

# **Human Development: Panacea for Infrastructure System and Development in Africa**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper beams a searchlight into the complexities of infrastructure systems in Africa, using Nigeria as a focus. It reveals how infrastructure is often misunderstood, or worse still, not fully understood by many Nigerians. Many assume that infrastructure only has elements of transportation and structural buildings; in this study the missing elements of infrastructure such as communication, finance management, education, and healthcare are unraveled. These are to be equally developed and fixed to attain a set of national goals. Most governments' national policies which claim to embark on massive infrastructural exercise often focus their attention on physical and material improvement of the environment such as roads, houses, factories, and means of transportation; and overlooked the most crucial type of development, that of the human. Using Erik Ericson theory of Human Development, this study reveals that unless the human being is developed mentally and physically every material infrastructure will suffer or face bottlenecks. Using analytical survey, the study did not only prove this assertion but also suggests that effort be made by the government to train and develop its human resources to maximum capacity - intellectually and otherwise in order to achieve a true infrastructural system development.*

**Keywords:** *Human development, education, financial institutions, national goal, policies,*

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## **I. Background and Rationale**

We could just start our discuss by highlighting the poor infrastructure system in Africa and present an empirical result with a conclusive note. That would appear scholarly and pass for a presentation, but the solutions will not be based on genuine evidences. In other words, we would just attempt the issue at the periphery provide and a superficial result. To find concrete solutions, we have to trace our problems to the very root of our existence; hence, a compendium of our racial suffering will be looked into. Africa has been a notable continent on earth since antiquity. The black Africans have been discovered to be the oldest human species on the planet and are believed to be full of vitality and vigor in their most natural habitat. Some nice things said about Africa are that it has a rich ancient oral tradition which survives to this day. Lynch (2004: vi) writes about Africa's long and dynamic history going back millions of years. Many scholars believe that human life began in Africa. Olatunbosun (1981:xv), corroborate this claim by writing that in prehistoric times, Africa was in the lead. Citing discoveries by Dr. Louis Leaky, he declared that man did not only originated in Africa, but had a well-defined culture using a large variety of tools in Africa 2 million years before any other continents. Lynch (2004: vi) claims that 700,000 years ago, hominids (near human - upright primates who walked on two legs) who migrated out of Africa had spread throughout Asia and Europe. She added that fossil remains of the first modern humans - Homo sapiens which dated back to 160,000 years were found in Ethiopia in 2003. Pomeranz (2005:6) reveals that long before the outside world started to exploit them, Africans developed unique qualities making them the greatest survivors of the entire human race. Commenting on the physical vitality of the African

people Pomeranz (2005:23) writes that they display a great vibrancy of positive life force, as well as solid and sustainable social fabrics. Considering these varied scholarly discoveries, one can conclude that, Africans are not only the earliest humans but their continent is the land of earliest traditions, remarkable will to survive and good spirit that is reflected in their physical being as well as in their communities. With all the unique civilization (Olatunbosun, 1981).

However, despite the rich historical laurels of Africa, it has continuously till the present time, suffered heavy criticism from the outside world. Africa is the only continent which faces intense hatred, is misunderstood, neglected, abused and exploited because they are different. Pomeranz (2005:7) captured this properly when she commented that “it is true that Africans constituted a puzzle to the rest the world because they are simply different people”. They have always named Africans “savage”, “backward”, inferior”, “non humans”, scum”, and in religious terms, “pagan”, idol worshipers”, “sinners”, in economic terms “Third World”, heart of darkness”. This last description by Joseph Conrad has attracted a frank reaction by one of Africa’s finest novelist, Chinue Achebe who believes that such expressions project the image of Africa as the other world: the antithesis of Europe and therefore, civilization (Achebe, 1983:3). Such derogatory terms are followed by harsh treatment of black Africans around the world.

Sadly, the resultant effect of contemporary African leadership has brought more hardship to the people of Africa. Though, the plight of Africans is both inflicted by foreigners (Arabians and Europeans) and the elite blacks, the black aborigines have been blamed for it. Since their encounter with the outside world, black Africans have been met with fear, abuse and hostility. First, the Arabians took advantage of the African kindness and hospitality to Islamize the blacks. Then the Europeans took what was left by exploiting the people and their land, and subsequently colonized the people for their own end (Pomeranz 2005:13). The scholar Walter Rodney was murdered after publishing his book “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa”. This old issue of underdevelopment of Africa has sparked debate among Africans and sympathizers. Some are of the view that the African underdevelopment is inflicted by materialistic foreigners, others believe that Africans are responsible for their poor state of being. It is worrisome that after centuries of plunder by Western nations and over half a century after independence, the black nations of Africa reek of unimaginable poverty. In spite of the advancement in technology in the world, the people dominating this part of the world have been wallowing in chronic deprivation for long. Disease, abject poverty, poor standard of living and lack of infrastructure are pervasive in this continent. Since independence from colonial rule, contemporary black African states are unable to coordinate their resources into economic development to commensurate with their huge level of natural endowment. Post-Independence efforts to develop Africa to par with advanced societies have been met with futility, yet we look on in despair for the right moment and people to come to rescue every time. Upon this background we are conducting this study to find out if our poor infrastructure system can be fixed. Due to time and resources constraints, we shall narrow down our study to the Nigerian situation.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

The current Director General of the Nigerian Budget office, Ben Akabueze, on February 11, 2018 expressed concern over the poverty level in Nigeria. The Punch.ng (2018) captioned the interview with the DG, “Nigeria’s poverty level worrisome- DG, Budget Office”, is there other credible source to hear this from? After roughly six decades of post-colonial rule, we are still at a pedestal stage of poverty, in the midst of abundant natural resources. Many economic plans have not yielded much success, yet many indications point to socio-economic problems ahead. Every concerned citizen will ask how we are going to turn around this situation for good. The questions before us is, what are we not doing right?

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

Our objectives in this study are as follows:

1. To find out why Africa is still an under-developed nation.
2. Why are there still poor infrastructure systems in Africa despite the global advancement in technology?
3. To find out if African leaders can provide a world-class infrastructure system for its people.
4. To determine how soon Africa will fix her problems of poor infrastructure.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Since we are applying scientific method (social science fact findings) we shall attempt to answer the following questions after a critical appraisal of the issue at hand. The following research questions will be answered:

1. Do the African leaders and professionals have the required skills to plan, execute and maintain the necessary infrastructure system in the continent?
2. Is the present educational system in Africa capable of producing world class professionals with the abilities of building a cutting-edge infrastructure?
3. With the situation of things at the moment, can Africa fix her poor infrastructure system in the next 50 years (until 2069)?

4. Are African present leaders doing the right thing to provide a world-class infrastructure?

## **II. Literature Review**

The debate over inferiority of black Africans is not the focus of this discuss, instead we are exploring means to understand why is there pervasive poor infrastructure permeating our contemporary society, in spite of the abundant human and material resources available. This is the twenty first century, many nations which were hitherto underdeveloped have taken advantage of technological advancement to change their society for good, except the black Africa. With all the generous resources abound, steady government budgets, foreign grants and loans, our nation's infrastructures remain in a deplorable state. Nigeria is a country which ought to be a model to the rest of black Africa, but what do we have, constant disappointment. A black sympathizer, Susan Pomeranz recounts her experience in the city of Lagos, the commercial hub of Nigeria when she writes that 'squalid slums' make up the greater part of the city of Lagos with 13 million inhabitants (Pomeranz, 2005: 15). These are terrible slums she described in subsequent page "visiting the slums of Lagos, for example, one finds oneself among thickly populated areas, where there is no passage ways we commonly called roads, in short nothing is available that modern man would require for just the simplest comfort. Gutters lining the fronts of dilapidated houses and sheds are filled with refuse and thick, black brew that includes gray water, old engine oil, chemicals, urine and other discarded matter" (Pomeranz:23-24). Another study by a local researcher corroborates her experience. Akolade (2008:42) cites the FOS report of 2006 which states that poverty in Nigeria is on the increase. The report states that in 2006 alone, about 67 million Nigerians, which represent 65% of the population, are poor.

Most amenities in our cities across Nigeria were either stretched to breaking point, or were short in supply. Due to poor quality, overuse and lack of maintenance, roads rapidly developed pot holes (Uchenunu, 2008:38). Many may be wondering what the government has been doing. Successive administration, civilian and military, presented national economic plans with different names and appellations, yet the climate looks gloomy. Ogundiran (2006:187,188) summarized the various government national development economic plans since 1962 to 2010 and aptly points that all the plans were marred with failures. He wrote that "The planning experience, which spanned four decades, was abandoned with the coming of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). SAP marked the beginning of financial scams in Nigeria as budgetary discipline disappeared... Nigeria had to take refuge in perspective planning, however, the 1997 plan and the vision 2010 document did not have any series of operational medium-term plans. The Nigeria Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, NEEDS, thus emerged to fill up the emptiness in the rolling plans and the aborted perspectives."

### **2.2 The Trouble with Nigeria: Where the Problem Lies**

Several reports have declared a large number of Nigerians are living below the poverty line. While poverty is commonly defined as lack of access to basic needs of life like food, clothing, shelter, education and health, Todaro (2000) elucidates the term as a state of general powerlessness, as well as the inability to exact a positive influence on one's physical and socioeconomic environment to one's benefit. And that is exactly the state in which we are. Akolade (2006: 42), points to the poor state of human resources and capital development in Nigeria is a major indicator of poverty, but when we examine the statement, the paradox is, poor human capital development is the reason for persistent poverty. Perhaps the reason why Nigerian and African governments always fail to achieve result is because they attempt to build other aspects and fail to first develop human resources. It is a clear fact human capital constitutes the basis for the wealth of a nation. Akolade (2006:44), understood this when he wrote that capital and natural resources are passive factors of productions; human beings are active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build socio-economic and political organizations, and carry out standard national development". Achebe (1981:22) could have declared that Nigeria fixes her infrastructure first, but, the sage knows better. He simply wrote "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership". One common thing about Nigeria: It has all, or nearly all, the institutions found in advanced societies but they are poorly managed. In his book "An Image of Africa and the Trouble with Nigeria" Chinua Achebe outlined ten points/troubles with Nigeria, all of these explanations are human attitudinal-related issues. He understands that human beings control other factors and thus humans must be fixed first, before other things can measure up. Anyanwu (2008:82) did not mince words when he stated that unless the human beings - the men and woman, she/ he cannot develop anything else. He added that intellectual development which is intricately tied to the development of the person, is intricately important. Citing Moemeka, Anyanwu boldly declares that intellectual development supersedes every other kind of development. He believes that once a person is intellectually developed, he would be in a better position to develop others and everything around him (Anyanwu, 2008:82). It is true we have several universities and higher institutions of learning, but these institutions which are supposed to help develop our human resources are poorly managed, and this results in annual churning out of low-quality professionals. What we are yet to realize is that intellectual development involves the whole man and his senses, a kind of intellectual development which questions and

critically examines natural and social phenomena to test and determine their relevance to our existence. It is either the African people do not understand this fact or they don't just care. It is common to see Nigerians admire and imitate cutting-edge equipment and state-of-the-art facilities, but they give little thought to making these by themselves. "Let's do it like they do it Europe", such expression has become a cliché among our leaders, they are careless about the minds/brains behind such admired achievements. In spite of being a religious publication, the *Awake Magazine* of November 2012 identified the importance of human development when it published an interesting article on the wonders of machines. It wrote "At a time when many boast about modern technology, we are reminded of just how much we owe to the brilliant and fertile minds that preceded us."

There will always be a way out, even for an ostentatious nation like ours, but truth must be told. Salvaging Nigeria from utter collapse is beyond the contrivance of mediocre leadership. It requires enlightened and brave leaders who will earnestly search for order and justice, even when it will cost them their lives. For those who fantasize that someday, a fairy figure will emerge out of the blue to fix our nation, they will *dream till thy kingdom come*. A nation is not built on fantasy and mere wishes. Such task is the prerogative of the learned, thoughtful and enlightened people. This is evident in the western world. The European people did not emerge out of the blue, they evolved by constantly inquiring into nature. Europeans have a long history of intellectual revolution dated back to millennia. They have invested plenty of quality time studying, developing, researching and till they were familiar with the elements of nature, human nature and the unseen world (metaphysics). Perhaps that is why Europeans are capable of transforming any part of the world they encounter. Philosophical inquiry which started with European classical and medieval eggheads who attempted to know the entire universe. The by-products of such rigorous mental search are the societal systems and technologies which make contemporary life what it is.

### **III. Theoretical Underpinnings**

Most human development theories focus mostly on child development, the Freud's Psychoanalytical theory, Erik Erikson's theory of development, Jean Piaget's of Theory Cognitive development, and many more attempts to explain how human develop in a linear order. Our concern here is how a race of people could develop intellectually, so we are going to consider the most suitable theories close to our human development issue. Erik Erikson's theory of human development is carefully adopted here to explain the development stages of our people. Unlike others, this theory explains the developmental process of adults. It infers that development is never complete; it is an ongoing process (Wade and Tavis, 2005:522). We have to make effort to learn new skills every time in order to contribute to society throughout our lives, rather than living for things to just happen. Complacency is a dangerous state for any group of people. Black Africans must learn that every success achieved at the stages of our societal development requires more effort to surge ahead. Development is a continuous phenomenon and must be diligently followed through. Training and retraining of our manpower in the country is a prerequisite for societal development and we must invest in our people intellectually with quality and discipline education from the basic level to the tertiary level. And continue to train people in the job, if we must perfect the arts and sciences of production.

### **Research Methodology**

This study which attempts to prove that lack of human development in Nigeria and black Africa could generate an empirical result by using survey research... the study population consists of adults as well as professionals who are of considerable age brackets and life experience. This topic is a critical issue which requires enlightened minds to dissect a more troubling issue like perpetual poor infrastructure systems; hence, we sample the opinion of learned men and women in the academic. Due to time constraint and limited financial resources, the view of the academic teaching staff of Lagos State Polytechnic, are collected. Lecturers and instructors/technologists from the various departments of the six schools are presented with a structured questionnaire to elicit the desired result. The questionnaire is the preferred research instrument used in this study because it helps to succinctly present the respondent's views in a form that would be analyzed statistically. The questionnaire contains two sections, A and B. Section A contains the demographic variables in which respondents were to tick the ones applying to their disposition, while section B presents the crux of our discussion. The later section is based on the 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree SA, Agree A, Neutral N, Disagree DA, and Strongly Disagree SD, which allows us develop a number of statements with respect to this topic. This option offers the respondents the opportunity of selecting from the options which best explains their disposition on the topic. The choice for analytical survey is informed by the nature of our topic of discussion. The analytical survey attempts to describe and explain why a situation exists and by examining two or more variables, we can reliably investigate or explore our research questions (Wimmer and Dominic, 2011:185). That is exactly what we are doing in this study.

**IV. Data Presentation and Findings**

**Table 1: Gender**

Female	26	26
Male	74	74
Total	100	100%

**Table 2: Academic Qualification of Respondents**

HND/B.Sc/B.A	50	50
PGD	14	14
M. Sc./M.A/MBA	24	24
PhD	12	12
Professional Qualification	Nil	Nil
Total	100	100%

**Table 3: Age Bracket of Respondents**

20-30years	46	46
31-40years	32	32
41-50years	18	18
51-60years	4	4
61 and above	Nil	Nil
Total		100%

**Table 4: Religion of Respondents**

Islam	34	34
Christianity	66	66
Traditional Belief	Nil	Nil
Total	100	100%

**Table 6: Nigeria has a world class infrastructure system**

Strongly Agreed	28	28
Agreed	24	24
Neutral	10	10
Disagree	24	24
Strongly Disagree	14	14
Total	Nil	100%

**Table 7: The infrastructure systems in Nigeria needs a holistic fixing**

Strongly Agree	68	68
Agree	26	26
Neutral	6	6
Disagree	Nil	Nil
Strongly Disagree	Nil	Nil
Total	100	100%

**Table 8: It is beyond the mental capabilities of Nigerians to fix problems facing the infrastructure**

Strongly Agree	26	26
Agree	8	8
Neutral	18	18
Disagree	24	24
Strongly Disagree	26	26
Total	100	100%

**Table 9: most Nigerian professionals and leaders maybe licensed, but lacked substance to build sophisticated systems requiring rigorous mental task**

Strongly Agree	12	12
Agree	44	44
Neutral	18	18
Disagree	14	14
Strongly Disagree	12	12
Total	100	100%

**Table 10: Nigerian leaders, past and present, have been doing the right thing towards infrastructure systems development**

Strongly Agree	26	26
Agree	4	4
Neutral	26	26

Disagree	32	32
Strongly Disagree	20	20
Total	100	100%

**Table 11: leaders in Nigeria, in various capacities, are competent professionals who are capable of producing world class infrastructure for its citizens.**

Strongly Agree	20	20
Agree	28	28
Neutral	26	26
Disagree	22	22
Strongly Disagree	4	4
Total	100	100%

**Table 12: Nigerian leaders have the required skills to plan, execute and maintain infrastructure systems in the nations in the nation, which can be compared to global standard.**

Strongly Agree	22	22
Agree	40	40
Neutral	22	22
Disagree	12	12
Strongly Disagree	4	4
Total	100	100%

**Table 13: the educational system should be geared towards mental development than focusing more on certification.**

Strongly Agree	52	52
Agree	24	24
Neutral	18	18
Disagree	24	24
Strongly Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100%

**Table 14: the present educational system in is capable of producing world class professionals and managers.**

Strongly Agree	24	24
Agree	24	24
Neutral	18	18
Disagree	24	24
Strongly Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100%

**Table 15: the Nigeria educational policies must be strictly implemented with the intention of turning out quality manpower, not just awarding certificates.**

Strongly Agree	54	54
Agree	34	34
Neutral	6	6
Disagree	4	4
Strongly Disagree	2	2
Total	100	100%

**Table 16: In the next fifty years, 2068, Nigeria will have a world class infrastructure.**

Strongly Agree	12	12
Agree	28	28
Neutral	44	44
Disagree	12	12
Strongly Disagree	4	4
Total	100	100%

**Table 17: the Nigeria infrastructure systems can be fixed by Nigerians, if developed and trained**

Strongly Agree	52	52
Agree	26	26
Neutral	12	12
Disagree	12	12
Strongly Disagree	Nil	Nil
Total	100	100%

## **V. Data Analysis and Findings**

Research Question 1: *Do the African leaders and professionals have the required skills to plan, execute and maintain the infrastructure system in the continent?*

This research question has been spread into three, which form the first three questions on the questionnaire section B. 28 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that Nigeria has a world class infrastructure system while 24 percent disagree. This could have been due to the fact that many of them have not seen an advance society to compare with Nigerian infrastructure. However, 68 percent strongly agree that the infrastructure systems need holistic fixing. 44 percent agree that lack substance requiring rigorous mental task, Table 7.

Research Question 2. *Is the present educational system in Africa capable of producing world class professionals with the abilities of building a cutting-edge infrastructure?* Why 24 percent of the respondents strongly agree with this statement, 24 percent agrees and 24 disagree. The issue is highly debatable.

Research Question 3. *With the situation of things at the moment, can Africa fix her poor infrastructure system in the next 50 years (until 2068)?* 44 percent of the respondents remain neutral on this question. 28 percent agrees while 12 percent strongly agreed.

Research Question 4, *Are African the present leaders doing the right thing to provide a world-class infrastructure?* 32 percent of the responds disagree with this statement, 28 percent were neutral, while 20 percent strongly agree

## **VI. Recommendation**

In the course of our study, the following recommendations were found necessary:

1. Why most of the respondents agree that we lacked standard infrastructure systems and need to be fixed, we ought to find a right way of developing our human resources from infancy till adulthood. Socrates' model of leadership development may seem too extreme, yet it is working for the United States people as they adopt a similar pattern of developing its citizens. The United States government invest a lot in the educational system where art, liberal commercial and science subjects are taught in detail from the basic school to the zenith of the academic structure. Same seriousness must be adopted in our educational system if we must succeed.

2. The educational system in Nigeria and the rest of black African nations must take a more radical approach by inculcating an all-inclusive learning mode and methods suitable for the native people. By this we mean the local languages must be properly developed and made a means of teaching other subjects like geography, biology, mathematics etc., this will encourage the students to have more insight the filed they are studying since they have a deeper understanding of the terms in their mother-tongue. It will help them to improve their study skills and relate terms to their local settings. It should be noted that other European non-English speaking countries like Germany, France, Sweden, Italy etc., learn in their local languages and look inward whenever they are finding solution to a societal issue.

3. Our public and private system must learn to see their staff as invaluable asset that need constant upgrade in terms of training, motivation and protection. Governments and the organizational leaders must continue to invest in human (employee) training and improved welfare to make them better suitable for any task that confronts them in the course of delivering their duties just as Anyanwu (2008) had suggested.

4. Going by the Erik Erickson theory of development, every stage of the human requires training, this must be a mantra for every employer of labour across our society.

5. For these recommendations to make impact, the leaders and government agents must fight corruption with all earnestness and rid our society of bad of foul practices like prejudice, tribalism, favouritism. People must learn to appreciate real skill and talent regardless of the differences among us. When meritocracy is practiced, competent managers and leaders will run the society fairly and that will bring about true development.

6. Contribution from the Ivory Tower must be seek and taken seriously by the authorities. It is a shame that our intellectuals like the university professors and academic researchers are not consulted by the government when making important decision. If the well invested in, the ivory tower is the first place the policy makers of our society should turn to for clarification and factual support before making key decision. But our leaders won't do that. William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' made it clear that a society lost it course when it seized to have the input from the intellectuals. Example is taken from the book's character 'Piggy', symbolizing the ivory tower made important observation which benefited the lost children until he was murdered by the leaders of the scout (symbolizing the military) then things deteriorated into chaos and wanton killings.

## VII. Conclusion

The study revealed that the crux of our national and racial underdevelopment is the lack of trained man power to efficiently and effectively manage our country. In spite the abundance of natural resources and favourable weather, Nigeria and black Africa are largely leaving in penury and unable to fix our problem for decades due to incompetence by the people in helms of things. We have arrived at this submission as supported by the findings outlined in this study, and hereby call on all and sundry to focus attention our people.

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