The Role of Ubuntu Human Values in Enhancing Key Political Institutions for Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper examines the problem of underdevelopment in Nigeria against the backdrop of the huge natural and human resources that the country is endowed with. Basic social amenities like good roads, hospitals, schools etc. are still social goods prayed for by Nigerians. The question is, what are the factors affecting development in Nigeria? This study is an attempt to respond to the above important and disturbing question. It was discovered that one cardinal factor affecting development in Nigeria is the nature of their political institutions, such as the Executive, Judiciary and Legislature. Political institutions that ought to be independent in their operations are now tools used by the political class for their selfish interests. As a way out of this situation, we propose a rethinking of politics and political institutions in Nigeria in the light of Ubuntu ethics and education. In view of this, this study employs the method of philosophical analysis in achieving its objectives.*

Резюме: *Статията разглежда проблема за изоставането в развитието на Нигерия на фона на огромните природни и човешки ресурси, с които страната разполага. Базисни социални придобивки като добри пътища, болници, училища и др. все още са недостъпни за нигерийците. Възниква въпросът за факторите, влияещи върху развитието на Нигерия, и в настоящото изследване се търси отговор на този въпрос. Един от основните фактори, влияещи върху развитието на Нигерия, е природата на нейните политически институции като изпълнителна, съдебна и законодателна власт. По определение политическите институции би трябвало да са независими, а вместо това днес в Нигерия те са инструменти, използвани от политическата класа за егоистични интереси. Като изход от тази ситуация статията предлага философското преосмисляне на политиката и политическите институции в Нигерия в светлината на хуманистичната „убунту" етика.*

Keywords: *ubuntu, institution, politics, development and values*

Introduction

The question about the difference(s) in developmental strides among nations of the world is one that scholars for ages have tried to tackle and are still tackling. In fact, it is a controversial area as there are several reasons that have been propounded by scholars. Some of these reasons or arguments are most of the times opposing each other. The dichotomy between the global north and the global south is one that calls for serious intervention; there is no basis for comparison in terms of development. One part is leaping while the other part is flying. Among the global north the most hit with developmental challenges is the sub-Saharan Africa, and within Africa our focus here is Nigeria.

As a country, Nigeria has passed through several governments, both military and democratic governments. Its present democratic dispensation started in May 1999. Since then, it has been one democratic government after another. As a system of government, democracy is seen as an ideal and in fact the best system of government. This is so because it is widely held that it promotes human rights, equality of all before the law, order, peace, security and development.

However, and unfortunately, Nigeria is still far from being a developed state and is currently walloping in severe developmental crisis. Some scholars have classified Nigeria as a developing state while for others, it is an underdeveloped state. Such is the manifest expression of the crisis of development that the country is currently facing, even in the midst of some of the world most sort after natural resources and with a huge human resources. As a major player in the world oil market Nigeria's developmental indices ought to have gone up, but sadly, it is a different story; lack of basic social amenities, no rule of law, high rate of unemployment and high rate of corruption. This sorry situation triggers a question: what are the factors that affect development in Nigeria? Rising from the above statement of problem, it becomes clear that there are several factors affecting development in Nigeria. However, time and space will not permit us to treat all; consequently, we decided to critique key political institutions such as the Executive, Judiciary and Legislature as cardinal factors that affects development in Nigeria.

Conceptualizing Development

The place of conceptualizing a concept in a qualitative discourse is one that cannot be overemphasized as it helps to clarify and show the different parts of a concept. Most importantly

it helps to define and streamline the concept in use. Hence, undergoing a conceptual clarification of development is most appropriate.

The term "development" like most concepts in the humanities, has various meanings and definitions. It has also been opined that the term can be explained in different contexts, meaning there is no one definition or meaning attached to it. Accordingly, "development has often been confused with economic growth as measured solely in terms of annual increase in per-capita income or gross national product, regardless of its distribution and the degree of people's participation in effective growth." (Abuiyada, 2018, p.1) It means therefore that development entails much more than just its economic perspective that most scholars have theorized about. It encapsulates so many other aspects and segments of the human society. To this end, Abuiyada (2018) is of the view that development should be seen as a progress towards complex goals such as the elimination of poverty, the provision of employment, the reduction of inequality and the guarantee of human rights. What the above assertion shows is that in every window of development there must be an upward improvement in the living condition and standard of a people. Without an upward improvement there cannot be said to be any significant development or even development at all.

Development thus becomes the "movement of the entire social system" and this "encloses, besides the so-called economic factors, including all sorts of consumption by various groups of people; consumption provided collectively; education and health facilities and level; the distribution of power in society; and more generally economic, social and political stratifications; broadly speaking, institutions and attitudes to which we must add as n exogenous set of factors induced policy measures applied in order to change one several of these endogenous factors." (Myrdal, 1974, 729) Hence, for there to be development there must be an upward movement of the entire systems and sectors of a country. In the same vein, underdevelopment is the downward movements of the entire systems and sectors of a country. To this end, development is a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. What this implies is that the process of development or put subtly differently, development brings about improved quality of life and Todaro points out three(3) aspects that must be seen in the development of any society. They are:

1.   To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health, and protection.

2.	To raise living standards, including and in addition to higher incomes, the provisions of more jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and humanistic values; and

3.	To expand the range of economic and social choices available to individuals by freeing them from servitude and dependence. (Todaro, 1994, p. 18).

A Critical look at Politics and Political Institutions as Cardinal Factors affecting Development in Nigeria

In this section we intend to examine the role of political institutions in the developmental agenda of the Nigerian state. It is our argument here that political institutions and politics are major factors hindering development in Nigeria. By politics we mean the "authoritative allocation of values for a society." (Gauba, 2003, 68) Values simply means those things that are important or of interest to a society or an individual. Allocation on the other hand is "the distribution of these things to various individuals or groups; this is accomplished through policy…a policy is authoritative when the people to whom it is intended to apply or who are affected by it consider that they must or ought to obey it." (Gauba, 2003, 68) Thus, politics becomes a social phenomenon and process that is carried out without the use of coercion and manipulation. In addition, in this paper, politics will also be understood as "the process by which a society chooses the rules that will govern it" (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013, 79) and in this case, institutions are one of such rules. The brand and nature of politics practiced in a given society helps in no small way in forming the type of institutions there. In particular, the political institutions in a state are a reflection of the politics played in that state. What then are political institutions? Suffix it to note that these clarifications are imperative as they will help us to have a better grasp of the Nigerian state. Political institutions are "the organizations in a government that create, enforce, and apply laws. They often mediate, make (governmental) policy on the economy and social systems, and otherwise provide representation for the population." (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013, 79) They can also be understood as those institutions which are directly or indirectly involved in law making, law enforcement or the interpretation of laws. Political institutions "include but are not limited to written constitutions and to whether the society is a democracy. They include the power and capacity of the state to regulate and govern

society." (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013, 79) In fact, political institutions are crucial to the smooth and balanced function of the state. They help to determine who has power in the society and to what ends that power can be used. So, to an extent, we can opine that politics and political institutions are two sides of the same coin. In Nigeria, we have political institutions like, the executive arm of government, the legislature, the judiciary, the 1999 constitution (as amended), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and other bodies that are involved in the implementation of government policies.

To streamline our discussion and argument, let us take a look at the Nigerian situation. First, it is important to note that Nigeria has being practicing democracy for over three (3) decades. The quest for independence by the nationalist leaders, who fought for Nigeria's salvation from the shackles of colonialism, was based on the hope for a better society and system of government. Nigerians were optimistic that the going of the white men and the coming to power by their own respected leaders will bring about the most desired development and a stable social-political order; unfortunately it turned out to be the opposite. On practical level, Nigeria as a democratic state is far from the ideals and principles of democracy. The political institutions are clearly the opposites of how democratic institutions should function. As 'rules of the game', "institutions are typically treated as constraints on the realization of actor preferences." (Hyden, 2008, 2) A critical look at these institutions shows that they have been structured in a way that only favours the few elites who are mainly politicians. There is a great undermining of these institutions to the extent that some Nigerian scholars have suggested that our political institutions are non-extent. To borrow the word of Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, Nigeria's political institutions are "extractive", that is, Nigeria operates "extractive political institutions." Put simply, extractive political institutions "concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite and place few constraints on the exercise of this power." (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013, 81) At the heart of this article is our argument and view that the extractive nature of Nigeria's political institutions does not allow for sustainable development and, it is one of the reasons why the country is still underdeveloped and struggling with the basic social amenities.

For a better exposition of the developmental predicament of Nigeria, it would be crucial that we beam some lights at what we termed the 'institutions of law' in Nigeria. Institutions of law simply means those institutions that have something to do with either making of laws, interpretation of laws or the enforcement of laws. These institutions are at the center of

governance and other institutions depend on them. Hence, we are not ignorant of the fact that there are other institutions in Nigeria.

One of such institutions of law is the legislative arm of government. In Nigeria, for instance, there is the practice of bicameral legislature: the Senate and the House of Representatives. At the state level is the existence of the states' Houses of Assemblies. Ideally, the members of such parliaments are meant to represent the interests of the people who sent them there but, it is a different case as the Nigerian legislative house is now a place for selfish men and women who are only after their pockets and interests. The duties of the legislators are two folds: law making and oversight functions. Suffix it to say that even though it is a fact that politics has made it difficult to review and amend the 1999 constitution to reflect new realities, it must be expressed that lack of laws is not a major problem of Nigeria. What is even more crucial and worrisome is in the area of oversight functions of the legislative arm of government. Sadly, a function that ought to be done with utmost patriotism, objectivity has been turned to money making venture where the legislators are bribed to look the other way. Thereby leading to an unfortunate situation where contracts/projects are done without recourse to lay down specifications and standards. In some cases, government projects are abandoned without any consequences. This is worrisome and endangers development because "institutions matters when there are costs associated with violating it." (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006, 4) The legislative arm of government in Nigeria has left its primary duties and embraced exploitative and anti-democratic tendencies. This in no small way affects development of the country as basic social amenities are still missing in Nigeria because of the egocentric nature of our legislators. The role(s) of this arm of government is very critical in national development as its mode of operation can either send a positive or negative signal to potential investors and entrepreneurs. No serious investor will like to come to a country where a competitor can easily bribe a legislator and get the rules of the game changed overnight. With little or no checks from the legislative arm, the executive can become dictatorial and impunity will reign supreme. This is the picture of Nigeria. Again, politics is a factor that has contributed in weakening the legislature. This is not the only institution of law that is a bane to development in Nigeria.

Another institution that is working outside developmental and democratic tendencies is the judiciary. The judiciary in Nigeria is the arm of government that responsible for the interpretation of the laws of the federal republic of Nigeria. The principles that ought to guide

this institution are rule of law and equality. The rule of law is the supremacy of the law over everybody in a state and, it is founded on the principle of equality. These principles are more of ideals than existential facts. Instead of being the last hope of the masses it has become the first and cherished hope of the few elites who have mastered the act of penetrating and manipulating the judiciary in their own favour. This definitely impends national development of any kind. Some scholars have expressed that the lack of financial independence of the judiciary is a major reason why they are weak. Granted that financial independence of the judicial arm of government is important, how about the collection of bribe by judicial officers? How about the selling of court judgments by judges to the highest bidders? These questions are imperative because for Nigeria to experience sustainable development, for Nigeria to have a stable social-political order, there necessarily must be a strong a vibrant judiciary that is founded on the altar of rule of law, equality and quick/dispassionate justice delivery. A good example of how politics drives most of these institutions is that fact that politically related cases and issues are attended to quickly as they are landing, while other types of cases are left to linger forever. No nation develops with this level of inequality, nepotism, impunity, injustice, exploitation and manipulation. Nigeria is not an exception.

The executive is another institution that has compromised itself thereby losing bearing of its place in the developmental schemes. The executive is not just limited to the federal level but at the state level too. As the arm of government that is in charge of policy formulation and law/policy implementation, the executive is too critical in achieving the *telos* of a nation. It is beyond dispute that Nigeria's main problem is more than lack of good policies. Nigeria is not underdeveloped because of bad policies but, to an extent because of lack of implementation. A policy without implementation is just a wasteful venture. But what could make a state or an institution to be unable to implement its laws and policies? This important question brings us back to the problem of institutions. When an institution is weak it will lack the will to enforce its mandate. In case of the executive in Nigeria and the institutions under it, they have become highly politicized, ethicized, tribalised and corrupted. For example, the corrupt nature of the law enforcement agencies has crippled their capacity to discharge their duties without fear or favour. The oil that drives this arm of government is power politics, tribalism, and corruption, partisanship instead of majoritarianism, utilitarianism, selflessness, patriotism and integrity.

Politics and Political Institutions in Nigeria as Categories in Need of Urgent Clarification

The reality on the ground in Nigeria is that the politics of alienation, marginalization, ethnicity, and the sad state of our institutions are the heritage of colonial capitalist hegemony. These values have ensured that political pluralism, democratic participation, rule of law and masses centered development is at best an illusion. Within the political space the realities of money bag politics, the lack of internal democracy, and the disregard of existing rules/laws by those in power have all contributed to the development tragedy that the country is witnessing today. Over and above all is the fact that the politics played is a big shift from the ideal of politics; that is politics as a process for national and human development. Hence, the tragedy of Nigeria, is that the political elites with their over blotted ego have destroyed our institutions.

Ideally, institutions are created and put in place for the common good of all members of the society with clear cut dispassionate rules and regulations guiding their operations. But in Nigeria the case is different as there is a huge gap between the rules these institutions are founded on and their day to day existential manifestations. Hence, in a sense, the gaps in the effectiveness of Nigeria's democracy and the lack of development in Nigeria can be attributed to "the perennial general corruption and inefficiency in public service delivery, a dominant role of politicization of ethnicity as a directing principle of social affairs and also a general citizen's dissatisfaction with the prevailing standards or quality of life and the potentials for attaining human dignity indices – notably, deficits health care, transport infrastructures and education. This developmental shortfall is obvious in the standard of living of those in the rural areas who lack access to good roads, free and safe water and so on. The poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged suffer most with the youth bearing the brunt. There is the real problem of socioeconomic disempowerment and marginalization of a group of citizens." (Ujomu, 2018, 67)

From the foregoing, it becomes imperative for Nigeria and its citizens to urgently clarify the workings of her institutions and the way politics is played. There is need to review and state clearly what the country stands for with a view at looking at how to restore and reactivate her institutions. This calls for a value cum ethical based rethinking of these institutions.

A Discourse on Ubuntu Ethics

Ubuntu is a term that originates from the Bantu language. It is a term that is widely used in the southern parts of Africa. Linguistically, many scholars have posited that ubuntu is an Nguni concept that means 'personhood'. However, the term is not limited or exclusive to the Nguni people, instead it is found among some other African ethnic groups under different names. In Shona, for example, it called unhu and in Sotho is botho.

According to Mbiti (2005) ubuntu is the essence of being human and it embodies a positive perceptive of African personhood. Central to the philosophy of ubuntu is a unique-positive humanism that portrays the essence of humanness that is founded on interdependence and solidarity. Writing in this light, Richardson (e2008) affirms that ubuntu "refers to the collective interdependence and solidarity of communities of affection. Ubuntu is concerned with the welfare of everyone in the community. Hence, in a way, ubuntu is an African worldview or view of life. It is an expression of how Africans perceive and relate in the world. This is not to say that all Africans behave according to the values and principles of ubuntu. But the point to take is that ubuntu is predominantly an African humanism.

Further it is important to note that ubuntu is a philosophical ethic. It is an African philosophy of life that pushes for some ethical values and principles. Ubuntu philosophy finds its key embodiment in the Zulu expression *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* which means a person can only be a person through other – often reduced to 'I am because we are' in English. (Mbigi & Maree, 1995, 7) Further, it also finds its root in the Northen Sotho aphorisms such 'motho ke motho ke batho' which is a simplification of ubuntu. It means "to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on this basis, establish respectful human relations with them. In other words, my human-ness is constituted by the human-ness of others, and vice versa." (Hauvd) Ubuntu is a relational ethics. As a relational ethics it shows us how we ought to relate with others and we ought to live in the society. It is a belief in the interdependence and interconnectivity of human beings. It therefore means that my humanity is caught up with the humanity of the next person.

Suffice me to state that the above discussed features of ubuntu do not imply that ubuntu philosophy is anti-individualistic. Instead, as argued by Louw (2006) Ubuntu respect for the particularity of the other links up closely to its respect for individuality. This is because "Ubuntu defines the individual in terms of his/her relationship with others." (Louw, 2006, 168) Hence, ubuntu must not be confused with privileging or prioritization of the community over the

individuals in the society. The community is relevant because it is medium through which an individual fulfils potential. A crucial attribute of ubuntu is interdependence.

Ubuntu aside being a factual description of the African worldview is also a social ethic, which is a rule of conduct or behavior. But, first, what is ethics and why is ethics needed by human beings? Ethics is important and needed in the society because it is one of the social instruments or structures for moderating human actions and behaviors in order to have a peaceful and meaningful society. Other social structures for moderating human actions are law and conventions. Basically, ethics is concerned about the rules for deciding wrongness or rightness of an action. There several theories that have been propounded by scholars in this light. For some Africans, human experience can be promoted positively through the philosophy and ethics of ubuntu. What then is ubuntu ethics?

Ubuntu could be considered as an ethical theory because it seeks to promote the social nature of man. Fundamentally, human beings are social animals because they were created to live together. Also, "human beings are social because they need to cooperate with each other, in order to attain the common good or purpose. Pursuing the common good is a central element of the social, ethical, or moral life." (Ujomu, 2018, 67) Hence, ubuntu is an African world view that has normative implications.

As a rule of conduct, ubuntu does not only describe human beings as relational beings but also prescribes what this entails. A good example of the normative nature of ubuntu is when we consider the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana aphorisms *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* and *motho ke motho ke batho babang,* which in plain English would simply mean our well being or survival are dependent on others. However, when the native Nguni and Sotho speakers make such statements, they "are rather in the first instance tersely capturing a normative account of what we ought to most value in life. One's ultimate goal in life should be to become a (complete) person, a (true) self or a (genuine) human being."(Metz, 2011, 537) What this clearly shows is that "the assertion that "a person is a person' is call to develop one's (moral) personhood, a prescription to acquire ubuntu or botho, to exhibit humanness." (Metz, 2011, 537) To develop and exhibit one's humanness entails displaying certain values in our everyday walk. The ubuntu ethics emphasizes some ethical values. Accordingly, "group solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity, humanistic orientation and collective unity have, among others been defined as key social values of ubuntu. Because of the expansive nature of the concept, its social value will always depend on

the approach and the purpose for which it is depended on. Thus its value has also viewed as a basis for a morality of cooperation, compassion, communalism and concern for the interest of the collective respect for the dignity of personhood, all the time emphasizing the virtues of that dignity in social relationship and practices." (Mokgoro, 1998, 2)

From the above it can be deduced that ubuntu defends a unique conception of the human person that is based on an intrinsic worth of the human person and not an instrumental one. The worth of the human person is expressed in his dignity. This self dignity is intrinsic and comes as a result one being a human being, and "dignity requires that humans be addressed and treated in ways that demonstrate their intrinsic worth, freewill, freedom, and responsibility to themselves and others." (Ujomu, 2018, 5) Our deepest moral obligation according to ubuntu ethics is to become more fully human. And the only way to achieving this is by entering community with others, which is by living out the values embedded in ubunu ethics.

Another cardinal principle and value of ubuntu is "community with others". This principle as sufficiently discussed by Thaddeus Metz in his article *Ubuntu as a theory and human rights in South Africa,* seats at the foundation of the idea of ubuntu. This is because it portrays the social and ethical characteristic of ubuntu. What then does it mean to seek out community with others within the context of the ubuntu philosophy? Does it mean to yield to the yearnings and desires of the majority in a society? Is it the same as conforming to the norms of one's group or association?

To seek out community with others with the notion of ubuntu can be understood using two recurrent and dominant themes in African discourse as enunciated by Thaddeus Metz. These two themes are "identify" and "solidarity." Meaning to seek out community with others encapsulates the ideas of identity and solidarity. But what does it mean to identify with others each other? Simply put, it means "for people to think of themselves as members of the same group, that is, to conceive of themselves as a 'we', for them to take pride or feel shame in the group's activities, as well as for them to engage in joint projects, co-coordinating their behavior to realize shared ends." (Metz, 2011, 538) To identify entails that the feeling of brotherhood and total involvement in a group and its activities. It means for people to think of themselves as part and parcel of the same group, thereby transcending the 'i' thinking to 'we' mentality. Conversely, for people to fail to show solidarity does not end at them thinking of themselves as an 'i', "but also aiming to undermine one another's ends." (Metz, 2011, 538) Solidarity involves

the exhibition of mutual support. To show solidarity "is for people to act in ways that are reasonably expected to benefit each other. Solidarity is also a matter of people's attitudes such as emotions and motives being positively oriented towards others." (Metz, 2011, 538) Sympathy, help and compassion are at the heart of solidarity. On the contrary, for people to fail to show solidarity would mean for them to show lack of interest in each other's wellbeing and progress.

At the conceptual level, identity and solidarity are two separate items. That is to say that one can do without the other. An individual could show identity without necessarily exhibiting solidarity. In the vain, one could exhibit solidarity without identity. For example, when you render help to someone anonymously. Be that as it may, identity and solidarity are not logically distinct in African thought/philosophy. According to Metz (2011), communal relationship with others, of the sort that confers ubuntu on one, is well construed as the combination of identity and solidarity. Morally, they ought to be actualized together and not separately. Writing on this, Munyako and Motlhabi (2009) affirms that seeking out community with others means that individuals consider themselves integral parts of the whole community. A person is socialized to think of himself, or herself, as inextricably bound to others… Ubuntu ethics can be termed anti-egoistic as it discourages people from seeking their own good without regard for, or to the detriment of, others and the community. Ubuntu promotes the spirit of helping and living for others and discourages egoism.

Further, the notion of justice is another cardinal value of ubuntu ethics. Justice within the purview of ubuntu ethics is essentially restorative and communitarian. Primarily, the aim of justice here is the restoration of peace and order in the community and stamping of human dignity. This type of justice is based on the idea that human community is organic in nature. It is likened to an organism. In an organism all parts are connected and what affects one part affects the other parts. Analogically, if one person is hurt in the community the rest members are hurt too. An evil melted to one is an evil to all and not just the victim of that evil or violence as the case may be. Writing on the notion of justice in ubuntu culture, Chuwa (2009) notes that "In the case of dispute, there is no clear distinction between conflict resolution and execution of justice. The resolution process aims at mutual education, community education, character formation and consensus seeking." Justice in this light aims at developing the individual and building the community cord so as to ensure peace and progress. The objective of pursing justice is reparation and restoration of peace and order. Hence, when an issue is brought to the fore, dialogue is

triggered "until a compromise is found and all in the discussion agree with the outcome." Dialogue and consensus are two values that are needed in arriving at an outcome. Ubuntu justice is restorative because it is summed up in Tutu's maxim, "I am human because I belong…my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours." (Tutu foundation) The primary aim of criminal justice in ubuntu is reconciliation of all involved, not retribution.

Another important aspect of ubuntu justice is that it is communitarian in nature. According to Metz, "An action is right insofar as it positively relates to others and thereby realizes oneself; an act is wrong to the extent that it does not perfect one's valuable nature as a social being." (Metz, 2007, 331) This clearly depicts the communitarian nature of ubuntu justice. Ubuntu justice is "other-prioritized" and not individualistic. A just action is that which brings about personal realization. But this realization must happen within the ambit of the community and it is done for two reasons; for the self and for others. Benhabib (1997) states that individuation does not precede association; rather it is the kind of association which we inhabit that define the kinds of individuals we become. It therefore means that society precedes the individual and the individual needs the society for self realization. Without the society the individual self realization is not complete and cannot be complete. Summing this up, Metz (2007) affirms that an action is wrong insofar as it is fails to honor relationships in which people share a way of life and care for one another's quality of life, and especially to the extent that it esteems division and ill-will.

Before we close this exposition on ubuntu ethics, it is significant to note that even though ubuntu ethics is African in nature, there exist connections between it and some western traditions in ethics and philosophy in general. In a constructive note, Mwase draws our attention that elements of ubuntu values could be found in the works and writings of scholars of different eras form around the world. Such personalities, Mwase (2013) notes, include Mohandas Gandhi, John Rawls, Desmond Tutu, Martin Buber, Immanuel Kant and others. One positive inference from the above observation is that key elements of ubuntu can be found within and across nations and tribes around the world. Interestingly too, the fundamental concern of ubuntu ethics, that is how human beings ought to live their lives in the society remains one of the fundamental topics of philosophical investigation throughout human history. From ancient Greek thinkers till date, the concerns are the same. Philosophical theories/concepts like utilitarianism, globalization, Kantian categorical imperative, etc. are all directing principles of human inter-relations and progress.

They are life promoting and life saving values. So also is Ubuntu ethics. Another nexus that could be observed between ubuntu and the aforementioned western theories is that they all argued for the respect for human life and human dignity and the unification of mankind. This is based on the idea of man as an end in itself and man as a social being.

Towards Value based Institutions: a Rethinking of the Foundation of Nigeria's Political Institutions for Development through the lens of Ubuntu Ethics

In this session of this paper, we will be looking at what we think should be done to salvage the already weak political institutions in Nigeria. This session is very important because for there to be any meaningful and sustainable development in Nigeria, our institutions, especially political institutions must be rejuvenated. It is wise to note that development paths can be changed but not at any time, nor in just any circumstances. This significantly shows the important place of institutions, because institutions shape policies and the smooth implementation of those policies plus the smooth running of those institutions will, lead to national development. The solution that we intend to push forward will be discussed in two fronts: ethical values and education.

For there to be a change from exploitative, disoriented, disorganized and weak political institutions as is the case in Nigeria, the place of human beings (especially those manning and working in those institutions) and societal values must not be missed. Institutions are not run by spirits but by human beings. Hence, for there to be any meaning change that will lead to a drastic shift in the way an institution operates, there must be first, a look at the dominant values prevalent in such a place and then a push for certain set of values to countermand the existing ones. Values are those things that are important, desirable and of interest to one. According to Dzobo, "the major functions of values are to serve as guide and judges for individual actions and to direct the choices and conduct of people in a culture." (Dzobo, 1992, 225) Thus, we are pushing for a normative solution to the problem under study.

Pursuing institutional change is the work of promoting and sustaining excellence through the application of the creative imagination of the human mind. The key factor of all societal transformation is the human mind. Hence, "the human mind seeks multifarious contact with things in reality in order to fashion phenomenal and useable order out of noumenal chaos or abstract entities." (Ujomu & Olatunji, 2014, 68) Put a little differently, "human character,

emotion and intelligence can in fact be transformed consciously by human actions into experiences different from what they are now. Indeed, the creative imagination is necessary in order to solve ethical and political problems. Ethics and politics are attempts to create what ought to be." (Andersson, 198) In this sense, the challenge before us is a normative one. To this end, we find in Ubuntu some values and principles that are imperative for the re-culturing of the human mind and consequently the rejuvenating of our politics and political institutions for sustainable development.

As an ethical theory, Ubuntu is imbued with several moral and humane values. However, for the purpose of this paper and for space constraints, we would be picking and applying just few principles of ubuntu. Identity and Solidarity are two key values of ubuntu as exposed and argued by Thaddeus Metz. These two values of Ubuntu are needed against the background that the few political elites in Nigeria have weakened and destroyed our political institutions. This is so because their selfish and exploitative individualistic tendencies will not allow them to think about others and the community at large. Explaining the principle of identity, Metz asserts that "to identify with each other is largely for people to think of themselves as a 'we', for them to take pride or feel shame in the group's activities as well as for them to engage in joint projects, coordinating their behavior to realize shared ends. For people to fail to identify with each other could go beyond mere alienation and involve outright division between them, that is, people not only thinking of themselves as an 'I' in opposition to a 'you', but also aiming to undermine one another's ends." (Metz, 2011, 538)

The above assertions must be understood within the context of the African community way of thinking and living which is based on shared values, the community way of thinking that is grounded on 'others'. To fail to identify with others simply means to alienate others, to create division, and to place one's selfish interests and desires above that of others and most importantly above that of the community. This negative way of living that seeks one's interest at all cost at the expense of the society is one thing that has contributed to the fall of our institution which has led in no small way to the underdevelopment of Nigeria. Hence, there is need for the embrace of new values and in this case the Ubuntu notion of identity.

To identify is good but, it is not good enough. Solidarity is needed from our political elites, our political leaders, and citizens at large. Recall that we mentioned earlier that "to exhibit solidarity is for people to engage in mutual aid, to act in ways that are reasonably expected to

benefit each other. Solidarity is also a matter of people's attitudes such as emotions and motives being positively oriented toward others, say, by sympathizing with them and helping them for their sake. For people to fail to exhibit solidarity would be for them either to be uninterested in each other's flourishing or, worse, to exhibit ill-will in the form of hostility and cruelty. (Metz, 2011, 538)

It merits emphasis to state that the place of Ubuntu as an alternative idea is needed because it promotes human development, equality, care and community as against the dominant social values like exploitation, injustice, lack of rule of law and selective humanism. It appears the values of Ubuntu afford us the opportunity to seek life enhancing values. These values like identity, solidarity, participation, rule of law, etc. once imbued into the individuals and the leaders, will most likely affect the institutional framework and running of our institutions. These values are normative in nature, thus are directed to effect changes in the human behavior. This is based on our argument that once the behavior of a person changes by accepting an alternate ethical views/values, it will spread to what he or she does. As such, at the level of development, and institutional building, the egoistic and 'I' only tendencies need to be countermanded with superior and better community based values. Consequently, "Ubuntu ethics can be termed anti-egoistic as it discourages people from seeking their own good without regard for, or to the detriment of, others and the community. Ubuntu promotes the spirit that we should live for others." (Munyaka & Motlhabi, 2009, 72) This spirit and letter of Ubuntu is what is needed in our politics, in political institutions as it discourages exploitation, injustice, undermining of institutions and corruption.

Further, the enthronement of the intent and spirit of Ubuntu justice in our polity would bring about less individualistic sets of leaders and the establishment of just institutions. Ubutu justice is "other prioritized" as against the self centered attitude of Nigerian leaders. The idea is this, individuation does not precede association. At all times the common good is the ideal and goal. Institutions are created and put in motion for the common good of all members of the community with dispassionate guiding rules devoid of ethnic, religious and political sentiments.

Another very important instrument that will help in restoring our political institutions which will lead to development is education. The bitter misfortune of Nigeria is that the few political elites have not only destroyed our institutions, they seem to have cleverly positioned a huge army of poorly educated, or put differently, wrongly educated citizens, especially youths to

see to the final burial of those institutions. Against this background, moving away from the normative part of this paper, we posit that our path to institutional restoration rest so much in education. However, ironically, education is one of such institution that has been destroyed by the elite. It therefore means that there is an urgent need to reform and recharge the education sector. But why is education imperative? First, education is the key to the success of democracy and democracy is the system of government practiced in Nigeria or, is the system we claim to practice in Nigeria. If that is true, then the lack of proper education will lead to the failure of democracy and in turn lead to underdevelopment. Also, education is where the culture/ideals of institutions begin. It is through education that citizens will be exposed and taught democratic values: which in turn will help them see the reasons to respect institutional boundaries. Education brings about the refinement of the mind. A refined mind will do more good to the nation and her institutions than harm. In order to have a rebirth of our institutions and in the long run, have sustainable development, the Nigerian government must refocus education to include teaching the Nigerian mind about institutions. This will help instil the idea that institutions are bigger than politicians or individuals. Here lies Nigeria's political, institutional, and developmental rebirth.

Conclusion

The problem of development in Nigeria is a complex and unfortunate reality. This is because in spite of the fact that the country is blessed with huge amount of human, material and mineral resources, it is still crawling on the wheels of development. In this paper we discovered and argued that a major cause of this quagmire is the brand of politics played in Nigeria and, the type of political institutions operating therein. The political elites who are more interested in their quest for power have found a dubious way of weakening and destroying institutions of government for their personal benefit. Because of this, individuals are perceived as been bigger than institutions. Politics is no longer about bringing hope and succor to those one represents but for the personal gains. We opined that with the political institutions weakened, there cannot be any meaningful development. Thus, we pushed for the values of Ubuntu ethics and education as strategies for development and institutional rebirth. These values of Ubuntu like solidarity, identity, justice, respect and dignity of the human person, once entrenched and enthroned in our society would activate community cum humanistic mindset in the citizenry which would in turn

lead to the firm establishment of strong institutions. The combination of these traits and institutions will consequently bring about sustainable development in Nigeria. We do not claim to have exhausted all there is about this topic and, we are not ignorant of the fact that there are other factors responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment. In fact, we affirm that the issue of development or underdevelopment is multidimensional in nature.

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