

Individual Development as the bedrock of National Development

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Abstract

Many governments of nations, and the leadership of many other human societies and organizations, often claim to aspire towards the development of their nations, societies and organizations, as the case may be. However, it is easy for any seeker of development to seek infrastructural development as the crux of development. Using the hermeneutics method, this work argues that for any other form of development to be achieved, especially national development, emphasis must be placed on individual development. The thesis of the work is that the nucleus of national development is individual development. It is part of the conclusion of the work that all leaders and all well-meaning citizens of nations and societies must aspire towards achieving individual development, in order to achieve national development.

Introduction

Individual development is the bedrock of national development. If the individuals that constitute a nation are not developed, such a nation would achieve little or no development. It is analogous to a machine which parts are faulty. Obviously, the overall functioning of the machine would be hampered. It is interesting to note that the impact of any faulty part of a machine on the entire functioning of the machine depends on the role played by that faulty part of the machine in the entire system. In other words, if a part of a machine which is not actually vital to the overall functioning of the machine develops a fault, the -functioning of the machine would not be as hampered as would be the case if a vital part were affected.

The foregoing analogy is also applicable to the development of a nation. The extent to which the undeveloped nature of an individual can affect a nation depends on the degree of importance of, or the position occupied by, such an individual in the nation. This means that if an individual who has little development occupies a top leadership position in a nation, the development of such a nation will be grossly hindered. On the other hand, if a properly

developed individual occupies a top leadership position in a nation, his presence in such a position will be a great impetus to the development of the nation. This implies that the greater the number of developed individuals in a nation and the more vital the positions of leadership occupied by such persons, the greater the level of national development that would be experienced therein.

Individual Development as the Bedrock of National Development

Development is defined as the growth or formation of something over a period of time. Consequently, national development can simply be defined as the growth of a nation over a period of time. Usually the level of national development is assessed by the level of industrialization which a nation has attained. A nation's level of industrialization translates to how poor or rich the nation is. Hence, the poorer and less industrialized nations or countries of the world are regarded as developing nations or countries. The developed nations are so-called owing to the high level of industrialization which they have achieved due to advancement in science and technology. Industrialization is the process of developing industries in a country or an area. In other words, if a country or an area is industrialized or if it industrializes, industries are developed there. A particular industry consists of all the people and the processes that are involved in manufacturing, producing or commercializing a particular thing. In other words, an industry is made up of the people and activities involved in producing a particular thing or in providing a particular service. Examples include the oil industry, the tobacco industry, the steel industry, the textile industry and the tourist industry. However, industry, in a general sense refers to the work and processes involved in producing things, especially in factories. A factory is a large building or group of buildings where machines are used to make large quantities of goods.

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that industrialization is, basically, about the economic life of a nation. All economic activities in a nation hover around it. When a nation's industry functions properly, economic and infrastructural development can result. In a strict sense, all nations can claim to be industrialized, the differences lie in the degrees of industrialization. The Western nations are regarded as the First World because of their high level of industrialization, enhanced by advanced science and technology. The implication is that industrial development and technological development immensely influence economic development. Economic development can lead to development in many other spheres of a nation's life. In fact, the importance of economic development cannot be overemphasized.

Political development is also very important in the life of a nation because there must be socio-political order for progress to exist in anything. For there to be order, there must be an agent of order, what St. Thomas Aquinas referred to as the 'efficient cause' of order. The agent of order in a nation is the government in power. Therefore, technological development, industrial development and economic development, all rest on political development. Politics is the actions or activities involved in getting and using power in a country, society or organization. Invariably, politics involves individuals. In every political environment, two major groups exist: the leadership and the followership. Both consist of individuals. Leadership and followership exist in national politics, industrial politics, factory politics, family politics, etc. In all the cases, it is individuals that are involved. In fact, politics is a natural human game. There is no human society without some form of politics. Suffice it to say that humans cannot not live in a political society. In other words, a human being must live in a political society. This was why Aristotle (the Ancient Greek philosopher) said that "man is by nature a political animal." By this, he meant that humans are by nature, intended to live in a political society (and not that man is a

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politician by nature). In the final analysis, the politics in a nation moves in the direction that it is swayed by the individuals in that nation. If most of the citizens of a nation lack individual development, it will be very difficult for such a nation to achieve accelerated national development. But if, on the other hand, most of the citizens of a nation have individual development, that nation will experience accelerated national development. In other words, the rate of national development depends on the level of individual development in a nation. This is reminiscent of the view of the sophist philosopher, Protagoras of Abdera, that "man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are, of those that are not that they are not" (D'Entrevés, 1970). Consequently, the primary aspect of development in any nation is individual development, i.e the development of the human person. All sectors of every nation consist of individual human beings. If the individuals that constitute any sector are not developed; there cannot be development in such a sector. The same applies to the nation at large. If most of the individuals that constitute a nation lack development, there is no how such a nation can get developed. Such a nation will keep being regarded as developing but never as developed. This is the situation in most African Countries. Comparatively few individuals in most African nations are developed. Unfortunately, most of these few developed individuals are not in positions of leadership, owing to the nature of political practice in most African nations. The same problem exists in the make-up of the followership. Only few of the individuals amongst the followership are developed. So the problem in Africa is not just that of leadership; it is rather a problem of lack of development by most individuals in Africa.

The implication is that these nations will continue to experience retarded national development until such a time when a good number of developed individuals find themselves into strategic leadership positions in the nations. The point here, therefore, is that individual development is the bedrock of national development. In other words, it is the nature of man that determines the nature of society. Socrates, the classical Greek philosopher, must have had this in mind when he admonished, "man, know thyself".

If we hearken to this Socratic injunction, we may then ask: what does it mean for an individual to be developed? Put differently, what constitutes individual development? Individual development entails intellectual development and, more importantly, moral development. It is through education that an individual can acquire intellectual and moral development. That explains why University degrees are usually said to be conferred on the basis of worthiness in character and in learning. As such, Education is indispensable in national development. Any nation that neglects its education sector or the education of its citizens refuses, 'ipso facto' to develop. Through education, special skills in different subjects are learnt. This acquaints the individuals with adequate skills with which to practice in the areas of training and specialisation.

However, a more important aspect of individual development is character development, that is moral development. Moral development is the crux of development. All other forms of development revolve around it. Without moral development, intellectual development becomes virtually useless. That is why a nation can have a lot of people who are intellectually educated, and yet, no serious headway is being made towards national development. Intellectual or academic knowledge alone does not constitute individual development; the moral dimension is not only relevant but also necessary. Without moral development, there cannot be individual development; and without individual development; there cannot be national development. Moral development is the right route to civilization. This was why Temples (1959: 172) asked the rhetorical question: "Is not civilization, above all else, progress in human personality?" Albert Schweitzer (1961 :76) also stated that "the prosperity of a society depends on the moral disposition of its members" This is so because the extent to which such things as moral laxity,

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bribery and corruption, selfishness, disregard for public good, embezzlement of public funds, lack of a sense of social responsibility and truancy in duty prevail in any nation, to that extent will national development be retarded. But when the individuals of a nation live up to high moral standards and eschew all forms of corruption, abuse of office, nepotism, traditionalist separatism, and negligence of duty and social responsibility; national development will not only be achieved but will also be accelerated. This is why individual development is said to be the bedrock of national development.

Apart from the more important moral dimension, part of the way to achieve individual development is by working on our psyche to improve our living. Many a times, we think ourselves down by focusing on our weaknesses and failures. This is one way of making ourselves always unhappy and unsatisfied with ourselves. We should rather develop a positive attitude to life. This does not mean we should neglect our weaknesses and failures. No, that would mean to jump to the other extreme. By thinking ourselves down, we bring our spirit down and make ourselves unhappy. But rather we should decide to make ourselves happy and have a better spirit to function with. Yes, we can really choose to be happy. Addressing a related issue, Mildred Newman et al (1977) posited:

...you have to make a very basic decision: do you want to lift yourself up or put yourself down? Are you for yourself or against yourself? That may seem like a strange question, but many people are literally their own worst enemy. If you decide you want to help yourself, you can choose to do the things that make you feel good about yourself instead of the things that make you feel terrible. Why should you do what gives you pain when it is just as easy to give yourself joy? That is an important question for you to ask yourself.

Conclusion

When national development is achieved, the benefits therefore will fall back on the individuals of such a nation. This means that individuals are both the producers and consumers of national development. If all nations achieve national development, there will be global or universal development. This was why Spinoza, in Copleston (1964 : 247), subsumed all things in the universe into one infinite, eternal and divine substance which he referred to as God or Nature. In Spinoza's view, God and Nature are two different names for the same reality. All finite things are modifications of God and they are parts of him. God himself is *Natura Naturans* (the naturing nature) while all creatures are *Natura Naturata* (the natured nature). Both constitute one eternal, infinite and indivisible reality. Hegel, the German idealist philosopher, in his postulation of the 'Absolute Spirit' shares this view of a wholistic perception of the entirety of the universe (Hegel, 1953).

The question that comes to mind at this point is: if we know that our individual actions - good or bad - still fall back on the entire nation or human society, to which we all belong, why do men often fall short of expectation in the struggle to build the wholistic entity? It is ignorance. No wonder, the philosopher, Plato, just like Socrates, equated knowledge with 'virtue and vice with ignorance. According to him, it is ignorance that makes people commit evil. In other words, ignorance is the cause of wrongdoing, for no man really does evil knowingly (Armstrong, 1965). What Plato seems to mean is that if a person were fully aware of the consequences of an evil action to the present and future society, he would refrain from it. In summary, all individuals must aspire towards individual development in order to become veritable instruments for national development. Man is a moral being and should live in accordance with his moral nature. It was Jean-Paul Sartre who once described man as 'a being who is not what he is and who is what he is not ...' (Sartre, 1956). But there must be a retreat. Man should be what he is and be

not what he is not. The process of this change is self-re-examination. It was Socrates who said that the unexamined life is not worth living (Copleston, 1964).

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