

# **The Correlational Dialogue of Scholarly Endeavour is Fundamentally Critical for Sustainable Peace and Socio-economic Development in a Post Covid-19 Diverse Society.**

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## **Abstract**

The aim here is to highlight correlational dialogue of scholarly endeavours as a catalyst in the process of peace and development in post covid-19 Nigeria. Coronavirus pandemic of the year 2020 (also known as covid-19) had a devastating effect on the world at large, Africa and Nigeria in particular. Nigeria as a nation of diversity has struggled since independence with issues of poverty, poor development, inept democratic principles, exacerbated by violent conflicts and a growing population. The pandemic and consequent lockdown made life grimmer for the common man and woman. The experience has challenged the very foundation and institutions on which our nation is built. It remains a wakeup call for all Nigerians to strive in harnessing all available talents resources and dexterity for development. But how can this be possible without a correlational dialogue encounter between different fields of endeavour that seek to collate, classify, and systematise available resources for sustainable peace and development? The paper focuses on correlational dialogue as a means for stimulating mutual engagement between diverse fields of scholarly endeavour. It attempts to bring to fore how a critical symbiotic analysis of culture and varied spheres of scholarly and entrepreneurial adventure can foster peace, harmony, and dynamism in society, and ends with a conclusion.

**Keywords:** Correlational dialogue, encounter, engagement, peace, development, society.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria as a developing nation is characterised by political, ethno-cultural, socio-economic, and religious diversity, and challenged by a huge-growing population (Worldometer, 2021). Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been struggling to build a nation state befitting her status and able to compete on the

world stage. This, however, has not been without copious setbacks stemming from poor political, socio-economic planning, lack of political will and corruption, intensified by sectionalism, deep rooted ethno-cultural, religious, and political divide that have robbed the Nigerian nation of the sense of direction. These continue to hold the country back from attaining its height in the world economic order.

The resulting deleterious effects of these inhibitions are experienced in total lack of development, poor management of resources, poor quality education, total lack of formidable institutions that cater for the wellbeing of the population, hunger, unemployment, abject poverty, insecurity, high crime rate and the failure to enforce law and order. It is within such deplorable scenario and experience in Nigeria, then came the outbreak of a highly contagious respiratory disease Coronavirus or covid-19 of 2020, a world-wide pandemic (NHS, 2021).

According to the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, by the end of February 2020, the first outbreak of covid-19 infection was reported (Nigeria Centre for Disease, 2020). Within one month the rate of infection was growing in the country, as several deaths had been recorded. Thus, there was need to put in place strategic measures to control the spread of the virus. A national lockdown was proposed and put in place (2020). This meant restriction of movement. Everyone had to stay at home, offices and workplaces were closed, market, schools and places of worship were all shut. It must be noted that the Nigerian economy is not built for lockdown. Thus, with a crippling economy and many people living hand to mouth, without savings, and needing to work every day to feed their families and earn their livelihood, there was hunger in the land. The price of food and services skyrocketed, severe hunger become more threatening than the virus (covid-19), people died from hunger and crime was on the increase (Jalloh, 2020). To affirm that a lot of Nigerians suffered in this time is an understatement. Of course, not because of the disease but due to lack of the necessary economic and medical facilities needed to support and cushion the effects of the virus and the consequent lockdown.

Few (three) years on, Nigeria is not yet out of the woods. Times are still hard, people are hungry. The weak and gory security situation, an unrelenting banditry attacks and kidnappings means that farmers are unable to farm their lands because of incessant bandit activities. Meanwhile, Covid19 seem to have come stay. The virus has hugely affected the world economic order and the disease keeps mutating and still infectious. What then is the future of the Nigerian people and the economic development our nation? How do we avert a future recurrence of such devastating health infectivity and its consequent hideous economic deprivation?

There is need for a formidable, concerted endeavour to identify, harness, and plough every available resource for strategic economic growth and sustainable advancement. I am arguing that correlation dialogue of engagement and cooperation that seek to coordinate a synchronised approach and analysis of culture, and a critical synergy with varied spheres of scholarship; to provide the needed technical erudition has the propensity to engender sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria post covid-19 pandemic.

### **Correlational Dialogue of Engagement and Cooperation.**

In generally terms, dialogue is the social science of engagement, a discourse, discussion, conversation and or negotiation with the 'other'. It is a process of encounter, aimed at learning to mutually understand each other's perspective and hopefully come to a compromise. It is an open honest engagement that involves listening and respecting the viewpoint of the 'other' for shared enrichment. The first step to dialogue involves the sincere willingness to engage, to listen and encounter the 'other' without being judgemental and the commitment to accept and respect the fact that, the 'other' has the right and the freedom to be different.

Dialogue as an art of interaction has been part and parcel of human civilization that can be applied to every aspect of human existence. There are different forms of dialogue aimed and tailored towards achieving specific goals in life. For instance, dialogue of life, interaction, negotiation, inquiry, dialogue of action or deed, dialogue of theological exchange, faith sharing, dialogue of the heart (avid for example on stories of Christian-Muslim encounter), intercultural dialogue, interreligious dialogue and of course correlational dialogue of engagement and cooperation (McGee, 2015 and Umaru, 2013).

Dialogue of Correlational engagement and cooperation can be described as a method of dialogue that seek to critically engage with other fields of academic endeavour, e.g., Philosophy, Politics, science and technology, the art of good-governance, policy making for enhanced governance etc. The aim is to identify available local resources, talents, academic research and discoveries, socio-cultural proficiencies, to harness and channel such dexterity for growth development and peace in society (Paul Tillich's Theological Method of Correlation-Assignment, 2018).

The correlational method was advanced by the Christian existentialist philosopher-theologian Paul Johannes Tillich, as an approach of exploring the symbols of Christian revelation to answer the challenges of human existence, raised by contemporary philosophical analysis of (existential) material reality (Hamilton, 1959). It is an approach that correlates for instance to insights from the theology of revelation, with issues raised by existential or philosophical

analysis of reality to achieve better understanding and plausible answers to such vital questions. For him, the method of correlation implies that a relationship exists between the terms being correlated. He argues that this presumed relationship is quite basic and can be seen if we consider an instance of correlation between the question and an answer (Hamilton, 1959). Tillich, for instance affirms that, theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and initiates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence (Hamilton, 1959). This means that questions and answers cannot be separated. For instance, the question this paper addresses are on the need for enhanced peace and development in Nigeria post covid-19, and Nigeria is endowed with the potential indispensable for development. Consequently, using the method of correlation, dialogue of engagement and cooperation between different fields of endeavours and academic disciplines can stimulate and sustain awareness on the need for collaboration and mutual interdependence for growth. This is significant because correlational dialogue has the dynamic capacity to engender and foster a shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity, (of our time, energy, and resources), centred upon recognising that we all are brothers and sisters with a collective responsibility and destiny, and achieving such demands a decisive commitment on the part of everyone (Pope Francis, 2020). Moreover, correlational dialogue of engagement and cooperation has the efficiency to champion and foster a positive philosophy that embraces a wide range of human emotions towards healing, forgiveness, mercy, and reconciliation in such a way that it leads conflicting communities to a more upbeat cooperation that is mutually beneficial to society (Consedine, 1999). Besides, such collaboration can encourage positive spirit and hope for a dynamic future, even in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles that may be ethno-cultural, socio-economic, political, religious, and or developmental (Guixot and Kankanamalage, 2020).

Correlation dialogue of engagement and cooperation seeks, examines, and asks critical concrete questions in order to gain an in-depth valuation in paving an inter-connected way forward taking all stake holders on board. It advocates an inter-academic and inter-communal engagement in building solidarity as a catalyst for promoting and advancing socio-economic growth, peace, and development for instance in Nigeria, and a rallying point for identifying and harnessing the mosaic of efficient capacities in (a) society. Moreover, it emphasises the unique prospect dialogue provides as it explores how such probabilities for instance in interreligious dialogue, peace education and or education for peace, attempts to transform society by creating a peaceful consciousness that is necessary in paving the way for economic growth and development (Harris and Morrison, 2003). Farther, correlational dialogue of scholarly endeavour has the propensity to engender mutual interdisciplinary

encounter, engagement, listening, analysis, critique, and corporation that can foster a dynamic mutually enriching fraternal experience that enables all to become stakeholders in the process of development in society.

### **The Significance of Correlational Dialogue for Sustainable Peace and Harmony.**

According to theologian Michael L. Fitzgerald, the sole aim of dialogue is to help diverse people live together in peace and harmony. This implies mutually working together to breakdown diverse categories of prejudice, eliminate varied forms of discrimination, foster tolerance and cooperation among people of various interests, for integral development, social justice, human liberation, social cohesion, and service of all in the community (2010). Hence, it can be argued that without peace there can be no societal cohesion, solidarity and the desired economic-growth and development necessary for life or society to thrive. Moreover, correlational dialogue of scholarly endeavour has the predisposition to flourish when constructive dialogue occurs between a country's many rich cultural values or components. For instance, popular youth culture, art, technology, economy, family, religion, media, educational and social cultures, and government genuinely interact to form new dynamic cultural ethos that commits all and varied institutions to jointly harness their resources for the benefit of all and for sustainable growth in society (Pope Francis, 2021).

Correlational dialogue method can set the tone for engagement and analysis of varied situations with the aim of sharpening awareness of a need, by setting the focus of different fields of sciences and human experience in a process of discernment to proffer solution to any potential conflict indicator (Pope Francis, 2013). Its ability to relate to, decipher and bring to light the unique contribution each discipline brings to the good and development of the whole cannot be underestimated.

Moreover, in a Country like Nigeria, the need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed post covid-19, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency but for the good of all Nigerians. Contemporary Nigerian society must strive to weaken the causes of (violent) conflicts, poverty and the total lack of socio-economic growth and development, a malady that is debilitating and frustrating its citizens, resulting in numerous forms of ethno-political, religious and resource based violent conflicts (Mali, 2014). The structures that promote and perpetuate injustice, inequality and poor governance must be tackled. Consequently, correlational dialogue of scholarly engagement and cooperation is critical for the promotion of human dignity in the pursuit of our common concerns, which ought to shape every economic policy for sustainable development and beneficial to in society (Pope Francis, 2013).

Nigerians (Africans) at all levels have the bounding duty and responsibility to team up and confront the enervating conflict of economic poverty. This has been ignored for decades consequent of the country remaining trapped and concealed in the circle of poverty, shrinking horizon and the loss of our sense of profound unity (Pope Francis, 2013). Harmonious coexistence demands building bridges of peace and solidarity, investing our talents and resources in an economy that improves the quality of life and serves all, this remains critically an existential necessity for growth and development (Pope Francis, 2021).

On-going groundwork for peace and concord between people of different religious affiliation through the process of interreligious dialogue by religious leaders, religious actors, and experts offers a glimmer of hope for mutual fraternity. Such must be sustained and consolidated for a more dynamic future. As for instance, Islamic and Christian scriptures and traditions, enjoins all to treat others as one would like to be treated, to live in peace and promote what strengthens for peace and mutual growth (Tb 4:15, Rm 12:14; 14:19). For Christians and Muslims as people of faith in dialogue encounter, the command to love becomes an expression of God's character and as citizens of Nigeria, that mutual commitment to love is as important as the shared commitment to reason together for the collective benefit and advancement of our nation (Volf, 2011).

Much has been achieved for instance in Christian-Muslim dialogue in Nigeria. The relative peace and growing understanding between faith communities is a microcosm of what could be accomplished around development if in all sectors available resources are harnessed, channelled, and targeted at development and economic transformation. Moreover, the diverse nature of the Nigerian society presents a challenge, that is social, ethno-cultural, political, religious and issues of security. At the same time such plethora of probes presents an opportunity for profitable and maximum growth. Besides, these challenges centres around fostering mutual understanding for peace and harmony without which the prospects for advancement remain stifled and dormant. Consequently, the role of Correlation dialogue of scholarly endeavour as a strategic statistical method of engagement and cooperation becomes even more critical; in its capacity to search out those potentials and competences available within a field or discipline that are essential to kickstart a process for the common good. This is furthermore essential because it focuses on the relationship that may exists between subjects and can stimulate that specialised scientific advancement through greater interdisciplinary communication that is indispensable for growth (Pope Francis, 2021). Nigeria has the resources, the expertise, competent skills and dexterity, the market, and the human capital necessary to get things moving. However, we need proficient leaders with vision, courage and will power to commit into action these potentials for the benefit of all and the advancement of our Nation.

### **The Need for a Political-Economic System that is Correlational for sustainable Growth and Development.**

There can be no sustainable development without peace, harmony and an efficient political-economic system of governance that is dynamic, accountable, reliable, and fit for purpose. In our contemporary world, democracy is in vogue. However, can there be one democratic system of governance that is suitable for all? Is there room for manoeuvre, creativity, and the development of unique system of political, economic and or governance that is local and idiosyncratic? For instance, traditional African societies for centuries had their own distinctive methodical structures for governance that were efficient and effectual (Diop, 1987. Asante, 2007 and Consedine, 1999). Granted time has elapsed, the world is become a global village, civilisation has advanced, and globalization means interconnectivity. Nevertheless, the need for African societies to develop robust political/economic (democratic) structure, and style of governance that they can manage and serves their need for development cannot be over emphasised. The necessity for paradigm shift is ever more daring, a new style of politics and political strategy that elevates our common humanity is indispensable. Moreover, African politico-economic development is possible based on a radical break with the global capitalist system that has ravaged, exploited, and has violated the African continent, and has contributed in numerous ways to our underdevelopment (Rodney, 2012).

The Western style political-economic principles and democracy as we have it today costs money, and the link between cash and power can be corrosive (The Economist, 2021). The democratic institutions we have inherited from the past were made for a different age and such have remained damming and restricting to the cultural heritage of Africans (Sacks, 2020). In rich democracies for example, parties choose their candidates and subsidise their campaigns. However, in (poor democracies) Nigeria and many African nations, aspiring politicians pay vast sums to run party ticket and fund campaigns, then give voters handouts which serve both as bribe and as hints of future generosity (The Economist, 2021). Consequently, when a career in politics costs so much, the genuine, honest-goodwilled and impecunious are excluded (The Economist, 2021). And besides, the economic system in Nigeria and most African nations are weak and inept at supporting the needs of citizens who are poor, such compels voters to ask for handout from politicians who many times neglect legislative work in favour of such deeds, resulting in monies meant for development being used for such tenacities (The Economist, 2021).

It can thus be argued that Western style democracy is not working in Africa for Africans. Africans essentially ought to develop a political system that is local, robust, tactical, and dynamic in serving their purpose. A strategic structure of governance that is relevant and responsible, with clear set objectives. Such must

be accountable and aimed at putting in place formidable institutions for service delivery. As Africans or Nigerians, we owe it to ourselves to evolve a socio-political, economic system of governance that serves our need and can stand the test of time (The Green Manifesto, 2021). And such a constitute must marshal, coordinate, and institute a scheme of checks and balances that stimulates, champion and charnel the workings of such a structure, and strengthens it to be effective in serving the purpose for which it has been crafted (the common good).

We can begin for instance, from examining those leadership models that kept African societies flourishing over the centuries and draw from such ethos (Osadebamwen, 2021). This can further be enriched by incorporating some values of Western style democratic principles that collectively will enhance and promote our need to build an Africa we all desire and can be proud of.

Such political/economic structure must be correlational in character and approach, to engage and cooperate with other sectors of society, aimed at maximising every available potential to bring about growth. The emphasis must be on strategic planning, with clear goals and set objectives, based on accountability, continuity, respect for the rule of law, analysis, and evaluation (The Green Manifesto, 2021). Those to exercise leadership within such political order must be carefully chosen. They must be people who are credible, disciplined, trustworthy, qualified (educated), skilfully trained and competent. They ought to be committed, accountable and willing to serve in solidarity, acknowledging our interconnectedness with a souring sense of duty and respect for the good of all (Pope Francis, 2020). They must be resolved at building and strengthening institutions in the state for the benefit of the nation. The focus essentially is to set in place a developmental strategy that is correlational and wholistic in approach, with each cog in society having a role to play in bringing to fore and harnessing their fortes.

Basically, Nigerian as a nation is suffering from grave structural and infrastructural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by intermittent solutions or quick fixes. Much needs to change through fundamental reforms and major renewals (Pope Francis, 2020). Consequently, only a dynamic political strategy involving the most diverse sector of society and skills that are correlational can manage such project of regeneration and correlational cooperation of scholarly endeavour is fundamental.

Furthermore, to avert the repeat of the economic debilitating experience of the covid era, we must work to put in place a programme of economy that is integral, part of a socio-political, and cultural life of society, directed towards the common good (Pope Francis, 2020). Such ideal political system must be



opened to engage with credible opposition in the political process, to pave the way for different possibilities that does not stifle human creativity and its thirst for progress, but rather directing such energies along new channels for efficiency (Pope Francis, 2020).

Consequently, this new dawn of African socio-political, democratic, and economic system ought to be propelled by leaders and politicians with a vision of politics that isn't just about managing state apparatus and campaigning for re-election. They must be capable of cultivating virtue in forging new and sustainable bounds and creating the essential conditions for a to progress (Pope Francis, 2020). Besides, such leaders must burn with zeal to serve with broader horizons, efficient at opening new ways for a people to organise and express itself and being in touch with the day-to-day experience of the common man/woman, while collaboratively seek solution to their endeavours. I am convinced that such model of politicking will be a critical antidote to the various forms of corruption and sleaze in society.

### **The Practical implication of the Correlational Method for Development in Nigeria.**

If correlational method is to achieve its aim (i.e to interconnect and interrelate with diverse segments of society to stimulate the process of wholistic sustainable development), it is critical to focus on and transform the present system of education in Nigeria. This is because education, research and the rapid progress in science and technology provides an opportunity. Such advancement has put into human hands unprecedented power to explore and reap great benefits for the good of humanity (A Catechist's Handbook, 1980). Consequently, through learning and scholarship, men and women have learnt and developed capacities, dexterity, and abilities to solve and resolve some persistent problems confronting humanity in the quest to improve quality of life and existence (1980). This has been possible due to persistent and consistent investment in research and education. However, in the case of Nigeria (Africa) for instance, it leaves so much to be desired. It can be argued that there has not been a consistent robust direct investment in our educational sector over the years. The resultant consequence has been very poor-quality education, susceptible to producing half baked, unprofessional, incompetent graduates that are not fit for purpose. No nation can develop without investing in quality education and enduring research. Our universities and academic institutions must become epicentres of learning, renowned in research, scientific and technological investigations.

Furthermore, there must be a renewed interest in our young ones and the youth. They are assets to our nation and ought to be nurtured. Thus, care must be taken to invest in our youths, to guide against radical-political ideologies that uses

and pervert religion. Moreover, the signs of the times (covid 19) challenges Nigeria and the African continent at large to use the current moment of crisis to think big, rethink our priorities, evaluate our values, and analyse what we want/seek, and commit to what we have dreamed and desired, a new approach that is value based in education, economics, political-growth, and development (Kelly, 2021).

Additionally, our experience of the pandemic exposed deep inequalities not just in wealth and income, but in health, education, digital access, and insecurity especially in the labour market, with such devastating effects (2021). This demands a strategic plan of educating that is not just aimed at passing on knowledge, but a deliberate methodical erudition that is transformational, bringing the best out of the person. A style of learning that builds expertise, seek value, and is directed at transforming knowledge, talent, and dexterity into invention, fabrication, and manufacturing finished goods using available local resources. It ought to be the sort of scholarship that target the wholistic development of a person's capacities and capabilities, purposely focused on training for instance in specific field for a precise goal. Achieving the above is only feasible when the character of our educating and learning stimulates creativity to become inventive, bringing to fore the potential in an individual and the all-important need for Nigeria to develop her own local technology that will make it possible to turn our vast resources into finished goods.

Education for sustainable development ought to empower, impel, shape, and stimulate creative aptitude in the person and equip the individual to turn such energies into concrete acts of production. It demands that our educational system be correlational in broadening horizons of knowledge, addressing causes, empowering and cooperative in networking, and be multidisciplinary in stimulating innate curiosity in students (Vocation for Justice, 2021). Learning must thus be such that it involves greater responsibility for contemporary challenges, problem solving and leadership skills that promotes human dignity and ethical guidelines for building of a future that is inclusive, and economically viable (2021). Farther, we must develop an efficient system for effective implementation monitoring, assessment and accountability with checks and balances proficient for evaluation.

However, such a prosperous future is only possible in an environment that enjoys peace and mutual tranquillity. Nigeria is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, socio-political, and religious plural society with its complexities. We have not been able to manage and harness the opportunities that goes with such diversity. Violent conflicts continue to rub and stifle any meaningful progress made. There has to be a change of attitude, a paradigm shift and respect for the right of the 'other' to be different. This new approach must accept and promote

diversity for the good of all. A new epoch of a dynamic hermeneutics; that recognises our common humanity, fostering sincere willingness to share or hear ideas quite different from those that one has heard or known until now, and the courage to take them seriously, not necessarily agreeing with them but at least entering the mindset of those who think that way, and the frank disposition to expose or share one's own ideas to critical scrutiny, and not feel threatened thereby, but rather enlarged and enriched. (Sacks, 2020). Dialogue then becomes central and indispensable to any peace process and correlational method seeks to nurture such stratagems.

Amidst suffering, conflicts and pain in contemporary Nigeria, dialogue between religions remains critical. Dialogue must focus on those attributes that foster and strengthens peace and harmony in our diversity (Romans 12:16, 14: 19). Hence, religious people ought to be men and women who bring the light of hope, to others and to a world in need (Cornwell, 2021). Moreover, our greatest power is not in the respect that others accord us but in the service we each can offer the 'other' (Pope Francis, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Correlational dialogue of scholarly endeavours, engagement and cooperation must aim to foster, nurture, and advance a dialogical encounter that dwells on the need for mutual critical analysis of engagement with other fields of endeavours: Philosophy, Politics, Culture, Religion, Sociology, poetry, arts, and policy making for enhanced governance, security, peace-making/building, and development in society. This synergy is fundamentally critical because, the human person is a wholistic being, and these aspects of human undertakings form and shape the fabric of any human community with the propensity for making significant contribution to any project of peace, stability, and development in society.

Moreover, dialogue has the predisposition to herald far-reaching socio-political, economic, and ethnic possibilities for peace and development (Sacks, 2002). The correlational method is audacious in sketching a dynamic type of politicking which crosses religious, inter-cultural and ethno-political divides, and is rooted in the appreciation of our shared humanity, that runs deeper than the things that divide us (Lamb, 2021). It is time for Nigeria and Nigerians to begin to make our Nigerian dream come true post covid19 through collaboration in harnessing our God given resources. Besides, no nation can develop without proper planning, and for such to come to fruition, education, technology, energy, health, and infrastructure are non-negotiable key factors for growth.

But without peace, it is impossible to achieve development. We are blessed in our diversity. It is important that we acknowledge, accept, and respect the dignity of our difference (Sacks, 2002), recognising at the same time the opportunities such multiplicity present for peace and socio-economic development. Hence, collectively remodelling of our political, economic, and social reality is of paramount importance if every (citizen) Nigerian is to have access to a dignified and fulfilled existence. Our post-covid future must centre on harnessing our diversity and resources for the regeneration of our economy, peace-making/building and sustainable development, and correlational dialogue can be the catalyst for such synergy and growth.

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