GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

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Abstract
One of the major challenges that have faced African states since the advent of political independence has been that of establishing and sustaining appropriate governance institutions and practices that would engender democratic practices and promote sustainable development on the continent. This paper is an analysis of leadership and governance challenges in Africa. It argues that Africa's failures have come about largely as a result of frequent leadership change, lack of ideology, policy reversal and weak institutional setups. The paper also examines the leadership selection process in Africa and that the leadership selection process in Africa takes the imposition pattern and that African leaders have frequently come to their position with limited experience. Hence, the decline in moral and discipline caused by bad policies, eroded professional standards and ethics and weakened the system of governance. The paper lays emphasis on leadership and governance in some selected African countries. It observes that for Africa to overcome the crises of leadership and governance in the continent, those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in the future must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties and obligation. They must also be prepared and exposed to face the challenges of leadership in developing society, since the long term salvation of developing countries depends on the quality of its future leaders. The paper concludes that only transformational leadership that has maximum empathy for the people is required for good governance in Africa.

Keywords: Leadership, Governance, Democracy, Challenges, Africa

Introduction

All over the nations of the world, especially in the developed countries, effective management and utilization of available resources to better the living condition of the people has been the pre- occupation of the government. They ensure that scarce resources i.e. human and material resources are effectively and judiciously galvanized, utilized and sustained to ensure the development of their areas. But this has not been the case in most developing countries in Africa. Anyone who observes the current trend in Arica will baffle at the contradiction between the wealth of the continent, and the living conditions of most Africans.

Throughout the whole world, there has been an urgent desire among various people and government for unity, justice, peace and stability. In fact, most constituted governments in Africa have been undergoing serious and deepening politico-economic challenges. These problems generated by political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crises, which have bedeviled Africa, call our attention to the problems of leadership and governance in the continent.

One would think that after decades of independence and adoption of democratic systems of governance, Africa would be well established into a real democracy. Yet to the contrary, a high amount of evidence and examples of 'dictatorship of the majority' can be drawn from most of the African nations, including, but not limited to, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Gabon, South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, and Malawi. Thus, it is worth noting that although current leaders throughout Africa may have been elected through a democratic process, the governments are not creating opportunities for their populations, because what the leaders care about is shaping a power that can protect their own interests throughout their tenure in office and beyond. It is unfortunate that not all elected officials in African countries have the passion and hope like the founders of most nations during the liberation struggle of most African countries from colonialism.

The socio-economic and political development of any country depends largely on the ability of its leadership to facilitate, entrench and sustain good governance. Importantly, good governance is a manifestation of committed, patriotic and discipline leadership. Africa has existed for over decades with little or no record of socio-economic development. This ugly trend is not unconnected with poor leadership. It is logically unbelievable and appalling that despite the long years of independence of all the nations, Africa is still battling with the problem of good governance. The crop of leaders that have attained leadership position had in one way or the other lacked vision; most of them have been engrossed with corruption and political bickering leading to the enthronement of maladministration and mismanagement of public resources, and consequently economic setback and abject poverty.

Significantly, Africa is among the continents of the world endowed with natural and valuable resources that are capable of improving socio-economic status and living standards of the citizenry. But the reverse has always been the case. In view of this ugly trend one begins to wonder where we are heading to with the kind of leaders we have in different nations of Africa.

It is against this background that this paper examines leadership and governance challenges in Africa with a view to providing alternative method and style of leadership that can enhance good governance.

Leadership and Governance: A Conceptual Analysis

It is really very difficult to attempt a definition of leadership, or in other words it is difficult to define what makes certain persons to be "leaders. A leader is anyone who influences others to perform beyond their formal authority. Leadership emerges because every society is organized. The masses cannot lead. There is a need to have a few people who will lead (Ujo, 2001). Leadership is both the adhesive that binds a work group together and the catalyst that triggers employee motivation, thereby having major influence on organization performance.

Some researchers define leadership in terms of personality and physical traits, while others believe leadership is represented by a set of prescribed behaviours.

According to Graig (2005) leadership is defined as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals. While Robert et al (2004) affirms that leadership involves a complex interaction among the leader, the followers, and the situation.

Research has also shown that many scholars of varying backgrounds have variously defined leadership to suit their discussion. However nebulous or elusive it is to define leadership, Mc Farland, cited in Mohammed (2004), came up with a definition of leadership which was adopted as the operational definition of this paper. He defines leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence others to work beyond ordinary level to achieve goals within organizations, a community, or society". Nwachukwu, in Onah (2007) defines a leader as the "most influential person in an organization who provides direction, guides group activities and ensures that group objectives are attained". Operationalising the above definitions, four key attributes can be identified clarify about leadership and a leader:

i. **Influence:** A leader acts on the character and behaviour of others positively, through inspiration, motivation and not by intimidations or undue influence.

ii. **Attitudinal change:** A leader influences the people willfully and passionately to do things differently, that is 'work beyond ordinary level'. This involves changing their thinking and approaches to issues.

iii. **Guidance:** A leader guides and directs others towards the achievement of the group's goals.

iv. **Goal oriented**: A leader is result- oriented. Achieving stated goes remains his preoccupation.

Form the above we can see that the importance of leadership in any organization, group or the entire society cannot be overemphasized. True leadership is a pointer to the survival and progress of any group or society. The level of development across the globe can be directly or indirectly attributed among other things to the kind of leadership paradigm in the system. No wonder, Ogunsola notes that "the success of developed countries of the world was not only attributed to the technological and infrastructural development but, the human element that were saddled with the responsibility of managing both the human and material resources in a productive manner"
(Alechenu, 2013). This is leadership implied. Leadership involves managing public resources for common good.

Leadership is a reflection of characters, which include but not limited to knowledge, vision, courage, openness, accountability, determination, transparency, uprightness, motivation and patriotism put in place by office holders to lead their people and or followers so as to achieve reasonable and positive societal development. Profound changes need committed leadership exemplified in transformational policies and actions (Ukaegbu, 2010).

Transformational leadership is one of the most popular leadership theories in recent years. In general, a hallmark of transformational leadership is the extent to which the leader influences, or transforms, followers (Sashkin, 2004). It has core values of goals, visions, and the means to unite with followers to ensuring that such goals are achieved. He also takes the responsibility of ensuring that people are mobilized to participate in the process of change, and encourages a sense of collective action. Essentially, transformation leadership is the type that strives to make leaders out of the available followers. Such generated leaders are dispersed across sectors of economy to ensure that the mission and visions of progress created at different centres of power are executed based on the needs of citizens and that the later actively involved in goal implementation. With this, the transformational leader takes people beyond pre-occupation with basic needs and scraping by, as it is today in most parts of the country, and sets the pace for individual and national self-actualization. As a matter of fact, transformational leaders work independently and

courageously to make choices that are best for the country within the international system of economic, political and cultural interaction; lead the citizen to bring back quality and excellence to education, revitalize infrastructural facilities and modernize productive activity in agriculture and industry; insert skilled indigenous professionals and labour centre stage of building national development infrastructure.

Transformational leadership is inward looking and conscious of the benefits that its society can derive from the international environment. It takes the responsibility of the national or local problem depending on the layer of leadership; deploys skill, knowledge imagination and energy to solution to most problems and assists followers to realize their hidden and untapped capabilities. The transformational leader is always physically present to monitor projects at sites. He also receives report from the subordinates to ensure that policies and projects are implemented according to designs and specification. This style of leadership relegates corruption to the background, and brings sanity, transparency and accountability to the fore. This is the legacy of transformation left by transformational leaders in many countries of the World (Ukaegbu, 2010).

Governance has been around in both political and academic discourse for a long time, referring in a generic sense to the task of running a government or any other appropriate entity, for example a nation. More recently, it has gained particular significance in the literature on Africa development as a result, among other things, of the World Bank (1989) identifying the crisis on the continent as one of governance.

The concept of governance, in fact, is simple. It is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages economic, political as well as social processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction among the government, civil society and private sector. In essence, the concept of governance is not new and is probably as old as human civilization. It broadly means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. The concept of governance relates to the quality of relationship between the government and citizens whom it serves and protects. Governance could be define as one in which the concerned authority if any, exercises power, exerts influence and manages the country's social as well as economic resources leading to better development. In a more precise manner we can say that governance is the way those with power, use the power. Thus, governance has social, political, and economic dimensions (Sahni, 2003).

Governance is defined as the capacity to establish and sustain workable relations between individual actors in order to promote collective goals (Chazan, 1992). It was further defined by Galadima (1998) as;

> *a process of organizing and managing legitimate power structures, entrusted by the people, to provide law and order, protect fundamental human rights, ensure rule of law and due process of law, provide for the basic needs and welfare of the people and the pursuit of their happiness.*

The World Bank defined good governance in a more robust manner when it averred that, "it is the means of exercising power in the management of a nation's economic and social resources for sustainable development" (World Bank, 1992). Potter (2000) calls good governance "sound development management" that is the totality of public sector management; accountability; legal framework for development (reforms); information and technology; the acceptance of government by the people; the capacity of governments to initiate appropriate policies, make far-reaching decision; implement them effectively for service delivery. Good governance can also be linked to the extent which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order, and deliver public services, able to create an enabling public environment for productive activities and equitable in its conduct.

Adamolekun (2002) simply views governance as the process of exercising political power to manage the affairs of a nation. He listed the main elements of governance as; rule of law, freedom of speech and association, free and fair election, accountability, probity and transparency and result oriented leadership.

According to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) research project, "Good governance is the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised; the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced; the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently, and to formulate, implement and enforce sound policies and regulations; and, the respect for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them" (cited in Onigbide, 2007).,

The Challenges of Leadership And Governance In Africa
The challenge of leadership and its subsequent impact on Africa's democracy and governance has generated concerted efforts, both from within and outside the continent, to try to address it. There has been a realization that much of Africa's problems and challenges emanate from leadership and governance weaknesses. The problem which troubles Africans most is the failure of political leadership. It is quite unfortunate to observe that Africa's leadership selection process takes the imposition pattern directly or indirectly. Worrisome too is the fact that the Africa's political formation is along tribal groupings and ethnic aggregations thus visionary leaders are dropped while mediocre are often selected or imposed on the masses. In view of the above, therefore, the following suggestions are proffered to help to ameliorate the seemingly endemic leadership and governance problems in the continent so as to achieve a measure of credibility and purposeful leadership. The immediate task of leadership in Africa is to restore hope. To pull our people out of the pit in which they have found themselves, to rescue the people from the ravages of military dictatorship and from the ruling clique, protect unconstitutional removal of leaders from their legitimate position, etc.

The challenges for leadership in Africa are enormous, serious urgent and important. A leader of Africa has work to do. He will need vision, organizing ability, wisdom, administrative skills and more. The search for leadership in Africa is a search for social justice, which automatically, eliminates social injustice. The principle of justice is to give each person or group what is his/her due and to demand the contribution of each on the basis of equal consideration. Africans should learn to deal sincerely and honestly with one another so that the question of mistrust and suspicion amongst the various ethnic groups in the continent would be wiped away. It is only then that any qualified African can be elected into leadership positions without mistrust, suspicion, acrimony or reference to his/her ethnic or religious background. The leadership search as opined by Seteolu (2004) should interrogate the option of independent candidacy a basis to attract professionalism, intellectual, business and industrial elite to contest political office without partisan platform. This option will likely enhance the quality of politicking, promote issue-based politics and recruit new entrants into the political class with somewhat personal integrity and pedigree, and reduce the cost of political power. The independent candidate as a political type will more likely suit the local levels of governance where community attachment, honor and integrity as opposed to party influence or domination are the determinants of political choice.

The challenges for Africa and its leadership endowed with courage, determination, tolerant and honesty and the creation and promoting the process of endowing political institutions with necessary legitimacy which is their ultimate safeguard against violent overthrow (Kamuntu, 1993). Africa cannot afford to continue with ill-prepared and unassisted leaders. Those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in future must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties, and obligations. They must be exposed and there must be a carefully planned preparation for leadership if they are to meet the challenges that will face them. As recommended by African Leadership Forum (1993), that one solution is to hold periodically the "African Leadership Forum" - a series which may be national, sub-regional, regional, and international in dimension and may vary in duration. The purpose is to acknowledge the awareness of young, potential African leaders, playing special emphasis on diagnosing apparent failures of the past; as well as an understanding of multiple dimensions and complex interrelations of local, national, regional and global problems; and seeking possible approaches at proffering solutions to them.

The problem which troubles Africans most is the failure of political leadership. There are of course failures in other domains, but these are traceable in the consciousness to political leadership deficiencies. Seteolu (2004) summarizes the challenge from Nigerian perspective thus;

> *the political elite are not a productive class, but rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over politicization of the Nigerian state is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political contest ensured the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centered political gains.*

The de-ideologisation of African politics means that aspirant political leaders do not see a pressing need to state their macro-vision for the continent. There is no explicit formulation of any systems values. The nature of Nigerian state evolved a predatory political class that was concerned with power struggle, consolidation, alignment and realignment in the context of hegemonic control… This is linked to the lack of ideology in the political space, monetization of the political process, expand the basis of political participation and canvass alternative policy agenda (Seteolu, 2004; Obi, 2000). Ake and Onoge (1995) also pointed out that;

> *Political leadership is parochial rather than national; and corruptly converts national resources into its project of primitive accumulation. Ethnic diversity is manipulated to stay afloat to the detriment of national cohesion. There is an embarrassing lack of national heroes. The failure was usually explained either by the easy manipulability of the cultural pluralist background, or by the "two publics" antagonism.*

The personalize nature of rule in so many African countries means not only that public policy making lacks the logic and empirical content that typically characterizes such an activity in order contexts but also that governance structures are largely informal and subject to arbitrary change (Hyden,1992). Following the widespread abuses of civil and political rights by such rulers as Idi Amin, Emperor Bokassa, and Macias Nguema in the late 1970"s, however, Africans gradually began to recognize their significance. One of the most important messages coming out in literatures is that African government can no longer at will, by invoking the demand for national unity; violate civil and political rights of their citizens. Nigeria, a country which has the largest population in the continent of Africa, has a dearth of genuine leaders. Also equally relevant and important is the absence of political will. A political will is the compelling force for sound leadership quality, the ability to do what is right, what is relevant and what is attainable within the context of patriotic nationalism. Political will very often means personal or group sacrifices. It implies the ability to implement policies that have a nationalistic important and relevant without allowing pockets of interest to detract from what should naturally be of national benefit. In contemporary Africa, Nelson Mandela represents that model of leadership by personal sacrifice to redeem his people from servitude (Isekhure, 1995). In light of the above, Eze (1995) has this to say about leadership in Nigeria; In considering the Nigerian situation, there seem to be certain issues in Nigerian leadership which require experimental investigations. For instance, it has been generally asserted that Nigerian management is marked by authoritarian leadership characteristics and practices. They are said to have maintained a rigid dictatorial approach, as well as master-servant, rider-horse relationship with subordinates. In fact, it is been said that a Nigerian man is by nature and training an autocrat who demands nothing but respect and obedience from his subordinates, and those younger and lower in status than him. Also in public sector, the leadership has been associated with certain undesirable traits such as double- standards, pursuance of selfish goals, lack of seriousness and indiscipline. The current governance and security challenge the Nigerian state faced (the issue of Boko Haram, Niger Delta militants and kidnapping) are not seen in isolation from what is already

said above. Most African leaders assumed their role with limited experience and training in the art and science of directing and effectively managing the affairs of a modern state (Kamuntu, 1993).

The challenge to African leaders is thus to develop the capacity that would enable us to strike a balance between the values of African societies and the governance that our nations must follow. However, the concern must be to blend the two rather than to treat them as if they were mutually exclusive. The political power in Africa became concentrated in one political party and finally in hand of one leader. Making the rise of the supremacy of the office of the President over all organs of government, most African Presidents enjoyed re-election in perpetuity without any competition. Kamuntu (1993) observes further that consequent resistant to the concentration of power to the hands of one man – the President was brutally suppressed with greater violations of human rights, resulting in massacres and millions of Africans becoming refugees or becoming displaced persons and many qualified African"s seeking employment opportunities in foreign countries in search of personal security. Africa"s continuing crisis presents a tremendous challenge to the continent and its leadership. Therefore, based on the above analysis, we can possibly assume that the trouble with Africa is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the African character or political system in operation. The character of political leadership became a problem as most of them lost or lacked control of effective leadership. This led to the scramble and partition of state resources to suit their purpose.

In general, the challenges of leadership and governance as perceived in most African states are summarized thus:

Lack of rule of law: The leaders in Africa do not show respect to the rule of law, especially, judicial decisions. This hampers the judiciary to effectively discharge its duties. The predictability of the judiciary is not yet a reality in Africa, the political executives still undermine the independence of the judiciary through patronage appointments, and judicial administration is characterized by weak enforcement capacity.

Absence of development oriented leadership. Many observers of the development and crisis in Africa since independence agree that poor leadership has been a major factor. Most of the African leaders were not committed to development of their society. Available evidence in the development literature on transformational leaders who have significantly reduced poverty in their respective countries during the past quarter century does not generate any consistent conclusion regarding the factors that contributed to the successes. The leaders of the success stories in Chile, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, all demonstrated strong commitment to development, with clarity of vision and of goal (Adamolekun, 2002).

Absence of Accountability and Transparency: - There is complete absence of transparent and accountable leadership in Africa. A government is deemed to be accountable when its leaders (both elected and appointed) are responsive to the demands of the citizen. Accountability is best enforced through the instrument of rule of law and independent judiciary. Citizen can seek redress in the courts for acts of omission or commission by a government and its officials. However, Africa has not done well in this regard; it has been corruption at all levels. And this corruption is not unconnected with profuse index of weak accountability and lack of transparency. The leaders abuse public office for private gain.

Corruption challenges: Although corruption is a global scourge, Nigeria and so other African countries appear to suffer tremendously from this malaise. One might be forced to believe that the natios have a culture of corruption; Nigeria is a rich nation floating on oil wealth, but almost none of it flows to the people. The countless reforms and lack of genuity and integrity of our leaders have left Africa corrupt as ever. Politicians are expunged and later re-admitted into their parties, then, what hope for good governance, when the leadership is deeply entrenched in corrupt practices?

Electoral malpractices challenges: This problem has become a popular phenomenon in all African politics. As a matter of fact, an average African especially in Nigeria believes that elections cannot be won except it is rigged. Yes, this is an extent at which our electoral system has deteriorated. Electoral malpractice is not a

recent phenomenon, in fact, it has existed since independence and has continued to exist, even, in a modernized fashion. Our leaders are the architect of electoral fraud, for instance, in the first republic, the leadership of various political parties were accused and alleged of election rigging. The same happened in the second republic. And forth republic was also not different. If by now, our leaders, the so called politicians are not ready to face free and fair election I doubt if good governance can be entrenched by these same set of people who are so desperate in their bid to clinch to power at all cost.

Conclusion

The quest for leadership is an undeniable fact in human history, especially in matters relating to the management of both human and material resources. Therefore, it should be noted that the success or failure of any country depends on the effectiveness or otherwise of its leaders. There is very urgent need now for able, true and efficient leadership. Such leadership must be in the hands of qualified, competent, enlightened and honest persons for the overall development of Africa. That search may not end until we get principled followership and principled leadership resulting into principled governance of Africa.

The crucial elements in the good governance being called for in Africa are accountability, transparency, predictability, human rights etc. Africans can develop the common values necessary for the governance of Africans societies which in essence must be rooted in the spirit of cooperation, tolerant and adherence to constitutional rules and procedures (Obasanjo, 1993). The long term salvation of African therefore, depends on the quality of its future leadership. In this context, apart from improved quality of education so as to secure able future leadership, the present leader of Africa have a special responsibility to develop a new generation of leaders, tested in our era. This is the new challenge to Africa's leaders and a necessary measure for Africa's future that can sustain stability and development.

There is the need to sanitize the selection process of our leaders by clearing the system of its current impunity. Hence, the electoral Institutions must be empowered to invoke the force of law. The punitive measures in the Electoral Act are not there for fashion. They must be invoked to sanction erring political actors to deter other stakeholders i.e. security and electoral agents and even the electorate. It is reasonable that those vying for elective positions should be carefully and strictly screened to ensure that credible candidates are elected into various offices. It is also important that every appointment into sensitive and strategic position must be based on merit. Merit rather favoritism or nepotism should be allowed to determine who occupies any position of authority and responsibility within the polity. This will ensure the appointment of credible, competent and In addition to this, the electoral process should give people opportunity to interact with all contestants from different political parties to enable the people screen candidates based on their mission and vision for the people. This will allow for a good choice among the candidates by the people. With the present crop of leadership in Africa, good leadership and governance may be unattainable, except for the emergence of transformational, selfless competent and discipline leaders who are ready to make sacrifices for the development of their country.

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