

**THE ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:  
A GOOD GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Nigeria is abundantly endowed with both Human and natural resources that can be carefully combined or harnessed and judiciously utilised to spur development. In terms of development the Nigerian state is yet to occupy her rightful position among the comity of states. One of the reasons responsible for Nigeria's stagnation in terms of development is bad governance. The kernel of this paper rests in the fact that good governance and sustainable development are not "strange bed fellows" and it is against this background that the authors theoretically investigate the necessity of good governance in Nigeria and its implication on sustainable development. Deploying secondary sources and employing descriptive narrative approach in analysing the subject matter, the paper recommends the need for leadership that is people oriented, one that will make the country to develop and meet the advanced countries and equally sustain that development.

**Keywords:** Development, Corruption, Good Governance, Sustainable Development, Underdevelopment

## INTRODUCTION

The attainment of *sustainable development* is the desirability of all countries, whether by their own volition or as made so by the world bodies like United Nations. As such, most, States are now championing its course. The efforts for the attainment of this desirable level of sustainable development have brought with it a different set of issues, different from those which necessitated its evolution in the first place. These spans from the question of its scope through to whose responsibility it is to the actualization of sustainable development (SD) to the means by which it could be attained. In terms of its scope, the consensus seems to be that it is broad with its coverage from economic, social, political, environmental, and ecological systems to local, national, international, and global concerns and participation. With regards to whose responsibility, it is believed to be the responsibility of all – individuals and groups.

Equally, the methods or means of attaining SD seem broad. Some see its attainment squarely from the economic perspective by considering and advocating for: a present mode of economic growth/development that will save resources to attain in the future similar or better forms of economic growth/development; the kind of competition that will not widen inequality-gap between individuals and between countries so as to put less pressure on the exploration and exploitation of the world's resources; among others. Others (such as Mulder, Reschke and Kemp, 1999) view its attainment from the technological angle. To these, the development (i.e., invention and innovation) of 'safe' technologies required for production, distribution and even consumption that will not impact negatively on the environment will be the plank on which the world will get to this desired goal. This is where the concerns about the depleting Ozone-layer by emission of harmful gases and the pollution of lands, air and water bodies from industrial and other activities feature prominently.

Many other means, like those which view it from the environmental and ecological preservation approach (see Oyeshola, 2008), are equally advanced or suggested and give all emphases they require. However, the political means, though mentioned at some instances, is not yet considered a potent means through which SD could be achieved, or at least not given the emphasis it requires. It is probably been considered passive. This line of thought is probably in line with the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development (chaired by the then Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs Brundtland, and known as Brundtland Commission, which published the report 'Our Common Future' in 1987) and the subsequent UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (commonly known as the Rio Earth Summit) which emphasize more on environmental, social and economic issues. Or probably because to the advanced nations promoting SD the political issues of governance is not much a concern.

To the developing African States, the political factor is still of great concern and determines all other factors. As such, as Wharton (1976) (cited in Onuchego, 1998, p. 61) contended:

When I look at the key world development issues – food-policy, distributive justice, resource 'wars' – over the next 25 years, I have concluded that most solutions will be rooted in the ability of the political processes, both national and international, to deal with them effectively. And remember that if political process fails to deal with these basic human issues of hunger, and survival, the inevitable alternatives will be grown interpersonal violence, domestic upheaval and wars.

These words point to the fact that development (of whatever form) is much dependent on what happens in the political front, both national and international, and most especially in the developing worlds of Africa with relatively large public sectors. For instance, the poor performance of the economy, resulting into inequality, all forms of starvation and poverty, disease outbreaks, etc, in some African States like Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, etc, with Nigeria inclusive, is linked to the political problem of poor governance (i.e bad leadership) in these countries. The socio-political unrests in these States (however over-blown by the international community or concealed by the governments of these States) are also deeply rooted in the problem of governance. These turbulences in the African States, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) (2011) observed, are clear indication that African populations now have higher expectations that government leaders act in a more democratic and accountable manner.

Driving the point home, when Nigeria gained independence on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960 (after about 100 years of British dominance of our economic and political affairs) power, control and authority were transferred (whether wholly or partly) and are now in the hands of Nigerians to stir economic, political and social affairs of the country so as to bring the desired development to the people. Since then, Nigerians have been full of expectations of the benefits of self-governance – benefits which before now were hitherto merely about development and not so much as to whether it is sustainable or not. However, not much of a success story can be told as how our independence has brought or is any close to bringing the long awaited development, and now not just development but sustainable development.

What, however, has remained clear is that, this delayed benefits of self-rule is not due to the absolute lack of all resources. The country is rich in both human and natural resources; in fact, rich as to achieve SD with relatively easy if these resources are properly harnessed and judiciously utilized to the optimal benefit of most Nigerians. What the country seems to lack is good governance – with which the harnessing and utilization of other resources can be made possible (Achebe, 1983; Azeez, 2009; Jato, 2013).

We do feel that good governance, the political means to achieving SD, still remains the necessary road that must be taken. Our objective is therefore to clearly show the relationship between good governance and the attainment of SD in Nigeria. That is to buttress the role of good governance if SD must be achieved in Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper is divided into seven sections. The first is the introduction which is ongoing, section two presents conceptual clarification, part three treats the theoretical perspective on good governance and sustainable development, the fourth section dwells on the indicators of sustainable development, the fifth part emphasis the nexus between good governance and sustainable development, section six looks at the case for good governance in Nigeria and the final section is the conclusion.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The concept of sustainable development, according to Kemp, Parto and Gibson (2005), arose from two main sources: increasingly worrisome evidence of ecological degradation and other biophysical damage; and the largely disappointing record of post-WWII ‘development’ efforts, particularly the persistence, and in some places worsening, of poverty and

desperation in a period of huge overall global increases in material wealth. This is said to have propelled the United Nations and other similar agencies like the World Bank into forming commissions that finally brought about the SD concept.

As such, from the emergence of the concept, there is no much gain seeking to define it in somewhat a different manner, but rather to see it as another broader form of development or its objective. It is, therefore, related to the concept of ‘development’ which has been increasing in dimension and horizon producing other concepts like ‘industrial development’, ‘human development’, etc., and now ‘sustainable development’. This has made a common definition of *development* itself difficult; to which it is seen to be interdisciplinary and of universal applications, and an all-embracing concept. Aziz (1978) in Jike (2005) points out that “there is as no consensus, intellectually or conceptually, on all the objectives of development. It is perhaps commonly accepted now that the first objective of development should be to meet every one’s basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, education, sanitation, clean drinking water and some public transport) but beyond these, the consensus breaks down.” Noting its multidimensional coverage, Todaro (1977) stated that “development should be perceived as a multidimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system.” He added that in addition to improvements in income and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures, as well as in popular attitudes and sometimes even customs and beliefs. In a similar way, Aboyade (2003) noted that in the past, development was narrowly conceived as little more than increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but that this days, emphasis is placed on the content of the GDP, as well as on other dimensions of the quality of life encompassing such social indicators as infant mortality, shifts in social status, nutrition, literacy and education, decrease in fertility, housing, water supply, employment opportunity, life expectancy, and so on.

From these, development now is said to emphasize people as the object of attention. As such, whatever form of development, this qualitative concept is now people’s welfare centered. It cannot be argued otherwise that it is these renewed perceptions of *development* that have given rise to the ‘new’ concept of *sustainable development*, which Estes (1993) see it as the unifying concept for worldwide development activities. It is variedly defined. The Brundtland Commission, in Kates, Parris, and Leiserowitz (2005) and Post (1997), referred to it as the “ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need”. That is a development that has as its basic target, the exploration and exploitation of a society’s resource to meet its present human needs while sustaining such development so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The use of this definition has led many to see sustainable development as having a major focus on intergenerational equity.

Agreeing with Oyeshola (2008), our perception is that, any development that will be deemed sustainable in Nigeria, and other developing nations, should:

- i. Increase real income of the poor and be able to eradicate poverty in the lung-run;
- ii. Improve the health and nutritional status of all, especially children, young mothers and the vulnerable;
- iii. Bring educational achievement;
- iv. Increase access to resources;
- v. Enhance equitable distribution of income;

- vi. Increase basic freedom and guarantee security of all citizens; and
- vii. Protection of the environment.

## **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

*Good governance* is a derived concept from that of *governance*. As such, good governance can only be properly conceptualized and understood if first we understand the concept of governance. Governance, according to Arisi and Ukadike (2011), is as old as human civilization and only became a popular concept in the 1990s due to donor activities. Like most concepts, Doornbos (2003) in Punyaratabandhu (2004), points out that there has hardly been a consensus as to core meaning of governance, how it could be applied more concretely. Punyaratabandhu (2004) had also noted that, “the term does not possess a standard meaning. Nor has its meaning remained constant in the decade or so of its being accorded a central place in donor frameworks for development”. This has given rise to a variety of definitions which, however, differ minimally in content and scope. For instance, according to Iwokwagh (2002) “governance is the art of exercising authority, or control in a political system through policy formulation and implementation”. Schneider (1999), as cited in Punyaratabandhu (2004), sees governance as “the exercise of authority and control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development”. Governance has been described as an approach or perspective that focuses on state, societal institutions and the relationship between them as well as on how rules are made in a society which are accepted as legitimate to enhance values that are sought by individuals and groups within the society (Arisi and Ukadike, 2011). It is generally referred to as the means for achieving directions, control and coordination of wholly or partially autonomous individuals or organizations on behalf of interests to which they jointly contribute (Azeez, 2009).

Other variant of definitions, descriptions and explanations of *governance* can be seen in Abdellatif, (2003), Gisselquist (2012), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (1999), Kabumba (2005), Kemp, Parto and Gibson (2005), Ndue (2005), Ogundiya (2010), and United Nations (UN) (2006).

Good governance can thus be seen as a qualitative term for governance, which in the words of Healey and Robinson (1994), as cited by Azeez (2009), implies “a high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy formulation and the policies actually pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and public welfare”. According to the European Commission, good governance consists of openness and participation, accountability, effective coherence, efficiency (proportionality) and greater sensitivity to the immediate context that is promised by subsidiary (Kemp, et al., 2005). More attempts to institutionalize and operationalise it can equally be found in the works of Abdellatif, (2003), Anger (2010), Gisselquist (2012), IFAD (1999), Kabumba (2005), Ndue (2005), Ogundiya (2010), and United Nations (UN) (2006).

Implied from these is the recognition that: 1) there is an existing authority vested with the responsibility to explore, exploit and utilise the means of survival in a given political system; 2) direct and control same activities performed by the citizens within that system; and 3) the maintenance of healthy co-existence with the aim to make living in the system meaningful.

Governance in this form is, therefore, leadership backed by state power and authority, where the leaders (or the governors) act via the formulation and implementation of State policies for the maintenance of life and integrity of the citizens (the governed), that of the state, and for the continued existence of both the citizens and the State. Implying further that, what happens to the existence of the citizens and the State depends greatly on the kind of government and the form of governance the State has in place. Meaning that, a system with the governed-centered policies provides the best form of governance.

Stating the qualities of good governance, Anger (2010) listed the following:

- i. Responsibility and responsiveness in public service;
- ii. Accountability and transparency in the mobilization and utilization of resources;
- iii. Discipline, effectiveness and efficiency in handling public (as well as personal) affairs;
- iv. Selflessness and impartial services to the people; and
- v. Population participation and involvement of the people in the conduct and management of their affairs.

It then follows, from its conceptualization, that good governance describes the system of governance that has as its cardinal objective the interest of the citizenry and acts in a way as to achieve that. It is a form of governance with a set of governors who, above their individual interest, have the interest of the State and are driven by such to formulate policies, direct such policies to right target group, back policies with action and evaluate the successes of such policies for even more better policies to follow.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Governance is an act of the State performed by the governors (or leaders). Perceived this way the leader is seen to have some constitutional powers and authority to command things to happen. Acting for the State, he/she is held synonymous with the State and the political system in which he/she acts. This, for instance, is dignity accorded the position of the president of a country and that of a diplomat in another State. Leaders of this nature, as such, can influence whatever form of development via the political tool of policy formulation and execution. And by these, the State is seen to bring development to its people.

This State's role (through the governors) in development started gaining support right from the earlier thinkers. For instance, the mercantilist philosophers saw a relationship between strong state-powers and economic growth in terms of specie (i.e. gold and silvers) inflow. Thus they saw the need and advocated for State intervention in economic activities to increase the wealth of the people and that of the State. A strong State was also to defend her citizen from external attacks.

The classicists, led by Adam Smith, however, saw things in a different perspective and called for less government direct intervention in economic activities but maintained that State should provide an enabling environment for people to seek their self-development through the invisible' hands of demand and supply. Hence, these thinkers still saw the need for a well-governed State that will protect the people, provide the means of exchange maintain law and order, etc, for development to take place.

Coming after the classical thinkers, Keynes J.M saw the need for active involvement of the State in economic matters of development by not only maintaining an enabling environment for economic actors but should also be an actor in the field of productive economic activities.

There have then been different views as regards the relationship between the role of a State and development of the State and its people. This role of the State is seen not only in terms of the relevance of the state-apparatus, but greatly in the usage of such apparatus by those in authority. The structuralist school of thought, of late 1960s to early 1970s, in this light views development (and underdevelopment) in terms of institutional and structural changes within the nation and even at an international sphere. It emphasized the impact of both external and internal institutional constraints on development of a nation. In this wise, Jhingan (1997) contends that, it is now universally recognized that in order to overcome the rigidities inherent in a less developed country (LDC) the state must play a positive role. Jhingan (1997) stressed further that, “breaking social chasms and creating psychological, ideological, social and political situation propitious to economic development becomes the paramount duty of the state in such countries.”

## **INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

As Spangenberg (2005) rightly pointed out:

Every society can be described as comprising four dimensions, the economic, social, environmental and institutional. Each of them is a complex, dynamic, self-organising and evolving entity in its own right, making the coupled system one of tremendous complexity. For this system to be sustainable, each of the four subsystems has to maintain its capability to survive and evolve, while the interlinkages of the subsystems must enable a permanent co-evolution.

As such, the indices with which to measure SD may vary from country to country based on the systems in these countries. It is in recognition of this that the United Nations (2009), therefore, suggested that countries at the national level and international governmental and non-governmental organizations at the international level should develop the concept of indicators of sustainable development in order to identify such indicators.

However, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has identified a framework of the indicators (see table 1) from which countries are to key-in in the formulation of theirs. These indicators generally dwell on *what is to be sustained*, *what is to be developed* and *what indicates the level of development*.

**Table 1: Indicators of Sustainable Development**

<b>SOCIAL</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Equity	Poverty	Percent of Population Living below Poverty Line
		Gini Index of Income Inequality
		Unemployment Rate
	Gender Equality	Ratio of Average Female Wage to Male Wage
Health	Nutritional Status	Nutritional Status of Children
	Mortality	Mortality Rate Under 5 Years Old
		Life Expectancy at Birth
	Sanitation	Percent of Population with Adequate Sewage Disposal Facilities
	Drinking Water	Population with Access to Safe Drinking Water
	Healthcare Delivery	Percent of Population with Access to Primary Health Care Facilities
		Immunization Against Infectious Childhood Diseases
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate		
Education	Education Level	Children Reaching Grade 5 of Primary Education
		Adult Secondary Education Achievement Level
	Literacy	Adult Literacy Rate
Housing	Living Conditions	Floor Area per Person
Security	Crime	Number of Recorded Crimes per 100,000 Population
Population	Population Change	Population Growth Rate
		Population of Urban Formal and Informal Settlements
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Atmosphere	Climate Change	Emissions of Greenhouse Gases
	Ozone Layer Depletion	Consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances
	Air Quality	Ambient Concentration of Air Pollutants in Urban Areas
Land	Agriculture	Arable and Permanent Crop Land Area
		Use of Fertilizers
		Use of Agricultural Pesticides
	Forests	Forest Area as a Percent of Land Area
		Wood Harvesting Intensity
	Desertification	Land Affected by Desertification
Urbanization	Area of Urban Formal and Informal Settlements	
Oceans, Seas and Coasts	Coastal Zone	Algae Concentration in Coastal Waters
		Percent of Total Population Living in Coastal Areas
	Fisheries	Annual Catch by Major Species
Fresh Water	Water Quantity	Annual Withdrawal of Ground and Surface Water as a Percent of Total Available Water
		Water Quality
		Concentration of Faecal Coliform in Freshwater
Biodiversity	Ecosystem	Area of Selected Key Ecosystems
		Protected Area as a % of Total Area
	Species	Abundance of Selected Key Species



<b>ECONOMIC</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Economic Structure	Economic Performance	GDP per Capita
		Investment Share in GDP
	Trade	Balance of Trade in Goods and Services
	Financial Status	Debt to GNP Ratio
		Total ODA Given or Received as a Percent of GNP
Consumption and Production Patterns	Material Consumption	Intensity of Material Use
	Energy Use	Annual Energy Consumption per Capita
		Share of Consumption of Renewable Energy Resources
		Intensity of Energy Use
	Waste Generation and Management	Generation of Industrial and Municipal Solid Waste
		Generation of Hazardous Waste
		Management of Radioactive Waste
		Waste Recycling and Reuse
Transportation	Distance Traveled per Capita by Mode of Transport	
<b>INSTITUTIONAL</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Institutional Framework	Strategic Implementation of SD	National Sustainable Development Strategy
	International Cooperation	Implementation of Ratified Global Agreements
Institutional Capacity	Information Access	Number of Internet Subscribers per 1000 Inhabitants
	Communication Infrastructure	Main Telephone Lines per 1000 Inhabitants
	Science and Technology	Expenditure on Research and Development as a Percent of GDP
	Disaster Preparedness and Response	Economic and Human Loss Due to Natural Disasters

*Source:* Adopted from Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as in UN 2007

It is this framework of indicators that the Nigerian government, like any other, is to adopt in the bid to attain sustainable development while trying to catch-up with advanced countries and be counted among the 20 most advanced countries by the year 2020. Whether or not our government has prioritized the SD agenda and has developed a set of workable indicators is entirely another thing but still has much to do with the kind of governance in place.

## THE NEXUS BETWEEN GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Much is expected from the good governance of a State. Good governance (Kemp, Parto and Gibson 2005) is the prerequisite step towards sustainability. Because a major portion of sustainable development is ultimately about radical changes in the systems of production, distribution and consumption, governance for sustainability is, by implication, about working through formal *and* informal institutions to bring about societal change.

The role of good governance in development started when man surrendered his *will* to a central authority to be ruled over. This instituted the Social Responsibility of the State or the Social Charter between the State and the citizens, which according to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, National Planning Commission (2004), refers to the contract between the individual and the government in which the government recognizes the individual's right and responsibilities with promise to deliver the basic necessities for a decent continuous human existence. The basic necessities in our context include portable water, food, clothing, shelter, adequate nutrition, basic education, primary healthcare, productive assets, security, and protection from shocks and risks. These basic necessities, which are increasing in number and broadening in scope as the society is becoming more complex and whose provision need to be adequate and sustained both in the present and future, make the indicators of SD. Thus, it is this social charter that has made governance, the plank on which a society can attain SD. And it is equally based on this charter that one can probe, at any point in time, the performance of the political system and its organs. By this, it is through good governance that the State identifies the needs of the citizens, prioritize such needs, harness available resource with which to meet such needs, distribute the resources among the needs, ensure judicious utilization of the resources, averts and/or mediate likely conflicts that may ensue from the acquisition an usage of the resources by citizens, etc. As such, good governance becomes the first and most important precondition and variable for the attainment of SD. That is, SD can be achieved by establishing good governance regimes that have reasonable coherence of vision and commitment, accountable, win the trust and support of followers, and have sufficient capacity for coordination, direction and re-direction of state affairs for the benefit of all or a greater majority of the citizenry.

Other than this social responsibility of the State to its citizens in the provision, maintenance and sustenance of the basic goods of live, a good governed State creates conducive environment for the interplay of the citizens in their pursuits of self-benefits. This is done through the enactment and enforcement of rules, laws and orders that regulate the actions of the citizens in their self-benefit seeking activities in order to avoid the negative impacts of such activities on others, the environment, and the State in entirety. It also entails formulation and implementation of policies that will propel and support the participation of all citizens, according to their abilities, in acts such as research, invention and innovation that are favorable to development.

According to Estes (1993), the concept of SD has succeeded, remarkably, in animating governmental leaders, development policy makers and others to enter into formal agreements that seek to both promote socioeconomic development and protect the environment. The Post (1997), therefore, had it that, whatever the exact definition, there is a need at policy level to translate the general wording of SD into specific targets. This cannot be achieved through the economic approach alone. The

drift from the classical market economic tenets to the Keynesian creed which emphasizes the role of the State points clearly to this fact. It is certainly not technology, which heightened competition among States and individuals resulting to the aggressive exploration, exploitation and utilization of the worlds scarce, in most instances unreplenishable, resources. For any SD from this might create further problems. According to the Post (1997), technology is both part of the problem and part of the solution, noting that most studies show that the solution is not technological, but required many social and institutional barriers to be overcome.

It is the State, through its political institution of good governance that can harmonize the different competing subsystems (such as the economy and environment) in the mega system that will lead to the attainment of SD. Good governance thus constitutes the non-quantitative variable in SD, which is most times neglected especially by economists and other promoters of SD. As Todaro (1977) had pointed out: “just as economists sometimes make the mistake of confusing their ‘science’ with universal practices, so they do also often mistakenly dismiss these non-economic variables as non-quantifiable and, therefore of dubious importance”. As such, he posits that: “economic development strategies which seek to raise agricultural output, create employment and eradicate poverty have often failed in the past because economists and other policy makers neglect to view the economy as an interdependent social system where economic and non-economic variables are continually interacting, sometimes resulting in self-reinforcement and at other times in central economic problems and at other times in contradictory ways.” The sphere of governance in bringing SD is, therefore, very vast and all pervading. It includes, but not limited to: maintaining public services; influencing attitudes; shaping economic, social, and political institutions; influencing the use of resources; influencing the distribution of income and other resources; protection of lives and properties; maintenance of law and order; controlling economic activities; ensuring full employments and ensuring the continued existence of the sovereignty of the State. These provide the prerequisites necessary for a meaningful development in the society and that which can be sustainable.

Arthur Lewis (1955), in Ayida (1987), had contended about the relevance of good governance in the development of a society saying: “If a community is fortunate to have a good leader born at a crucial time in its history, who catches the imagination of his people and guides them through a formative experience, he will create traditions and legends and standards which weave themselves into the thinking of his people and govern their behaviour through many centuries...” Therefore, it is now, as opposed to the primitive society, an inherent primary obligation of any leader (whether civilian, military, democrat, socialist, capitalist, etc) to provide favourable conditions under which the citizenry gets the best of life. This implies that governance is the best means to meet the needs of the society and bring about the desired SD. However, Aboyade (2003) argued that, it has not yet been demonstrated empirically that governments always and necessarily achieve better developmental results than non-governments. This notion does not in any way suggest any comparison between an ungoverned society and a governed one. A well governed society makes it conducive for the government organs to function well as well as the non-governmental bodies. The burden then still rest on the shoulders of the leaders who are vested with the responsibility of governance.

The leaders are expected to spread and harmonize the winds of development to all the governed. By this, they are to bridge the gaps between the different classes of the society — the poor and the rich. The importance of governance in the development of a nation has been felt and has placed nations at different levels of development in the global sphere. For instance, Todaro and Smith (2009) show that differences in governance in Pakistan and Bangladesh have resulted to differences in developmental levels between the two countries. It is then no doubt that the level of development of a state is blamed so much on the kind of leadership and the political structure in place.

Given its increasing significance, scope and urgency, for SD to be realized, therefore, there should first be in place the institution of good governance. This is to the simple fact that all the other means that have been advanced can only be applied effectively if there is in place the machinery of governance that will provide the kind of environment necessary for the application of such alternative means. Therefore, the other means for the actualization of SD are subsidiaries of the all encompassing broad means – good governance. A kind of governance as described in this paper. And added to those characteristics, good governance for sustainability will also contain certain key features and components. These, as identified by Kemp, et al (2005), are: 1) *Policy integration* – the coordination of government policies and the corresponding and complementary positions and initiatives of other governance actors; 2) *Common objectives, criteria, trade-off rules and indicators* – these are shared long-term objectives, common criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings, specified rules for making trade-offs and compromises, and widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability; 3) *Information and incentives for practical implementation* – Governance for sustainability also needs means of spurring and guiding appropriate action through the use of policy instruments such as tax reforms regulations, procurement, etc; and 4) *Programmes for system innovation* – this bothers on the longer-run period where sustainability requires transitions involving system innovation as opposed to obtaining sustainability benefits immediately through the use of currently available technologies.

## **THE CASE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

It is no small a blessing to a country that has a good form of governance. This is why many still hold to the opinion that Nigeria, though abundantly blessed with rich human and natural resources, is still backward because of the lack of good governance. For instance Achebe (1983) clearly voiced out that: “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to responsibility....” Akor (2001) equally made it clear that, “poor organizational co-ordination and the inability of administrative managers to adapt to the changing needs of Nigeria have led to very low performances.”

Nigeria, like any organized state, can enjoy the positive link that exists between a good form of governance and SD. The country has all it takes, but for good governors, to meet up with the developmental needs of its populace. However, since independence, Nigerians have waited and are still waiting for the dividends of their independence from colonial rule. But these hopes seemed dashed and far from been reality. According to Ajayi (2003), “the beautiful dream that many had and pursued in the interest of their country had turned into a nightmare. Nigeria, a country with rich human and natural resources,

is still poor and termed underdeveloped". This is an underdevelopment caused by a people vested with the responsibility to govern. It is to this that Onucheyo (1998) asserts that, the tragedy of underdevelopment is not that the ordinary people have remained poor or are becoming poor, but that they have been inhibited from developing as human by the elites who have taken over the right to develop society and by this very act and claim distorted the natural and profound notion of development. This is the situation with Nigerian governance. Governance is the hijacked by few Nigerians in elite circle. It is now a game of selecting political loyalists to top governance positions, which rather aggravate inequality, inflict worst poverty on the citizens and further plunge the country into underdevelopment through poor policy formulation or even no policies at all. The norms of governance which are found only on pages of papers have no meaning and are being relegated to the background.

NISERS (2003) contend that, two critical issues remain outstanding in the understanding of poverty in Nigeria. The first is the impact of good governance on socio-economic and political development. Stressing that, all the diseases that are fatal to the poor, none is lethal than poor governance as political and economic dictatorship frequently leads to poverty more than any other thing. The second is noted as the merit of consultation and of citizens' involvement in programmes for which they remain the target and beneficiaries. In the view of Akinkugbe (2003) as cited in Ajayi (2003), the four decades of Nigeria's political independence have witnessed a steady decline in values, quality of governance, commitment and the integrity of our environment. He argued further that our society has become negatively permissive and much passes for norm today that would have cause a raising of eyebrows in yonder years.

Obasanjo, the then President, in a press report (the Guardian, 2003 in Ajayi, 2003) stated that: "the problem with Nigeria is that since independence, when we move a step forward, moved sideways in another step, we then move backward three steps, as such we move further backward than we move forward." Going further, he contended that "our problem is like a water tap that has a closet. While some people are turning the tap for water to run, others are busy leaving the base of the closet open, thus making the filling of the closet an impossible task". These words clearly tell how bad governance in Nigeria has been. There is no need emphasizing corruption, mismanagement, sectionalizing, self-centeredness, and a host of other qualities of governance in Nigeria.

Many have, however, blamed this failure of governance on the military that intervened in the act of governance after six years of the country's independence and stayed in for about three to four decades, thereby not allowing the political class much time to learn on-the-job of governance. This military period is likened to a dark age in the sense of participatory development. To others, like Akor (2001) and Anger (2002), the problem is of colonial origin. According to Akor (2001, p. 116):

The colonial administrative structures in Nigeria were inherently geared towards the maintenance of law and order and the creation of an atmosphere conducive for the exploitation and repatriation of the Nigerian resources. More than two decades of Nigeria's political independence have left the critical elements of these colonial administrative structure unaltered. Recent piecemeal reforms notwithstanding, the post-colonial administrative structures have remained executive in character.

Anger (2002), bearing same view contended that, the colonial rulers in Nigeria socialized the Nigerian political leadership in an authoritarian form of governance by monopolizing economic and political powers in their own hands for their interest and of the foreigners.

Whatever the genesis and cause of Nigeria's poor governance problem, time and circumstances have warranted a positive change towards a good form of governance if the country really want to share in the SD agenda of bringing the desired development to the people and sustain same for future generations. In this wise, Ayida (1987) had earlier pointed out that, "in national economic planning, there can be no substitute for inadequate political leadership. Administrative leadership, however competent, cannot rise over the quality of its political leadership." Sharing in this believe, Akpakpan (2004) had this to say: "the struggle to develop the Nigerian economy and society must continue. But, in this new phase of the struggle, we will have to do many things differently. Two agencies will be critical to the success; they are the **government** and the **educational system**."

## CONCLUSION

We considered the increasing need by all countries to attain and maintain a sustainable level of development. We equally considered and made case for good governance as the machinery through which such development can be brought about in Nigeria. Looking at the Nigeria's past, we conclude that we are where we are primarily as a result of poor governance. A nation with abundant resources still wallows in poverty, backwardness and greatly underdeveloped only points to one thing – lack of focused leaders who will identify the needs of the people and go all out to meet such needs. We need a style of leadership that will harness all human and natural resources with the aim of making the citizen enjoy the fullness of being Nigerians and lead the country to a level of sustainable development. For the country to develop and equally make such development sustainable, much need to be done in order to reposition the institution of governance.

Therefore, in Nigeria, we are of the view other approaches of achieving SD may not yield meaningful results without repositioning the political institution of governance. It is with good governance that the country can formulate policies that will translate SD from mere words into achievable targets within specified time frame. We, therefore, recommend that all Nigerians, especially those vested with leadership roles, should be taught acts of good governance for a better reorientation and easy attainment of sustainable development. To this end, governance should be made part of the curricula at all levels of learning. Also, erring leaders should be punished to server as deterrent to others.

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