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Reflection on Leadership Issues and Sustainability of African States

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Abstract

A leadership issue in African States has been a significant global concern over the past few decades. It has been identified as a serious constraint to effective leadership and sustainability to African States. This study aims to provide an overview of leadership issues and sustainability of African States, analyzing its problems, characteristics, challenges, and priorities. This study delves into the factors that contribute to the persistence of leadership issues in African States. This includes political instabilities, sophisticated corruption, poor criminal justice system and fragility and weak governance. The study analyzes the dynamics of leadership issues and sustainability of African States. It examines the African priorities for sustainable development such as tourism, gender equality, education and health among others. It also explores the challenges of leadership in African States which includes the policy of rewarding friends and punishing foes, nepotism, blurred vision, competition for preeminence, corruption dictatorship, and failure to re-define goals, among others. The study discusses the sustainable development issues as having multiple contexts and often diametrically opposed values, demanding an unprecedented interface between academic research and public policy, and there is no such thing as sustainable development expertise, but rather, a multiplicity of expertise among others. The study recommends that young people being trained for leadership in Africa should be aware of the above dangers and challenges. They should be encouraged to develop attitudes toward the potential that will keep them away from the pitfalls preventing the full development of their countries. Others include redefining and repositioning of leadership system and style, and proper political acculturation for youth with fresh and pristine ideations. This study employed Use of historical method of elicitation of data (both primary and secondary source) and analysis and interpretations at arriving at the reliability of the study.

Key Words: Leadership, Sustainability, Youth, Governance, African State.

Introduction

Leadership issues have been identified as a serious constraint to effective leadership and sustainability to African States

governance system The African leadership crisis and issues cannot be placed in correct perspective, if the concepts and meanings of leadership are

not properly analyzed and interpreted. Leadership is qualitative governance as against mere quantitative governance. Leadership as qualitative and quantitative governance connotes a leadership style, approach and policy that have delivered ample (quantitative) dividends or blessings. Leadership simply means service to humanity. A leader is actually a servant, a selfless servant who is preoccupied with the tasks assigned to him and delivers as expected or positively as unexpected. That is, he is an 'extra' ordinary performer who is results-oriented and collectivist in diligently and commitally seeking and finding solutions to concerns of mankind. Some scholars view leadership as sacrifice and commitment to humanity. In a nutshell, leadership connotes excellence¹ expected to be discharged and delivered by an articulate leader designated with number of responsibilities in a given territoriality.

It is essential to note that African States lacks visionary leadership, and a nation without a vision is actually will be bereft of good governance. Vision means focus, and the person without a vision is

the most pitiable creature on earth. According to Emmanuel, "Where there is no focus, confusion takes over. Until you have a focus, you cannot become a focus; until you know where you are going, there is no way anyone can help you get there."²

The African leadership system and style is unfortunately marred with number of challenges, it is either by inheritance, or default through military usurpation of power (coup de'tat) or its civilian version of election rigging. Some of these African States leaders inordinate desire for power has poised them to source for it either by crooks or by hooks, using the credulities of the electorates by ethnic inclination and economic strategies. This has become the major setback that has continued to create wide lacuna in governance on the African States. It will interest to note however that some African rulers have been rare exception to the rule in this case. For instance, despite the fact that the former Head of States and President Olusegun Obasanjo got to power by default in 1976, his administration made landmark contributions to Nigeria's development. This was because he had a vision that

had not departed from Lt. Chukwuma K. Nzeogwu, his friend in 1966 and late General Murtala Ramat his boss in 1975 to make Nigeria a united, strong and prosperous nation.³ That was a vision that drove Obasanjo's in Nigeria to the front-row of African and International relevance. Another rare exception was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, whose idea of Ujamaa or African socialism and villagization changed the fortunes of agriculture and economy of Tanzania in his time. Similarly, Nelson Mandela had a vision of no negotiations, no compromises with the apartheid regime or the white natives of South Africa, but by 1994 when he became the President, he saw the need to bend and reached agreements with them for the sake of a greater post-apartheid South Africa. What this implies is that a visionary leadership will have to constantly show flexibility when desirable so as to accomplish the vision.⁴ Notes that Africa has not had too many in the likes of Mandela and Nyerere. African rulers have dreams but not visions, since they could not be implemented effectively to spawn the objectives of good governance. Zimbabwean official of the World Bank

noted in 2001 that Africans must come: (i) To identify and address their personal strengths and weaknesses as leaders. (ii) To understand the challenges they face as participants in a rapidly globalizing society. (iii) To share and refine their respective visions of the society they would like to live in. (iv) To lead by example in building this society. African leaders are increasingly taking the reins to define where they want to take Africans to build a new partnership between donors and African states.⁵

The Leadership Problems in African States

Leadership issues have not been oversubscribed to as the problem of African States, contrary to how some scholars have argued in recent times. It is contended in that line of thought that there are other dire straits in Africa that tend to render leadership to a secondary matter as they defy leadership.⁶ However, it is pertinent to note, leadership issue is an intervening variable in modern governable society as it increases or decreases the rate of the crisis, depending on policy choices, decisions

and implementation.⁷ There are three types of leadership challenges at the generic level in the 21st century, namely; the contextual, personal and changing paradigms. Firstly at the contextual level in the case of Africa, the historical, environmental, diseases, poverty, wars and political instability, infrastructural and general underdevelopment are the turbulent issues. For instance, in Congo, there is the poverty of infrastructural development from independence to date. Secondly, at the personal level, observation has shown that there is low drive or motivation towards self-development on the part of Africans (leaders or followers), absence of leadership and general performance skills and a warped educational system, which started dying with the advent of unfocused military rule and political instability. For instance, it is largely evident that one can count the number of African leaders that is schooled up to the university level, or how many go back to school after one level of service. In Congo-Leopoldville (later Congo-Kinshasa, Zaire and now DR Congo) at independence for instance, only Patrice Lumumba had any

significant tertiary education. Thirdly, is the challenge of whether Africa is responding well to hanging paradigms such as globalization, World perspectives, technology, international speed of events and democratization. Indeed there are other problems of African States that is natural, as they are phenomenal. It should be noted that the sporadic spread of number of pandemic like Covid-19 grossly affect African leadership system, and has been responsible for re-direction of government policies in African States. For instance, the HIV-AIDS, and malaria are pivotal to development, but they are closely tied to leadership vision if health of the citizens are not properly consider a thing of serious concern. All could be achieved through effective control and management of such natural/health maladies by governments and concern philanthropists.

Another problem of leadership issues in African States is the perspective of leadership itself. It will be proper to quickly submit before identifying the locators of leadership, that the environment of leadership include followers, and leaders in Africa has

a consumer perspective, rather than a producer perspective that has changed the fortunes of the West. African leaders merely consume, they hardly or do not produce finished exotic goods that is transferable for acquisition of wealth or capital either within or to the metropolises. In the same vein, African States leader sell raw materials because they don't and have not developed capacity to turn it to finished product. Mensah Otabil, Chancellor of Central University, Accra at a Shiloh Programme in Canaanland, Ota in 2004, in a message titled, "Buying the Future" identified this futur as an Esau mentality whereby we sell our birthright because of our shortsightedness. Now, among the locators of leadership, the most fascinatingly dangerous for Africa is positional leadership perspective. This represents the get-there-by-all-means syndrome but with infinitesimal, insignificant or no achievements at all. What constitutes achievements are rewarding efforts to the aspirant for getting there, the titular recognition, addition to or richness of his curriculum vitae, and of course, the spoils of office.⁸ The "position" therefore is the

focus of attention, not the results, neither the policies, nor the actions and inactions. The inactions of some African leaders are more likely to find space and speed, especially in acceleration of crises which indirectly snowballed into violence pugnacities In Africa, titles have driven men-politicians, soldiers, and even area boys crazy. Hence, high-sounding titles like 'President, General, Chief Doctor, Honorable Minister, Senator, Governor, Alhaji Chief Doctor, Reverend Colonel, Prophet, Architect,' etc have tended to make us lose a sense of the citizens calling and responsibility for mundane title contest and irrelevances. The culture of seeking and taking titles extends to the area boys who also bear 'Professor, Chief, Alaye baba'. It is this same positional perception that has driven politicians in Nigeria to begin assassinations of perceived and real political threats or enemies, to get to power position at all costs. This explains the murders of Funsho Williams in Lagos, and Dr. Ayo Daramola in Ekiti among others in Nigeria Who knows who and who are next! The cycle goes The opposite of positional leadership is responsible leadership, this is what Africa

needs in the 21st century. For instance, the querying of the ambitions of General Ibrahim Babangida in Nigeria to return to democratic power is tantamount to ‘Odumegwu ojukwu assertions, that those who have been intoxicated with power, and have enjoy certain emolument from it, even though for one day will never like to abdicate their position⁷, his inordinate action poised for numbers of rhetorical questions has the propensity for elicitation of answers when Babangida’s ambition is placed within the purview of the positional leadership perspective that is ruining Africa. Babangida just wants to return to power, that is all! He should have accomplished his vision for the country when he spent eight years in power (1985 - 1993). It is apposite to understand that his mission to return could mean to amend and ameliorate some vision or oversight committed during the first opportunity of military administration between 1985 and 1993. Like many other African heads of States, retired generals, for instance, Babangida may have become a spent force who probably wishes to return for the sake of covering up his first loopholes. As a matter of fact, he has

precedence to refers to Milton Obote “came back in Uganda, Yoweri Museveni came back in Uganda,” Matthew Kerekou did same in Benin Republic, and of course own General Olusegun Obasanjo has done same in Nigeria. In line with vision, Babangida’s ambition is apparently parochial and very self-serving. Positional leadership syndrome is responsible for this. “I was this, I was that, I am this, I will be this....etc” without any driving philosophy, ideology or vision without any accomplishments worthy of envy. The madness must stop! Babangida, like other retired generals, must quit the scene completely. Their re-intervention is an arrogant display of how they have permanently captured Africa. What is more? Nigeria’s examples are setting a very dangerous precedence for the continent’s nascent democracy. We cannot afford to have a return of soldiers to power under any guise if we must move ahead in Furthermore, African leaders must stop running their States like personal and must not been seen. Most of them see the states as an extension of themselves, thus, personifying power as well as

personalizing the State. They are like one patriarch whose children are the citizens, nation their household.

Political Factor

By far, the political challenges are more perennial and indeed central to the causation or escalation of leadership issues in African States. These are political instability, sit-tightism that manifests in the Machiavellian arrogance of power consciousness or civilian dictatorship or even in third term bids of septuagenarian leaders; construction of a pseudo-democratic sub-system or otherwise militarization of the ostensibly democratic institutions; praetorianism excessive politicization of issues and policy-making; political corruption, manipulations of electoral processes; political assassinations; rulers compromised to western dictates; maladministration; ideological differences; disunity; failed policies; failed unions, etc.⁹ The Nigerian situation is more critical. Thus, its response in the African leadership issues is not far from prognosis. First, as the most populous nation in the Africa, it stands the greatest risk in the event of one act of ill-

governance or the other such as collapse of inter group relations, outbreak or mismanagement of diseases, etc. Second, Nigeria's acclaimed "giant" of Africa status, its afrocentric approach to leadership issues, and unsavory political experience of the past-distant and recent- do not only make it concerned, on democratizing, about the future of modern democracy and good governance in Africa; but have stimulated its repositioning for favourable leadership turn over in the present century.

Leadership and Sustainability

Indeed, through the strengthening of democracy, leadership becomes the tool with a capacity to enhance sustainable peace, security, stability and development; and that there can be no leadership without citizens or electorates collective and direct involvement. Much international spotlight has been cast on the severity and magnitude of Africa's challenges. Addressing those challenges in a new cooperative spirit should be nurtured to sustain change and renewal of Africa States hopes and aspirations. But problems and challenges can be hardly

tackled in a vacuum. Our getting involved, all of us, in all spheres of leadership is half of the battle in overcoming the challenges. After all, history and great accomplishments start and end with individuals and the commitment and sacrifices citizens are willing to make in the public interest.

Leadership Training and Cultural Sustainability

This is the belief that becoming a leader is only possible when training grounds are not just available, but are properly positioned for great acculturation for the youth. Emergence of role models African States are secure if there are role models for the leadership “apprentice” or student to emulate or to inspire them. The youth best learns by example, not experience as the old ideas are good guides, but fresh ones build changing societies. Improving governance and resolving conflicts. It is observable that well-managed countries with effective institutions and sound policies tend to be more successful.

Over the last decade, dysfunctional governance has taken a heavy toll on leadership issues and sustainable development of African States. Endemic

corruption, skewed budget allocations and a corroded fabric of state-society relations, often continue to undermine the potential for successful sustainable development, and in some cases even foster conflict. A quantum improvement in governance is that will be. We need to build on these Islands of success, to scale them up, and to replicate them across the continent. Africa continent needs to resolve the pressing issue of violent conflicts such as insurgencies in various part of the States which is now becoming a major development issue and threatens to the continent’s prospects. More also, as discussed in the preceding section, HIV/AIDS epidemic has become a major inhibition of development issue for Africa.

. It is pertinent to note that sustainable development is not possible where the productive age of the population is ravaged by disease. In Zimbabwe, about 35% of the population is infected, and there are hundreds of thousands of orphans. African leaders have a key role to play, particularly with regard to prevention, but they have remained silent. The World Bank recently approved a \$500 million multi-country project, financed through concessional credits.

Others, and in particular the EU, have also been very active. There is also the Global Trust Fund to fight AIDS.¹¹ The challenge before African States now is to develop the implementation capacity to ensure that these funds can be effectively spent. In spite of globalization, many African countries are at the risk of being marginalized. Over the last decade, Africa has fallen behind, in terms of both investments, productivity and sustainable development.

Characteristics of Sustainable Development Problems

They:

- Are more complex and interactive than is generally assumed;
- Are ones that emerge in several places and suddenly, for example, the hole in the
- Ozone layer, rather than ones that emerge only locally at a speed that is rapid enough
- To be noticed;
- Move both human and natural systems into such novel and unfamiliar territory;

- Aspects of the future are not only uncertain, but are inherently unpredictable;
- Are ones where knowledge, therefore, will always be uncertain and information incomplete;
- Transcend man-made political boundaries;
- Are scale, place and time dependent, and must be defined according to the type,
- Intensity and frequency of use;
- Are interdependent and holistic, and
- Have highly diffused contexts, involving a multiplicity of actors.

Sustainable Development Issues The following are sustainable development issues:

- a) Involve multiple and often diametrically opposed values;
- b) Demand an unprecedented interface between academic research and public policy, and
- c) There is no such thing as sustainable development expertise, but rather, a multiplicity of expertise.

In order to effectively respond to sustainable development imperatives, we require

- a) Multiple ways of organizing around specific issues, depending upon context.
- b) Multiple tools,
- c) Multiple research methodologies, and, most importantly,
- d) Interdisciplinary networks of collaboration.¹²

Africa's Priorities for Sustainable Development

Sustainable Tourism

Africa is the fastest growing tourist destination in the World, and about 7.7 million people are employed in Africa's tourism and travel sector (UN World Tourism Organization 2013.) In 2004, NEPAD approved a Tourism Action Plan to make Africa the "21st century destination." Most African governments have tourism in their development strategies, including marketing, research and development, and codes of conduct for tourism. There are plans to invest in major projects likely to generate spin-offs

and enhance Africa's economic integration. Tourist arrivals in Africa grew 8.8 per cent in 2009-2010, the highest rate for any region. Morocco, Angola, Cape Verde, Madagascar, Egypt and South Africa are recording double-digit growth, while Tanzania and Mauritius are not far behind. However, tourism slowed in North Africa due to recent political developments caused by leadership issues in African States. Like corruption and smuggling of resources by leaders.

Gender Equality

African women's involvement in politics is increasing as twenty-nine African countries have ratified the protocol of the African charter promoting women's rights. All but 10 African countries have adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In October 2010, the AU launched the African Women's Decade which gave them more leverage in participation in numbers of progressive activities. In addition, 18 of the 28 countries where female genital mutilation was widely practiced have outlawed it, with a goal of totally eliminating it by

2015. African women's involvement in politics is increasing, in 2008 Rwanda elected a majority of women to its lower chamber of parliament, the highest Worldwide. Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia was elected in 2005 and then re-elected in 2011. Despite such gains, only 76 girls for every 100 boys are enrolled in colleges and universities in Africa, 91 girls for every 100 boys in primary schools and 79 girls for every 100 boys in secondary schools. However, African women's involvement in leadership has been decreasing slowly due to recent political developments caused by leadership issues in African States. 13

Education and Health

Many countries are on track to achieve universal primary education. Many African countries are on track to achieving the MDG target of universal primary education by 2015. For instance Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania have abolished school fees for primary education. However, 30 million children, mostly girls, still have no access to education and there is an acute need for more trained teachers. At the

tertiary levels, enrolment is just 6 per cent, while up to 40 per cent of faculty positions are vacant.

Many African countries face a high prevalence of malaria, HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular ailments. In 2008, Africa accounted for half of the World's 8.8 million child deaths, but there is also good news as per level of improvement Since 1990, under-five mortality in sub-Saharan Africa has declined by 22 per cent. In 2008, some 76 per cent of one-year-olds were immunized against measles, compared to 58 per cent in 1990. Mozambique has achieved a reduction in infant mortality rate more than 70 per cent, Malawi of 68 per cent and Niger of 64 per cent. Again, Burundi, Cape Verde and Egypt have also registered impressive progress in reducing infant mortality.¹⁴ The recent leaders in African continent have slow in paying much attention to education and health due to leadership issues and poor economic development of African States.

Challenges of Leadership in African States

1. The policy of rewarding friends and punishing foes:

According to Diceys Rule of Law,” the rule of law in the most basic form, is the principle that no one is above the law. The rule follows logically from the idea that truth, and therefore law is based upon fundamental principles, but which cannot be created through an act of will. One basic principle of the rule of law is that laws apply to everybody irrespective of one’s social, economic, religious and political status. If the sign says “No Parking,” one is not expected to park there even if someone is a pal of the alderman. Another principle of the rule of law is that government can’t make up new rules to help its cronies and hurt its adversaries except through due process, such as getting a legislature to pass a new law. The policy of rewarding friends’ stifles criticism and promoted a hand-clapper culture. It means that it is

almost impossible to sustain momentum on projects when new leadership arrives, particularly when that new leadership is opposed to the work of the former administration. Policies that favour only supporters have created a system that rewards short-term thinking and incentivizes hero worship and laziness rather than prudence, while encouraging divisiveness and cronyism. Furthermore, these structures do not simply motivate or aid those with bad intentions; they act as a barrier to those citizens with good intentions. Any leadership that operates under this policy is being encouraged to act badly and has strong incentives for cronyism and corruption, and a general lack of patriotism

2. Nepotism: The 2010 Amnesty International report on human rights in Africa found that nepotism impedes community access to housing and services, and leads to the collapse of some municipal governments and to

widespread protests among affected communities. Nepotism is only rampant and popular in Africa because of several values and the mentalities upheld by most Africans and not ably dealt with by African leaders. Family values, ethnicity, religion and tribalism are all factors that instigate favoritism. Africans hold in high respect these norms and values to the point that they affect adversely a leader's decision-making process. African Leadership has been infiltrated rather obnoxiously with sentimental sympathy and a biased thinking faculty which denies an equivocal decision-making process. It is common in Africa, especially in the civil service to find a department full of village or tribal friends of the politically powerful. Often, none the officers have any the qualifications for the post other than being clan members. The price of nepotism causes a complete failure of a country, or an organization to develop.

3. Blurred Vision: It has been said that 'where there is no vision the people perish.' Blurred vision of what things resulted from the failure of nationalist leaders after the attainment of independence to switch from their role as freedom fighters to that of economic modernizers. Most leaders had been envying the opulent lifestyles of their oppressors, and once independence was attained, focused on making themselves similarly opulent. Those leaders who succeeded in adjusting themselves to their new tasks are the ones who never lost sight of the fact that freedom is merely a means to the end of social and economics reorganization.

The twofold dangers of (a) dwelling in the past and (b) petty jealousies of wanting to be the first among equals have also contributed to the lack of a true developmental mindset.

4. Competition for preeminence: Soon after attaining independence, African freedom fighters and leaders rapidly embarked on

personal struggles to be “first among equals”. This unnecessary competition, which deserves the condemnation of those people who want to foster African unity and to promote harmonious cooperation among African leaders. Most times African leaders are engrossed in personal struggles for power and preeminence in their political parties instead of embracing the spirit of teamwork and patriotism that was the hallmark of African pioneers.

5. Corruption: In 1957, in his inaugural address to the newly independent State of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah cited corruption as a vice that risked gravely harming millions in Africa struggling for freedom and justice. Today, corruption is everywhere in Africa and it is the major cause of poverty and conflicts, and has continued in Africa countries takes place in many forms. Corruption in Africa has grown at an alarming rate due to poverty, and has continues unabatedly in undermining the socio-cultural,

economic, political and religious fabrics of development miserable salaries often cannot suffice to cater for a big and extended family force many people to opt for bribes to meet the needs.¹²

Corruption has gone from a mere act of accepting bribes to a complete state of mind and way of life. It has progressed from the poor attempting to “make ends meet” to a sense of entitlement from anyone in a position of authority. Because of African social fabric, effective drives for changes need to start from the top and progress to the bottom. In this regard, African leaders have failed to set the example that all others must follow. Most African leaders have used their political position to embezzle economic resources-a process that has often involved the mass pauperization of their ‘subjects’ and the deepening of their dependence on the patrimonial favours of the “ruler.¹³

6. Dictatorship: Three things will bring about a dictatorship in Africa: (1) economic crises in nations, (2) democracy and (3) neurotic ambition. Of the three causes, the third presents the least

problem. The real problem is posed by those leaders who will lapse into dictatorial tendencies either because their countrymen trust them too much or too little e.g Liberia, Zimbabwe, Gabon and Sudan. In framing policies and designing measures, therefore, leaders must rely more on public opinion and the opinions of colleagues rather than on their imagined superior intellect.

7. **Failure to Re-define Goals:** In the constantly dynamic World of politics, challenges continue to evolve. It is important therefore for a leader to be equally dynamic and adaptable, laying out a series of goals, and recognising with relative precision when it is time to move from one goal to the other. Indeed, if such a re-definition of goals proves an illusive task, it might be an advisable and perceptive course of action for the leader to leave the arena, bowing out with dignity. In the case of Nelson Mandela of South Africa, his goal over so many years had

been to fight and end the apartheid rule in that country. Having achieved this and become that country's first ever black president, Mandela ruled for one presidential term and retired. But it could equally be argued that Mandela had achieved what he set out to do, and having achieved it, there was no need to remain in the active political arena. It is pertinent for leaders, having succeeded in achieving their goals whether this be independence as was the case with African pioneers, or food security or other goals for them to redefine their goals in line with the needs and socio-political dynamics of their countries.

Conclusions

What has been written about African political leadership in the 1960s is still very relevant to contemporary situation. They should be encouraged to develop character, positive attitudes and sustainability that will keep them from pitfalls preventing the full development of their countries and citizens. Despite all the

odds, Africa can still make it right for its children, firstly, deals with the redefining of leadership systems and styles in Africa. Secondly, leadership needs training, and that is only possible when training grounds are not just available, but are properly positioned for great acculturation for the youth with fresh ideas. Thirdly, African States are secure if there are role models for the “apprentice” or student to emulate. The youth best learns by example, not experience or old ideas. In fact, consolidating the changes suggested above will require improving governance stupendously, investing in the people, and in particular to fight against bad governance, building more competitive and diversified sustainable economies, increasing financing for development, and finally changing the aid relationship between Africa and donors.

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