

## **The Role of Personal Values in the Quest for Socio-Economic Development in Africa**

Christopher Agulanna

Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

---

**Abstract:** The quest for development is universal. This is perhaps one of the most profound statements one could make in economic theory and analysis. The reason is that every nation seeks to advance from its present level to a higher. Conceptually, development is usually taken to connote the idea of an increase or progress or expansion for the better. However it is not unusual for people to conceive of development merely in terms of an increase in a nation's GDP or GNP levels. The idea here is that the quantum of a nation's material accumulation determines whether the people will be happy or not. Incidentally, it is in this sense that African states conceive of development. In the study, I argue that that this idea of development is tapered and short-ranged. The study proposes the human capability approach to development; this is an approach that recognizes the role of morality or personal values in socio-economic advancement. According to the approach, development can only said to be meaningful and full-orbed if it promotes human welfare. Development, the study avers is concerned with human interests and well-being. Put differently, people are the real goal of development. Similarly, development depends upon good governance and the existence of strong social institutions. In consonance with this type of argument, the study posits that Africa's quest for socio-economic advancement will only be actualized if African states are able to evolve solid social institutions and governmental structures that accord respect to the dignity and will of the people.

**Key words:** Personal values, Africa, socio-economic development, human welfare, good governance, meaningful

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this study, it argued that the cultivation of personal values and the civic virtue of morality are requisite conditions for social growth and economic development in Africa. I also argue that the primary objective of any development programme or agenda should be to improve people's welfare and advance human interests. This viewpoint I have adopted in the study is a counterpoise to the one which conceives of development merely in terms of growth in a nation's income or in terms of advances in technology and industrialization processes. This latter view is in my opinion, tapered and short ranged. As I show in the study in contemporary discourses on the matter this narrow view on development has largely been jettisoned if not completely discarded. But what do all these issues I have adumbrated above add up to? The answer to this question is simple and it is this: As African nations hanker after economic growth and advances in industrial and technological matters, care should be taken not to undermine the welfare of individuals who should be the prime locus of any development policy and the real wealth of their nations.

Having made foregoing remarks, I here restate a truth that is both self-evident and also difficult to confute or

invalidate. It is this truth: The quest for socio-economic advancement is universal to all nations of the world. This is perhaps one of the most profound statements in economic theory and analysis. Another is that the quest for development is not the pastime of only those nations that are considered backward economies or under-developed societies. On the contrary, even world famous economies such as those of Britain, the United States of America, Japan and other so-called other First World nations still hanker after growth and social advancement. What this shows suggested is the fact that the quest for social advancement or progress is universal to all socio-economic polities of the world. In the discussion that follows in the paper, I argue that the ideal of development will fail that that lays emphasis on material accumulation to the neglect of values of the moral life or the civic virtues of public spiritedness and human reasonableness.

**Values and development:** In pursuing the issues I have adumbrated above, I propose two questions that I believe are crucial to the discussions I undertake in the study. I pose the questions in the following ways: What are personal values? How do they impact on socio economic development? These questions are neither trivial nor trite. They are also not otiose or hackneyed. On

the contrary, what the questions suggest is that the moral element is vital to any form of development be it economic or socio-political. In making this point, I need to emphasize that part of the goal of morality apart from its helping provide us with rules for appropriate conduct is to enhance human dignity and integrity. Morality aims also to influence action and guide behaviour. In providing us with rules of conduct or behaviour, morality is also able to engender social order in the human social environment community. This submission about the role morality plays in promoting human social well-being leads me to three crucial points that this study makes. One is that development is values driven. The second point, following Amartya Sen, world renowned economist and 1998 Nobel Prize winner in Economic Science is to see development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (Sen, 1993).

The corollary to the above claim is to assert that the primary objective of economic development is to benefit people. Therefore, theories or ideas on development that try to obscure this basic truth are to be rejected as jejune and ineligible. The third point follows from the first and it is this: the moral element is essential to any form of social progress or economic development. The argument here is that economic progress and human well-being are not to be measured in terms of material accumulation only. This point about not measuring the worth of the human person by the amount of material wealth s/he possesses is one that had been made many years back by Nigerian thinker Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe. For Anyiam-Osigwe, the real worth of a person is determined by the concrete projects s/he evolves for the order and well-being of his or her community (Anyiam-Osigwe, 2005). Arguing in the same vein, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report asserts as follows:

The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth

The idea that human beings are the real end of all social activities is an age-long one. It is an idea found not only in the works of such early philosophers as Plato and Aristotle but also in the writings of the early leaders of quantification economics such as William Petty, Gregory King and Joseph Lagrange, etc. In a similar vein, a peek into the works of such leading political economists as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Robert Malthus, Karl Marx

and John Stuart Mill will show that the motivating factor in their intellectual enunciations was the concern for human well-being or welfare (UNDP, 1990). In classical antiquity for instance, Aristotle riled against the tendency to measure a society's achievement by such things as the quantum of its material wealth or income rather than by the promotion of citizens welfare. For him, material accumulation has an instrumental value: its importance lies in its being able to help us expand basic human capabilities, guarantee human rights and self-respect.

From the foregoing, it can be conveniently argued that development is about improving the people's quality of life. Put differently, development and human welfare are inextricably linked. Therefore, a society would be said to be on the path to development when the following obtains: there is improvement in the people's living standards, there is reduction of poverty among the populace and there is provision of better health and nutrition, greater freedom as well as more opportunity for citizens to advance their humanity. Expanding on this idea, the Human Development Report which I had earlier cited posits that people are the real wealth of a nation. The claim that real development is about human welfare and happiness finds support in Protagoras declaration that Man is the measure of all things. This statement made in the 5th century BC by Protagoras has been subject to different interpretations by scholars. One interpretation sees the statement as supporting the idea of ethical relativism the idea that there are no universal moral norms that have a binding force on all people. However, the interpretation I find germane is the one which states that it is through the conscious activities that they carry out that human beings give meaning to their existence.

So then, the quest for social development is an important one. However, it is worth mentioning here that development is a process that is ongoing and not a once for all affair. A nation stagnates when it stops developing. But as Anyiam-Osigwe (2005) would argue, development is usually encumbered or hindered when people do the wrong things or when they do the right things in the wrong ways. The importance of this statement can only be appreciated when it is juxtaposed against the background of Africa's quest for technological as well as socio-economic advancement. The only snag is that this quest very often been erroneously conceived in terms of monetized high income and an increase in a nation's per capital income.

The major problem with the emphasis on increased income or growth in GDP and GNP levels is that it very often fails to take into account the human dimension to development. In reality, the use of statistical aggregates as yardstick for measuring national income or growth will

only obfuscate the primary aim of development which is human well-being. It is for this reason that the study proposes a change from the statistical model of development to the human capability approach. The human capability approach is one canvassed by some economists such as Amartya Sen. According to this approach to development, social arrangements are to be judged for their meaningfulness or otherwise by the extent to which they promote human well-being or capabilities. The human capability model conceives of real development as a process by which societies expand the real freedoms that the people enjoy. In its famous declaration in this regard, the Human Development Report affirms as follows: People are the real wealth of a nation. The idea that human beings are the real end of all social activities was a recurring theme in the writings of such philosophical luminaries as Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and the contemporary American socio-political thinker John Rawls. In other words in the absence of concrete human individuals, the goal of development will be of no value or significance.

**The role of values in development:** Development to reiterate a point I made earlier is about human well-being or welfare. With due regard to the issue of economic development, advancement in the economic well-being of a society should, however not to be conceived merely as growth in people's material or monetary income. The income approach to development while not to be discarded as completely otiose or ineligible is however, limited because while addressing the poverty of income fails to address the poverty of human life. To capture this argument in a more succinct manner it can be said that the income approach is not holistic in its conception and so is not full-blown. In the social science and development literature, for example it is now a commonplace to employ the phrase sustainable development to describe the form of economic advancement that is said to be holistic and full-orbed. Development is said to be sustainable when the following obtains: when people have access to income when they enjoy good health and better quality education as well as access to good nutritional intake. Other factors that define development are: access to a cleaner environment, personal security, community participation of citizens in matters that concern their existence and freedom from political oppression. The items I have adumbrated here may seem trivial but in the exact sense of things such things as health and nutrition are to be considered as important components of human capital. By health here is not meant the mere absence of disease or infirmity (as

important these are); good health would include the complete physical, social, mental, psychological well being of the individual (FAO/WHO, 1992). On its part, nutrition refers to the amount of food intake that is sufficient to meet the dietary and energy requirements of people. In this regard, good health and nutrition are prime entry points to ending poverty and a milestone to achieving better quality of life (WHO, 1997). The ending of human poverty and the securing of better quality of life for people are factors that sum up the whole content of socio-economic development. Hence as African nations pursue the important goal of socio-economic advancement, they must do well to aim at meeting these minimum conditions of social progress without which human happiness cannot be guaranteed. Outside of this goal of enhancing citizens welfare, all development programmes or agenda in the African continent will wind up achieving no good purpose in the end.

To sum up the issues adumbrated in the preceding paragraph above for development to be truly sustainable, it must, to use the words of Anyiam-Osigwe be people driven it must also thrive on qualitative capacitated human beings (Anyiam-Osigwe, 2005). Again, development is sustainable when it is able to meet people's current needs while not neglecting their future survival. In this regard, real development would embrace improvement or advancement in every facet of a person's life. This would include improvement or development in the moral, physical, social (as well as) cultural life of people and their societies. Here, I should mention that as lofty as the theories of development are development will neither be sustainable nor the goals met if they (i.e., the theories) fail to take into account the moral dimension to human development. Arguing in this vein, Emmanuel Oladipo reminds us that development is a value word. And as a value term, it refers to the process by which a people's economic, social and political lives are altered or transformed to achieve positive ends (Oladipo, 1999).

**An analysis of values:** In posing the question, how do personal values personal values impact on socio economic development, I meant to suggest that development is not to be conceived in mere abstract economic terms alone. Rather, as a value concept, development has a moral content and dimension as well. This point leads me to an elucidation of the role values play in the process of socio-economic development. In explicating this issue, I proceed in a systematic manner by first providing a theoretical analysis of the concept value. The type of clarification I seek to undertake here is absolutely essential because in philosophy what is

sometimes called conceptual analysis serves two practical purposes. One is it helps provide us with an adequate understanding of the meaning of the words or concepts we make use of in the discussions. The other is that since questions are crucial to the philosophical discourse, conceptual analysis helps us in posing questions not only about social facts but about reality as well. The truth is this: if we do not understand the meaning of the questions we may not know what counts as answers to them. So then, conceptual analysis aims to promote understanding and enhance the capacity to decipher, interpret and make sense of the meaning of words, issues and ideas. Having made this point, I now proceed with a clarification of the term value. So what is this thing called value?

The term value is used to refer to what is good or thought to be good; what is desirable or thought to be desirable. Values refer to traits or qualities that we consider useful, beneficial or worthwhile. Put differently, when we talk of value we mean those qualities that are considered useful or that have a purpose. They usually represent the highest priorities or the deeply held beliefs that impel or motivate the actions. According to Susan Heathfield, when we are part of an organization, a group or an association it is typical to bring the deeply held values and beliefs to the organization. These beliefs or deeply held values co-mingle with those of the other members to create a group or family culture (Heathfield, 2010). But the question is: how do we come to form the values-those deeply held beliefs that eventually determine who or what we become in life?

By way of an answer, I should mention that values are one of the most important features that distinguish humans from brute beasts; they are the things that define who we are and what we believe. In the same way, the values are usually the basis for the personal ethics and beliefs. In the words of Joseph Agbakoba, the notion of value readily goes with preference because a thing or idea has more or less worth in relation to other things and ideas (Agbakoba, 2009). Families, groups or cultures have values that are largely shared by members.

The values a group subscribes to identify the objects, conditions or characteristics that members of the group count important or worth pursuing. Individuals also have personal values that are unique to them. By way of extrapolating, a person's values would refer to everything that has happened to him or her in life. The factors that influence or determine the values would include the religious beliefs, culture, education as well as the environment. But apart from these, parents, school teachers, acquaintances as well as the media all influence the thought and beliefs.

However, the crucial point in the analyses above is not merely that we develop the values and ethics through past experiences; nor is it that values are constantly changing and developing throughout the lives. On the contrary, what is important is that when we become intellectually capable, we are able to identify or recognize those factors that influenced the values. With this recognition we are able to develop a clear, concise and meaningful set of values and beliefs. Understanding the values helps us to keep the priorities in the right order and the actions in line with the beliefs.

Values instill a sense of discipline, honesty and integrity in people. Without doubt, part of the reason for the social collapse of the African state is the absence of those core values required for the appropriate socio-political ordering of the political state. Some of the core values I have in mind here include leadership responsibility, accountability, transparency as well as responsiveness on the part of leaders. It is the absence of these social virtues or values that defines what Okunade (2008) has aptly described as leadership deficit. By leadership deficit is meant that Africa has a shortfall of leaders who are committed to the commonweal that is leaders who are dedicated to promoting the welfare or the well-being of the masses of people they govern. So then, the absence self-less and committed leaders is one of the major factors that accounts for Africa's socio-economic backwardness. Harping on this same idea, Nigerian novelist and literary guru, Chinua Achebe once made the world-famous statement that the reason for Nigeria's (and Africa's) political dissoluteness is the absence of a virile and perspicacious political leadership (Achebe, 1983).

The point in what Okunade and Achebe say above here is that effective and responsible political leadership is one key factor the evolving of a virile and active civil society. This paucity of leaders who possess civic virtues and who are committed to the well-being of the citizenry is the bane of governance in Africa. This jettisoning of values or the ideals of probity, truth and justice accounts for why Africa has become the butt or object of ridicule of civilized nations of the world. It also explains why the continent has been transformed from being a land blessed with great potentials to a famished, self-accursed (place) in which dispossession and alienation have become a permanent condition of being for the majority (Oladipo, 2009).

But not only have African peoples themselves abandoned the moral values of honesty and diligence; they have also been lax in carrying out their social duty of watchfulness over the political estate. This explains why

society has continually been shortchanged by its leaders and political power instead of being an instrument for transformational change has become a tool for oppression and manipulation. The crucial point to be made is this: without the value of morality and civility, the political state will become inchoate and fractured. Again, when leaders place their self-interested pursuits above the well-being good of the people, there will be a diminution of the institutions of the society. When this happens, the state will become an instrument for the subversion of the people's interests, rather than being an institution for progress and development. The result will be competition and conflicts as well as a devaluing of the social order as well as the institutions of the state- all evident tokens of the moral dissoluteness of the social order.

**Examples of values:** I have devoted considerable space to analyzing what value is or signifies. By now it is quite clear that every society has some sets of values or the other that regulates its activities and those of members. As I mentioned earlier, values identify those activities that members of the society regard as important. For example, a particular society, say X may value communalism, human fellowship or religiosity over other issues in life. On the other hand, another society, say Y may consider material comfort, wealth acquisition and individualism of a higher worth than all else. Using the Nigerian society as a foil, for example in the country, football players are usually accorded more honour (and given better recognition) than intellectuals, teachers and even University teachers in part because the society respects personal values such as physical activity, fitness and competitiveness more than mental activity and education. This may also be the case because the Nigerian society takes its education for granted. Perhaps this also explains why school teachers are despised and paid despicable wages in the nation's private and public schools. On the other hand, athletes, soccer players, politicians and bank workers are honoured (in form of monetary payment) and paid highly stupendous wages than school teachers. Could this be a measure of the value that we place on teachers and the type of job they do in Nigeria?

R.C. Sproul provides an answer which appears to be an appropriate response to the question posed in the preceding lines above. In his words, the value we place on the teacher reflects the societal attitude toward education. When we dishonour the teacher we punish his pupil. When we respect the teacher we honour his student (Sproul, 1991). In other words, the way we treat the teacher is a reflection of the type of value we place on

the students who are tutored by him or her. It also reflects the reasonableness or otherwise of a society its institutions and the people who make it up. Values impact every aspect of a society or the individual person's. In what follows below, I provide a list of items or things that are recognized or can be regarded as values in the practical sense of the word. The list would include the following items:

Honesty, truthfulness, ambition, competency, equality, integrity, service, responsibility, accuracy, respect, dedication, diversity, improvement, enjoyment, loyalty, credibility, innovativeness, teamwork, individuality, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, stewardship, empathy, accomplishment, courage, wisdom, independence, security, challenge, influence, learning, compassion, friendliness, discipline, order, generosity, persistency, optimism, dependability, flexibility, power, etc. (Heathfield, 2010)

The list is not exhaustive but merely serves as a good reference point on some of the things that count as values. The list contains items that individuals or even societies use to gauge their activities, actions or life goals. Indeed, all human goals and purposes are usually grounded on those core values that people usually subscribe to. I believe the analysis of values undertaken in the preceding lines above is sufficient to capture what value means or signifies. In what follows below, I shall undertake a taxonomic discussion of the ways values are commonly categorized, classified or arranged.

**Taxonomy of values:** Values are usually classified into different types. Here, I identify five types that bear a direct relevance to the issues in this essay. Specifically, the five types of value I have in mind are as follows: aesthetic values, ethical/moral values, religious values, socio-political values and economic values.

**Aesthetic values:** The best approach to understanding what aesthetic value means is to begin by first defining what aesthetics itself is. So what is aesthetics? It is a branch of philosophy which deals with the creation and appreciation of the nature of beauty to which art is intimately related. Aesthetics is also concerned with the question of whether those ideals that constitute beauty inhere in objects themselves or whether they exist in the mind of those that perceive them. In sum, aesthetic values

refer to those qualities of objects that are considered worthwhile in themselves or are appreciated because they help to satisfy the human desire for the sublime or magnificent.

**Religious values:** Religious values have to do with those beliefs, doctrines and ideas that are considered essential or important to the religious life or the believers commitment to the deity. Such values play a salvific role as they help synchronize believers with the divine or with their fellow humans.

**Ethical/moral values:** Moral or ethical values are the subject-matter of ethics that branch of philosophy that is concerned with human conduct or actions that are considered good in themselves or worth-pursuing for their own sakes. Moral values aid in the promotion of social order and harmony in the human community. Some examples of such values include honesty, truthfulness, generosity, dependability, etc.

**Socio-political values:** These refer to those policies of the state as well as ideals that help promote social engineering in the society. They are principles or programmes of action that are taken to be worthwhile in themselves or that are pursued because they help promote the good of society. Examples of such values include justice, liberty, human rights, political freedom, respect for human dignity and equality of citizens before the law. Without the value of justice and respect for human dignity for example, society would soon relapse into the Hobbesian state of nature which was characterized by internecine conflicts and mutually destructive tendencies that had the potential to atrophy the human community and life itself.

**Economic values:** Economic values refer to economic policies, programmes and ideals that aim at enhancing the economic welfare of the people. Such policies aim at enhancing people's ability to realize their potentials to build self-confidence in themselves and lead a life of dignity, happiness and fulfillment.

**Personal values and economic development:** So far in the study, I have undertaken a general discussion of the meaning and nature of values. I have also highlighted the types of values that exist. In connection to the idea of development, I need to emphasize here that value is essential to any form of development be it personal, social or economic. Indeed, it is in developing the individual's capacity for self-actualization, through the cultivation of the appropriate civic virtues that society can ever hope to

advance or make progress. In other words, the quest for socio-economic advancement in society will remain a tall dream except individuals are empowered and adequately capacitated. Having made this point, I now look more closely at the idea that development needs to be sustained and that the only way to sustain it is by ensuring that all developmental agenda aim at advancing human well-being and happiness in the society.

The acceptance of the principle that the people are the ultimate end of true development is one that has gained prominence in contemporary discourse on the matter. Inferable from this principle is the idea that a society cannot be said to be developing when an overwhelming majority of its citizens live in misery and are deprived of basic freedoms or those elements that enhance human well-being and happiness. What is also suggested by this principle is the idea that development is not a serendipitous occurrence or something that happens by chance. On the contrary, it requires diligent planning, programming and specific stages towards a proper implementation of its goals. Here, the point is worth making which is that the realization as well as sustenance of any development agenda would be achieved only if due cognizance is taken of certain principles. The first of such consideration is that human well-being is the chief goal of any development programme. The other consideration is that development will thrive better in a good social environment; that is in an environment where citizens rights are respected and where the leadership is accountable to the people.

The ideals espoused in the preceding paragraph above are no hush-hush musings of an idle mind which has no practical relevance to human social existence nor are they the high-flown reflections of a whimsical thinker that are merely speculative but impracticable. On the contrary as the African charter for popular participation in development and social transformation (also known as avers, the key elements in social development and the democratization process include the following: respect for the dignity and rights of the human person, citizens equality before the law, the right of citizens to chose their rulers and to dispose of them when the need arises.

To be sure, that society will totter that continually trifles with these time-honoured norms that are so fundamental that they are enshrined in the various charters of civilized peoples. The failure to honour these universal norms remains the bane of development and good governance in the African continent. With this point made in what follows below I undertake a discussion of the Anyiam-Osigwe perspective on development a perspective that advocates a people oriented approach to development or the idea of human advancement.

**Development and the pursuit of human interests: the Anyiam-Osigwe perspective:** The word development has become so popular in the literature that it has become somewhat of a byword among scholars. However, it has become more fashionable to speak of sustainable rather than just development in isolation. As I had implied in the paper earlier as a value-laden word, development is commonly used to refer to the process of economic, social and political progress or advancement. But as a general term however, the concept is sometimes taken to connote the idea of an increase an expansion, improvement or change for the better. It is for the reason that the word has come to be identified with the notion of change that development is sometimes taken to connote the idea of economical or technological.

To emphasize on a point, I have made already in the essay, one factor that impels social policies of nation states is the quest for economic progress and/or technological advancement. The general belief is that the measure of a nation's economic development is the amount of material wealth its citizens are able to accumulate. The idea here is that a society's economic growth will automatically translate into happiness for the citizens that an increase in a country's GDP and GNP will lead to flourishing for the citizens. But how true is the belief? Does it always follow that the more material wealth a society accumulates, the more its ability to end poverty among its people? Should we conceive economic development merely in terms of increase in national income or growth in a nation's GDP and GNP? In responding to these queries, Emmanuel Osigwe Anyiam Osigwe provides a perspective to the idea of development that I find germane and also intellectually challenging. While agreeing with the opinion that economic progress is a prerequisite in any effective strategy to eradicate poverty and institute order in society, Anyiam-Osigwe however argues that economic development, if it is to be meaningful and sustainable, must advance human welfare. According to this argument, genuine development whether in Africa or elsewhere in the world must be people driven; it must also enhance the human capacity for self-actualization. The point here is not that development should not be conceived merely as growth in a nation's per capita income nor is it to be seen essentially in terms of technological advancement. On the contrary:

True development begins with engendering the requisite mindset that integrates into the spiritual integral of his [Osigwe] three constituents of existence hypothesis (Anyiam-Osigwe, 2005)

Lest anyone should charge the wise thinker with being overtly concerned with the preternatural or the

arcane, Anyiam-Osigwe simply defines spirituality as value-guided conduct (Anyiam-Osigwe, Ibid). Inferable from this idea is that the harmonizing of the appropriate moral and spiritual integrals in persons will enhance true development. Harping of the value of morality to the social life, Anyiam-Osigwe submits as follows: a better world-order (I add, economic order as well) begins with me. This idea that the individual should live a morally good life in relation to society and his/her fellow human beings is the principle on which all ideas of social progress rests. The question: what kind of life is the good life for human beings? is one that dates back to Socrates and Aristotle. The answer the early philosophers gave to the question is that it is a life of well-being and social progress. It is on the basis of arguments such as the foregoing that I have made the point that socio-economic policies will be accounted meaningful if help in the important goal of helping improve human welfare in society. Here, it is conceivable to argue, therefore that the idea of economic progress has its foundation in ethics. To use the words of Alexander Moseley, since people are by nature sociable there being few proper anchorites who turn from society to live alone the question follows as to what kind of life is proper for a person amongst people (Moseley, 2010).

The proper kind of life for humans says Aristotle is the life of happiness that is a life of well-being and fulfillment. This goal the one which aims at advancing human interests is the goal of all true development. Like Aristotle, Anyiam-Osigwe will not consider any development process as sustainable that is not anchored on human well-being and happiness. For him, all policies on development should aim at advancing the spiritual, moral as well as material well-being of the human person. However, it is also the case that the achievement of this goal requires the harnessing of the resources of a society to promote the common good through political institutions that operate on the basis of truth and justice (Oladipo, 2009).

**People and development:** Development theorists are all agreed that governments have a fundamental role to play towards enhancing the welfare of members of the civic public. One way that the government is by formulating policies that will improve the quality of life of the people through investment in human capital development especially through qualitative educational policies aimed at eradicating ignorance and empowering the people to take personal initiatives over their lives. The prospect of expanding human capacities and enhancing peoples competences as well as promoting sustainable development in society can be met when governments take a greater interest in the proper diversification of the economy, enhanced infrastructural development, education for all, affordable health care services, job

creation, poverty minimization programmes, implementation of environmental laws/policies that will protect the present environment from degradation and devastation for the present and future generations of peoples (Ihensekhein-Orobosa and Aisuhumihien, 2009).

But while acknowledging the important duty of government in promoting the welfare of citizens, Anyiam-Osigwe however posits that individuals also have a role to play in the socio-economic development process of society. Through imbibing and reflecting personal values or such fundamental ethical virtues as honesty, integrity, trust and propriety in their conduct, members of the public can help add impetus to the development efforts of their societies. To paraphrase Anyiam-Osigwe views on the above we are reminded that:

The cultivation and strengthening of the moral element in the individual should precede the formulation and implementation of developmental initiatives. Similarly, institutional reforms should be preceded by reform of the mind-set of the people (Anonymous, 2007)

What interpretation can we give to views expressed in the quotation above? The simple interpretation is this: the ideal of economic development or advancement will be impossible unless the individuals themselves-the people whose interest developmental programmes are meant to advance make the right positive contributions to the process itself. This is the idea Anyiam-Osigwe meant to convey when he says that genuine development must be people-driven and that it should thrive on qualitatively capacitated human individuals. Put differently, governments efforts at improving citizens welfare will be made null and void except the people themselves get actively involved in deciding what form of advancement is in their own interest. For, as Oladipo (1999) would say, the active involvement of the people is a key ingredient for sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

In the study, I have argued that every society craves for economic advancement and growth. However, a well rounded and full-blown concept of development is that which takes human interests into account. What this means is that in the true sense of the word, people are the real goal of development. Oftentimes, the immediate concern of nations has been with material accumulation and the quest for an increase in the per capita income of their national economies. But any policy on wealth acquisition that fails to recognize the special role occupied by the people in the social scheme of things is

to be rejected as ineligible and askew. Indeed, developmental ideals generate visions of the good life for human individuals. And for Aristotle, the good life is nothing but a life of happiness and human well-being. Here a connection between the goal of political philosophy and economics as an intellectual enterprise both aim at nothing but the enhancement of human welfare.

In the study, I have also argued that the moral element is crucial to any idea of development. The cardinal principle behind any ethical or moral ideal is respect for human dignity and welfare. The point here is that morality aims among other things to promote the personal happiness and the well-being of the fellow humans. A proper training in morality then is necessary to help us appropriate the right personal values or civic virtues that are essential to ensure human mutual well being and flourishing. A counterpoise to this argument is state that the absence of the appropriate moral framework could lead to the atrophy of the human social order. For Anyiam-Osigwe (2005), the lack of honesty and probity in the managing of public affairs and assets, the disposition to unlawful acquisition, falsehood, hatred, envy, jealousy and lust for power are things that limit human solidarity or the camaraderie feeling that should exist among people. These vices if not gotten rid of have the potential to scuttle all efforts at social or progress or development.

**A postscript:** In whatever way development is looked at it is only worthwhile and meaningful if it promotes human welfare. The human capability approach to development advocated by Anyiam-Osigwe, Amartya Sen and others posit that development must ensure the growth of human capacities and potentials by enhancing the human ability for self-realization and self-action. According to this argument:

Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states (Sen, 1993)

African states will do well to heed this admonition if they truly want to develop. In societies where the political process is manipulated and elections are rigged to favour particular candidates, the prospect of social development is usually very bleak. No society is going to make appreciable progress if it fails to respect the will of its people. Without doubt, the meddlesomeness of the state in the people's daily affairs remains one major hindrance



to development in Africa. The state is seen often to act paternalistically in the manner of an all-knowing father thereby hindering the personal initiatives of citizens and their right to make mistakes and learn from the same. It is in taking the first faltering steps that a child learns to walk properly eventually.

The same thing applies to members of the society: it is in making mistakes and learning from their errors that people mature and become responsible members of the civic public. Social paternalism-the attitude that rulers or governments know it all is the one limiting factor to social progress in Africa. Development depends upon good governance and the existence of strong social institutions for without strong institutions, the state will falter and the goal of social progress will be effectively scuttled. As America's President Barack Obama reminds us, history offers this verdict: governments that respect the will of their own people are more prosperous, more stable and more successful than governments that do not. Africa will do well to heed this verdict or it will forever be consigned to the refuse bin of a backward or dilettanti continent in the area of social development.

#### REFERENCES

- Achebe, C., 1983. *The Trouble With Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu.
- Agbakoba, J.C.A., 2009. Personal Values and Democratic Ethics. In: *The Development Philosophy of Emmanuel Onyechere Anyiam-Osigwe*, Oladipo, O. and A.B. Ekanola (Eds.). Vol. 1, Hope Publications, Ibadan.
- Anonymous, 2007. *Harnessing Africa's capital that the people may have life and live it more abundantly*. Proceedings of the 9th Session of Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Lecture Series. Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, Lagos.
- Anyiam-Osigwe, C., 2005. *The Mindset Factor in Creative Transformation: A Philosophical Underpinning for Human Development*. Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, Lagos.
- FAO/WHO, 1992. *A Global Assessment*. International Conference on Nutrition and Development. Geneva.
- Heathfield, S.M., 2010. Success in life and work: Identify and live your personal values. [http://humanresources.about.com/od/success/qt/values\\_s7.htm](http://humanresources.about.com/od/success/qt/values_s7.htm).
- Ihensekhein-Orobosa, A. and S.O. Aisuhumiuhien, 2009. Population, environment and sustainable development: The Nigerian Experience. *Constitution A J. Constitutional Dev.*, 8.
- Moseley, A., 2010. Political philosophy. *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Okunade, B., 2008. *Leadership: The Big Challenge*. An Inaugural Lecture. Ibadan University Press, Ibadan.
- Oladipo, E.O., 1999. People and Development: Towards Participatory Sustainable Human Development. In: *The Search for a Holistic Approach to Human Existence and Development*, Anyiam-Osigwe, C. (Ed.). Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation, Lagos, pp: 66.
- Oladipo, O.T., 2009. Holistic Approach to Existence and Development. In: *The Development Philosophy of Emmanuel Onyechere Anyiam-Osigwe*, Oladipo, O. and A.B. Ekanola (Eds.). Vol. 1. Hope Publications, Ibadan.
- Sen, A., 1993. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Sproul, R.C., 1991. *The Hunger for Significance*. Hodder and Stoughton, London.
- UNDP, 1990. *Human Development Report 1990*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- WHO, 1997. *The world health report: Conquering suffering, enriching humanity*. Geneva.