle for their personal interests at   the expense of the democratic dividends promised the citizenry. It is on record that a certain state in the South- South region of Nigeria is without a functional judicial platform just because certain political gladiators are in the pursuit of their personal ego and self-political survival at the costly expense of the masses. How can sustainable national development strive in such conditions?

Conclusion
There is no controversy whatsoever that injustice is a negative phenomenon capable of inducing counterproductive behaviors on its recipients; it behaves the leaders and managers of Nigeria common resources to exhibit behaviors and actions that will usher in justice among the people. Because when people perceived they are unjustly treated, they become unhappy, unsatisfied and

withdrawn. These negative reactions will also affect contributions of such persons towards national development; especially because developing a nation is a collective responsibility of all citizens.

Recommendations

For Nigeria to make progress in her sustainable national development project, the leaders have to:

1   Create the right atmosphere for the Practice of real democracy, rather than mere ritualistic democracy.
2   Dismantle every structure that had hitherto trampled on the egalitarianism of the country, so that all animals can truly be equal as against the current situation where some animals are more equal than the others. Example, widening rich-poor-gap, immunity clauses, born to rule syndrome, state of origin concept, etc.
3   Develop and inculcate in everyone- new values and national cultures that will ginger patriotic mindsets among her citizens; including those who have been previously meted with injustice.
4   Ensure proper accountability for all resources; including foreign aids, loots recovered as well as internally generated revenues.
5   Avail itself of the opportunity offered by the staggering national confab in charting a definite sustainable national development agenda that will not be subjected to interruptions by subsequent administrations.

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