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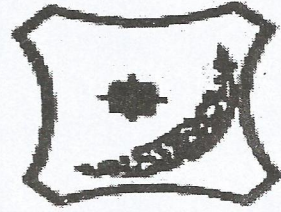


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Table of Contents

Theoretical Approach to the Contributions of Antonio Gramsci to the Development of Sociology AbdulGaniyu Abolore Issa & AbdulAziz Isiaka.....	1 – 10
Substance Abuse: A Study of <i>Benelyn</i> Consumption among Females in Tarauni Local Government Area, Kano State Aminu Musa Ahmed.....	11 – 21
The Role of Patent Medicine Vendors in Health Care Delivery in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State Josph M. Hellandendu & James A. Idakwo	22 – 30
An Assessment of the Activities of the EFCC in the Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria Sadiq Isah Radda	31 – 44
Terrorism in Social History and the Capitalist Mode of Production Yohanna Kagoro Gandu	45 – 66
A Study of Some Factors Affecting Awareness and Utilization of Antenatal Care Services by Married Teenagers Musa Abubakar	67 – 77
Workers' Freedom of Association in Nigeria: Selected Issues Rabiu Sani Shatsari	78 – 89
Availability-Proneness Theory: The <i>Gadagi</i> Experience in Kano, Nigeria Aminu Mohammed Dukku	90 – 103
Neglecting Development Plans and Its Implications for Democracy Salawu, B., Muhammed, A. Y., Adekeye, D. S. & Onimajesi, S. I.	104 – 115
Regulatory Agencies, Third Parties and Cyber Crime Control in Nigeria Philip Nnameziri Ndubueze	116 – 134

Neglecting Development Plans and Its Implications for Democracy

Salawu, B., Muhammed, A. Y., Adekeye, D. S. & Onimajesi, S. I.

Abstract

Theoretically, development plans of any sort involve deliberate efforts on the part of government to speed up the process of the social and economic development of a country. In some countries, such as the former Soviet Union with a socialist ideology, the development plan efforts were usually found to be rewarding, as the government was able to intervene directly and extensively in the lives of the people (Ogunjimi, 1997:97). Similarly, in other countries like the mixed advanced Western economies and many developing countries with a purely capitalist ideology, the economy is structured in such a way that though the interventionist role of the government is usually relatively small, there is always emphasis on the provision of a policy framework (i.e. through development plans) within which the economy and other sectors operate. What this means is that, in all the areas of the economy, the need for a general framework in form of development plans is very crucial. Despite the obvious advantage of development plans as instrument of directing and guiding authentic socio-economic development, the instrument has virtually disappeared in Nigeria today. Its disappearance has led to some set-back in the developmental efforts of successive governments. This paper therefore sets to examine in full the implications of neglecting development plans for democracy.

Keywords: Development, Growth, Democracy, Governance, Plans, Colony

Introduction

The essence of planning by government is to make a conscious choice regarding the rate and direction of growth. The most logical interpretation of this is that the relative rates at which heavy industry, light industry, agricultural improvement, transport and commerce, housing and the like are to be pursued become a matter of conscious policy (Ayinla, 1998:21). It is therefore reasonable to say here that, through a national comprehensive plan, it will be possible to make rational decisions to achieve deliberate, consistent and well-balanced action towards socio-economic development and good governance.

The successful implementation of many projects before and after independence and up to a point in the history of Nigeria as a nation was due substantially to the strategy of pursuing economic and social development through periodic national development plans. The history of development plans in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial era when the British Colonial Office mandated the colonies to prepare development plans for the disbursement of the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds in 1940. Thereafter, a body known as the National Economic Council was set up in 1955 to co-ordinate the nation's growth in line with the recommendation of the World Bank Mission to Nigeria. This eventually led to the preparation of a National Development Plan for Nigeria in 1959.

The main objective of the 1959 Development Plan was the achievement and maintenance of the highest possible rate of increase in the standard of living and the creation of necessary conditions to this end. Since 1960, therefore, Nigeria has formulated and launched development plans, which had made it possible for governments to articulate policies in the following areas: the equitable distribution of income; increase in employment opportunities; improved social services; and the efficient allocation of available resources to eliminate waste (Ayinla, 1998:41).

Preparing and implementing development plans thus became one of the ways by which successive governments in Nigeria before and after the country's independence have been trying to better the socio-economic and political conditions of Nigerian citizens. This is because the policies contained in such development plans touch on the various aspects of the society, which include the political, economic, educational, social and agricultural sectors (Olaniyi, 1998:104). Good as this may sound, in 1986, there was a gradual movement towards a cessation of national development plans in Nigeria. It is important to note that this has made the business of governance haphazard. It is against this background that this paper sets out to examine the implications of neglecting development plans. In order to achieve this objective, the paper covers the following sub-areas: the history of development plans; the journey towards neglecting development plans in Nigeria; the implications for democracy of the cessation of development plans; and summary and recommendations.

A History of Development Plans in Nigeria

The history of conscious planning for development in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial days. To be specific, it has its origin in 1946 when the colonial government introduced what it tagged "Ten Year Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria". This was under the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. Under this historic Development Plan, a total planned expenditure of an equivalent of ₦110 million for a period of ten years was earmarked for the period starting from April 1, 1946 to March 31, 1956 (Ogunjimi, 1997:97). Analyzing the focus of the ten-year Development Plan, Ayo (1988:1) observes that the plan focused on building a transport and communication system, while little provision was made for industrial development. He notes further that this first development plan was also selective in its focus on agriculture, as attention was concentrated on a limited range of cash crops, which include cocoa, palm products, cotton, groundnut and timber. An important conclusion which one can draw from the analysis given by Ayo is that the Colonial Development Plan for Nigeria was meant to serve the interest of the colonial masters rather than that of the colony (i.e. Nigeria).

This foreign-centered development plan, however, did not run its full term because, by 1950, the inappropriateness of charting development over a period as long as ten years in a country experiencing rapid structural changes had become evident. Consequently, a decision was taken to break the plan period into two five-year sub-periods and to formulate a new plan for the sub-period 1950-1956. However, the introduction of a federal system of government affected this revision as each of the regional governments became autonomous and adopted different economic policies. The consequence of this,

as can be noted from the work of Olaniyi (1998:106), is the launching of a five-year development plan for the period 1955-1960 to be implemented by the Federal Government for itself. The plans reviewed above constituted the pre-independence development plans. Whatever their weakness, the fact remains that they constituted the beginning of the practice of development planning in Nigeria.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has formulated and launched other development plans, which, of course, were more comprehensive than the pre-independence plans. They were comprehensive because such plans were conceived and formulated within the framework of an improved system of national accounts. Besides, they covered the operations of both the public and private sectors of the economy and, more importantly, they had their projects related to a number of well-articulated overall economic targets. Therefore, between 1960 and 1985, there were four development plans in Nigeria, which were referred to as the First, Second, Third and Fourth National Development Plans. Each of these development plans had its own focus and well-articulated objectives, which had far-reaching effects on the nation's developmental aspirations.

The First National Development Plan was launched in April 1962 and was to cover a period of six years (1962-68). Under this plan, a total investment expenditure of about ₦2.132 billion was proposed. Out of this, public-sector investment was expected to be about ₦1.352 billion, while the remaining investment expenditure of ₦780 million was to be undertaken by the private sector. The full implementation of this development plan was however interrupted by two major political events, namely, the military intervention in 1966 and the 1967-70 civil war. Consequently, the period of the plan was extended to March 31, 1970. These major interruptions notwithstanding, both the Federal and regional governments recorded a number of landmark achievements during the development plan period. During the crisis period, the Federal Government alone successfully executed projects like the Oil Refinery in Port Harcourt, the Paper Mill, the Sugar Mill and the Niger Dam (in Jebba and Bacita, respectively), the Niger Bridge, and ports extension, while it also constructed a number of Trunk 'A' roads. It is interesting to note that it was also during this period that the first-generation universities were established: Ibadan and Lagos by the Federal Government, Ahmadu Bello University by the Northern Nigerian Government, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) by the Eastern Nigerian Government and the University of Ife (now known as the Obafemi Awolowo University) by the Western Nigerian Government.

The federal and regional governments were able to achieve this much in spite of the crisis because, during the period, the annual capital budgets operated within the development plan framework. They were employed as the main instrument of control and the allocation of development resources (Ogunjimi, 1997:98). This was in itself made possible by the existence of a development plan, which provided guidelines for meaningful and co-coordinated development during the plan period despite two political crises. General Yakubu Gowon launched the Second National Development Plan in 1970 on behalf of the Federal Government and the government of the then twelve states of the federation. It was launched shortly after the end of the war. Because it was a post-war

development plan, its focus was on the reconstruction of a war-battered economy and the promotion of economic and social development in the new Nigeria. What this means, according to Olaniyi (1988:107), is that the philosophy of the plan was consequently influenced by the exigencies of the war, which included the building of a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian society; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and a free and democratic society.

Like the First National Development Plan, the Second also recorded a number of major projects, which were successfully executed by both the federal and state governments. Such projects included the successful construction of many federal roads; the successful take-off of the National Youth Service Corps scheme; the introduction of federal scholarship and loan schemes for Nigerian students, etc.

General Gowon also launched the Third National Development Plan on behalf of all governments in the country. The plan covered a five-year period from April 1975 to March 1980. Ayinla (1998:86) describes this plan as a watershed in the evolution of economic planning in Nigeria. It was a unique development plan because, apart from its huge initial investment of about ₦30 billion (which was later revised to ₦43.3 billion), extensive consultations with the private sector of the economy were made in the course of its preparation.

The cardinal objectives of this plan were also part of its uniqueness. Such objectives included increase in per capital income during the plan period; more even distribution of income; a reduction in the level of unemployment; the diversification of the economy; balanced development; and the indigenization of economic activities. As laudable as the objectives of this development plan were, the implementation was adversely affected by the change of government in July 1975, barely three months after the plan was launched. In particular, the change of government led to a reappraisal of some of the cardinal objectives, as contained in the plan. Here, more emphasis was placed on those projects, which were thought to have direct effects on the living standard of the common man. Sectors that were thus given priority included agriculture, water supply, housing and health (Olaniyi, 1998:108).

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-85) was launched by President Shagari in 1981 on behalf of the Federal Government and the governments of the then nineteen states of the federal. This was the first plan to be formulated by a democratically elected government under a new constitution based on the presidential system of government. As observed by Ogunjimi (1997:100), the plan was intended to further the process of establishing a solid base for the long-term economic and social development of Nigeria. Unlike the previous development plans, the fourth plan was the first in which the local governments were made to participate at two levels. One, they participated at the level of preparation, and, two, they were allowed to have their own separate programmes under the plan. The capital investment target was ₦82.2 billion shared between the public and private sectors with the former putting in about ₦70.5 billion, while the latter put in the balance of ₦11.7 billion.

The Fourth Development Plan was again affected by the change of government in 1983 and by yet another change in 1985. These two changes seriously disrupted the implementation of the programmes of the plan and, consequently, the performance of the economy during the fourth plan period was generally poor. Whatever the case (success or failure), it is interesting to note that between 1945 and 1986, the concept of development planning was common: planning for social and economic development in Nigeria. Beyond the end of this period, this concept gradually faded away and has now become a thing of the past.

The Journey Towards Neglecting Development Plans in Nigeria

It is important to note the real journey towards neglecting the tradition of development planning in Nigeria started with the Babangida administration. In response to the problems encountered during the Fourth Development Plan period, the administration suspended in October 1988 the idea of a five-year development plan, which had hitherto almost become a well-established tradition. At the end of the Fourth Development Plan in December 1985, a one-year economic emergency programme was instituted in 1986 probably to solve some obvious economic problems left behind by the Shagari administration. Interestingly, this was later absorbed by an economic policy christened the Structural Adjustment Programme (SPA). According to the apologists of SAP, the programme was introduced in 1986 for the economy to have a foundation before any meaningful planning could be done.

The Babangida administration then believed that because the economy was largely indebted, the basis for planning was eroded. The government therefore wanted to do away with the already practiced medium-term planning and consequently introduced a perspective known as the rolling plan. Based on this, the government decided on a 20-year perspective plan for the period 1989-2008. According to the philosophy of this rolling plan, the first phase of the perspective plan would constitute the Fifth National Development Plan. With this structural change of policy, the five-year planning model was replaced with a three-year rolling plan to be operated along with a 12 to 20 year perspective plan and the normal operational annual budgets. This plan becomes operational with the 1989 budget and provided the foundation for the three-year rolling plan (1989-90-91). In order to effectively execute this programme, some fundamental reforms were the merging of budgetary and planning functions with the sole objective of minimizing conflict between the two (Ogunjimi, 1997:101; Ayinla, 1998:23; Ilesanmi, 2000:6).

According to the architects of this rolling plan programme, it was considered to be more suitable for an economy facing uncertainty and rapid change. The rolling plan was meant to be revised at the end of each year, at which point estimates, targets and project were added for an additional year. What this means is that planner revised the 1990-92 three-year rolling plan at the end of 1990, issuing a new plan for 1991-93. In effect, a plan is renewed at the end of each year, but the number of years remained the same as the plan rolled forward. According to Ihonvbere (1991), the objectives of the rolling plan were to reduce inflation and exchange rate instability, maintain infrastructure, achieve

agricultural self-sufficiency and reduce the burden of structural adjustment on the most vulnerable groups.

In the same way that the tradition of five-year development plan was jettisoned by the Babangida administration, the idea of the rolling plan was also shelved in 1996 by General Sani Abacha for Vision 2010, which was launched on September 18, 1996. The programme was to systematically improve the quality of the life of Nigerians in fourteen years (Ogunjimi, 1997:107). Although not directly related to the transition programme, the work of Vision 2010, a 250-member committee of private-sector representatives, government ministries, academics, journalists, traditional rulers, trade union leaders and foreign businessmen, among others, inaugurated by General Abacha on November 27, 1996, was similarly intended to move the country forward. The committee was chaired by Chief Ernest Shonekan, who headed a short-lived Interim National Government in 1993 before Abacha seized power (Jukwey, 1996).

Vision 2010 submitted its final report to General Abacha on September 30, 1997. The committee reportedly recommended "large-scale deregulation of the Nigerian economy", the release of political detainees and rigorous compliance with the transition programme (Jukwey, 1977). In his October 1, 1997 National Day address, Abacha promised to introduce the measures required to begin the programme's implementation immediately, in the firm belief that successive administrations would carry it to a successful conclusion with the support of the Nigerian people and friends of the nation (National Day Address, 1997). The fear of Vision 2010 members that their recommendations would not be implemented was justified. Funds for the capital projects budgeted for the first half of 1997 were only released in September, bringing investment in infrastructure and the economy in general to a virtual halt. Massive lay-offs of federal and state employees throughout the country had caused significant hardship. Pervasive of "failed bank" and "failed contract" tribunals, which seemed to have been designed to target potential opposition supporters rather than crack down on "illegal deals"?

From our discussion so far, it can be seen that the military intervention in 1966 and its subsequent prolonged rule in Nigeria became the genesis of truncating the process of adhering to national development planning as a strategy for economic and social development (Fika, 2004). What the nation has inherited in the absence of well-articulated development plans are budget frauds, road contract scandals, oil scams and unchallenged or unchecked high levels of financial corruption at all levels of government in Nigeria. It is, however, imperative to note here that since the re-commencement of democratic government on May 29, 1999, the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo had begun a series of bold economic and political reforms to put the country back on a sound economic and political footing.

The Implications of the Cessation of Development Plans for Democracy

A democratic dispensation is considered as being so efficacious in pushing the frontiers of development that some authorities see it as being coterminous with government (Oshionebo, 2004:305). In this regard, Boeninger (1991) simply defines governance as

“good government of society which guides a country along a course leading to a desired goal, in this case, development”. Development, here, is construed to mean equity, social justice and the exercise of basic human rights. The point to note, however, is that this perspective acknowledges that democracy has a moral purpose and rationale. This means that the well-being of society is dependent “not only upon the correctness and rationality of government policies or plans but also on public confidence that previously settled methods, procedures and rules of politics and government will not be violated or arbitrarily changed but in fact preserved” (Obadan, Oshionebo and Uga, 2002).

The British Council (1993) regards democracy as symbolizing “good government”. It sees government as simply the framework of institutions and functionaries or officials that the state uses in running its affairs. A good government is regarded as good if it provides a responsive governmental and state administrative framework that facilitates good governance. Although good governance and economic development must be longer-term goals than good government, the former will be achievable without the latter. Therefore, good government would, in practice, mean:

- (i) A legitimate and representative government following democratic elections.
- (ii) An accountable administration and a responsive government characterized by free-flowing information, the separation of powers, effective internal and external auditing, low levels of corruption and nepotism, competent officials, realistic policies and low defense expenditure.
- (iii) Governmental respect for human rights, as indicated by freedom of religion and movement, an impartial and accessible criminal justice system, and the absence of arbitrary-government power (Oshionebo, 2004:306).

The essence of democracy, therefore, is to provide an organizational platform to tap the potential endowments of society so that opportunities will be generated for an all-round development (Oshionebo, 2003). For a democratic dispensation to perform competently enough to be adjudged “a good, honest government” (Galbraith, 1999), which is essentially “a pivot for responding to citizen expectations” (Cohen, 1995), the government must exercise state power and authority in the context of what Oshionebo (2002) describes as the institution that facilitates the effective performance appraisal of the policies, programmes and activities of government. Deriving from the foregoing, development plans are indispensable in good governance. As a result, it is logical to assert that the negligence of development plans in Nigeria, as a result of prolonged military intervention, is responsible for the various developmental problems, which the country has experienced.

Nigeria’s development reports since independence eloquently point out the link between good governance and societal development. According to these reports, Nigeria is abundantly blessed with enormous human and natural resources that should translate to a decent standard of living. With a population of over 120 million, Nigeria is the most

populous country in Africa and the eleventh in the world (Oshionebo, 2004:304). In spite of these blessings, the poor performance of the Nigerian economy in many sectors is very evident. The real sector (manufacturing and agriculture) is performing rather poorly. While the country still imports a lot of the agricultural produce for consumption, capacity utilization in industry is around 400/0. The country's per capita income which was as high as \$1,281.4 in 1980, declined continuously to its lowest level of \$240.0 in 1992; it stood at around \$250.0 in 1995 and \$270.0 in 1997; roughly the same figure as in 1972 (Obadan and Odusola 1999). That figure is still below \$300 as at today.

The economy may be experiencing some gains but these are only moderate, particularly given the resource disbursements on the country's development efforts. As we have seen, Nigeria's development indices point to a low rate of economic growth, low capacity utilization in the industrial sector, poorly performing utilities/infrastructure and the attendant increase in operating costs, among others. The Nigerian economy is therefore embattled on all fronts and with crises of ramifying description, including energy crisis, education crisis, unemployment crisis, food crisis, transportation crisis, debt crisis, and, of course, the crisis of economic management (Oshionebo, 2004:304).

The overall consequence of the macroeconomic problems is the deplorable poverty profile of Nigerians. Indeed, it appears to be worsening. The UNDP Human Development Report for 2001 places Nigeria at No. 148 out of the 173 countries surveyed. The situation was marginally compared with the 2003 report, which put Nigeria at 152 among the 175 countries covered in the survey. Official statistics indicated that the national incidence of poverty has remarkably risen from a modest level of 15 percent in 1960 to 28 percent in 1980. It rose further to 46 percent in 1985 and 66 percent in 1996. As at 2001, it was estimated to stand at over 70 percent (FRN, 2001 and Obadan, 2001).

These predicaments are no doubt manifestations of neglecting the practice of having development plans, which denies the country the required blueprints for development. The present administration has made concerted efforts at redressing the various crises and reviving the economy, but the fact remains that in the year 2000, the economy "neither improved nor deteriorated significantly but was static and still low-income, low-growth, with distortions in several areas". Indeed, President Olusegun Obasanjo made reference to the static nature of the economy while presenting the 2001 Appropriation Bill to the National Assembly in November 2000 when he stated, "for this government and most Nigerians, our hard-won democracy is yet to translate into significant improvements in our lives" (Taiwo, 2001).

What this means is that the level of development in Nigeria today does not match the level of the resources available. This is as a result of a high level of corruption, which lack of adequate resource utilization for development has made possible. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become a full-blown cancer, as it has been in Nigeria. With the jettisoning of development plans, which today remains one of the greatest tragedies occasioned by military rule, corruption was allowed to grow really unchecked. The rules and regulations for doing official business, which

development plans entail, died. Consequently, cynicism, the contempt for and cause of integrity pervade every level of the Nigerian bureaucracy, which used to be the vehicle for the execution of development plans in the past. Budgets, which are not tailored towards any development targets, are read without execution. This has provided an avenue for siphoning public funds by those in power. The implication of this is that the practice of reading the annual budget without anything to show for it has eroded public trust in government and undermined the rule of law. It has also weakened the effectiveness of governance at all levels. More importantly, it has hindered economic growth as the nation's resources meant for development are plundered in an ineffective manner.

Summary and Recommendations

In summary, this paper has traced the history of development planning in Nigeria to the colonial era when the British Colonial Office mandated the colonies to prepare development plans for the disbursement of the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds in 1940. The paper also reported that the setting up of a body known as the National Economic Council thereafter to co-ordinate the nation's economic growth in line with the recommendations of the World Bank Mission to Nigeria in 1955 eventually led to the preparation of a National Development Plan for Nigeria in 1959.

The main objective of the 1959 Development Plan, as discussed in this paper, was the achievement and maintenance of the highest possible rate of increase in the standard of living, as well as creating the required conditions for the achievement of the above-stated objective. The objectives of development plans that later followed the 1959 plan were the same. Indeed, with the various plans, the country was able to articulate policies that directly touched on the lives of common people in the country.

From our discussion, it has been shown that at a point around 1986, there began some signs of inconsistency in the implementation of development plans, which ultimately led to a total abandonment of the tradition of having development plans. This has been found to be one of the major factors militating against good governance in Nigeria; the business of governance began to be haphazardly conducted, while the quality of life began to decline.

The paper has reported that as a result of the cessation of development plans in Nigeria, the country has suffered some negative consequences among which are a deplorable poverty profile and unchecked high levels of corruption. The implication of all these is the hindrance of economic growth because the country's resources, which are to be used for development, are being plundered.

To remedy the negative consequences, it is hereby recommended that the present democratic government should go back to the old practice of formulating national and state budgets in the context of comprehensive development plans. To this end, there is the need for the following institution to be established or, where they are already in existence, they must be strengthened. First is the establishment of a National Council on

Development Plans. This council, to be chaired by the President, should, among other things:

- Supervise the implementation of national development plans;
- Ensure the harmonization of existing policy measures with the future development objectives and strategies;
- Ensure effective and consistent dissemination of the development plan vision to institutions and the wider public; and
- Co-ordinate and monitor all inter-sectoral related activities spanning rural development, poverty alleviation, water supply, urban and rural environmental sanitation, health, education, agriculture, control of population growth, electricity supply, communications, transportation, etc.

Secondly, to ensure the success of the development plans in Nigeria, corruption must be eliminated. Consequently, it is suggested that all the laws on corruption should be strengthened. Institutions such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) should be given more support by the government, so that the implementation of development plans at any state will be free of corruption.

Finally, for development plans to lead to good governance, the rules and regulations governing the conduct of government activities must be widely known and understood. In order words, there is the need to develop the culture of transparency in the running of government as an enterprise. To this end, the bureaucratic processes in Nigeria should be developed to facilitate effective governance. This can be done by removing bureaucratic red tape, which often undermines good governance via policy implementation, as embedded in development plans.

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