# Infrastructural Development:
## A Panacea for Nigeria's Economic Transformation

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**Abstract**
The robustness of any economy will to a large extent, depend on some key interlocking economic factors. Presently, government has been drumming the necessities for transforming the nation's economic structures. This paper is a discursive study that argues for infrastructural development as a panacea for such economic transformation. Accordingly, a discourse on theoretical framework and review of relevant literature was undertaken. The paper also assessed the present condition of infrastructure and the economy in Nigeria, vis-à-vis the globalized economy. Also examined were the intertwined factors responsible for the present infrastructural decay in Nigeria. The paper reveals that government has neglected the provision of key infrastructures needed to drive the economy. The right quantity and quality of infrastructure needed to engender rapid economic transformation are for now either absent or in a state of disrepair. The paper recommended transparency and good governance, adequate funding of infrastructure in critical sectors, population control and physical planning as basic necessities to transform the national economy. Consequently, it was concluded that the war of economic transformation through infrastructural development in Nigeria may be lost or won depending on the availability of physical infrastructures which are germane to the realization of true socio-economic transformation.
***Keywords:* *.Economy .Transformation .Infrastructure .Development .Funding***

**Introduction**
In all nations of the world, the need for economic emancipation has continued to be of utmost priority in recent times. Nigeria being the largest black nation on earth has actually seen economic transformation as a noble goal. From the first world countries down to the third world societies, the need for economic prosperity has continued to be prioritized. Consequently, various tactics were adopted to transform national economies over the years. It was in the above realisation that (Olokesusi, 2011,p.6) states:

> At independence, many African countries including Nigeria were committed to achieving economic and social progress and development planning was the main strategies used by many governments to set their visions, missions, goals, and effective means of realizing economic and social progress.

To this end, Nigerian government has over the years, sought the need for economic advancements through various development plans. Such would include, but not limited to short, medium and long term development plans. Contemporarily, Nigerian government has equally envisioned the country's economy to top the most 20 developed economies by the year 2020. No doubt, it is a noble goal. Whether one likes it or not, infrastructural development has not been harnessed as a necessary strategy needed to grow the nation's economy. But it must be stated that the failure of past development plans in Nigeria cannot be divorced from the infrastructural deficit.

Although Nigeria sees this new approach (Vision 20:2020) as a way of addressing the shortfalls of past efforts, how well Nigeria will realise this new economic transformational dream is still a subject of academic debate. The Nigerian Vision 20:2020, according to Abdulhamid, (2008) in Olokesusi (2011) is an outcome of a research by the American Investment Bank which predicted that Nigeria will be in the league of 20 top economies based on the assessment of her abundant natural and human resources with the assumption that these resources will be effectively managed. It might not be out of place to dream dreams, but making such dreams come true is another matter altogether. Such long-term vision that would position Nigeria on the pedestal of sustained economic progress, should not only accelerate the emergence of a truly developed Nigeria, but must be seen to be practical in realising such goal. By so doing, contemporary strategies must be explored to realise such economic transformation. It is also not in doubt that Nigeria is a nation blessed with abundant human and material resources. Consequently, Nigeria's intends to improve the living standards of her citizens, while placing Nigeria among the top 20 economies of the world with a minimum GDP of $900 billion and a per capita income of no less than $4000 per annum (FGN, 2009a).

This national aspiration, National Planning Commission (2009) seeks to make Nigeria a globally competitive economy that is resilient and diversified with a globally competitive manufacturing sector that is tightly integrated and contributes not less than 25% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

It can be argued that Nigeria has so far made some progress since 1960 when she got political independence, but such successes would have been tremendous if a broad based approach was followed. If Nigeria must actually transform the economy, in tandem with the economic transformation being trumpeted by the present democratic government, a robust infrastructural development is required.

This paper assesses *infrastructural development as a panacea for Nigeria's economic transformation* and argues that only infrastructural development can truly engender the requisite socioeconomic transformation needed in Nigeria for now.

**Theoretical Framework**

Over the years, social development and economics scholars have put up various theoretical propositions. Such theories would be needed to evaluate the nature of research that embraces the place of infrastructural development as a necessity for economic transformation. For sure, there have been opinion variances among scholars and development expert as to how infrastructure engenders development. Hence, effort is being made to critically appraise relevant theories that relate to infrastructure vis-à-vis economic growth. That is, to dissect or x-ray relationship between infrastructural development and economic development.

**Economic Transformation and Infrastructure as a Key**

For any economic system like that of Nigeria to experience practical transformation or development, there is the need to invest in social services and key physical facilities or assets. This may have prompted Ogun (2010,p.34) to argue that:

> The urge to increase public investments in urban areas is as a result of the fact that they are key determinants of long-term sustainable growth, and has the capacity for the poor to benefit accordingly from the growth process.

Speaking from theoretical perspective, three philosophies exist on investment in infrastructure as a strategy for reducing poverty. The first school, according to Jahan & McCleery (2005) and Jerome & Ariyo (2004) argue that investment in social infrastructure, which encompasses investment in health and education, is more relevant to poverty reduction goals than investment in physical infrastructure. Next is that investment in both social and physical infrastructure does reduce poverty. And lastly, the philosophy holds that investment in infrastructure generally does not reduce poverty.

Those who support the third philosophy build their theoretical arguments on three platforms. Firstly, they argue that though investment in infrastructure is of utmost necessity for economic development, it has absolutely little relevance to reducing poverty. Also, it is being argued that actual benefits from infrastructure have not significantly met desired expectation. Thirdly, Ali & Pernia (2003) believe that in developing nations, characterized by weak governance and institutions, the tendency for government officials to be corrupt is very high, and in this scenario, decisions to invest in infrastructure may be distorted, thereby lowering the contribution of infrastructure to growth. From the above theoretical premises, it can be intellectually argued that if good governance is put in place and institutional structures are well developed and established, the connection between infrastructural development and economic transformation can also loom larger.

**Theory of Commercialization and Privatization**

Privatization and commercialization have become a modern-day development strategy or policy of Nigeria government. This strategy was introduced by Olusengun Obasanjo's regime, while vigorously and robustly adopted by the present Goodluck Jonathan's government. This strategy encompasses deregulating the economy to encourage private individual participation, while boosting efficiency and productivity in the short and long run. The key elements, in the view of Olukoju (1996), are the disengagement of government from the ownership of hitherto state-owned enterprises and the concomitant sale of such enterprises to private entrepreneurs. Here, the private sector becomes the driving force of development, while the government is concerned with creating atmosphere that enables economic growth. This approach to economic development has been globally adopted and it seems to have worked over the years. However, this is done in the global scene through efficient style of allocating resource by a free interplay of market forces. This strategy of deregulation *(Commercialization and Privatization)*encourages competition. By so doing, a greater volume of social and economic overhead capital or infrastructures will be built up in a market environment that is not only efficient but competitive.

This strategy encourages governments to off shed their economically inefficient and unproductive enterprises to generate more revenue from the sale of these economically unproductive enterprises. Such disposal of the economic infrastructures and parastatals enables government to focus more attention on social parastatals and infrastructures. This, Familoni (2000) aver, will adequately create substantial external economies through the provision of public goods such as education, health, portable water and sanitation. This economic transformational strategy in Nigeria has produced significant results over the years, particularly in the telecommunication sector.

**Facts about Nigeria's Economy**

Nigeria as a nation is endowed with the right mix of human and natural resources and has no excuse not to be economically transformed in an age where there is global economic competition and development. The economic profile of Nigeria shows that the country's economic potential is very great. Presently, the country is living beyond her means. This is because, in a productive, prudent and efficient economy, increase in expenditure should be offset by increase in productivity and growth. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with Nigeria.

Key facts about Nigeria would include:

- Nigeria has a disputed estimate population of 167million people
- Nigeria has over 80million hectares of arable land.
- Nigeria is the 8th largest producer of gas oil and 6th largest exporter of crude oil.
- Nigeria has 33 solid minerals in commercial quantity in 450 locations across the country (The Punch, 2011).
- Current crude oil production is 2.19 mb/day and export is 1.74 mb/d.
- Nigeria has a more diversified economy that is presently growing at 7.0% per annum.
- Between January and September, 2011, Nigeria generated N3.37 trillion from taxes alone (The Sun, 2011).
- Between April to June, 2011, Nigeria generated N2.4 trillion revenue and N1.8 trillion was from oil (The Sun, 2011). These statistics suggest that 75.0% of the country' revenue is from oil (FGN, 2010).

In spite of her huge human and natural resources, Nigeria as at 2009 occupied the 42nd position among the 60 largest economies in the world (FGN, 2009). Relatively, she still maintains the same position at the moment. Largest economies of the world have high GDP per capital except China ($6,757), Brazil ($8,402), India ($3,452), Indonesia ($3,843), Turkey ($8,407), Russia ($10,845) and Mexico ($10,751) whose high population figure accounted for lower GDP per capita. America has the highest GDP per capita of $41,890). Nigeria currently has the lowest GDP per capita of $1,128 among the top 60 countries (FGN, 2010).

Nigeria's most recent GDP annual growth rate of 7.0% is slightly more than the annual population growth rate of 3.2%. However, this impressive economic growth has been weakened by the high poverty rate of 54.4%. Among the top 60 largest economies of the world, Nigeria's poverty level is the second highest, with Columbia's 64% being the worst (NPC, 2009).

**Role of Infrastructure in Economic Transformation**

Infrastructure is not only the engine, but the wheels of all economic activities. Infrastructure, in the view of Ogbuozobe (1997) refers to a network of transport, communication and social services – all functioning as a set of interrelated and mutually beneficial services provided for the improvement of the overall well-being of the population. Development economists see infrastructure as an umbrella term for so many activities which they regard as "social overhead capital".

Social services refer to those services or facilities meant for the good of the common man. Such will include drinkable pipe borne water supply, efficient healthcare delivery system, sound education, electricity, and telecommunication facilities among others. No doubt, sufficient infrastructural services are necessities and indispensable tools for economic emancipation or transformation of any country, particularly Nigeria, being one of the developing economies of the world. How adequate the infrastructural facilities of a nation is, to a large extent, determines the pace of economic transformation. This explains Nigeria's success or failure in production diversification, coping with population explosion, poverty reduction, and improving environmental conditions.

Infrastructure, in this context therefore, can be classified distinctly and broadly along these two lines:

- Physical Infrastructure - roads, electricity, telecommunication, etc
- Social Infrastructure - education, health, recreation, housing, etc.

It must be emphasised that physical infrastructure is often likened to or referred to as economic infrastructure. Hence, infrastructural development as a panacea for economic transformation has been highlighted along these lines.

It cannot be argued that economic transformation can only be accelerated by a robust infrastructural development strategy, it is indeed a panacea. If these infrastructural facilities are absent, economic transformational effort would be encumbered. Perhaps, this argument aligns with that of Adeyemo (1989) that adequate access to good roads, potable water supply, medical services, education, employment opportunities and stable electricity, are strong indices of development.

**Physical Infrastructure**

Physical infrastructure in this paper has been aligned to that advanced by Aigbokhan (1999) when he gave examples of physical infrastructure as public utilities such as power, telecommunications, pipe borne water supply, environmental sanitation and sewage, as well as public works which include roads, major dam and canal works for irrigation and drainage, and other transport projects like urban transport, urban and interurban railways, seaports and waterways and airports.

In other developed societies of the world, key physical infrastructural development has significantly engineered overall growth in their economic indices. Countries like China, Brazil, Korea, Israel and Japan, have adequately invested in the development of infrastructures. This has ultimately resulted in the total transformation of their economies. However, places where the development of infrastructures has not followed such a rational and coordinated path, economic transformation has been stunted or outrightly retarded. This is the case of most developing economies like Nigeria. Empirical research efforts have delved in this seemingly controversial area of research, as various studies have produced variant results as it concerns the use of infrastructure in engendering economic transformation. According to the World Bank (1994), infrastructural capacity grows step by step with economic output. For example, a 1% increase in the stock of infrastructure is associated with 1% Gross Domestic Product.

Also, Empirical studies from eighty nine (89) districts in thirteen (13) States in India, according to Ogbuozobe (1997) reveal that lower transport costs increased farmers' access to markets and led to considerable agricultural expansion, even as modern irrigation techniques brought high yields.

Investigating the long run effects of infrastructural provision on per capita income in a range of countries between 1950 and 1992, the results according Canning and Pedroni (2004) provide clear evidence that in the vast majority of cases, infrastructures such as paved roads, telephone, and electricity generating capacity does produce long run effects on economic growth. The provision of economic infrastructure does expand the productive capacity of the economy by increasing the quality and quantity of such infrastructure. This ultimately accelerates the pace of economic development, thereby enhancing the pace of transformation of the socio-economy.

In 1992, Cesar and Surhid discovered that road infrastructure is a significant element of economic development. In their World Bank study of 1992, where they employed an empirical approach to define the relationship between economic development and road infrastructure, findings showed that there are consistent and significant relationship between economic development (in terms of per capita gross national product (GNP) and road infrastructure (in terms of per capita length of paved road network). The study also showed that road condition seems to be associated with economic development. Hence, it can be empirically argued that development of infrastructures does promote economic transformation.

**Social Infrastructure**

Importantly, a healthy workforce is one of the major determinants of labour productivity and efficiency. The environment in which economic activities take place is of utmost importance. Conducive working environment, no doubt, engenders speedy growth and development. Hence, human capital components of infrastructure, in the view of Aigbokhan (1999), have been found to have impact on economic development. The realization of the ongoing Transformational Agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan would depend to a great extent, on the availability of the necessary infrastructure in the right quantity and quality.

Also, no nation can attain any meaningful economic transformation without good educational infrastructures. Hence, education has been regarded as a crucial panacea for economic growth. In support of the above averment, Denison (1962) contended that even though education is a social investment, it can also be seen as an economic investment, since it improves the stock of human capital needed for the transformation of the economy. Nigeria being a developing society needs experts in all angles to accelerate the development of such sectors. It was because of this reality that made UNESCO to recommend a minimum of fifteen percent of national expenditures on education, even though some more developed economies have exceeded such minimal standards in their developmental agenda.

There empirical evidence to suggest that urbanization has correlation with economic development and that there is also a strong correlation between economic transformation and infrastructural development. Hence, metropolitan cities and urban places with high quality infrastructure are expected to play key roles in economic transformational of such society. Unfortunately, cities in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, according to Yunusa (2011) fail to optimally and fully exploit the economies of agglomeration, because they are poorly planned, managed and lack adequate density and services.

In Nigeria, more than 27% of GDP and about 64% of urban labour force is in the informal sector, not accounted for in the books as well as not recorded in the macro-economic indices (Aigbokhan, 1999). This large proportion of urban population lacks the requisite infrastructure that will propel their businesses to contribute to national economy in a significant way. In a cyclical manner, improved access to infrastructural services induces economic growth.

**Infrastructural Development in Nigeria: Present State**

Nigeria, as a Federating State (federal, state and local); each federating unit provides infrastructure in tandem with their constitutional responsibilities. Even though there had been improved budgetary allocations by government to infrastructure in the last decade, realities on ground do not justify past budgetary allocations by successive governments.

***Electricity:*** Presently, the situation of power in the country does not reflect the economic transformation agenda. In Nigeria, electricity supply is in the exclusive list. That is, responsibility is placed on the government at the centre constitutionally. Since 1960, the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) managed the power sector, but due to abysmal poor performance, the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) through the Electric Power Sector Act of 2005 took over power generation and distribution in Nigeria. At the moment, the sector is being fully deregulated with several private companies emerging to handle different aspect such as power generation, power transmission and power distribution. Here in Nigeria, power outages are recurrent decimal, and the power sector operates well below expected capacity. For now, power generation in Nigeria is about 3500MW. Nigeria is presently facing serious energy crisis as a result of declining electricity generation from domestic power plants.

Electricity consumption per capita in Nigeria is 111 KWH. Indeed, it is one of the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. This is as a result of suppressed demand caused by deteriorated electricity supply infrastructure. Evidence shows that Nigeria has generation capacity of 5,900 MW (three hydro-based and five thermal plants).

The poor state of electricity supply and other infrastructure in Nigeria has unduly increased the cost of doing business. As a result, most productive and manufacturing firms have relocated out of Nigeria to other economically viable and friendly nations of Africa.

***Oil and Gas:*** Oil being a major income earner for Nigeria currently accounts for about 85% of her annual revenue. Over the years, the Oil and Gas sector has been managed by Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). As a result of limited gas distribution infrastructure, Nigeria flares about 2.6 bcf/d of gas, representing 12.5% of all globally flared gas, which is 68% of the associated gas produced or 51% of the total gas production, although Nigeria is working seriously to meet the zero gas flaring deadline (Aigbokhan, 1999). Also, the domestic market is limited by the low level of industrialization and the inadequacy of the gas transmission and distribution infrastructure (Ogun, 2010).

More importantly, Nigeria has four oil refineries (2 in Port-Harcourt, 1 in Warri and 1 Kaduna). Since they were built, none has worked at full capacity. Rather than build productive refineries, government has consistently delved into *turn-around maintenance* which costs over $200 million for each of the refineries, yet it is difficult to produce between 25 and 30 per cent of daily fuel consumption in the country. Consequently, Nigeria has always sold crude oil to foreign buyers as export; and in return buy back the processed products at a very high cost compared to if the oil were refined within the country (Ogun, 2010).

***Transport:*** An objective evaluation of the transport sector in all its ramifications shows that Nigeria has fallen well behind international benchmarks or standards. Some of the infrastructures have suffered years of neglect, under-investment and poor maintenance culture. Nigeria has a total road length of 193,200 kilometres, comprising 34,123 km Federal roads, 30,500 km State roads, and 129,577 km Local Government roads (Ogun, 2010). All these roads have really suffered years of neglect, never maintained at all in some situations. This administrative and governmental attitude is economically unhealthy and cannot support economic transformational agenda or drive.

The railway system has almost crumbled until 2013 when efforts were being intensified to revive the moribund rail systems in Nigeria. The neglect of the railway system has ultimately led to over-dependence on road transport with 98% of goods being transported by road. Air transport infrastructure in Nigeria is largely located within the country's international and domestic airports and private airstrips. In the final analysis, air transport is still being seen as a luxury in Nigeria, and in other cases, there have been series of air disasters or crashes that actually reveal the level of rot and regret in this sector. However, the Jonathan's government has recently had a renewed effort to transform the air transport infrastructures across Nigeria.

Social Infrastructure such as health, education, water and sanitation needed to engender socioeconomic transformation has either been neglected or not provided at all. This shows that Nigeria is not infrastructural ready to drive economic transformation.

**Factors Responsible for the Present State of Infrastructure**

In Nigeria, several interlocking factors have been largely responsible for the present state of infrastructure.

***Economic Sabotage and Corruption:*** Economic sabotage through vandalization of public facilities (oil pipelines and power transmission lines) has impacted negatively on the nation's economy.

On the other hand, Corruption has been a bane to development in Nigeria, and a major socio-economic problem with negative effects on developing key infrastructure. Embezzling resources appropriated for infrastructural development is a common phenomenon among public officers. Most worrisome, many projects for which funds have been promptly allocated and released were never completed (abandoned projects) while inflation of project costs (collecting bribe from contractors) is a common experience.

***Bad Governance:*** System of governance in Nigeria, which has been regarded by economic and development experts as bad, has been largely responsible for infrastructural decay in all sectors. Current data indicate that the economy is growing at 7%. The poor GDP growth rate, according to The Punch (2011) is largely due to inefficient allocation and poor management of the country's human and natural resources.

The present system of governance in Nigeria has hindered the development of infrastructure. State governments in Nigeria have been controlling the finances of the local governments. Consequently, many local governments have lacked freedom and financial strength to embark on any infrastructural development project that can serve as catalyst for economic transformation, particularly at the grassroots.

***Population Explosion:*** Presently, Nigeria's population is 167million and growing at 3.2% per annum (NPC, 2009). The physical and social infrastructure required to support this huge population is enormous and requires huge funding. The population explosion has placed undue pressure on existing infrastructure over the years. Such pressure on government budget has made the infrastructure base grossly inadequate and lacking in maintenance.

The short-fall in infrastructural provision affects the economy negatively and lowers productivity in every sector. This has been occasioned by inability of government, over the years, to integrate population policy with overall development planning.

***Poor Funding:*** For several decades in Nigeria, funding has become a major challenge to infrastructural development. Due to population explosion, the need for additional infrastructure also increased in all sectors. Unfortunately, resources of the government cannot meet the increasing demand. Hence, government relied on foreign loans to complement budgetary allocations in providing physical and social infrastructure. The need to develop infrastructure in critical sectors of the economy has eventually plunged Nigeria into debt. This has made financing key infrastructure a big problem to the government, hence the present level of infrastructure.

**Conclusion**

From analogies in this paper, it can therefore be reasonably concluded that infrastructure plays critical roles in the economic transformation of any nation, Nigeria not exempted.

Nigeria as a whole needs to imbibe the culture of transparency and accountability with greater managerial skills, adequate funding and greater private sector participation in the economic transformation drives. Bad governance, poor funding, corruption and poor management culture are some of the major threats to the provision of key infrastructures that should drive the economic transformation agenda.

Infrastructural development plans, policies and programmes are carried out in time and space and for the benefits of humanity and common good; they must be carried out in human environments, hence the urgent need for proper planning. The war of economic transformation in Nigeria would be lost or won in our localities where productive economic activities are located; hence physical planning of these environments is germane to the realization of true socio-economic transformation.

**Recommendations**

Economic transformation is a noble goal that must be vigorously pursued by government and the private sector alike. For the development of infrastructures as prerequisite for economic transformation in Nigeria, the following have been recommended:

1. It is inevitable to expect population explosion in a developing nation like Nigeria. Government must therefore plan and sustain such population explosion to achieve economic growth.
2. To reduce governments' financial burden on infrastructural development, there must be deliberate control of the country's population as done in China. Today, about 55 per cent of the population lives on less than $1 per day. This is one of the highest poverty rates in sub-Saharan Africa. China, for its part, with a population growth rate of 0.493, has moved rapidly into healthier economic structure than countries such as India and Nigeria, where little is done on population control.
3. Government has as its responsibilities to concentrate on the provision of quality education to enhance quality human capital, quality health care and basic physical and social infrastructure needed to drive economic transformation of the present administration.
4. In order to achieve economic transformation in the highest level possible, the process of development should be backed up with good governance and robust infrastructure.
5. There should be more investment in infrastructure in the critical sectors of the economy. By so doing, Nigeria needs to be more transparent in her business transactions needed to boost physical and social infrastructures.
6. Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government in Nigeria must have their accounts for the past 20 years audited. This is to expose all the fraud that has taken place against the provision of social and physical infrastructures.
7. The government must be committed to a long-term improvement and maintenance of the various key infrastructures like power, transport, water and sanitation, and be consistent in funding same. Alternative sources of funding key sectors like power, transport, water and sanitation must be devised to reduce the demands on the budget.
8. The plundering of the nation's gas resources due to the failure of foreign oil companies to invest in infrastructure to utilize natural gas is an act of economic sabotage. This must be urgently checked if Nigeria must truly transform the national economy.
9. The Central Bank and Federal Government should expedite efforts to increase the debt and liquidity of Nigeria's capital markets so as to facilitate private sector's ability to raise finance for infrastructural investment.
10. Existing public enterprises have failed to manage public facilities and services, no doubt, government, therefore, must complete the total deregulation in the power sector. Total deregulation should also be made visible in the transport, oil and gas industries.

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