



International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management
Volume 6, Issue 2, pp. 180-192, 2024.

ISSN: 2735-9220

www.ijilpm.com.ng



INNOVATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically focused on the impact of innovative and transformational leadership on national development. The Nigerian State is in dire need of innovative and transformational leadership that will bring about economic, industrial, social, moral, cultural, and technological development. The Nation is bedeviled with plethora of problems in every sector majorly due to the kind of leaders who are at the helm of affair from the federal to local levels. The problem is not the lack of transformational and innovative leaders but the political structure and system that recycles leaders who are not innovative enough to transform different sectors of the nation and this has culminated into poor economic growth and slow pace of development. This paper established the exigent need for innovative leaders who will transform the nation in order to ensure that Nigeria's efforts towards economic, industrial, technological and all-round growth is pursued more vigorously with the desired impetus that can guarantee appreciable success within the timeframe of the sustainable development goals. It suggested that political parties and structures should be diligent and dutiful in allowing leaders who are innovative and transformational to contest for elective positions and also that the electorates (Nigerians) should shun nepotism, tribalism, ethnicity and stomach infrastructures during elections in order to elect leaders who have their interests at heart and will bring in creativity and innovations in different sectors of the nation for sustainable national development.

Keywords: Leadership, Development, Innovative Leadership, Transformational Leadership, National Development.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Ibe, P. O., & Tiger, T. H. (2024). Innovative and transformational leadership for national development. *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management*, 6(2), 180-192.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a clear-cut relationship between leadership, governance and development because, leadership affects governance and governance affects development. The Nigerian state has a strong potential to be enlisted amongst developed nations of the world but this is far from the reality because of the kind of leadership we have presently and this invariably affects development in all sectors. The import of innovative and transformational leadership cannot be over-emphasized or over-stressed because leadership sets the tone for development to take place. The deficit in innovative and transformational leadership has continued to undermine meaningful, steady and purposeful growth and development of Nigeria as a nation.

Onwudiwe (2017) highlighted the leadership problem in Nigeria and stated that tens of thousands of Nigerians are dying annually because of acute starvation and chronic diseases that would have been prevented if it were not for the misguided policies of the Nigerian governing elite. Also, Uduma (2015) observed that leadership in Nigeria is a completely failed enterprise that has consistently kept the nation on the path of corrupt, visionless and inept governance for many decades.

Almost every sector, ministry, department and agency (MDA) is affected by bad leadership and governance and this impedes on growth and development of the nation. This is also the case because of the effects of corruption on the energy sector, public education, healthcare, infrastructure, security, standard of living and the law enforcement agencies.

According to Onyema (2012), the impact of poor leadership and bad governance can be instrumental to poor or sluggish economic growth and development and therefore has significant negative implications on different aspects of the socio-economic action ties and processes including the industrial sector which propels the economic sphere in a nation. Iheriohna and Oguoma (2010) asserted that the development models that recommend structural and institutional reforms, attitudinal change, liberalization, open economies, free markets and market friendly economies point at the necessity for reforms by knowledgeable and visionary leadership.

To bridge the existing gap, there is the exigent need for innovative and transformational leaders to sail the economic, educational, political, industrial and technological ship of the nation – leaders who truly inspire and motivate their subordinates and team members to achieve the Nigeria of our dreams. Nigeria is in dire need of leaders who aim to transform every sector, team, or community by fostering a culture of innovation, experimentation and development – leaders who truly possess the capacity, political will, mandate and charisma to deliver good governance that will bring about national revolution in every lackluster sector of the nation.

The nexus of this paper is on the interconnection between the concepts of transformational and innovative leadership and national development. It considers transformational and innovative leadership as apt and timely for Nigeria at this point of her industrial quagmire and establishes the real and positive effects it can have on the structures and policies of governance that can effectively bring about the much alluded growth and development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Leadership

Attempts to define leadership can be categorised into conceptual, construction, and typology frameworks. Grint's four factor conceptual categorisation holds that leadership as a *person*, *position*, *result*, and *process* (Grint, 2010). For Grint, *person* leadership concerns *who* an individual is and the inherent traits and exhibited behaviours that lead others to perceive them as a leader. For *position* leadership, the *where* is the analytical thrust - it focuses on an individual's occupancy of a station or rank within a system or group. *Results* based leadership is about the performance ability and *what* outcomes are achieved. *Process based* leadership (PBL) combines the *who*, *what*, and *where* to understand the *how* and *why* of leadership (Murphy, 1941). It investigates how individuals use the multifarious elements of the aforementioned perspectives to attain and maintain leadership.

According to Sharma and Jain (2013), leadership refers to a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent to achieve the course of action. In a more practical and simple terms, leadership can be seen as the ability to get a person or group to do what you want them to do, when you want it done, in the way you want it done because it is necessary to be done (Jumogu, 2011). Obinna (2013) viewed leadership as culture context specific capacity to inspire or induce individuals to give their best to achieve a desired result and to maintain effective and healthy relationships. Innovative and transformational leadership are two forms of leadership that this paper will focus on.

Transformational leadership

The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978) in his descriptive research on political leaders and on visionary leaders for a progressive and sustainable society. It is a form or style of leadership that focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal growth. It involves creating a vision for the future, communicating that vision in a compelling way, and empowering and supporting others to work towards that vision. It is a leadership process that is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals and includes accessing people's motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as rational human beings. It involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. Charismatic and visionary leaders are important elements of transformational leadership (Northouse, 2004). Onwudiwe (2017) emphasized that transformational leadership will afford the country the necessary leadership quality that is so central to the revitalization of Nigeria's national unity.

Transformational Leadership Verifiers

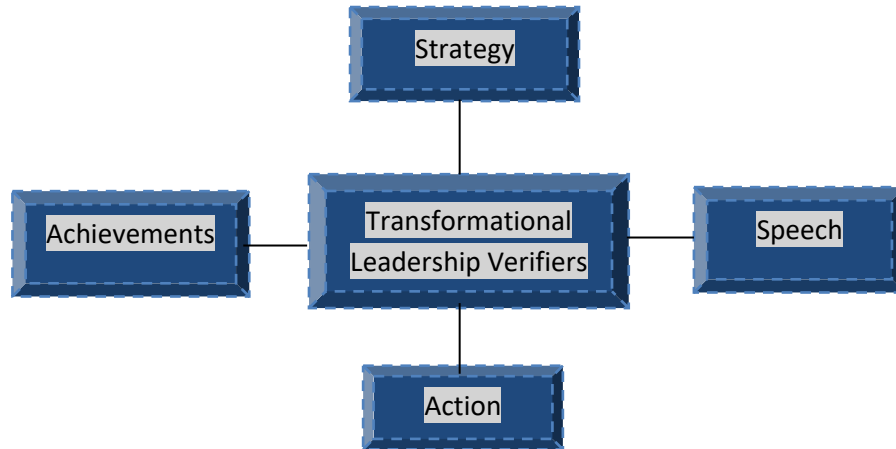


Figure1: Transformational Leadership Verifiers

Source: John-Mary Kauzya (2020) Developing Transformational Leadership Capacity in Africa’s Public Sector Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs.

Transformational leaders can initiate, develop and carry out significant changes in the country that will transform the lives of ordinary Nigerians for good (Onwudiwe, 2017). Transformational leaders empower and nurture citizens towards positive change; raise their consciousness and get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others; act as strong role models for the country with a highly developed set of moral values and a self-determined sense of identity, confidence, competence, articulate with strong ideas and character. Most importantly, transformational leadership possesses the capacity to create a vision that is consensual which can initiate and implement new directions for the country (Osuigwe, 2014). Transformational leadership has these key characteristics: visionary thinking, charisma and inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, empowerment and trust, effective communication, emotional intelligence, and continuous improvement.

Innovative Leadership

It will be ideal to understand the concept of ‘innovation’ before delving into more conceptual clarification and critical issues that bother on ‘innovative leadership.’

Robert (2014) posited that innovation itself is a process where we take an idea and further translate it into a valuable service or concept.

Couros (2015) defined innovation to be a way of thinking that creates something *new* or *better*. In addition to the definition of innovation, Couros draws upon Carol Dweck’s growth mindset and defines the mindset of the innovator to be, “the belief that the abilities, intelligences, and talents are developed so that they lead to the creation of new and better ideas” (p.33). He (Couros) believed that people must be free to fail and to have both the qualities of resiliency and grit. One major factor that distinguishes the leader and follower is innovation. The innovative leader continuously looks for better ways to satisfy his target audience and market with improved quality, durability and value-driven services.

Having understood the concept of ‘innovation’ it is appropriate to understand who an innovative leader is, how he leads and what characterizes his leadership.

An innovative leader is someone who fosters a culture of creativity, experimentation and continuous improvement within their organization, sector or nation. The leader encourages and empowers others to generate new ideas, take calculated risks, and develop innovative solutions to complex problems. Innovative leaders inspire their teams to challenge the status quo, experiment with new approaches, and embrace change as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

On the other hand innovative leadership refers to the ability of leaders to drive and facilitate innovation within their organizations, fields of endeavour, sector and nation. Some key principles and practices associated with innovative leadership are:

- Vision and Purpose;
- Empowerment;
- Open Communication;
- Risk-Taking;
- Experimentation;
- Adaptability;
- Lead by Example;
- Resource Allocation;
- Recognition and Rewards;
- Long-term Perspective.

Development

The concept ‘development’ means different things to different persons because there is no single definition. However, there are key variables that must be evident in every definition. The definition must take into cognizance that development must be related to change in the society, and this change must not only be positive but also a conscious one. Development is the positive and conscious transformation of a society and its people.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics (2009) viewed development as the: “fulfillment of the necessary conditions for the realization of the potential of human personality. At its simplest form, development is the increasing satisfaction of basic needs of people.

World Bank (1994:33) simply defined development as the act of: “improving standards of living over a long term”. World Bank went further to itemize these standards to include: better education, health, housing, transport facilities and infrastructures, industrialization and technology.

Albert et al. (2012:33), argued that “development is not only restricted to the concept of modernization where supposedly, there are chains of industries, good road networks, beautiful urban development and so forth. If all these are achieved and yet, the greater mass of the populace still remains mal-nourished, illiterate, unemployed, unhealthy and generally poor, it means that such a country is not yet developed. Or if there is the presence of infrastructural development and yet there is no discipline and respect for the rule of law in the polity, such a country is still not developed”. As faulty as the World Bank conception may be, and as correct as the criticisms levied against it may be, it seems to us vividly that we cannot meaningfully talk about development without paying greater attention on the standards.

Agbanusi (2012:84) posited that “development is a change from one stage to another with regards to society; it is a change from one social level to another. The common wish of man is to pilot society to a higher or more advanced level with regard to economy, education, culture, politics, science and technology. These are among the areas of life which progress will culminate into national development”. From this, we can say that development means advancement or improvement on the people’s well-being and progress in the society (Obama 2016).

Better still, development can be viewed as a way of using the natural, economic and human resources for the advancement of the society for the over-all benefits of the members of the society.

National Development

The concept of national development cut across every society, state or nation whether it is a first-world or third-world country. It encompasses different aspects and sectors of any nation. It is a process of economic, social, industrial, political, educational and technological progress aimed at improving the standard of living, well-being and prosperity of a nation’s citizens. The various aspects of national development include:

Economic Development

The following are the criteria or yardsticks to measure economic development:

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth:** Increasing the overall output of goods and services within the economy.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Creating jobs and reducing unemployment rates.
- **Income Distribution:** Ensuring equitable distribution of wealth and reducing income inequality.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Building and maintaining physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports, and utilities to support economic activities.
- **Industrialization and Diversification:** Developing diverse sectors of the economy to reduce dependence on a single industry or export.
- **Investment Climate:** Creating an environment conducive to investment by providing incentives, ensuring regulatory clarity, and protecting property rights.

Social Development

To determine the social development of a nation, the following factors are considered:

- **Education:** Ensuring access to quality education at all levels to promote human capital development.
- **Healthcare:** Providing affordable and accessible healthcare services to improve public health outcomes.
- **Social Protection:** Establishing social safety nets to support vulnerable populations, including the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities.
- **Gender Equality:** Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls to participate fully in economic, social, and political life.

- **Inclusion and Diversity:** Fostering social cohesion and inclusion by respecting and celebrating diversity in ethnicity, culture, religion, and language.
- **Quality of Life:** Enhancing the overall well-being of citizens by improving living standards, housing, and access to basic amenities.

Environmental Sustainability

This entails the following:

- **Natural Resource Management:** Promoting sustainable management of natural resources such as land, water, forests, and minerals to ensure their long-term availability.
- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** Implementing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and build resilience to environmental hazards.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Protecting and preserving biodiversity and ecosystems to maintain ecological balance and support sustainable development (Arinze, 2012).
- **Clean Energy Transition:** Transitioning to renewable energy sources and promoting energy efficiency to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and combat air pollution.

Governance and Institutions

The following determine development of a nation with respect to governance and institutions:

- **Rule of Law:** Upholding the rule of law, ensuring equal access to justice, and protecting human rights and civil liberties.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Promoting transparency in government operations, decision-making processes, and public financial management.
- **Anti-Corruption Efforts:** Combating corruption at all levels of government and society through effective anti-corruption measures and enforcement.
- **Effective Public Administration:** Building strong and efficient public institutions capable of delivering quality public services and implementing policies effectively.
- **Democratic Governance:** Promoting democratic principles, including free and fair elections, political pluralism, and respect for democratic institutions.

Cultural and Identity Development

The criteria for cultural and identity development is as follows:

- **Cultural Preservation:** Preserving and promoting cultural heritage, traditions, and languages to foster national identity and pride.
- **Arts and Creativity:** Supporting artistic expression, creativity, and cultural industries to enrich society and promote cultural exchange.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Using culture as a tool for international engagement and diplomacy to build bridges between nations and promote mutual understanding

Technological Innovation and Knowledge Economy

The following variables are pointer to technological innovation and knowledge economy:

- **Research and Development:** Investing in research, development, and innovation to drive technological advancements and create knowledge-based industries.
- **Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Expanding access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) to bridge the digital divide and foster digital inclusion.
- **Entrepreneurship and Startups:** Supporting entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems to spur economic growth, job creation, and competitiveness in the global market.

Nigerian Leaders can be Innovative and Transformational: The HOW...

Political parties have undoubtedly become the platform and structures from which leaders emerge in Nigeria but the political class is egocentric and cares less about the standard of life and standard of living of the average citizen. This narrative has to change if Nigeria is to make headway in becoming a first world country thriving in every sector. The kind of politicians we have in the country makes it difficult for citizens to enjoy the dividends of democracy largely due to corruption and other factors which impede growth and development. All hope is not lost, Nigerians must awaken from deep slumber and demand for leaders who are innovative and transformational – this is realizable if every Nigerian can think in this direction before becoming bonafide members of any political party. This is because the gross misconduct and the level of corruption in the system are a reflection of the gross misconduct and corruption-thinking and tendencies of the average Nigerian. While I strongly believe that all Nigerians are not corrupt, I know of a truth that a greater percentage of Nigerians are corrupt. There can be no positive change on the outside if no change has taken place on the inside.

If you must demand for transformational and innovative leaders as a citizen or follower, you should also assiduously work towards being a better citizen who is patriotic, progressive, innovation and of course transformational. Nigerian leader can lead with a difference by:

- Embracing a vision for sustainable development and inclusive growth.
- Prioritizing transparency, accountability and good governance.
- Fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity.
- Investing in human capital development, education and healthcare.
- Promoting national unity, diversity and social cohesion.
- Encouraging participatory governance and citizen engagement.
- Encouraging private sector growth and economic diversification.
- Leading by example, demonstrating integrity and upholding ethical standards.
- Fostering regional and global partnerships for cooperation and development.
- Addressing security challenges and ensuring public safety.
- Empowering youth and women, and promoting gender equality.
- Supporting cultural revitalization and preserving national heritage.
- Encouraging continuous learning, self-reflection and leadership development.

Impact of Innovative and Transformational Leadership on National Development

Ikegwuoha (2016) concurred that leadership plays a major role in establishing good governance, economic and political direction of a country and it also influences how well an actor takes advantage of other parameters of power. This is apt for transformational leadership when placed side by side with other leadership studies. Thus, the style has enabled organizations and countries to pull their strength, resources and goals for common good. These are points of divergence between developed and developing countries in Africa where leaders hold sway at all cost and at great pains to their followers. Innovative and transformational leadership can contribute immensely to national development in the following ways:

Promote collaborations and partnerships

Transformational and innovative leaders recognize the importance of collaboration and partnerships in driving national development. They engage with diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector companies, civil society organizations, and academia, to leverage resources, share expertise, and co-create solutions to pressing challenges.

Drive institutional reform and governance

Transformational and innovative leaders champion institutional reform and good governance practices that enhance transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. They streamline bureaucratic processes, combat corruption, and strengthen the rule of law, creating an enabling environment for investment, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

Inspire Vision

Transformational leaders have a compelling vision for the future that inspires and motivates people to work towards common goals. By articulating a vision of progress and prosperity, these leaders mobilize citizens and stakeholders to actively participate in the development process.

Foster empowerment and development

They empower individuals and communities to reach their full potential. They invest in human capital development, provide training and education opportunities, and create platforms for innovation and entrepreneurship. By unlocking the talents and creativity of their people, these leaders drive economic growth and social advancement.

Adaptable and resilient in the face of change

These kinds of leaders are adaptable and resilient in the face of change and uncertainty. They anticipate challenges, embrace new opportunities, and pivot strategies as needed to navigate complex environments. By fostering a culture of adaptability, these leaders enable nations to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Long-Term Sustainability

Transformational and innovative leaders prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains. They integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into decision-making processes, ensuring that development initiatives are environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, and economically viable in the long run.

Create an enabling environment for innovation and creativity to thrive

Innovative leaders encourage experimentation, risk-taking, and creative problem-solving. They foster a culture of innovation within organizations and society as a whole, driving breakthroughs in technology, science, and business. By promoting innovation, these leaders spur economic diversification, job creation, and competitiveness on the global stage.

Global Engagement and Influence

Transformational and innovative leaders position their countries as global leaders in innovation, technology, and sustainable development. They engage with international partners, participate in global forums, and contribute to global initiatives aimed at addressing shared challenges such as climate change, poverty, and inequality.

Drive Economic Growth

Innovative and transformational leaders spearhead initiatives that drive economic growth by fostering entrepreneurship, encouraging investment in research and development, and promoting the adoption of new technologies. By creating a conducive environment for innovation and transformation, they can stimulate productivity, create jobs, and attract investment.

Address Societal Challenges

These leaders can tackle pressing societal challenges such as poverty, inequality, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability through innovative solutions. They can mobilize resources, build partnerships, and implement policies that address these challenges in a holistic and sustainable manner.

Ten Priority Actions that Constitute Transformational Leadership

To sustain the momentum for transformation, the leadership must itself be transformed to privilege ten critical strategic action areas that constitute a practical model of transformational public leadership. They are as follows:

- Leverage Community potential for transformation and sustained development;
- Engage all actors and secure their support, commitment, energies, resources and action;
- Align development plans with national, regional and global development goals;
- Develop competences at community, political, managerial, administrative and technical levels;
- Ensure mobilization and frugal utilization of both internal and external financial resources;
- Rely on local capabilities to ensure creativity and innovation, resilience and sustainability;
- State achievements and shortfalls using the two to sustain and improve performance;
- Harness an ideology that puts people at the centre of all policies, plans and actions;
- Instill values of professionalism, transparency, accountability, integrity and ethical conduct;
- Pursue a vision for the future generations built on the achievements of today.

Figure 2: Ten Priorities Model of Transformational Public Sector Leadership

Source: John-Mary Kauzya (2020) Developing Transformational Leadership Capacity in Africa's Public Sector Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs.

CONCLUSION

No nation can rise above the quality and caliber of its leaders because the growth and development of any society or nation is largely dependent on good, competent, innovative, transformational and people-oriented leadership. Nigeria as a nation is bedeviled with societal menaces and vicious monstrosities such as corruption, poverty, crime and criminality, terrorism and banditry, farmers-herders crisis, bad governance, ethno-religious chauvinism and others which impede growth and development of any nation or sector.

There is the exigent need to arrest the ill-fated development prevalent in the nation and this is possible through setting up an effective national ethic institution which will be poised with the responsibility of re-engineering national moral consciousness and engender discipline, propriety, sobriety, efficiency and other allied virtues that guarantee good leadership and the realization of authentic development. In the same vein, the revamp, overhauling and sound reform policies in the core sectors of education, security and political economy are as well proposed.

Transformational and innovative leadership are needed to revitalize her ailing economy. It is this style of leadership that will transform the lives of ordinary Nigerians and also improve their standard of life and living. The incorporation of transformational and innovative leadership will provide a consensus-oriented, participatory and responsive government that observes the rule of law, transparency and accountability while pursuing and ensuring that government policies and programmes in Nigeria, such as the Sustainable Development Goals are attained.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made to foster national development through innovative and transformational leadership:

- Youths and other forward-thinking and innovative individuals should join political parties and contest for elections inter and intra party. They should also vote for competent, charismatic, innovative and quality leaders irrespective of ethnicity, tribe, religion and affiliations. This will increase quality of leaders in the system.
- Policies that affect development should go beyond formulation to implementation. Policy formulation and planning are good but they will be as good as nothing if they are not implemented. The executive arm at all levels should prioritize implementing the policies and delivering the dividends of democracy to the people especially at the grassroots.
- There is need to build independent institutions and systems that cannot be manipulated by any politician or personality as is the case with first world countries. When an office or position is built around a personality, it will make the institutions weak, ineffective and unproductive. The legislature and judiciary should be at the fore front of making this a reality. When this is done, the system won't recycle the crop of corrupt politicians or supposedly 'leaders' we have presently. It will also enable us to have leaders who are innovative, creative and transformational in bringing about all-round development in every sector in the country.
- The legislature and executive should ensure that budgetary allocation for education is increased to conform with best global practices because; education is a key driver and determinant of national development. It holds sway that no nation can develop and rise above the quality and caliber of its teacher since education is the bedrock for national development. Qualitative and functional education will develop in the students/youths/teens the spirit of creativity, innovation and problem-solving and will equip both leaders and followers with the dexterity, competence and technical know-how to contribute productively to national development. If Nigeria must realize its full potential politically, economically, educationally, industrially and technologically, there is need for electoral reforms and amendment of the constitution to effectively produce innovative and transformational leaders who are empathetic and prioritize the welfare and wellbeing of the populace. The electoral reforms should be fully implemented and not partially like that of 2022 which was assented to by the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari – the electoral reform was laudable but was partially implemented because the processes were skewed and manipulated.
- Citizens should be properly sensitized and enlightened about the processes and importance of elections and electioneering in order to reduce voter apathy. The programmes will help them to read, understand and analyse party and candidates' manifestoes and the kind of leader to vote devoid of bias and sentiments. The orientation and sensitization programmes can be in form of seminars, conferences, town hall meetings, newspapers, magazines, bulletins, newsletters, online publication, campaigns, grass root mobilization, etc. when this is properly done, voters and citizens will make the right choice by voting for credible, empathetic, visionary, innovative and transformational leaders.

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