“Why Nations Fail” to Develop: The Case of Nigeria

Victor E. Dike

Abstract
This article focuses on the forces that prevent nations from developing politically, socially, and economically or why some of them have failed to achieve their purpose. It draws profusely from two inspiring books: Why Nations Fail and Leading From the Emerging Future to explore as to whether or not the political leaders of Nigeria can learn any lesson from the seminal work. The books concentrate on practical approaches that empower political leaders to shift their mind-sets to enable them to transform their extant extractive political and economic institutions that hinder national development. Unlike previous studies on leadership and development in Nigeria, which have observed that the system has been rendered unproductive by poor leadership, this article argues that the problem with Nigeria is that the political leaders have failed to shift their engrained mind-sets from “ego-system awareness to eco-system reality” to enable them to build and maintain effective institutions and infrastructure that drive the economy and develop the nations. It also argues that discussion about the leaders’ mind-set and national development deserves a different approach to transform the nation’s ossified institutions into innovative and creative ones. This will encourage the leaders to collectively shift their mental models to design and implement growth policies that will fit into the 21st-century economy and empower them to lead from the emerging future.

Keywords
leadership, development, emerging future, ego-system awareness, eco-system reality, fixed mind-set, Shifting Mental Models, Nigeria

Introduction
The basic structures of societies are the same as every society has sociopolitical and economic systems as well as educational institutions. But the performances of these institutions and the development of nations vary according to the sociopolitical dynamics of every society. In other words, every case is different because what works in one society may not be effective in another one. Therefore, the transformation of multi-religious and multi-lingual Nigeria and its seemingly chaotic sociopolitical and economic environment require a leader with the skills and knowledge to address the systemic bottlenecks that hinder national development. That will involve changing the structure and “human consciousness” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 240) as well as the “mental models” (Senge, 2006, p. 163) of the political leaders from their engrained “ego-system awareness” into “eco-system reality” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 11).

Although the process seems daunting because of the disordered Nigerian environment, it is not by any means impossible to accomplish with collective mindfulness (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013) as every Nigerian is a stakeholder in the affairs of the nation. However, Germer, Siegel, and Fulton (2005) have defined “mindfulness,” among other things, as a “moment-by-moment awareness” (p. 6). For Bodhi (2000), mindfulness means having awareness, attention, and remembering. However, to the already crowded definition, Davis and Hayes (2011) have added that “mindfulness is a moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experience without judgment” (p. 198). Yet others have noted that “mindful leaders” are “courageous,” they perceive the “big picture” and “create environments of trust and safety,” which would “ignite innovation” (Moore, 2012, pp. 1-2).

The differing perspectives on the issue of poverty are not new. It was also underscored by various speakers at the 2014 Africa Innovation Summit Cabo Verde that no country has overcome the challenges of poverty reduction, and no region will overcome the challenges of development, without proving its ability to be creative and innovative. And Nigeria is not an exception. Nigeria’s leaders appear to have a “fixed mind-set” (Dweck, 2007). The nation is choking on its democratic

1Washington Unified School District (WUSD), West Sacramento, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Victor E. Dike, Washington Unified School District (WUSD), West Sacramento, California, 95691, USA.
Email: drvedike@csjhdev.com; vdike@cwnet.com
experiment because the leaders do not operate on principles that ally with democracy. Worse still, the system is colored by unbridled corruption, non-functional health care and education systems, and institutions and infrastructure that are antithetical to capacity development. These forces have resulted in a weak economy, rising youth unemployment, and poverty as well as insecurity in the society. The leaders do not seem to understand that empowering the people will change the future of the society. It has been noted that no society can separate poverty from the political and economic forces in the society as well as the mind-set of the leaders because they determine the state of human condition in every nation.

But what is mind-set? According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1980), mind-set is “a mental inclination, . . . a . . . state of mind” (p. 725). For the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2015), mind-set “is a set of attitudes or fixed ideas that someone has and that are often difficult to change” (para. 1). Meanwhile, for Dweck (2007), professor of psychology at Stanford, mind-set is “the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life. It can determine whether you become the person you want to be and whether you accomplish the things you value” (p. 6).

If this writer may ask, are the mind-sets of Nigeria’s leaders “carved in stone”? Why is Nigeria difficult to change? Why has Nigeria failed to develop with abundant human and material resources at its disposal? Why has prosperity eluded the nation? Why are many Nigerians swimming in the deep ocean of poverty? Put differently, why is there a rising unemployment rate in the society? There are conflicting reports on the rate of unemployment in Nigeria because of paucity of data. Available pertinent information shows that Nigeria’s unemployment rate is about 24% (this is a very conservative figure). However, youth unemployment rate is put at more than 50%, which represents about 64 million people (“Rate of Job Creation Insufficient to Tame Unemployment in Nigeria,” 2014). But for the new Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), Nigeria’s poverty rate is hovering around 43.3% of the estimated population of 170 million (see Emejo, 2014).

It is proper to note that three groups of unemployed youths have been identified in this article: university graduates, high school graduates not yet enrolled in any university program, and those who did not complete high school education. Others who have added to the rising rate of unemployment include people who choose to leave their current job to retire, those who went back to school to acquire new skills and knowledge for another career, and those who take a position at another organization. It is, however, proper to note that most of the unemployed youths are vulnerable to antisocial activities as they are struggling to make ends meet without any form of government assistance.

Given the above background, the political leaders do not seem to be taking responsibility for these problems as everyone is blaming everyone else. Nigeria’s leaders, it appears, hate to be held accountable for anything. It is also proper to note that the root cause of the present social, political, and economic predicaments in the society is not the making of the leaders alone, but collective selfishness. Everybody in Nigeria, it seems, wants to be in a leadership position whether or not they have the skills and knowledge to stimulate a healthy competition, increase the wealth of the nation, and thus, create economic opportunity for everyone. Leadership is not about revenue sharing but about moving people to action to create wealth. These actions are possible with leaders who are committed to improving the living conditions of the people.

The challenges facing Nigeria appear to be deep-rooted in the mind-sets of the leaders and the nation’s extractive political and economic institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). As a result, there is a serious disconnect between ego-system thinking and eco-system reality (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). It has aptly been noted that the state of our mind-sets or mental models (Senge, 2006) affect what we do—our performance, decision-making process, and how we manage ourselves. For Nigeria to move forward socially, politically, and economically, the leaders and followers (in collective leadership) should have a deeper shift in their mind-sets and gravitate toward “eco-system awareness” from their engrained “ego-system thinking” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 11).

According to Albert Einstein’s famous dictum, we cannot solve our present problems with the same level of mind-set or consciousness that created them. Meanwhile, because of the failure of the political leaders of Nigeria to change their mindset and embrace creative and innovative ideas that will transform and restructure the system, Nigeria’s non-functional education and health care systems will continue to threaten the growth and development of the economy as
these are the engines that drive individual and national productivity. But “failure is not an option” (Blankstein, 2010, p. 1) for Nigeria. However, what Nigeria will become is the society the leaders and followers have decided to create. Without a doubt, majority of the people wants a leader who can lead from the emerging future possibilities.

**Purpose**

This article revisits the issues of leadership and development in Nigeria as it attempts to investigate as to whether or not the leaders have any lessons to learn from *Why Nations Fail* and *Leading From the Emerging Future*. The books, as noted earlier, deal on practical approach to helping leaders shift their mind-sets from their ego-system awareness to eco-system reality and create inclusive political and economic institutions to empower the citizens to reach their full potential. This article, therefore, seeks to discuss some of the pertinent issues raised in the books as they relate to leadership and development problems facing Nigeria.

**Research Method**

This article will attempt to provide an in-depth assessment of the forces that are preventing Nigeria from developing as it should with the abundant human and material resources at its disposal. As noted, information for this article was derived mainly from *Why Nations Fail* and *Leading From the Emerging Future*. Information is also gathered from the research and descriptive analysis of other scholars, analysts, and practitioners as well as recent newspaper and journal articles that are pertinent to the issues in discourse. Thus, the primary method of study was an extensive review of available related literature for an extensive and in-depth description and analysis of leadership and development problems in Nigeria and their implications in the society. The sources of the information were thoroughly evaluated and analyzed to determine their authenticity.

**Problem Statement**

Debates about why Nigeria has failed to develop as it should with abundant human and material resources at its disposal have been raging for decades. Some have noted that the problem is due to the absence of effective leadership. Yet others have observed that Nigeria is stuck in its present sociopolitical and economic predicaments because the leaders have been unable to change their mental models (Senge, 2006), which has prevented them from building critical institutions and infrastructure capable of transforming the society into the 21st-century system. Yet the political leaders who apparently have “fixed mind-set” appear to think that Nigeria can be transformed into an industrialized society without changing their mentality, reframing their meaning of leadership, building functional institutions, and designing and implementing pro-growth policies. The political leaders of the developed countries could not have transformed their economies into the healthy and productive state they are today without shifting their mentality that enabled them to lead from the emerging future.

**Research Questions**

This article focuses on the following questions:

- **Research Question 1**: Do most leaders of Nigeria possess fixed or flexible mind-set?
- **Research Question 2**: What will it take for the political leaders to change their mind-sets from “ego-system awareness” to “eco-system reality?”
- **Research Question 3**: Why has Nigeria failed to develop as it should with the abundant human and material resources at its disposal?
- **Research Question 4**: Can Nigeria become an industrialized nation without inclusive political and economic institutions?

**Designing a New Strategy**

Leaders of developed nations are known to have continually shown their knack in managing difficult situations by crafting functional strategies that align with the culture of the society or organization they lead. When a society, a person, or an organization has a problem, the first instinct will be to find a solution(s) to the problems (Kahane, 2005). A well-designed strategy is a symbol of action that will enable the authorities to achieve the desired goal—whether it is changing the behavior of a people or engineering a social change. A strategy is a “game plan” to achieve one or more goals. It is a plan, a “how” and “a means of getting from here to there” (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 23). A “. . . strategy is a solution to move from where you are now to where you want to be” (Bucknell, 2011, para. 3).

As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is facing myriad social, political, and economic problems. Yet the leaders do not appear to have the skills and knowledge to design and implement effective strategies to resolve the issues. For instance, they are unable to tackle the infrastructural and institutional problems, improve the nation’s standard of education and of the economy must align to make a difference in the life of the people. The political leaders should flip the lens around a little to work out ways to serve the public good. They should collectively “develop cross-sector platforms of innovation and leadership” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 205) for positive change in the country.

It has been noted that Nigeria’s leadership quality is in its DNA. For instance, the fundamental causes of Nigeria’s weak economy are poor leadership and governance that have contributed immensely to non-functional infrastructure and
institutions, low quality of education, and lack of practical skills and knowledge to drive the economy. There is no discernable change of attitude on the part of the leaders to address the shortfalls in the system; they are not willing to put their egos aside and listen to the people. They are mired in what has been branded “ego-system awareness” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). The political leaders appear to worry about the realities in the eco-system only when there are serious national issues that threaten their own well-being such as the Ebola crisis (Freeman, 2014, para. 1) described as “an epidemic without mercy” (see “Briefing Lightbox,” 2014, p. 11).

At this critical juncture, Nigeria needs a leader who is committed to leading the society to a bright and bold future. This is because political stability in any country comes with the development of the institutions and infrastructure that drive the economy, create employment, and take care of the people’s needs. Nigeria has abundant natural and human resources that will enable the people to tackle their family and community obligations, only if the leaders can change their “mental models” (Senge, 2006, pp. 163-190) and move from their ego-system awareness to eco-system reality (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Without the political leaders reframing their thinking model and their meaning of leadership, without fixing the infrastructure and institutions that drive the economy, without transforming the education system into the 21st-century model and equipping the students with the knowledge and skills to compete effectively in the knowledge-driven global economy (Banks, 2008), and without taking care of the needs of the growing number of the people in poor health, the society will remain unproductive and underdeveloped.

“Reframing Leadership” in Nigeria

Debates about the seemingly absence of effective leadership in Nigeria have been endless. For instance, Achebe (1983) has observed that “the problem with Nigeria is the failure of leadership” (p. 1). Others have noted that there is poor leadership in Nigeria because most of the leaders are mired in a sense of entitlement in their actions, beliefs, and attitudes (Akor, 2014; Ani, 2014; Oluokun, 2014). The people would like their myriad social, political, and economic problems resolved by their political leaders. Specifically, they would like to have an enabling environment and a healthy economy, peace and stability in government, good roads, and functional hospitals and schools. Also, they would like their human and civil rights respected. The leaders talk about these issues without resolving them; instead, they lock themselves up in their lofty offices dishing out orders that are unimplemented. But the people may not get the services they want without the leaders reframing their meaning of leadership (Bolman & Gallos, 2011).

True leaders have passion and understanding for those they lead. And they are known to resolve conflicts by reframing the situation, which means “looking at the situation with a new set of eyes.” When the leader reframes, it will enable him or her to respond to the situations by commanding control with confidence. As noted, leadership is not in the position, it is taking responsibility and accountability, and it is working for the good of society to enable the people to achieve their full potential (The Integral Business Leadership Group, 2013). Instead of providing services, the political leaders use government policies to buy support from the people.

Personal growth is a component part of leadership. Thus, the leaders must change their mind-set to lead from the emerging future possibilities (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). As Peter F. Drucker has noted, “You cannot manage other people [or a society] unless you manage yourself first” (cited in The Integral Business Leadership Group, 2013, para. 1). In Leadership, Burns (1978) has noted two types of leaders: (a) transformative and (b) transactional. Transformative leaders are those who have a vision to mobilize people to action, while transactional leaders are addicted to quid pro quo—“If you scratch my back, I will scratch yours” (see Banks, 2008, p. 94). This style of leadership seems pervasive in Nigeria. Yet, another type is leadership that hands down orders from top to bottom. This style of leadership is mostly adopted by leaders who want utmost control over the decision-making process in an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Also, most of the leaders of Nigeria appear to fall within this category; the society has powerful leaders without effective institutions to tame their actions (The Integral Business Leadership Group, 2013).

Many people in Nigeria wish to be leaders, but very few of them seem to understand the essence of leadership. True leadership is about serving the people; it is about having a sense of responsibility; it is about providing the people the service they need, or “getting things done through people” (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). In addition, leadership is about inspiring others to excel. In a democratic society, power is said to come from the people at the grassroots. In making decisions the leaders must be cognizant of the opinions and needs of the people. And the leader will assume responsibility for what went well and what went wrong because true leadership is about taking responsibility wherever responsibility needs taking. Put differently by Scharmer and Kaufer (2013), “The essence of leadership has always been about sensing and actualizing the future” (p. 110).

In productive and progressive societies, creativity is alive in everything they do. There is inspiration and aspiration involved in education as talented faculty is hired and students radiate creativity in innovations and research. All these are made possible by the political leaders who invest national resources in technological development and innovation. Educational institutions offer students high-quality education that leads to good career pathway. This is not the case in Nigeria where political leaders are filling their pockets with public money, instead of serving the people. To move forward, Nigeria’s leaders must change their mind-sets and the
people must not allow them to continue “patching problems,” instead of “redesigning” the system to make it function effectively. The leaders should also learn to become better listeners and empower the people with the skills and knowledge they need to become more productive. In addition, they should be “grounded in mindfulness and service” (Maqueda, 2014, para. 1) to enable them design and execute effective policies, and offer solutions to the nation’s myriad social, political, and economic problems. That means reframing leadership and the environment.

Reinventing the Environment

Nigeria’s existing democratic structures are not yet effective. Its extractive political and economic institutions do not create incentive for the citizens to save, invest, and innovate. Power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of those controlling state apparatus. In other words, only those in control of or connected to those in political power are benefitting from the system. Lack of effective law and order and economic incentive has destroyed the environment. As human beings, our actions, attitudes, and beliefs are defined by our “physical environments” (Dewey, 1934, p. 345). As such, we cannot remain in a dysfunctional environment and expect good outcomes in what we do. As our “physical life” is affected by the “physical environment” (Dewey, 1934, p. 345), so also our nation’s environment will affect the quality of attention the people will give to their actions. The system is corruption-charged, and that has affected the “moral life” (Dewey, 1934, p. 345) of the people and the health of the economy. “No permanent solution is possible save in a radical social alteration” (Dewey, 1934, p. 343).

The political leaders can only change the system by changing their mental models (Senge, 2006). They are always on each other’s throat with their petty politics (“What Seems a Petty Dispute,” 2014, p. 31), instead of dealing with broad national issues and creating an environment that would accommodate the interests of the diverse population. For instance, the former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, is always critical of the policies of President Goodluck Jonathan (see Obasanjo, 2013), instead of working collaboratively with his administration to build a stable and brighter future for the society. Also, instead of designing and implementing effective monetary policies to build a healthy economy, the former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who is now the Emir of Kano, took delight in heating up the polity when he alleged that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) failed to remit about US$49.8 billion to government’s coffer (see Leba, 2013).

The long-running misunderstanding between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)—a union of university academic professors founded in 1978 (Akinnaso, 2013)—disrupted the academic calendar of higher institutions for months. In addition, the relentless drop in global oil prices is putting enormous economic pressures on the government that lacks any solution to the problem. Worse still, the Boko Haram (a militant Islamic group) onslaught (see Adetayo, 2014; Carson, 2015) in the northeast is threatening to destabilize the country. Do the political elites want political reform or revolution?

Everyone seems to agree with the general observation that corruption and economic mismanagement (Ross, 2014), which has scared away both domestic and foreign investors from the economy, is a major part of the problem. As of today, the state does not seem to have the capacity to stop the terrorists creating chaos. The terrorists do not seem to be selecting a particular group of people to kill; they are indiscriminately killing people. The leaders do not seem to have any solution to this presently as they are pointing accusing fingers at everyone else. It is feared that this can precipitate into a state failure. The energy wasted on all these sociopolitical plots could have been channeled toward reinventing the education system to open the nation “up to the highest future possibilities” (Scharmer & Kaufer 2013, p. 29).

Radical Transformation of the Education System

As observed earlier, Nigeria is facing major challenges, including the crisis in the education system and corruption scandals that are strewn around the political landscape like straw hut in a hurricane (Ross, 2014). In particular, the education system lacks proper funding and planning (Afolayan, 2014), and teaching and learning are based on theory with little or no practical application of what the students learned in the classroom. Practical application is the way for any society to become innovative and creative, and thus produce results the people want (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). It has been observed that the ultimate goal of teaching is to ensure that students develop a deep understanding of the subject matter and interconnected knowledge and skills they can draw upon when needed (Banks, 2008).

The problem facing the nation’s education system and other facets of the polity is dictated by the political and economic institutions that do not shift toward progressive, destructive innovation and thus economic success. In a nutshell, this means that destructive innovation (or creative innovation) will replace obsolete technologies with new and emerging technologies as well as create better ways of thinking, leading, and doing things. Nigeria’s repressive political and economic institutions have contributed immensely to the eventual socioeconomic decay or stagnation (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). To transform the education system, the leaders’ policies must shift toward promoting favorable institutions, creativity, and progressive innovation (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). And the teachers and administrators in the education sector should be motivated to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to introduce practical education that works (Banks, 2008).
Scholars have observed that nations will rise when they design and implement pro-growth political institutions that share power (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), train, educate, and produce productive workers. But they fail when the institutions fail to adapt to the environment or when the powerful political elites benefitting from the status quo prevent the institutions from being effective. So, to move forward, the leaders should create progressive institutions and adopt methods that have been tested by successful countries and adapt them to fit into Nigeria’s environment. Although some educators and policymakers think that investing in technology will improve the education standards and student performance, others have different opinion. For instance, Daniel Goleman in his inspiring new book, The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education, co-authored with Peter Senge, thinks that the combination of instructions in “social and emotional learning” can enable students to better understand themselves, their friends, and their environment. Such instructional techniques can improve both social skills and academic performance (Goleman & Senge, 2014).

Thus, improving Nigeria’s education system should go beyond rhetoric. Blaming the teachers is not the answer to the failing standard of education in Nigeria. The extractive political and economic institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) in which the teachers work are the problems. As long as the underlying institutional problems are not resolved, all the rhetoric will not fix the education system. Nigeria should build inclusive political and economic institutions to empower the teachers and treat them as professionals they really are. In addition, they should adopt effective teaching and learning as well as education reform that will add value to the system. This seems possible only through building mindful schools and training mindful educators—those who have the welfare of students at heart, and are committed and motivated to making teaching and learning enjoyable. It has been observed that mindfulness is an antidote to the diseases of the 21st-century life (Cullen, 2011).

Perhaps because of poor investment in human capital development (education and health care system), Nigeria’s secondary school (high school) graduates the educational institutions churn out yearly are ill-prepared to face the rigors of university education. To reverse this ugly trend, leaders of the secondary school education sub-sector should develop progressive policies and educate the educators so that they can empower their students with the knowledge and skills to become effective participants in 21st-century society (Banks, 2008). Lack of proper attention in preparing high school graduates for university education seems to pose serious problems for the development of creative, innovative, and productive citizens. For the workers to compete effectively in the 21st global economy (Scharmer & Kauffer, 2013), the education system should be transformed to meet 21st-century standards by equipping workers with the 21st-century knowledge and skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

This writer avers that if teachers are well trained, it will lead to motivation of teachers as well as improve teaching and learning strategy in the classroom. It is, therefore, necessary for Nigeria to adopt innovative and imaginative ways to train and support teachers to enable them to deliver quality teaching and better motivate students. It is equally essential for teachers and administrators to understand their philosophy of teaching, which is their business, as that will be essential for them to understand themselves and their colleagues better, as this may engender high individual performance and team work.

To restructure the education system, Nigeria needs leaders “who are transformative in orientation” (Banks, 2008, p. 94). For Burns (1978), transformative leaders have a vision to organize and mobilize other people to action. Without retooling the education system and arming the workers with appropriate skills and knowledge and without abolishing policies and politics that are inimical to economic development and prosperity, Nigeria cannot be transformed into a productive society. Developed and progressive countries became what they are today because their people fought and overthrew the powerful political elites who dominated political power, and thus create a society where political rights were properly shared and the government was responsive to the needs of the people (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

As noted earlier, to improve the education system, the educators should first be educated and motivated to empower their students, because the quality of faculty and teachers matter (Kezar & Maxey, 2014) in the quality of teaching and support they provide the students. The education leaders are good at blaming the teachers and students for the poor performance in external examinations such as West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) without taking responsibility for their own contribution to their poor performance. Quality counts; the leaders should develop an education system that serves the society well. Thus, they should upgrade the status of the educators and respect them like other professionals; they should empower them to make better decisions (Banks, 2008) and effectively perform their duties. “A teacher’s skill makes a difference in student performance” both “in school and their feelings of well-being” (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008, p. v).

Extractive institutions hamper national development. Thus, without inclusive institutions, sustainable growth and development is difficult, if not impossible (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). It is unreasonable to expect the disrespected teachers to educate and motivate the youth; the society should expect to get only what it has invested in the education system. As John Dewey (1859-1952) has observed, “. . . we receive but what we give . . .” (Dewey, 1934, p. 214). When teachers feel honored, they will develop the will and capability to educate their students and equip them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to “become change agents [in the] society” (Banks, 2008, p. 97). The bottom line is that the
society should reform the institutions and discard the education policies that do not work because the state of the education system will affect the conditions of the whole system, including the health care system.

**Transforming the Health Care System**

As noted above, inclusive institutions matter in national development. According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), “institutions that encourage prosperity create positive feedback . . . that prevent efforts by [greedy and selfish political] elites to undermine them” (p. x). Like in the education system, Nigeria’s health care system does not appear to meet the needs of the people. Poorly equipped hospitals and health clinics are strewn all over Nigeria (Dantiye, 2015; see “The Health Workers Strike,” 2014). And like the educational institutions, the health care institutions are lacking the emerging 21st-century medical science and technologies that would enable the health care workers to provide high-quality health services to the people (Adejoro, 2015; Musawa, 2014).

However, due to ineffective institutions, the health care providers cannot provide good quality services without proper training and resources. Worse still, they operate in unsafe work environments (Dantiye, 2015). Thus, transformation of the health care system should “revolve around transforming the relationship between patients and the healthcare providers” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 209). That means changing the political attitude of the elites as well as creating pro-growth health care strategies and institutions. There are many communities without basic health care facilities; as a result, the people do not have access to primary health care services (Adejoro, 2015, para. 20). Consequently, thousands of Nigerians die every year from preventable diseases such as high blood pressure, hypertension, prostate cancer, diabetes, breast cancer, maternal child birth issues, and malnutrition (Musawa, 2014).

Unfortunately, because of poor institutions and deterioration of the health care system, the political leaders (and others who can afford it) often travel abroad to receive high-quality health care services at the expense of the public (Adejoro, 2015; Dantiye, 2015). The ordinary citizens often resort to private assistance to resolve their basic health problems (see “The Health Workers Strike,” 2014). To produce a healthy and productive workforce for the 21st-century economy and to build a stable society, the leaders should rethink the ways they manage the nation’s health care institutions.

The ineffective political institutions are inimical to economic growth. Medical doctors and other health care workers are often on strike to press home their demands over diverse issues, including non-payment of salaries and allowances, which often lead to unnecessary loss of lives (see Atoyebi, 2014). Some people think that the health care professionals care only about their remuneration than provision of health services to the needy (see News Agency of Nigeria [NAN]. 2014). As a result, many Nigerians have lost faith in the health care system as they perceive the health care workers as unreliable, unskilled, undereducated, and not kind-hearted care providers (Dantiye, 2015). Everyone should have access to high-quality health care that is being now enjoyed only by the rich political leaders. The administrators of the health care system, in collaboration with the medical community, should transform and modernize the health care system for the benefit of everyone. Building functional health care facilities in every community to deliver high-quality health services to the citizens and building a healthy economy is imperative. But this requires an effective institution and a transformative leader who will work collectively with others in the society.

**Building a Healthy Economy**

Building a healthy economy does not occur overnight. It takes planning, resources, and unswerving leadership to build and sustain a healthy economy. The first step is for the leaders of Nigeria to develop a growth mind-set and shift the nation’s educational paradigm to educate and train the technical manpower to drive the economy. Ineffective political and economic institutions are known to breed a weak economy, which creates high unemployment and poverty and generates sociopolitical uncertainty (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). Yet the political leaders do not seem to take the threat to national stability seriously as they are mired in their selfish political interest. As emphasized in Leading From the Emerging Future, “In order to meet the challenges of our time, we need to shift our thinking as individuals and as a society” because “Today’s economy works as a set of locally embedded and globally interlinked eco-systems” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 67).

Nigeria’s economy is not an exception. Many Nigerians appear to have entrepreneurial skills; they are very creative and innovative. But the unpredictable and unconducive, extractive political institutions and unfriendly business environment have stunted their zeal. In particular, poor leadership that has combined with all these conditions to create a weak economy has not allowed the society to tackle its systemic problems. Starting a small business from scratch is challenging. It takes a lot of passion and determination to keep your business running and to market your products or services under the poor business environment in Nigeria. Thus, the situation does not allow for creativity and innovation (Schumpeter, 1942). To build a healthy economy, the political leaders must shift their mind-sets and invest in the infrastructure and institutions that drive the economy and enhance individual and national productivity. Also, the society must empower the youth with the skills and knowledge to take initiatives, conduct independent inquiry, compete effectively in the global economy, and produce results the society wants (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). As Senge (2006) has aptly noted, “When . . . people develop [effective institutions and
work collaboratively] . . . they can be a formidable force for change” in the society (p. 370).

In reality, the secret of economic growth, since the time of Adam Smith, is specialization. But this is possible with effective political and economic institutions to enable Nigeria train the needed technical manpower to specialize in producing the goods and services the world wants. This goes to say that economic growth and investment in human capital development are inseparable as they complement each other (Ocampo & Vallejo, 2012). As noted above, why Nigeria has failed to develop and why the people are poor is because the political and economic institutions are extractive (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Put differently, the leaders extract material and financial resources (revenue) from the system without investing in the institutions and infrastructure that drive the economy.

The mood in Nigeria does not appear upbeat because the people are not politically empowered as the society is economically underdeveloped. Although Nigeria has a history of democratic elections, it does not seem to have an inclusive political institution. This is because during elections, there is violence and intimidation and electoral fraud. And the system does not have a political level playing field; the rich and powerful individuals control the system. In some cases, chaos would reign, colored by kidnapping and political murders. Those who can afford it would hire private security personnel for protection. Nigeria cannot build a healthy economy and lead from the emerging future without the leaders shifting from their engrained “ego-system to eco-system awareness both individually and collectively” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 243). Without that, the society will remain chaotic and underdeveloped with untold human misery.

Why Has Nigeria Failed to Develop?

History is replete with reasons nations have failed to achieve their purpose. Some scholars blame lack of effective political and economic institutions to manage the affairs of the society (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Others blame poor leadership (Achebe, 1983). In particular, Nigeria has failed to develop as it should because of poor leadership and extractive political and economic institutions that have concentrated political and economic power (or the wealth of the nation) in the hands of the corrupt politicians who are controlling the state machinery. The selfish politicians have perpetually pauperized the citizens because they have refused or failed to provide them basic public services, such as good roads, quality education, and constant supply of electricity. This is not to mention lack of good drinking water and basic health care. Everyone knows that water sustains life and unhealthy individual is an unproductive worker.

Lack of water and functional health care undermine the health, safety, and productivity of the people in Nigeria. In addition, Nigeria has failed to develop because the nation’s democracy and the type of policies that come out of it have not been designed to benefit the ordinary people. Instead, the policies benefit only the political lords and their cronies, leaving the masses to make ends meet on whatever they could find. Thus, politics in Nigeria has not created a level playing field—it has not given the people a voice in government. And this has opened the society up for constant social unrest. Consequently, like in every other developing country or sub-Saharan Africa, the people are not motivated to save and invest in the economy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Related to the politics and democracy is the issue of functional constitution. The political situation in Nigeria has not really improved since the reprise of civilian government in 1999 (after the long years of military rule). For one, the so-called civilian government is still using the constitution crafted by the military and foisted on the people. This document lacks true democratic principles; it has limitations on the use of political power as well as the distribution of power in the society, and vests absolute power on the corrupt political leaders. With that, the political leaders can arbitrarily cancel or shift scheduled elections without any person blinking.

The 2015 national elections (presidential and national assembly elections) in Nigeria were conducted as rescheduled, and the elections and transition of power from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)–led government to All Progressives Congress (APC) went relatively peaceful. Although a new political leader, Muhammadu Buhari, has been sworn in, the APC-led government does not appear to be fully operational yet and the Boko Haram (the militant Islamic group) onslaught in the society has not abated. In other words, the group is still bombing facilities, killing Nigerians, and disrupting economic activities in their strongholds in north-eastern part of the country. The question remains: Is Muhammadu Buhari the messiah Nigerians have been waiting for? This, in the author’s opinion, is doubtful as he does not seem to possess the political skills and knowledge to work with the national assembly and tackle the problems facing the nation. Despite his campaign promises to tackle insecurity, corruption, and youth unemployment in the country, these challenges remain. The people want action, not campaign rhetoric.

However, the basic political structure created by the military remains and the mentality of the political leaders has not changed. The political leaders took over power from the military simply to continue with the absolute power structure it inherited from the military, or recreated a system worse than the one it inherited from the military. Under this condition it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the ordinary person on the street to acquire political power to change the way the system works. Thus, without a true political transformation, the poor in the society will not even meet their basic needs, not to mention challenging the system. For Nigeria to develop as it should, the diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in the society must honestly come together to achieve a common purpose—that is to create a
positive sociopolitical change for the benefit of every group. Without this, the livelihood of the millions of ordinary Nigerians who are stuck in abject poverty will not change and Nigeria will remain underdeveloped.

It is equally pertinent to emphasize that Nigeria has failed to develop as it should because of its skewed value system and social structure. Social structure, according to social science literature, is the way a society is composed or organized, including the “social web of relations that regulate human interaction” (Ferriss, 2006). The social structure and values of a society determine its economic system and wealth distribution patterns, the effectiveness of its legal system and people’s quality of life (Ferriss, 2006). Also, the social and economic conditions determine the people’s attitude toward public resources and their social values. Thus, values are conceptions that guide the way individuals act and react to issues, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions (Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). In addition, social values determine what people believe in (good or bad). However, values vary according to groups (religion, tribes, and ethnic groups). A person’s (or an organization’s) values define its “structure and purpose” and enable the individual or organization to determine what is important and meaningful. Some people, however, believe that social structure develops naturally, while others think it is socially created by the elites who seek to control the economic system or institutional structure of a society (Hoff, 2003).

Social and leadership values could either spur or retard the pace of national development. Thus, some cultures are more suitable than others for economic growth and development. Decades ago, Max Weber (1864-1920) talked about the Protestant Work Ethic and the forces that led to the emergence of capitalism and competition. Because of their work ethics, individuals in the Western world are believed to have become rich through hard work and invention, innovation, creativity, and high productivity. The economic success of the Asian Tigers have been attributed to their Confucian Ethic or Value, which lays emphasis on hard work, loyalty and respect for authority, and of course, punctuality to work. Whether a society will develop or not depends largely on the effectiveness of its institutions and infrastructure. Nigeria cannot develop without advanced technological capability (Kim, 1997; Mohan, 2003; Robbins, 2000) to spur innovation and increase individual and national productivity (Lewis, 2004). This is to say that inclusive institutions will lead to the emergence of new technologies. Technological development is the engine that drives economic development (Sen, 1975) as it engenders creativity and innovation (Schumpeter, 1942), and thus economic growth and development.

As noted above, there is a large population and resources in Nigeria to be extracted because many of the village dwellers lack the political power to demand their rights and revolt against the extractive institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) that are benefiting only those in the corridors of power and their cronies. This is among the major causes of Nigeria’s underdevelopment and the endemic corruption that leads to moral laxity and lack of law and order. It is common knowledge that Nigeria lacks effective institutions, structures, procedures to tame corruption. Today, any person in Nigeria could “become fabulously wealthy” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, p. 394) and famous without any discernible source of income and nobody blinks (see “Before our politicians empty the treasury,” 2010). Public servants do not show up for work on time and do not take their work seriously, and they expect to get paid every month without being productive. The mentality that hard work and honesty does not pay (or is not properly rewarded) has found its way into the school system as students do not take their studies seriously any longer. The “I don’t care attitude” and the mentality to get rich through fraud often discourage the spirit of competition and hard work, and thus, inhibit national development.

Nigeria lacks inclusive political and economic institutions (Acemoglu, 2003; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Edison, 2003) to ensure proper rights and to empower the people with the skills and knowledge to realize their full potential. The political leaders have created these extractive institutions to enrich themselves and their cronies leaving the majority of the people to struggle for survival (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). This is one of the reasons for the incessant social unrests in the society, which have combined with the turbulent global economy and financial crisis to undermine the people’s ability to earn a living and improve their livelihood (World Economic Forum, 2007).

Many factors are retarding development and prosperity in Nigeria. There is widespread social injustice in Nigeria; the government rhetorically talks about the welfare of the needy and the growing number of jobless and sick people. But it does not provide them the tools to make a decent living; majority of them survive by virtue of the traditional safety net—the extended family system. As mentioned earlier, there are conflicting statistics about the rate of unemployment in Nigeria: The Nigerian Labour Congress at some point estimated the unemployment rate to be 35% while the National Bureau of Statistics report showed that about 10 million Nigerians (about 20% of the entire labor force) were unemployed as of March 2009. Recently, the World Bank reported that more than 40 million Nigerians are unemployed (see “Before Our Politicians Empty the Treasury,” 2010). The unemployment figure, as pointed out above, has worsened, particularly among the youth. How can a nation develop and prosper when the majority of the people are unemployed and swimming in the deep ocean of poverty?

Nigeria’s social structure and skewed value system appear to have contributed to the failure of the many reforms agenda and visions in the society. In particular, the Vision 2020 and the re-branding campaign embarked upon some years ago, which gulped a huge sum (but had nothing to show for it), could have been invested on human capital and infrastructural development to spur the economy and create employment. No society has become an industrialized nation without
investment in human capital development, functional institution and infrastructure, and particularly technology education. The Asian Tigers could not have become what they are today without investment in technological development (Mohan, 2003). Any person who thinks that Nigeria can be transformed into an economic giant or power-house without technological capability must be living in a different planet.

Concluding Remarks

This article seems, in the opinion of this author, to be a conclusive overview of Leading From the Emerging Future and Why Nations Fail as they relate to why Nigeria has failed to develop. Although additional study is needed, after reviewing the change framework in these seminal books and the activities of political leaders, this writer can hazard to say that Nigeria’s leaders can learn a huge lesson from this impressive research on how to develop the society. This is because the political leaders who are trumpeting positive social change appear to have “fixed mind-set,” which has prevented them from adopting and implementing effective sociopolitical and economic policies to transform the society. For instance, the political leaders are unable to shift their fixed mind-set (Dweck, 2007), to dismantle the nation’s man-made extractive political and economic institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) that are inimical to Nigeria’s economic growth and development. Effective institutions and infrastructure are known as the foundation for a long-run economic growth (Hoff, 2003; Mohan, 2003; Robbins, 2000).

That is the crux of the matter with Nigeria. If the leaders cannot change their mentality (Senge, 2006) or if they have “fixed mind-set” (Dweck, 2007), how would they create effective institutions and social structure to give the people a voice in the political process? And how can they alter the quality of attention the people give to their own actions? As the behavioral dimension of change espoused by the reviewed seminal research has noted, “The quality of results produced by any system depends on the quality of awareness from which people in the system operate” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 18).

Conflicts over the sharing of resources have been pervasive in the society. Given the poor state of affairs in the society, the political leaders do not appear to be leading with integrity. Most of them are not keeping their promises. Thus, Nigeria’s poor development appears to be caused by the poor policies of the policymakers and ineffective institutions. However, to move forward, the politicians should shift their mental models (Senge, 2006), create inclusive institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), and develop the courage, political will, and commitment to enthrone positive change in the society. They should also give the people a voice in the political process. The political leaders of Nigeria should, therefore, create a unity of purpose and shared vision to move the nation forward. The quality of a government, and thus that of its leadership, determines the quality of its policies and how they enhance the quality of the lives of the citizens.

The books have played a significant role in shaping this author’s understanding of how to transform extractive political and economic institutions into inclusive ones to empower the people and engender creativity, innovation, and national development. Currently, the education and health care delivery systems are not working, and the people are tired and hungry because the health of the economy is weak. The political leaders are able to stuff their pockets with public money because the plethora of anticorruption measures instituted in the society is not working. Many of them are not designed to work; in fact, nothing works!

To prevent the rising discontent in the society from reaching a boiling point, Nigeria needs a political leader with an open mind, an open heart, and an open will (Scharmer, 2007, p. 142; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005) to transform the education and health care systems and invest in functional infrastructure and inclusive institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). All these will combine to empower the people and enhance individual and national productivity, without which the nation will remain perpetually underdeveloped, with its attendant social unrest and political instability. That, unfortunately, is the case with Nigeria.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

References

Acemoglu, D. (2003, June). Root Causes: A historical approach to assessing the role of institutions in economic development. Finance and Development, 40(2), 27-30.

Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty. New York, NY: Crown.

Achebe, C. (1983). The trouble with Nigeria. London, England: Heinemann.

Adejoro, L. (2015, January 1). All eyes on universal health coverage, modern medical equipment. Daily Times. Retrieved from http://www.dailytimes.com.ng/article/2015-all-eyes-universal-health-coverage-modern-medical-equipment

Adetayo, O. (2014, November 5). No agreement yet on Chibok girls, says FG. Punch. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com/news/no-agreement-yet-on-chibok-girls-says-fg-2/

Afolayan, F. O. (2014, November-December). A holistic review of public funding of primary education in Nigeria. IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education, 4(6), 68-74.

Africa Innovation Summit Cabo Verde. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.africainnovationsummit.com/index.php/en

Akinnaso, N. (2013, December 31). 2013: The year of ASUU. Punch. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com/opinion/viewpoint/2013-the-year-of-asuu/
activities-at-lagos-federal-government-hospitals-stalled-as-health-workers-continue-strike-johesustrike/
Northouse, G. (2007). *Leadership theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
Obasanjo, O. (2013, December 12). OBJ’s letter to Jonathan. Vanguard. Retrieved from http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/objs-letter-jonathan/
Ocampo, J. A., & Vallejo, J. (2012). Economic growth, equity and human development in Latin America. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal for People-Centered Development*, 13, 107-133. doi:10.1080/19452829.2011.637395
Oluokun, A. (2014, November 11). Nigerian Senators vs. Jonathan. TheNews. Retrieved from http://thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2014/11/nigerian-senators-vs-jonathan/
Oxford Advanced Learner’s dictionary. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/mindset
Rate of job creation insufficient to tame unemployment in Nigeria. [editorial]. (2014, September 12). BusinessDay. Retrieved from http://businessdayonline.com/2014/09/rate-of-job-creation-insufficient-to-tame-unemployment-in-nigeria/
Robbins, P. (2000). The Rotten Institution: Corruption in natural resource management. *Political Demography*, 19, 423-443.
Rohan, M. J. (2000). A rose by any name? The values construct. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, 255-277.
Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York, NY: Free Press.
Ross, W. (2014, March 11). Is Nigeria serious about tackling corruption? BBC News, Lagos [Nigeria]. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26535530
Saphier, J., Haley-Speca, M. A., & Gower, R. (2008). *The skillful teacher: Building your teaching skills* (6th ed.). Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching.
Scharmer, C. O. (2007). *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges*. Cambridge, MA: The Society for Organizational Learning.
Scharmer, C. O., & Kaufer, K. (2013). *Leading from the emerging future: From ego-system to eco-system economies*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
Schumpeter, J. A. (1942). *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy*. New York, NY: Harper. (Reprinted by Harper Colophon, 1975).
Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1-65). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
Sen, A. (1975). *Employment, technology and development*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.
Senge, P. W. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
Senge, P. W., Scharmer, C. O., Jaworski, J., & Flowers, B. S. (2005). *Presence: An exploration of profound change in people, organizations, and society*. New York, NY: Crown.
Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
What seems a petty dispute exposes the gulf between India and America. (2014, January 4). The Economist. Retrieved from http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21592630-what-seems-petty-dispute-exposes-gulf-between-india-and-america-mangled-messages
World Economic Forum. (2007). *The Global Competitiveness Report* (2007-2008). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Author Biography**

**Victor E. Dike, EdD**, who is currently the founder and CEO of Center for Social Justice and Human Development (CSJHD), an NGO that provides educational and skills training services to the under-served groups in the area, was formerly adjunct professor, School of Engineering, Technology, and Media, National University (Sacramento Campus) California. He has more than 20 years of experience in education, and currently teaches for the Washington Unified School District (WUSD), West Sacramento, California. His recent book (co-authored with Dr. Meshack Okpala and Agatha Ekeh) is *Leadership and Governance: Implication on the Nigerian Economy* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publication, January 10, 2014). The book is available at www.Amazon.com, www.CreateSpace.com, and other book retail outlets.