

Leadership Literacy as a means to enhance Sustainable Community Development in Nigeria

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.12.03.2022.p12324
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.12.03.2022.p12324>

Paper Received Date: 3rd March 2022
Paper Acceptance Date: 7th March 2022
Paper Publication Date: 13th March 2022

Abstract- For many centuries, literacy has been used to equip leaders with skills of governance. It has thus, served as means to retool them, impart knowledge to them and ensure that sustainable development is guaranteed. This process is vital so that the human species are treated as real human organisms capable of enjoying their environment in peace under good leaders. Unfortunately, over the years it seems that education which is expected to impart literacy skills has failed dismally in achieving the desired good of effective leadership. This paper takes a critical insight into how leadership literacy can serve as a means to enhance sustainable community development in Nigeria.

Index Terms- Leadership, Literacy, Leadership Literacy, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Needs, Sustainable Community Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria recently celebrated its 61st anniversary of independence. In 1960 Nigeria gained her independence from the British government and there attained the status of a self-governing rulership devoid of external influences. Unfortunately, this desire for self rule has been marred by one tribulation or another, military rule and even war. The gains made under the colonial masters have been lost due to bad leadership enmeshed in crude politicking, thuggery and election rigging. Kleptomania in financial terms has resulted in losses in the treasury and the sorry state of a devaluated currency. The devaluated currency has in turn led to an hyperinflation which has left many destitute as criminality assumes an ascendancy that is uncontrollable. These, could be checkmated by a literate leadership that should be seen as loyal to its own leadership vows. There is a strong case here for literacy for the leadership which would be able to reverse the decay in the polity. This paper will serve as a tool to supply the needful in leadership training to ensure sustainability in all ramifications in all communities in Nigeria from the micro to macro levels.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Leadership

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A definitional and functional definition of leadership were best understood from Ume's (2012) perspective which averred that a fundamental problem in a democratic organization is that of recruiting, retaining, developing and finding a functional leader, at all levels, from the smallest local government to the entire country or central government. To solve the problem of leadership therefore, he preferred certain characteristics which may serve as parameters in identifying good leaders. He therefore listed those characteristics as:

1. Acceptance by the group
2. A good leader must have the spirit and desire to lead.
3. A good leader must make certain sacrifices
4. Personality suited to do the job
5. Expert knowledge
6. Skilled in working with others

Overtime, Nwakaire (2013) experientially and empirically came to include: 7. openness to constructive criticisms, 8. fear of God, 9. modesty and Humility, 10. Non-tribalistic approach to matters and, 11. A visionary, as part of the characteristics of a good leader. The inclusion of the five additional parameters were justified by Nwakaire when he opined that few leaders in Africa accept constructive criticism.

These leaders view themselves as Perfectionists who do not falter. It is a truism that when a leader listens to constructive criticism he will progressively improve his leadership rather than view it as an affront. Failure to consider constructive criticism has caused many African leaders to perpetrate the mistakes of the past.

Some individuals who have proffered constructively their views of leadership and governance in Nigeria include: Tai Solarin, Wole Soyinka, Late Professor Awojobi, Fela Ransome Kuti, Chinua Achebe, Late Agwu Okpanku, Arthur A. Nwankwo and most recently, Obiageli Ezekwesili. These individuals have done so through various media, including interviews, literature (prose), poems, lectures and various other publications available in Information Communication Technology.

Obi once chaired a committee for twelve years. They usually met quarterly to assess the progress in their functions. Consistently he reminded the members that he did not like a positive response to every item in the agenda. He claimed that he preferred it if some individuals said no to some items so that the

committee would reason on the no and justify their yes or otherwise modify their yes thus clarifying their position. This is what constructive criticism should help the leaders achieve. A good lecturer often asks his students, "How do you see my lecture? And he takes their opinion into consideration in improving the quality of his teaching. The students are intelligent humans. So it must be concluded that when a leader assumes the mantle of leadership it does not mean that he is the most intelligent. Therefore, the ideal leader should be ready to accept constructive criticism to improve his leadership skills.

Another character a leader should possess is Fear of God. Really as espoused by Nwakaire (2013) by virtue of a leader saying, "So help me God," in the consummation of his oath of Office he has acknowledged his accountability to the universal Sovereign. In his subsidiary, infinitesimal role as a leader, he must render an account to the Universal Sovereign who allowed him to function in his area of operation.

Modesty and Humility: Arising from fear of God are modesty and humility which are characteristics a leader must possess. The Almighty has exemplified humility by condescending to listen to us as individuals. And that is why we confidently pray with the assurance of being heard. A humble leader is willing to listen to the cries of the poor. Is he a leader only of the rich? He should recognize his limitations as a human. There is only one who is not modest – The Universal Sovereign. He has no limitations.

III. NON-TRIBALISTIC APPROACH TO MATTERS (DETribALISED)

African states are multilingual. Nigeria is multilingual with over 250 tribal groups. A leader must emerge from one tribal group. If the leader who so emerges leans toward his tribe whether one of the majority tribes or minority, then the start of misrule commences.

There is an enlightenment that is appropriate at this point. That one is born a Yoruba is an accident of birth, or that one is born an Hausa – It is mere accident of birth. Similarly, that one is born an Igbo is an accident of birth or born Creole or Twi, or Ewe, Or Zulu, Hutu, Tutsi etc. No matter what tribe you belong to, it is an accident of birth. In fact, you should be grateful that you are alive. This is because, if your father had married another woman and not your mother, you would not have been born. If your grandfather had married another woman and not your grandmother, you would not have been born. Not recognizing all these biological facts in governance and leadership is illiteracy of some sort. So, no tribe is superior. We may not have appreciated the scope of culpability incidental to the loss of lives resulting from this illiteracy.

IV. THE LEADER AS A VISIONARY

This is a very vital aspect of the characteristics of a good leader. A leader must be able to create a mental image of what is a possible and desirable future state of his organization or country. This image as a vision may be as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or mission statement. The critical point is that a vision articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists. A vision is a target that beacons; it is a future

state that a leader endeavours to attain. Once the vision is created, the leader vigorously pursues it, putting into place every machinery for its attainment, monitoring all agencies and infrastructure for the attainment of the vision. One then ventures to ask: what vision have African leaders created before taking the oath of office and to what extent are they pursuing such vision. A good leader with good vision channels all the resources available to attain it. These resources are both material and human.

V. A CRITIQUE OF POST-INDEPENDENCE AFRICA LEADERSHIP

Pranary Gupte was a writer and poet. His heart was full of hope for the future. Some 100 years ago, he imagined a place "where the mind is without fear and the head held high; where knowledge is free; where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; where words come out from the depth of truth; and where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection"

Gupte then expressed the hope that one day his country as well as the rest of the world would awaken to such a place. If this noted prize-winning Poet were alive today, he would indeed be greatly disappointed. Despite all its advances and breakthroughs, the world is more fragmented than ever. And the overall outlook for mans future remains bleak.

IBSA reported that when a farmer was asked why violence erupted between certain factions in his country, he pointed to what he considered to be one reason. "It is bad leaders, he said IBSA also quoted historian Jonathan Glover as expressing similar view saying "The genocide (in India) was not spontaneous eruption of tribal hatred, it was planned by people wanting to keep power".

When war erupted between two republics of the former Yugoslavia in the early part of the 1990s, a Journalist wrote: "we lived happily together for many years and now it has come to killing each other's babies. What is happening to us?"

Gupte was quoted by IBSA as stating in a lecture entitled "Can India Survive as a Nation?" that "Some 70% of India's large population is under the age of 30, yet there are no leaders to provide them a role model.

Nor has Africa fared better, the history of African leadership and African Nations in post-independence Africa were best written with blood as ink. It is either bloodshed spilled to gain power, retain power, overthrow, or bloodshed resulting from bad leadership (sitting on human heads due to self induced poverty) or total mismanagement of resources. This squalor compels one to think of sustainable community development.

VI. INSIGHT INTO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

An illustration would impress on our minds what sustainable development purports to be. It is put into question form:

(1) How would you assess a father who squanders all his resources without leaving a land, house, bank account, no education for his children, nothing whatsoever to posterity?

(2) How would you also assess a father who while living enjoys the best cars, affluence, best food, meat, milk, every sort of edible, best clothes – but look at his children, they are poorly clad, they forage for food in the bins (refuse dumps), trek distances, do not have meaningful employment? What pride

would they take in their father? Would the children take pride in their father who does not provide good treatment when they are sick; packs them in vehicles when they want to travel: when they die in accidents he does not mourn? He pretends nothing has happened? No security for them? They are not trained to continue from where he stopped?

The illustrative preamble is a tip of the unsustainable conditions African populace has been subjected to. So we want to understand what sustainable development is. The World Commission in Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) Brundtland Report gave the following definitions of sustainable development.

1. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts

* The concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and

* The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

Even the narrow notion of physical sustainability implies a concern for social equity between generations.

2. Barbier (1987), in his definition of sustainable development, is concerned with the plight of the populations of the third world. His focus is on combating the pervasive and deepening poverty and improving the quality of life.

According to Barbier

“.. the concept of sustainable economic development as applied to the third world is therefore, directly concerned with increasing the material standards of living of the poor at the grassroots level, which can be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, education services, health-care, sanitation and water supply, emergency stocks and cash, etc and only indirectly concerned with economic growth at the aggregate national level. In general terms, the primary objective is reducing the absolute poverty of the world’s poor, through providing lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption and social instability.

3. According to Goodland and Ledec (1987):

Sustainable development is here defined as a pattern of social and structural economic transformation (i.e. development) which optimized the economic and social benefits available in the present, without jeopardizing the likely potential for similar benefits in the future. A primary goal of sustainable development is to achieve a reasonable (however defined) and equitably

distributed level of economic wellbeing that can be perpetuated continually for many generations.

CIDA (1992) outlined five aspects to the concept of sustainability:

1. Economic sustainability – appropriate economic policies, efficient resources allocation and a more equitable control over resource, and increased productive capacity among the poor.
2. Social sustainability – equitable income distribution, participation of intended beneficiaries.
3. Cultural sustainability – sensitivity to cultural factors including cultural diversity, recognition of values conducive to development
4. Political sustainability – premised on the assurance of human rights, promotion of democratic development and good governance.
5. Environmental sustainable – managing and protecting ecosystem to maintain diversity of life in both human – managed and natural system and protecting the environment from pollution to maintain the quality of land, air and water. It would be necessary to appraise or assess post-independence Africa in these core aspects of sustainable development. Our case study is Nigeria.

VII. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF NIGERIA

Economic Sustainability: The gap in this area is evident from an appraisal made by Ngoddy (2012). Referring to Agenda 21 – poverty line by the Earth Summit (UNCED, 1992) he gave the shocking revelation of the poverty in Nigeria;

* The state of Nigerian poverty is worse than the world average estimate of 40 percent of people worldwide living below the poverty line.

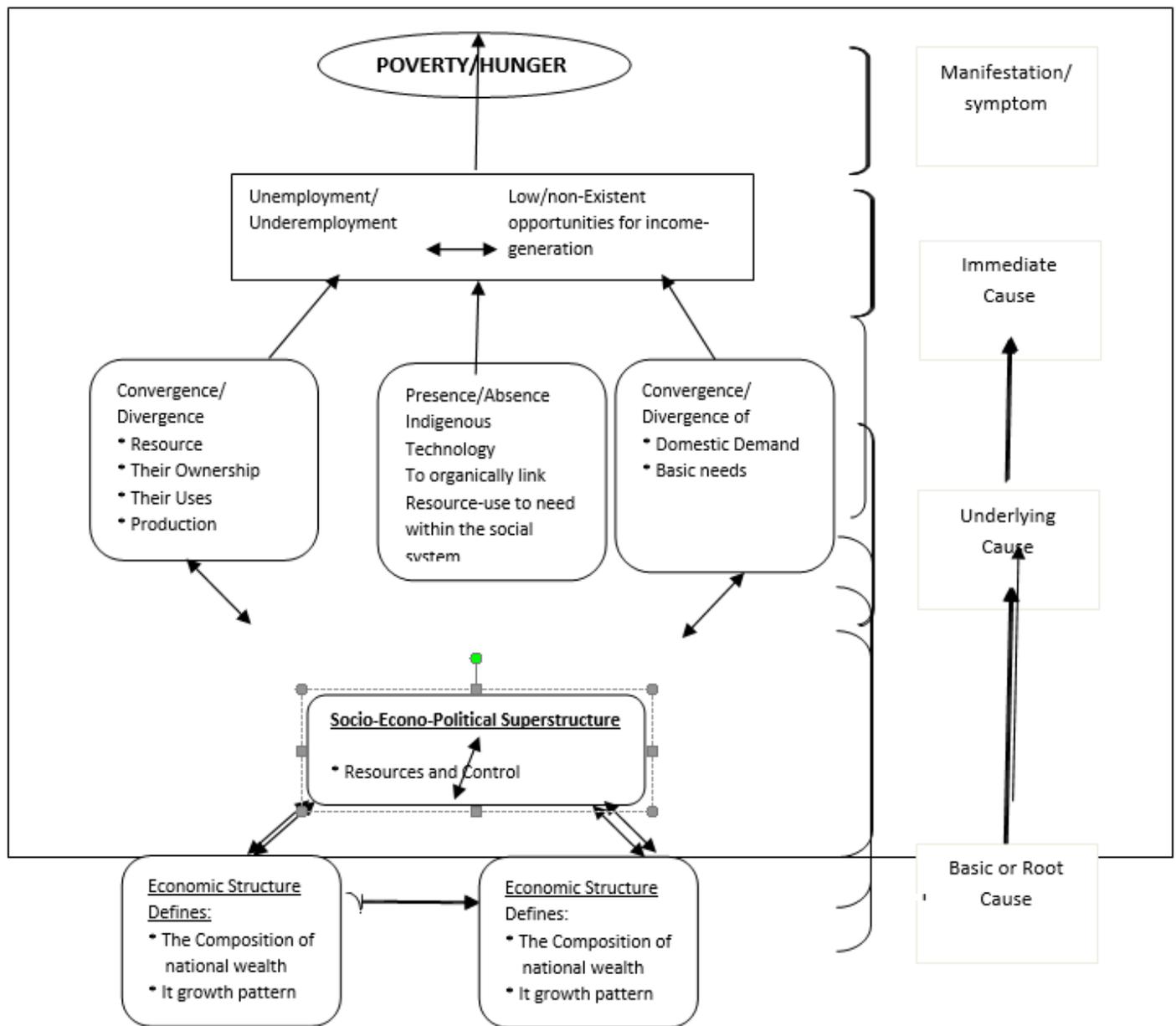
* Nigeria’s poverty status is worse than the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average of 45 percent of citizens living below the poverty line;

* Up to year – 2000, figure as high as 60 to 80 percent have been reported for Nigeria (World Bank/UNDP, 2000) as the proportion of our citizenry who lived below the poverty-line;

* This rather sobering reality is a sad reflection of how badly we have managed our vast reserves of oil and other resources in Nigeria since our Independence in 1960.

Ngoddy (2012) created a problem tree for Poverty/Hunger which has been my methodology in exposing students to problems – solving. Go to the root-cause of a problem if you want to succeed in solving a development problem. Below is the figure which is called poverty Problem Tree.

Poverty/Hunger Problem Tree



Source: Ngoddy (2012) P.6

It is possible for the country, indeed Africa to grow economically and sustainably by adopting simple models within Africa. Julius Nyerere – a Visionary established Ujama villages. Michael Okpara established farm settlements, planted cashew farms which are still being used today by residents in those localities to sustain themselves. Okpara went further to build the Modern Ceramic Industry and Golden Guinea Brewery which provided employment opportunities for many youths. Unfortunately, those industries are now defunct due to lack of political will.

I read the title of a book and immediately dismissed it as not relevant under the present dispensation. Very interesting indeed, it was entitled “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa”. Is it not a catchy subject? But permit me to espouse my reason for my negativistic attitude. The Europeans used the railway to transport goods to the coast and carted them away. They built industries to process their goods and owned various merchant companies. These have long been indigenized. They also used up our resources from land-and now the almighty oil. But let me ask; did the Europeans carry away the rail lines as they departed? Is it not true that Railway Corporation provides employment to the populace and today we have trains plying their routes at 180km

per hour? Why has the focus been placed on oil with a token given to Agriculture that was Nigeria's economic mainstay before oil? Why deplete our foreign reserve by importing mass transit buses, and trailers when the Whiteman left us with passenger trains, limited trains and goods trains? Did they leave with our agricultural and rich resources? Did they hypnotize us against mechanizing our agriculture leaving over 50% fallow?

Listen to Obama (2009)

(But) the true sign of success is not whether we are a source of aid that helps people scrape by, it is whether we are partners in building the capacity for transformational change. No country is going to create wealth if its leaders exploit the economic to enrich themselves... With better governance, I have no doubts that Africa holds the promise for a broader base for prosperity. The continent is rich in natural resources. But old habits must be broken. Dependence on a single export concentrates wealth in the hands of the few and leaves people too vulnerable to downturns. As I said earlier: Africa's future is up to Africans. With strong Institution and a strong will, I know that Africans can live their dreams in Nairobi and Lagos: in Kigali and Kinshasa, in Harare and right here in Accra. You have the power to hold your leaders accountable and to build Institutions that serve the people.

Do African leaders need to be reminded that by now positive action should have been taken to revive their economy sustainably? Let me re-emphasize the seriousness of the need to take drastic action to revamp the economy. In 1982, Emeka took an external degree course in Britain – specifically. Sussex College of Technology, England. The charge was \$220 (Two hundred and twenty dollars). This amount was remitted to the College's account by African Continental Bank. What he paid was N165 (one hundred and sixty five naira only) and this included bank charges. The exchange rate then was almost 50kobo to \$1.00 and today it is N500 to \$1.

Ani (2011) indicated that the extinction of domestic industries, small and medium scale enterprises, till very recently, has sent Nigerian economy backwards. Listen as he in turn relates to Sanusi who said:

By the late 70's and early 80's, Nigeria could boast of established industries in textiles, manufacturing, mining and quarrying, steel and personal care. In other words, the country was firmly in the midst of the first and second Kondratieff waves or in terms of Rostow's growth stage model, was moving to the precondition for the take-off stage. Misguided liberalization meant the collapse of these industries through competition from superior and cheaper import substitutes, the retrenchment of workers, and the creation of idle capacity. The importation of goods hitherto produced locally meant a further deterioration in the current account position, thus, as exacerbation of the ostensible problem that is being solved.... Many of these imports are second-hand, used, substandard or even fake, and all this has increased pressure on foreign exchange demand and the exchange rate. This is why even today, the government comes up with policies of selective banning of imports and selective protection without accepting the fundamental error in jettisoning a sound development strategy.

Obama's speech should help our leaders reappraise their approach to economic recovery before it is too late. Another very bad attitude of the African populace is their failure to pay bills. They want everything free.

VIII. SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The social conditions in Africa have not allowed for sustainable development. I had mentioned blood spilling as an area requiring accounting but the truth remains that most African Countries today are plagued by criminality of such dimension that critical action needs to be taken to preserve the polity.

Think about fraud, in fact you do not know whom to trust again. This is because the fraud has extended into the religious realm with "Men of God" wielding their wealth and claiming that a child of God cannot be poor.

Violence of all sorts have become endemic and the society is totally suffused and confused over what has been unleashed at it. Accidents occur on daily basis and one is uncertain what life the next moment will prove to be. Suspicion between the tribal groups continues to fan the embers of hatred and the centre cannot hold. And this, in spite of the claim that we are Africans, fellow Nigerians.

Another worrisome area is in the provision of social amenities – Electricity, water, sanitation, good roads, housing, health and education. It may be necessary to dab at these problems.

Electricity: Some years ago Ghana celebrated 10 years of uninterrupted power supply. With poor investment and abuse of investment in the sector for up to two months, some sections of Nigeria do not see the epileptic power supply. The staff of the power holding in Nigeria do not feel ashamed carrying their ladder with their vehicles which are never roadworthy. That agency has now been privatized. Let us see how things will turn out.

Water: Portable water and dried taps are ironies of water supply. Rural communities are the worst hit.

Good roads: This is a very sorry social situation. Many of the roads here in Africa and Nigeria have gone bad and when reconstruction goes on, it is done with inferior materials and therefore, cannot stand the test of time. The Federal Ministry of works in Nigeria is the government agency charged with monitoring what the construction companies are doing and they know what they are doing. One would wish the agency could be absolved of complicity in the spate of deaths incidental to poor condition of our roads. One still questions the rationale for removing the toll gates when the revenue generated from them could be used to repair the roads.

Housing: By now, every Nigerian should have had a house to live in and boast about. In 1981, the second republic made a bold move to construct low cost houses but sad to say, they chose to do so in the forests. Those houses have been scavenged and snakes inhabit them. Poor policy implementation bedeviled that lofty housing programme. Collapsing building structures in some parts of Nigeria today is also another troubling phenomenon in the matter.

Health: This sector is also in serious disarray. From fake drugs to medical personnel who are hurrying to attend another patient to get his money. Nigerians, indeed Africans have been subjected to sickness of all sorts. Roll Back malaria, fight against HIV/AIDS, all sorts of wars – as my friend put it – war on this, war on that, too many wars; no victory.

Education: I wish to agree with the analysis made of Nigerian education system: Nigerian education system is more quantitative than qualitative. It has been agreed that knowledge powers national economy but what has been the situation with the

knowledge economy which should drive our economic system? We have turned out graduates most of whom are misfits in our economic system and cannot be relied upon to harness or transverse the information super highway to innovatively engender economic transformation. Those who venture to acquire the needed knowledge and skills are not pooled together for further development. This sector needs a revolution both in the approach of the stakeholders and the duty bearers. When unions charged with quality education go on strike they should think about the quality of their output in the education sector, while the leadership should think seriously about their role as the stake holders. Perhaps, if the leadership is able to pool those who have excelled in the universities and proven themselves capable of engendering transformation that will move the country to next level, industrially, technologically etc, then a motivation for others to imitate them will have been established. Yes, we can.

IX. A FUNCTIONAL LITERACY APPROACH FOR RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP IN POST – INDEPENDENCE AFRICA.

Functional Literacy or work-oriented literacy has been defined as the literacy skill that enables individuals to carry out their functions with improved knowledge in their respective role devolutions. Egonu (2010) considered this literacy to be comprehensive enough to teach economic skills and offer immediate use to the recipients in participating in important political issues and personal matters. This dimension of literacy calls for definite programmes and instructional objectives and strategies within a context of development which should be part of an overall educational plan in order to contribute to the liberation of man to development of his full potentials. Egonu (2010) opined that this literacy creates conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of the society in which one lives. It also stimulates man's initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development.

The functional or work-oriented literacy approach is premised under five major philosophical schools of thought namely; Liberalism, Progressivism, Behaviorism, Humanism and Radicalism. An ALADIN-India initiative (2006) gave an insightful understanding of the above philosophical orientations or traditions in the manner espoused hereunder:

Liberalism is premised in the belief that freedom comes through a liberated mind and all human beings are endowed with a reasoning ability to liberate themselves. Liberalism stresses the development of intellectual power of the mind as the individual learner is believed to be a "renaissance" (liberated) person who is quite cultured and keen to learn. Based on this liberal view about human nature, it focuses on the role of organized knowledge (curriculum) and evaluation in the intellectual development of the learner.

Progressivism stresses an experiential, problem-solving approach to learning and emphasizes experience of the learner as the main determining factor in seeking solution and change and thus, believes in the social reform role of education.

Behaviourism focuses more on behaviour modification and controlled environment for the learner. It believes that human behaviour is tied to prior conditioning, that external forces control all human behaviour.

Humanism considers human nature as essentially positive with virtually unlimited potential. It believes that it is the intellect that distinguishes humans from animals. It places emphasis on individual's personal growth and self-directed learning. This philosophy practically caters more to privileged sections of the society and facilitates self-actualization of the individual learner. It is also supposed to reform the society as a benevolent and gifted member of the society.

Radicalism is premised on the belief that people themselves collectively create meaning and that knowledge leads to an understanding of reality and, ultimately helps to bring about the necessary change. The fundamental role or purpose of education is to bring about radical social, political and economic changes in society through critical knowledge, training and education. Its emphasis is on human agency, which can act towards a particularly desired change or goal; it emphasizes particularly the transformative role of education and radical social change.

All these philosophical underpinnings give legitimacy to the functional literary programme that all leaders must undergo before assuming office and in the progress of their office.

Barrack Obama indicated that when he was elected a Senator in the United States Congress, he took his time to study the American legal system from 1865 till that time. He was thus, armed with working knowledge of his functions as a Senator. The impact of this knowledge on his contributions in Senate Proceedings cannot be over-emphasized and today, he has virtually won the hearts of Americans through his knowledge bank, oratory and mastery of the art of leadership and good governances. He is therefore, a Model to follow in functional literacy approach hereby proffered. The content of functional literacy for the leadership – Presidency, Ministers, Senators elect, House of Representative members elect, should include amongst others: political education, development education, economic education, history and comparative studies in good governance and leadership.

X. CONCLUSION

This paper has taken an x-ray of leadership literacy as a means to enhance sustainable community development in Nigeria. It has discussed the characteristics of a good leader which when made functional are able to engender sustainable development in the areas of economic sustainability, social sustainability, cultural sustainability, political sustainability and environmental sustainability. Sustainable development needs of Nigeria were given attention in the area mentioned above especially in consideration of the growing poverty in the polity. A functional literacy approval has therefore, been adopted to give literacy skills to leadership in Nigeria in the areas where deficiencies have been detected. This, therefore, calls for urgent action in order to curb the dividing social situation in Nigeria.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the leadership literacy gaps detected in the paper and experientially, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. All the present leaders from the presidency to the local government councilors should undergo education for leadership and good governance.
2. Full implication of oath of office should be explained before administering the oath.
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized to imbue the leadership with function literacy skills to enhance sustainable community development in Nigeria.
4. A Ministry to be named – Ministry of Economic Development and Recovery should be created urgently.
5. Experts from all sectors should be deployed to erect policies that will take Nigeria to the next level, economically, politically, socially, culturally, and realistically.

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