

Beyond the Rhetorics of Statecraft in Africa: Searching for a New Paradigm of Leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract: Leadership question features most prominently in virtually all reported analyses, comments and interviews in the media, especially the print media. One thing that is evident is the recognition of leadership deficit as an important factor in understanding Africa and indeed Nigeria's predicament. Chinua Achebe, in "The Trouble with Nigeria" identified leadership failure as the bane of development in Nigeria and by implication in most of Africa. As a matter of fact, even honest African leaders like the late Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), late Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), and Nelson Mandela (South Africa) had in the past pointed at the leadership malaise in development in the continent. This paper therefore examines leadership and governance in Nigeria within the framework of servant-leadership. We noted that for Nigeria to evolve a positive and focus leadership with morals, values and accountability, there is the need for selfless in the form of putting others above self in service delivery, which is the essence of servant-leadership. The creating of a culture of servant leader-leadership in Nigeria would mean the replacement of the top-bottom culture with one where attributes of servant-leadership as already identified flourish. It would require having in place a leadership that has "worked well enough to be considered valid." It is, therefore, an evidence of internalization of values and "a stabilizing force which creates social reality for its techniques for creating a culture of servant-leadership which is not possible except there is progress in evolving a team of servant-leaders.

Key words: Development, governance, leadership, Nigeria, paradigm and statecraft

INTRODUCTION

I have devoted considerable time and effort for some time now to studying and writing about the state in the post-colonial Africa and come to a conclusion that the problem of Africa is neither the lack of human and natural resources rather the abuse or misuse of this very treasures of the earth which is often time as a result of misgovernance which is a function of poor leadership style that manifested in the leadership creed who often time get into political offices for their personal aggrandizement. Nigeria, which is perceived to be the giant of Africa, is even more hit by this crisis of leadership this is because of her inability to live to her bidding to maintaining such status both at home and abroad. The spate of corruption and irresponsibility's among our leaders has led to the branding of the country as either a failed state or failing state because of the high level of poverty amidst the abundant human and natural resources in the country. It is on the basis of this that this paper discusses the leadership and governance in Nigeria: the imperative of servant-leadership as an alternative model of leadership in Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualizing Leadership: There have been series and extensive debates on leadership since the idea of

organized society came into existence. Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, Marx, Engel, Heidegger, etc have written on the importance of leadership in nation building and development project.

Though these scholars advocate various methods in their approach, they are basically concerned with who governs, who should govern and what should constitute political authority in a community, as well as the role and influence of political actors. While Plato and Aristotle adopt the idealist method in their analysis on leadership, Locke and Rousseau rely heavily on the prescriptive method for generalising on the nature of man, society and authority. The work of Marx and Engels rests squarely on historical materialist theory (Cramston, 1964).

In simplest term, leadership implies the quality of being good at leading a team, organisation, a country, etc. Okadigbo (1987) views leadership as the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Whereas, political leadership is the decision on social policy and resource allocation as exerted by partisan representatives.

Conger's assertion on leadership uncovers the selfish motives of most African leaders. Conger (1988) argued that "African leaders place more value on capturing political power for themselves and grow increasingly fearful about what seem to them to be the grave consequences of losing it to their rivals in the competition

for control of state power” (Abubakar, 2004). Pearse-Femi, (1985) takes a cursory look at leadership from political cum moral angle. While Adamolekun, (1985) explores leadership in government administration as it relates to politicians, political (technocrats) and higher civil servants.

The basis of these definitions is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resource for effective national development. Therefore, the fundamental concept of leadership is also appraisal at the structural and behavioural levels. Seteolu (2004) identifies six salient features of leadership with its theoretical underpinnings. These include trait, behaviour, and attribution, charismatic, transformational and visionary. The trait theory is associated with confidence, iron will, determination and decisiveness. The behavioural theory appraises the conduct specific leaders’ exhibit such as initiatives, experimentation, generating and implementation of change.

The attribution theory depicts the intelligence, personality, oratory virtue and aggressiveness of leaders. The charismatic theory shows leadership features such as self-confidence, vision, articulation, conviction and extraordinary behaviour. The transformational theory is tinged on the charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision, pride, respect and thrust. The visionary leadership deals with the ability to explain and strengthen the vision through skillful oral and written communication behaviour (Seteolu, 2004).

Leadership and governance A theoretical discourse:

The leadership question is hinged on the interface of structure and behaviour, dialectic of persons and institutions. Actors who create, implement or interpret the laws that are binding on existing social institutions play the state roles. The behavioural concern is the impact of personality trait, attitude and values on political governance. The extant literature on leadership offers the theoretical context and philosophical departure to explain the motives and character of the governing elite. Since the idea of organized society, there have been debates on who governs, who should govern, what basis of political authority in a community should be, when, why and how should political actors obtain and appropriate influence. Plato, Marx, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, had raised philosophical interventions on these issues (Cramston, 1964). However, these writers differ on methodology. For instance, Locke and Rousseau rely on the perspective method to set the criteria for generalized ideas on the nature of man, society and authority (Abbott, 1947; Cramston, 1964). The works of Marx thrives on the historical materialist theory (Cramston, 1964).

There is link between leadership and governance. The interface will be examined in the later part of this paper. Leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Political leadership is the

decision on the social policy and resource allocation, as exerted by partisan representatives (Okadigbo, 1987). This definition suggests that the leadership process is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resources, which determines the locus of power. The concept of leadership is also appraised at the structural, behavioural levels. These problematic are further deepened by the implications of the concept of power, legitimacy and hierarchy. Therefore, a detailed analysis should appraise the imports of identified variables for leadership inquiry. Do these factors strengthen or limit political authority, and within what context.

The literature analyses leadership theories such as the trait, behavioural, attribution, characteristic, transformational and visionary. The trait theory identifies the attributes of confidence, iron-willed, determined and decisive. It also identifies trait that differentiate the leaders and non-leaders. These are ambition and energy, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence and knowledge. However, this approach ignores the need of followers, fails to clarify the relative importance of various traits and strength of situational factors (Robbins, 1998). The behavioural theory appraises the conduct that specific leader’s exhibit. In this context, the leader initiates structure, value experimentation, seeks new ideas, generates and implements changes. The attribution theory suggests that leadership is an allusion to how the followership characterizes the leaders. These include intelligence, outgoing personality, strong verbal skills, and aggressiveness. This theory emphasizes the perception approach as a basis to interrogate the leadership issue (Robbins, 1998). The charismatic theory is hinged on the features of self-confidence, vision, and ability to articulate the vision, strong convictions about the vision, extra-ordinary behaviour. When successful, these behaviours evoke surprise and admiration. The charismatic leader is viewed as an agent of radical change rather than the status quo. These leaders are able to make objective appraisals of environmental constraints, and resources needed to foster change. The transformational leader is imbued with charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision and sense of mission, instill pride; attract respect and trust. The visionary leadership is the capacity to create and articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision of the future. This leadership is imbued with the ability to explain and strengthen the vision through definite oral and written communication and behaviour (Okadigbo, 1987; Bass, 1990; Robbins, 1998).

Leadership and governance in Nigeria An overview:

The Nigerian state emerged as a colonial state where the foreign bourgeois class dictated the economic and political content. It organized the socio-economy under the direct control of global capital. This state attained political sovereignty in 1960 thus expanding the basis of capitalist accumulation to include the local bourgeois class. Meanwhile, the economic structures were skewed

to sustain the hegemony of global capital in a peripheral state. Thus, the emergent leadership secures political power within the content of the dependency, peripherilization and neo-colonialism. This political class pursued power within the framework of the British parliamentary system. It is based on the future of power among the organs, principle of collective responsibility, bicephalous executive system, strong party discipline and strong opposition. The polity was administered on the premise of a regional structure within the context of the federal system. The nature of the federal system allowed the region to pursue policy and programmes hinged on their historical specificities. Beside, the parliamentary system evolves leadership that had immense followership and legitimacy. This strength was used to mobilize the people behind policies. The regions under Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively had visionary and charismatic leaders whose behavioural leanings and attitude set the pace and context of politics and governance. The parties had ethnic origin and somewhat ideological context that constituted the fulcrum of political and economic governance. However, the situational factors like the 1962 and 1965 western regional crisis, 1962 and 1963 census crisis, and 1964 general election crisis accelerated the collapses of the first Republic.

The military rulership has had far-reaching impact on the Nigerian political economy. The military supervise transitions that defined the nature and context of leadership transfer. The crescendo was the annulment of the June 12 elections that precipitated national crisis, secessionist agitation, social dislocation and economic crisis. The military sought to reengineer the political domain, cultivate a new political culture, reduce the influence of money in the political process and evolve a new political class. However, this intent was undermined by the cancellation, personalization of political power, the re-emergence of ethnic irredentist group and ethnic politics (Akinterinwa, 1997). Also its economic agenda and socio policies sought to instill socio discipline, Fiscal and budget discipline, self-reliance and sustained national economic growth. The Buhari regime pursued a strict economic policy, which sought to reduce the imperialist influence in the Nigerian political economy. The strict posture on external debt and negotiation with the Bretton woods ideologues on economic reforms incurred the wrath of the Paris club and the G8. However, these populist measures were undermined by human right abuse, detention without trial, muzzling of the media and selective application of laws.

The Babangida regime pursued the structural adjustment programme that sought restructure diversify the economy, private sector growth and capitalist based development hinged on the market logic. However, critics like Bangura (1991) and Adejumo (2002), cohere on the adverse social implications of economic reforms in the adjusting states. The contradictions were heightened by

the personalization of state power by the military president, General Babangida and institutionalization of corruption. The Pius Okigbo report indicted the Babangida regime on the inability to account for \$12.2b oil wind fall. Furthermore, the mass mobilization for social and economic recovery policy of the Babangida government sought to correct the Nigerian attitudinal problems, which negatively affected the economy and politics. However, the policy was contradicted by the divide and rule tactics of the junta, unpopular economic programmes, repressive policies and human underdevelopment (Adejumobi, 2002).

The Abacha regime was characterized by jaundiced transition programme, repressive policies, harassment and killings of critical opposition and declining economic fortunes. The military junta led by General Sani Abacha, had a morbid dislike for intellectual class and the progressive political class. This disdain heightened with the mounting opposition against the authoritarian disposition of the government the military ruler Sani Abacha was a reticent person shunned public appearance, hibernated in the presidential villa, sponsored military goons who transverse the country to humiliate, harass and intimidate critics, shunned intellectual discourses, opted for brute force and brigandage as instrument of political governance.

The Obasanjo government emerged in the context of the hegemony of the military class over the political terrain. The president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, won the 1999 and 2003 presidential elections amidst critical opposition to pseudo-military rulership. Overtime, civil society groups, trade unions and other parties had pilloried the president. He was perceived as intolerant, arrogant, combative, bellicose, cantankerous and pandemic. This leadership style is linked to his military background and orientation, personal attributes and demeanour. Furthermore, his rulership is critically perceived for national attributes and demeanour. Furthermore, his rulership is critically perceived for national insecurity, rising inflation, collapse of local businesses, growing human poverty, homelessness and despondency, epileptic, unreliable and insufficient social facilities, over bloated bureaucracy, halfhearted struggle against corruption. Here, we had discussed leadership and governance under civilian and military regimes within the context of specific policies, institutional framework, motives and attitudes of the major political actors.

Evolving the servant-leadership in Nigeria: According to Greenleaf (1977), "a servant-leader is one who is a servant first" and servant-leadership

Begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve first. Then conscious choice brings to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test

is; Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servant? (Emphasis mine).

Autry (2001) advances what can be regarded as the intrinsic elements of the leader as servant, by redefining leadership from the perspectives that serving others is its essential component. It is therefore, "not about controlling people"; instead, "it is about caring for people and being a useful resource for others." It is not also about being boss;" but entails "being present for people and building a community at work". Further more, it is "not about holding a territory; but letting go of ego, bringing your spirit to work, being your best and most authentic self." It is also "more concerned with creating a place in which people can do good work, ... find meaning in their work, and can bring their spirits to work" and largely, it is 'a matter of paying attention and requires love. It is, therefore, not about power, which was always the preoccupation of leadership. It is, therefore, a calling.

Elsewhere, Rasmussen (Spears, 1995) identifies the following-service to others, using a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, sharing power in decision-making, and impacting the least privileged in society of benefit, or at least causing no further deprivation; and the development of "a relationship in which those being served grows as persons by becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servant leaders themselves"- as the philosophy or underlying values of servant leadership. These are in contrast to their descriptions of leadership, which are behaviorally based.

On the basis of Green leaf's writings, Spears (1995) identifies a set of characteristics of the servant-leaders, which are of critical importance, and are central to the development of servant-leaders. These are listening, empathy, healing, awareness and persuasion. Others are conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, community to the growth of people, and building community.

A servant-leader is therefore sharply different from one who is leader first. For a leader first, it will be a later choice to serve-after leadership is established. One other difference is in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. These distinctions between the 'leader-first and the servant-first' which he regards as 'two extreme types', is the greatest problem to the transition to servant-leadership or creating a team of servant-leaders and indeed, a culture of servant-leadership in existing organizations, institutions and communities.

The leadership style is the opposite of transformational leadership in the sense that it not only makes the followers to be leaders, the leader puts him at the service of the followers. This is also markedly different from the conception the conception of politics and leadership, especially in Nigeria where politics and leadership are self-serving.

The greatest problem of servant-leadership as a leadership model is how to reverse the existing conceptions and trends at all levels of political leadership and the public service without which such claim by one person may be unfounded and futile. Servant-leaderships require of a team of servant-leaders. One of the essential responsibilities of effective leadership is to build and sustain high cohesive and performing team or teams, as the case may be. So, it is not enough for a president or a Governor to proclaim that status for the approach to leadership to take root.

Therefore, there are challenges to the emergence and the development of servant leadership in Nigeria. The first relates to the validity of the claim to servant-leadership and the second is associated with the building of team of servant-leadership and the third has to do with creating a culture of servant-leadership building a team of servant leaders and creating a culture of servant-leadership are necessary for leadership effectiveness and sustainability.

Challenges of developing of servant-leadership in Nigeria: The greatest challenge of servant-leadership as a leadership model is how to reverse the existing conceptions and trends at all levels of political leadership and public service without which such a claim by one person may be unfounded and futile. Servant-leadership needs a team of servant-leaders. One of essential responsibilities of effective leadership is to build and sustain a high cohesive and performing team or teams, as the case may be. So, it is not enough for a Present or Governor to proclaim that status for the approach to leadership to take root.

Therefore, creating of a culture of servant leadership in Nigeria would mean the replacement of the top-bottom culture with one where attributes of servant-leadership as already identified flourish. It would require having in place a leadership that have "worked well enough to be considered valid." It is, therefore, an evidence of internalization of values and "a stabilizing force which creates social reality for its techniques for creating a culture of servant-leadership which is not possible except there is progress in evolving a team of servant-leaders. It is through the existence of a culture of servant-leaders. It is through the existence of a culture of servant-leadership that the method can firmly rooted and outlives the administration. But this cannot be done in eight years. Except there is commitment by its successors, there is no guarantee of continuity.

In Nigeria, for such a culture to emerge, the task of servant-leadership must succeed and there has to be an understanding of its imports and evidence of its advantages. Since creating a culture is contingent on building a team of servant-leaders, we will not go as far as discussing the stages and mechanisms for creating such a culture here. But it should be noted that as in the case of building a team of servant-leaders, the leadership also has a critical role to play in creating a culture of servant-leadership. Here, the leader's, role modeling is potent in creating a culture of servant-leadership.

In all of the above, the servant-leader, in this case the President, is the most important element. Therefore, a lot depends on the extent to which the leader can act out the attributes of servant leadership as earlier identified. The behaviour and example that he sets carry the greatest message on the import of servant, and provides “the substance that holds the team together in common purpose toward the right objectives.” It is through team-building experience that a trustworthy team of servant-leadership can emerge.

If the model will see the light of the day, there is the need to give substance and effect to it. As at now, there is no attempt at developing and popularizing the style of leadership. People including potential and serving leaders, hardly know what this entails. Something has to be done to reverse this if servant-leadership style will have any meaning in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

From the above, the task of building a team of servant-leaders like in all organizations is more problematic, giving the prevailing leadership models. In these organizations, change and change management are herculean, because the task of building a team of servant-leaders requires transformation as against reformation of existing practices and techniques for task accomplishment. It requires more than marginal tinkering with existing arrangements. As Autry (2001) notes and rightly too, “servant-leadership does not come naturally or easily to people whose experience has been limited to organizations in which the command-control, hierarchical management style is the norm”. This puts a lot of responsibility on the new leadership in helping others to develop.

Similarly, human reaction to change, regardless of its outcome even when not sudden, is not always without reluctance and, in some cases, is the evidence of resistance borne out of fear and anxiety. In some cases, it might result in the old thinking that accepts certain hierarchies, which will wane under the servant-leader.

In addition as Okuande (2008), argued, the Nigerian political class holds on government to entrenched itself in power. The benefits of office were far too attractive to many who otherwise would have little glory or affluence to allow them to contemplate the forfeiture of these perquisites without carrying on the most effective fight regardless of means.

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