

The Developmental State and Economic Growth in Singapore: Lessons for Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of the developmental state and how it has been successfully applied in Singapore to achieve sustained economic growth. It analyses the strategic interventions made by the Singaporean government such as long-term planning, industrial policy, investment in human capital, and strong governance structures. More importantly, the paper evaluates the applicability of the Singapore model to Nigeria's economic developmental efforts. By identifying both the similarities and contextual differences between the two countries, the study highlights policy lessons that Nigeria can adopt to strengthen its economic foundations. The secondary data form the basis of the study which hinges on the developmental state theory as propounded by Johnson Chambers. The study concludes that while Nigeria cannot replicate Singapore's model in its entirety, adapting key principles such as institutional efficiency, targeted investment in infrastructure and education, and accountable leadership can facilitate inclusive economic growth. It thus recommends that public institutions should be strengthened, there should be reduction of dependence on oil by investing in other key sectors of the economy such as agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and the digital sector through supportive policies and incentives; and the modernization of transportation, energy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) to achieve sustainable growth.

Keywords: Development, State, Economic Growth, Singapore, Nigeria, Governance

Introduction

In an era of rapid globalization and increasing inter-connectivity, the role of the state in driving economic development remains a topic of great interest and debate. One model that has gained significant attention and admiration is the developmental state model, and Singapore stands out as a shining example of its success. With its remarkable transformation from a resource-limited city-state to a global economic powerhouse, Singapore's developmental state model has proven to be not only effective but also highly relevant in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Singapore has been described as an economic miracle in East Asia (Huff, 1995), not only because of its economic growth that has exceeded many developed countries (in terms of GNP per capita) but also the rapid economic transformation from developing a country into a newly industrializing economy (Olds & Yeung, 2004). Since its independence in 1965, the Singaporean government has been using the developmental state approach in governing the country and justifying it as the key of its successful economic growth (Pereira & Tong 2005). In a developmental state, the role of controlling economic development is played by the state. The state also intervenes in the market, guiding selective industrial policy and offering protection to new born industries (Chang, 2010).

In the decades after independence, Singapore rapidly developed from a low-income country to a high-income country. GDP growth in the city-state has been amongst the world's highest, at an

average of 7.7% since independence and topping 9.2% in the first 25 years. After rapid industrialization in the 1960s that catapulted the island nation's development trajectory, manufacturing became the main driver of growth. In the early 1970s, Singapore reached full employment and joined the ranks of Hong Kong SAR, Republic of Korea, and Taiwan a decade later as Asia's newly industrializing economies. The manufacturing and services sectors remain the twin pillars of Singapore's high value-added economy.

In the 1970s, Singapore developed its economic bureaucracy to revise investment incentives in order to redirect foreign direct investment from predominantly labour-intensive manufacturing toward more capital- and technology-intensive, higher value-added industries. Central to this transition was the strategic role of the Economic Development Board (EDB), which re-calibrated fiscal incentives, tax holidays, and industrial policies to attract multinational corporations in electronics, petrochemicals, and precision engineering. This shift formed part of a broader restructuring strategy following the tightening of labour markets and rising wages in the early 1970s, compelling the state to upgrade the industrial structure (Low, 2001; Amsden, 1989). Singapore's bureaucracy also exercised extensive control over key factors of production. Through agencies such as the Jurong Town Corporation, the government acquired and allocated industrial land at subsidized rates, ensuring efficient spatial planning and lowering transaction costs for investors. Simultaneously, the state invested heavily in human capital development by expanding technical education and vocational training institutions to meet the needs of emerging high-technology sectors. Public expenditure on research and technological development increased, with state-linked enterprises and research institutes facilitating technology transfer and innovation. These coordinated interventions reflect the characteristics of a developmental state, where a competent and insulated bureaucracy strategically guides market forces to achieve structural transformation and sustained economic growth (Wade, 1990; Amsden, 1989).

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is responsible for soliciting foreign investment, directing this investment into strategic sectors, and maintaining ties with international business clientele. State enterprises are required by law to break even and are subject to fiscal and monetary restraints. The autonomous Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) is in charge of regulating the financial sector and holds monetary stability as its top priority. The incumbent government elite has had a successful track record in dealing with external economic fluctuations and possesses an institutional capacity for long-term bargaining with all the major sectors of society. During an economic downturn, economic officials can obtain the cooperation of these sectors with tightening policies, which allows Singapore to manage its national economy effectively in light of global economic changes.

By contrast, Nigeria, despite its vast natural and human resources, large population, and position as Africa's largest economy, has experienced uneven and limited economic transformation. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has implemented several development plans, including the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Vision 20:2020, and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP). However, the country continues to struggle with infrastructural deficits, corruption, policy inconsistency, institutional weakness, and economic over-reliance on oil exports. These constraints have undermined the country's capacity to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. The focus of this paper is to analyse the developmental state model with specific focus on Singapore's experience and to explore how its core principles can be adapted to suit Nigeria's socio-economic context.

Conceptualizing Developmental State

The term developmental state refers to a government that takes proactive role in guiding economic development and industrial transformation. First popularised by Chalmers Johnson in his study of “Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Japanese Miracle” (Haggard, 2018), the developmental state is distinguished by strong state intervention, bureaucratic competence, and close collaboration between public and private sectors. Johnson (1982) defined the developmental state as a state that is focused on economic development and takes necessary policy measures to accomplish that objective. He argued that Japan's economic development had much to do with far-sighted intervention by bureaucrats, particularly those in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI).

Developmental state, or hard state, is a term used by international political economy scholars to refer to the phenomenon of state-led macroeconomic planning in East Asia in the late 20th century after World War II period where there was rapid economic growth in East Asian countries. In this model of capitalism (sometimes referred to as state development capitalism), the state has more independent, or autonomous political power, as well as more control over the economy. A developmental state is characterized by having strong state intervention, as well as extensive regulation and planning. The term has subsequently been used to describe countries outside East Asia that satisfy the criteria of a developmental state. There is no single way to describe a developmental state. It is varied between one state and the other regarding their economic policy and their historical experience, as consequence, it cannot be exactly replicated (Chang, 2010). According to Johnson (1999), the developmental state consists of several characteristics which include the following:

- A committed and competent bureaucracy
- Strategic industrial policy
- Investment in education and human capital
- Collaboration with private enterprises
- Insulation from clientelist politics

In a developmental state, the state ensures that infrastructure constraints do not hamper economic growth. For instance, the previous Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew said that it was necessary to plan extensively since Singapore is small in size, there could be no room for failure (Hamilton-Hart, 2000). Developmental state in Singapore was formed because of several conditions and challenges, viz: financial and territorial threats; economic instability and geopolitical danger were the most significant reasons to justify the emergence of developmental state in Singapore (Low 2001). This condition, however, creates a regional isolation for Singapore. The governments of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand treated Singapore with great suspicion and perceived it as a threat regarding economic subordination (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997). The features of a developmental state are all present in Singapore’s development trajectory. Nigeria, however, has struggled with policy inconsistency, bureaucratic inefficiency, and elite capture of state resources.

Conceptualizing Economic Growth

Economic growth refers to the increase in the production of goods and services over a specific period compared with a previous period. It can be measured in nominal or real terms. Traditionally, aggregate economic growth is measured in terms of gross national product

(GNP) or gross domestic product (GDP), although alternative metrics are sometimes used. (Potters, 2023). The key takeaways of economic growth are:

- Increases in capital goods, labour force, technology, and human capital can all contribute to economic growth.
- Economic growth is commonly measured in terms of the increase in aggregated market value of additional goods and services produced, using estimates such as GDP.
- The four phases of economic growth are expansion, peak, contraction, and trough.
- Tax cuts are generally less effective in spurring economic growth than are increases in government spending.
- If the rewards of economic growth go only to an elite group, then it is unlikely that the growth will be sustainable.

In economics, growth is commonly modelled as a function of physical capital, human capital, labour force, and technology. Simply put, increasing the quantity or quality of the working age population, the tools that they have to work with, and the recipes that they have available to combine labour, capital, and raw materials, will lead to increased economic output (Potters, 2023). While Singapore has achieved consistent growth rates averaging 7-9% since independence, Nigeria's economic growth has been episodic and heavily reliant on the oil sector with little diversification.

Theoretical Framework

The Developmental State Theory provides the analytical lens through which this study is conducted. It emphasizes state-led economic planning, institutional autonomy and coordinated market intervention. The theory asserts that for late-developing countries, state intervention is necessary to overcome structural constraints, stimulate investment and guide economic direction. Johnson (1982) first proposed the concept of a developmental state, using the term to describe strong interventionist policies implemented by Japan that led to sustained, rapid industrialisation and long-term economic development. The term became shorthand for the successful rise of the newly industrialised countries (NICs) of East Asia, or the 'Asian Tigers'- Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. (Amsden, 2007). In the period that began with the Second World War and continued up to the 1980s, their developmental strategies were shaped by a political ideology that privileged raising income levels and sustaining industrial growth (or 'GNP-ism'). This paradigm asserts the state as key to the development process, with the capability and intent to resolve market failures, capital scarcity and lack of coordination between governments and industrial elites (Amsden, 2007).

The experience of Singapore reflects the core assumptions of Developmental State Theory, which emphasizes the role of a strong, autonomous, and technocratic state in driving industrial transformation (Johnson, 1982; Evans, 1995). Through strategic institutions such as the Economic Development Board and the Monetary Authority of Singapore, Singapore institutionalized long-term economic planning, export-oriented industrialization, and macroeconomic stability. These institutions operated within a merit-based and highly professional bureaucracy insulated from excessive political interference, thereby demonstrating what Evans (1995) describes as "embedded autonomy" a condition in which the state maintains close collaboration with the private sector while preserving institutional independence. Scholars such as Amsden (1989) and Kohli (2004) further argue that successful late-industrializing states deliberately allocate credit, protect infant industries, and invest heavily in human capital to enhance competitiveness. In contrast, Nigeria

has experienced weak bureaucratic capacity, policy discontinuity, and politicization of state institutions, limiting its ability to function as a developmental state. Thus, applying Developmental State Theory suggests that Nigeria's restructuring must involve strengthening institutional autonomy, professionalizing the civil service, ensuring policy consistency, and strategically directing investment toward productive sectors, particularly manufacturing and technology, in order to achieve sustainable economic transformation.

Methodology

This paper utilised secondary or documentary data, drawing extensively from textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, policy documents, government reports, archival materials, newspapers, and credible online sources. The use of documentary analysis is particularly suitable for examining the concept and practice of the developmental state, as it enables a systematic review of historical experiences, institutional frameworks, and policy outcomes across different contexts. The developmental state model, popularized through the works of Chalmers Johnson in his study of Japan's industrial transformation, and further expanded by scholars such as Alice Amsden and Robert Wade, relies heavily on historical and institutional analysis. As such, documentary research allows for critical engagement with policy records, economic data, and institutional reforms that shaped developmental trajectories in countries like South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore.

Singaporean Economy and Industrial Policy

The state intervention in economic policy-making in Singapore was started with the establishment of The Strategic Plan of Economic growth. It described the position of Singapore as a global city which will become a 'total business hub' for the Asia-Pacific. Singapore offered the attractiveness of knowledge-intensive and high-tech industries along with investment to enhance labour skills and innovation capacity (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997). This political power and economic expertise gave the state the ability of transformative capacity to overcome the challenges of economic competitiveness. According to Perry, Kong and Yeoh (1997), there are five models of intervention that are undertaken by the Singaporean Government. First is the establishment of agencies as a central planning bureau which formulates the economic planning and implementation.

For example, the Economic Development Board (EDB) has functions such as development assistance of the Ministry of Trade and Industry which operates as an investment promotion agency. It encourages the expansion of established enterprise and inward investment. The scope of EDB is determining the eligibility for the taxation and incentives schemes. Secondly, the Trade Development Board (TDB) was formed to promote international trade and provide assistance to foreign and local companies. Thirdly, the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) was responsible for the development of industrial infrastructure in Singapore. Fourthly, Government-linked companies (GLCs) are state-owned corporations that have a very large scope in services industry, infrastructure and manufacturing sector. The state has an ownership interest in over 500 companies. The government relies heavily on GLCs, in other way the GLCs are a significant factor in running the Singapore's economy.

Subsequently, the government also provides extensive use of subsidies and tax incentives in order to attract potential investors in expanding their businesses. Finally, the government regulates macro-economic policy carefully in order to keep inflation low and invest the government's budget surplus in social and physical infrastructures (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997). The economic structure of Singapore developmental state which has been mentioned above, shows that the government provides a careful planning to ensure that it achieves economic growth effectively.

Specific Economic Policies Implemented by Singaporean Government

The Singaporean government implemented several economic policies that significantly contributed to the growth of Singapore's economy. Some of the notable policies are:

1. Industrial Promotion Policies: In the early stages of Singapore's independence, the government formulated industrial promotion policies to attract foreign investments and develop local industries. It included offering tax incentives, grants, and subsidies to encourage companies to set up manufacturing facilities in Singapore. This policy helped to diversify the economy and create employment opportunities (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

2. Export-Oriented Industrialization: Recognizing that the small domestic market posed limitations, the government adopted an export-oriented industrialization strategy. It focused on producing goods for foreign markets rather than relying heavily on domestic consumption. This approach allowed Singapore to tap into global market opportunities and establish itself as a manufacturing and export powerhouse (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

3. Strategic Investment in Education: The government prioritized education as a key driver of economic growth and invested heavily in developing a highly skilled workforce. They established quality educational institutions, such as the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological University. The Skills Future program was also initiated to boost lifelong learning and upgrade the skills of the workforce to stay competitive in rapidly evolving industries (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

4. Investment in Research and Development (R&D): The government recognized the importance of innovation for economic growth and invested in R&D initiatives. Institutions like the Agency for Science, Technology, and Research (ASTAR) were established to promote scientific research and technological advancements. This focus on R&D has helped Singapore develop a competitive edge in sectors such as biomedical sciences, information/ communication technology, and clean energy (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

5. Development of Export Processing Zones: The government created export processing zones, such as Jurong Industrial Estate and the Changi Business Park, to provide infrastructure and specialized support to attract foreign investments. These zones offered streamlined administrative processes, tax incentives, and excellent infrastructure, making it easier for companies to establish their operations in Singapore (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

6. Trade Liberalization and Free Trade Agreements: Singapore pursued an open trade policy and actively engaged in negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various countries and regions. These FTAs helped reduce trade barriers, expand market access, and make Singapore an attractive destination for international businesses. Key agreements include the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with India, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

7. Development of Financial Sector: The government fostered the growth of Singapore as a global financial hub by creating a robust regulatory framework, establishing the infrastructure for financial services, and attracting multinational financial institutions. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) played a pivotal role in regulating the financial industry and promoting stability, while initiatives like the Singapore Exchange (SGX) and the establishment of the biennial Singapore FinTech Festival enhanced Singapore's stature as a leading financial center in the region (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

8. Development of Tourism Sector: Recognizing the potential of tourism as a significant economic contributor, the government actively invested in developing the tourism sector. Initiatives such as the construction of world-class attractions like Gardens by the Bay and Singapore Flyer, the promotion of Singapore as a shopping and culinary destination, and hosting major events like the Formula 1 Singapore Grand Prix attracted a steady influx of tourists, boosting the hospitality industry and generating revenue (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

9. Entrepreneurship and Start-up Support: The government has been supportive of nurturing a vibrant start-up ecosystem and entrepreneurship. Initiatives like the Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE) were established to provide mentorship and funding opportunities for budding entrepreneurs. Co-working spaces, incubation programs, and financing schemes like the Startup SG initiatives have helped foster innovation and create a favourable environment for start-ups to thrive.

10. Housing and Urban Planning: The government implemented effective public housing policies to provide affordable and quality housing for its citizens. The Housing Development Board (HDB) played a crucial role in developing and managing public housing estates. The provision of affordable housing has facilitated social stability and allowed citizens to focus on other aspects of their lives, including career development and entrepreneurship (Perry, Kong & Yeoh, 1997).

These specific policies, along with the government's proactive and strategic approach, have played a significant role in driving Singapore's economic growth and transforming it into a prosperous and thriving nation.

Singapore's Strategic Policies and Nigeria's Policy Lessons

Singapore's transformation from a struggling port city in 1965 into a global economic hub has been largely driven by the purposeful strategies of a developmental state. These policies rooted in pragmatism, meritocracy, and long-term planning, provide critical lessons for Nigeria, a resource-rich country that has underperformed economically. A comparative policy analysis reveals that while the two nations differ in size, history, and demographics, Nigeria can draw significant lessons from Singapore's industrial policy, education strategy, infrastructure development, public-private collaboration, and governance framework.

First, Singapore's industrial promotion strategy involved a deliberate move away from labour-intensive sectors to capital-intensive and knowledge-based industries. The government, through institutions like the Economic Development Board (EDB), provided targeted incentives to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and develop industrial clusters (Huff, 1995). By contrast, Nigeria's industrial policy has lacked coherence, with inconsistent support for local industries and a dependence on oil exports. To replicate Singapore's success, Nigeria must design a consistent, long-term industrialization policy that targets sectors with comparative advantage such as agro-processing, digital technologies, and renewable energy. State-led investment in industrial parks and SME support schemes can drive inclusive job creation (Rodrik, 2008).

Singapore also pursued an export-led growth strategy, integrating deeply into global value chains. Through incentives for multinational corporations (MNCs), streamlined customs procedures, and a reliable logistics network, the country positioned itself as a hub for electronics, petrochemicals, and biomedical exports (Perry, Kong, & Yeoh, 1997). Nigeria's trade structure, in contrast, remains dominated by unprocessed oil exports, with minimal value addition. Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Nigeria have underperformed due to poor

infrastructure and bureaucratic bottlenecks (UNECA, 2021). Nigeria must reform trade facilitation policies, enhance port efficiency, and reduce tariff unpredictability to foster an export-driven growth model.

A cornerstone of Singapore's transformation was investment in education and skills development. Education was not only accessible but tailored to meet the evolving needs of the country. The curriculum emphasized science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), while institutions like the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) provided skills aligned with market demands (Goh & Gopinathan, 2008). Nigeria's education sector, on the other hand, is marked by underfunding, outdated curricula, and high graduate unemployment. For Nigeria to compete globally, it must prioritize STEM education, revamp technical and vocational education training (TVET), and align education outcomes with labour market needs. A dual education model that merges classroom learning with hands-on apprenticeship could bridge the gap between schooling and skills.

Infrastructure development was another strategic pillar of Singapore's growth. The government invested heavily in world-class ports, roads, energy supply, and public transport systems. These infrastructural assets were not only essential for business competitiveness but also for attracting foreign investors (Hamilton-Hart, 2000). Nigeria's poor infrastructure, especially in power and transport, remains one of the greatest impediments to private sector growth. According to the World Bank (2022), over 80 million Nigerians lack access to reliable electricity, and transport inefficiencies increase business costs by 30–40%. Public-private partnerships (PPPs), infrastructure bonds, and concessional loans must be leveraged to modernize Nigeria's critical infrastructure and unlock productivity across sectors.

Another key element in Singapore's model was its effective use of public-private partnerships (PPPs). The government maintained close ties with the private sector, often involving business leaders in policy formulation through platforms like the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP). This collaborative model ensured that policies were business-friendly and aligned with economic realities (Low, 2001). In Nigeria, however, PPPs are often hampered by distrust, corruption, and poor regulatory frameworks. To build investor confidence, Nigeria must create a predictable legal environment, reduce red tape, and offer transparent dispute resolution mechanisms. Establishing sector-specific PPP units in ministries could facilitate smoother collaboration between public and private actors.

Singapore's developmental success was also underpinned by strong anti-corruption measures and a transparent governance structure. The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) had the autonomy to investigate and prosecute corruption at all levels, contributing to high public trust and efficient service delivery (Quah, 2007). In Nigeria, although anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and ICPC exist, their efforts are often undermined by political interference and selective prosecutions (Transparency International, 2023). Strengthening the independence and capacity of these institutions, ensuring asset recovery transparency, and adopting technology-driven governance (e.g., e-procurement) could reduce corruption and improve development outcomes.

Importantly, Singapore's meritocratic bureaucracy ensured that the most capable individuals led public institutions. The civil service was not only well-remunerated but also performance-monitored and professionally trained (Evans, 1995). Nigeria's civil service, by contrast, suffers from patronage appointments, weak motivation, and limited accountability. Reforming the public

sector through merit-based recruitment, continuous professional development, and performance-based promotion can enhance policy implementation. Establishing a National School of Government, akin to Singapore's Civil Service College, could provide training for ethical and competent leadership.

Nigeria must also emulate Singapore's long-term planning culture. Singapore's Vision 2030 and its rolling Five-Year Plans are anchored in data, stakeholder consultations, and institutional continuity. Development goals are clearly articulated and protected from political cycles (Woo-Cumings, 1999). Nigeria's numerous plans—such as Vision 20:2020 or the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) have often failed due to weak execution and political discontinuity. Strengthening institutions like the National Planning Commission and giving them legal backing to enforce development plans could institutionalize policy stability.

Nigeria should take cues from Singapore's internationalism and regional engagement. Singapore actively signed bilateral and multilateral trade agreements to integrate into global markets and attract investment. Nigeria has yet to fully maximize its position in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and ECOWAS. These platforms present enormous opportunities to scale up industrial production and attract regional supply chains. A more outward-oriented trade and investment policy, backed by strong infrastructure and domestic capacity, could help Nigeria become a regional economic hub.

Challenges in Applying the Developmental State Model in Nigeria

One of the most critical challenges Nigeria faces in adopting the developmental state model is its weak institutional capacity and overly centralized bureaucracy. Unlike Singapore, where institutions are autonomous, efficient, and insulated from political interference (Huff, 1995), many of Nigeria's public institutions are under-resourced, politicized, and plagued by inefficiency (World Bank, 2022). This institutional weakness undermines the capacity to design and implement coherent economic policies. Also, the excessive centralization of authority limits the responsiveness of local governments and regional institutions, which are often better positioned to address grassroots development needs (Mkandawire, 2001).

Another significant obstacle is systemic corruption and elite capture of the Nigerian state. Corruption undermines the integrity of public institutions, distorts budgetary priorities, and leads to substandard infrastructure and service delivery (Transparency International, 2023). In contrast to Singapore's zero-tolerance approach to corruption and enforcement of strict anti-graft laws (Hamilton-Hart, 2000), Nigeria continues to experience a high level of impunity, even among top officials. Public office is frequently treated as a platform for personal enrichment, eroding trust in government and discouraging both domestic and foreign investment (Rodrik, 2008).

Also, ethno-religious and political fragmentation poses a serious challenge to the adoption of a unified national development strategy. Nigeria's politics are often shaped by sectional interests, where appointments and resource allocations are distributed based on ethnic and religious affiliations rather than merit or development need (Ayoade, 2008). This undermines national cohesion and the formation of a shared economic vision. For a developmental state to thrive, it requires a strong sense of collective identity and national purpose both of which remain fragile in the Nigerian context (Leftwich, 1995).

Nigeria suffers from a lack of long-term development planning and chronic underinvestment in human capital and infrastructure. While countries like Singapore have pursued structured, multi-decade development blueprints with remarkable discipline (Perry, Kong, & Yeoh, 1997), Nigerian plans are often disrupted by regime changes and shifting political agendas (UNECA, 2021). Spending on education, health, and technological innovation has remained below international benchmarks, weakening the country's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy. Unless Nigeria adopts a consistent long-term vision with adequate investment in core development drivers, the application of the developmental state model will remain aspirational.

Conclusion

Singapore's development demonstrates the value of visionary leadership, strategic state planning, and inclusive economic policies. Nigeria has the potential to adapt these principles to its context, but success depends on transforming its institutional culture, political leadership, and economic priorities. While there is no one-size-fits-all model, embracing the core tenets of a developmental state can help Nigeria achieve inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth in the 21st century.

Recommendations

To adopt the developmental state model effectively, Nigeria must undertake bold yet practical reforms. In specific terms, the Nigerian Government can build on the following:

- The strengthening of public institutions by promoting merit-based recruitment, enhancing transparency and depoliticising anti-corruption efforts
- The reduction in dependence on oil by investing in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and digital sectors through supportive policies and incentives.
- Modernize transport, energy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure while supporting research and development through innovation hubs and university partnerships.

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