

## LEADERSHIP, THE CORE OF GOVERNANCE

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### Abstract

*This paper delves into the complex relationships between governance and leadership. Leadership is an integral feature as poor leadership affects the effectiveness of governance. This is a tale highlighting how politics and issues concerning leadership and governance are closely related and form part of one entity. Discourse within the Nigerian socio-economic and political milieu analyzing the interplay between underdevelopment and corrupt leadership which pervades the country. This assertion is fundamental and it leads to investigating how viable has been Nigeria's search for sustainable national development. Leaders who value ethics in governance should issue a resounding call for tapping into the nation's plenty natural and human resources. The paper thoroughly analyzed the role of leadership as a key for governance, traversing across the hills of vision, making decisions, communication and accountability. The story incorporates several approaches when analyzing the scenarios in which strong leadership resulted into positive changes and where weak leadership led to challenging problems. It emphasizes key aspects of leadership in the governance fabric, negotiating a maze of obstacles encountered in leadership. The discourse deepens this position further when it emphasizes the role of public opinion on effective governance. The use of international benchmarks is helpful in illustrating crosscutting issues; this points towards various directions and concludes with an appeal. Denouement calls upon the collective responsibility to cultivate and foster effective leadership that provides for meaningful and long-lasting administration. Finally, the whole paper is a kind intellectual compass for exploring subtle political under towing that are necessary ingredients for the nation's ascension.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, essence, core, governance.

### INTRODUCTION

Without doubt, quality leadership holds the foundation on which societal structures hinge together. In dealing with matters pertaining to public administration, organizational supervision, and nation building, it is evident that the success or otherwise depends on effective and high quality of leadership. The aim of this paper is to examine the overall argument that truly strong leadership should be considered as integral, rather than just as desirable element of government. Exploration on the importance, problems and transformative powers of idea of good leadership inside complex environment of governance. It emphasizes understanding the multi-dimension of leadership in government, and this refers to understanding leadership in a country. This paper defines an excellent governor as one who makes sensible choices, encourages spirit, offers the vision in words, and inspires people to be accountable for what they do and result. Leadership in governance includes competence with difficult situations, morality, integrity and inspiring people towards goals. It is believed that the creation of such robust resilient and

efficient governance mechanisms that are aligned to what the governed aspire towards can be achieved through good governance. Further, the discourse extends into practical concerns about Nigeria's seemingly bleak future coupled with leadership gaps. The paper however, notes that there has been an improvement of the nation's GDP while at the same time regretting the worsening of the social-economic indicators like human and infrastructure development in the last thirty years. Lastly, this paper does not only look at the symbiosis that exists between leadership and governance but also argues for an appreciation of leadership as a key and indivisible ingredient towards making nations move forward. This highlights the need for the transformational leadership paradigm especially regarding the issue of wealth and sustainability in particular within the setting of Nigeria.

### **Leadership the essence of good Governance**

The nature of political leadership has an inexorable effect on the overall performance of governance in any coherent political set-up. In spite of possessing plenty of raw materials and manpower, most of these problems have been faced by the country following its independence. Good governance can be defined as power structures that make it possible for nations to build themselves up in the social-economic-political sphere. The government should ensure that it organizes and monitors the use of human and material resources such as roads, water, electricity and education facilities to cater for the well-being of its citizenry. Good governance is vital for the development of Nigeria's politics and economy. The other requirement for good government is high caliber leadership. However, Nigeria experienced limited progress towards political and social equality, which was hampered by the lack of effective and innovative leaders. Even after many years of autonomy, Nigeria is still struggling with the problem of good governance, which has made it difficult for it to be dubbed "Giant" of Africa. Since then, different leaders have been into power but they presided over years of political crisis and corruption leading to weak governance and abuse of resources. As a result, the country is facing severe economic hardships and extreme poverty. Adah Ekoja and Gideon correctly point out that leadership inadequacy is a major cause of Nigeria's development paradox since Nigerian problems stem basically from poor leadership (Ekoja & Gideon, 2014).

Accordingly, leadership is a term that emanated from the way civilizations were structured. They accepted the fact that not all people are capable of leading while a small fraction must take charge of the many in the society. Leadership is crucial when it comes to igniting public motivation, unifying and inspiring a team, and greatly influencing the performance of any establishment. Omolayo compares effective leadership to essential oil in the working of state mechanisms. From this viewpoint, leadership involves guiding the most important national asset – the people. Effective leadership involves attributes like knowledge, vision, courage, innovation, resolve, openness, clear-headedness, motivation, patriotism and nationalism combined together, which steer the followers in a direction towards positive change in society. Besides, great leadership involves the implementation of powerful laws and actions due to the importance of social changes. The meaning of transformational leadership according to Ukaegbu's work includes vision statements that are bold, actions directed towards the group formation, goals that are audacious, engaging the team in change process actions, and the group formation's encouragement of collective self-efficacy and identity. Notably,

transformational leadership converts followers into leaders such that any objective or vision set out from different power centers is realized for the people's own sake.

### **Leadership's Impact on Governance Effectiveness**

It is only fair to say that governance in institutions like the corporation, government agencies, NGOs and others is largely based on effective leadership. Leadership is a contextual circumstance that comprises of the leader, those they lead (the followers) and various factors that influence it that is aimed at attaining pre-determined goals using material and human resources to maintain stability within an organization. Ivancevich et al. define leadership as "people influencing each other towards the achievement of specific objectives" (1993). The good leader empowers, persuades and directs action towards the accomplishment of the set goals by each individual within a team or an organization. Conversely, an ineffective leader hampers rather than advances organizational goals, as noted by Robbins (1979): "leadership is defined as an influence over a group of people, with specific goals in mind that are communicated via a process".

Leadership is often central in shaping the governance efficacy an organization/system. They are the archetype of corporate culture creating guidelines related to decision-making policies and outlining parameters of work. Good governance is rooted in morally guided corporate culture that is administered by competent management system. Of importance is ethics as it affects leaders. Leadership of ethics, however, creates a moral atmosphere that enhances responsibility, makes integrity, and therefore leads governing process efficiency. Transparent governance is built on trust and accountability, which necessitates effective leaders who value clear communication in the country. Effective governance is achieved when nation's objectives are aligned with applicable governance procedures and structures that leaders can achieve using a well-defined strategic vision. Good management planning and implementation requires well thought-out and planned strategies devised by leaders for instance. Leadership involves identifying and addressing corporate dangers, and risk management should be an integral part of an effective strategy framework. Leadership plays a crucial role in decision making process within an organization. For good governance, that is leaders should promote decisions that are right, responsible, informed, inclusive and accountability on people choice and behaviour. It is important that leaders deal with several groups of stakeholders like staff members, customers, investors, or local communities. Leaders need to have the interest of all parties considered because, a good governance model should be inclusive and accommodating. Agility occurs in governance systems where the leadership places importance on being flexible as well as creativity especially crucial when dealing with changes. Governance effectiveness is largely determined by how competent leaders resolve conflicts and thus promote stability in a government setting. Governance dictates that leaders ensure that they provide for an avenue whereby the organization's performance is tracked, and the findings assessed. In order to promote government efficiency, leaders need to train their groups on skills related to governance so that they have the requisite knowledge and skills. Therefore, since governance and management affects the process and culture of an organization, efficacy must be ensured in that regard. Leadership by fostering morality, responsibility and transparency leads to standards of integrity within the nation's setting.

### **The Welfare of the Community or Country and Leadership**

The crises of governance in Nigeria have led to developmental problems where heads of states only pursue self-interests with no consequences. Patronage becomes more widespread, politics becomes more personalized, and the influence, arbitrary powers, etc. undermine people's confidence in the authority. The situation impedes the possibility of the economy flourishing, according to the world Bank. While it is about a half-century since Nigeria gained independence from colonization, the country still remains in the last position regarding the living conditions, basic infrastructure usage, productivity, and technological innovations in comparison with other states. The initial causes attributed for this development lag included historical circumstances whereby a former colony was not fully engaged in a world economy dominated by great powers, and lack of well-educated manpower. Nevertheless, this is not what stops Nigeria today but rather a lack of transformational leadership. Developing nations in Africa share one characteristic that is the necessity of strong leadership and lack thereof hinders development. This entails studying the duties of leaders, and how the provisions must be tailored to each African state.

Governance principle is critical since leaders need to be accountable. It also calls for understanding of what people want or demands from their leaders. They should form policies that will address such issues as human right, socioeconomic empowerment, and environmental management. Years after, the complaints pile up and worse are that political misfits still hold the lead positions. This ruling class works in silence and as such, the majority misses out on the expected merits of democracy. This leads to low productivity of development output due to corrupt practices involving elites which exploit the weaknesses of the system. In 2007, Nigeria was facing such problems as poor economic growth, elevated rate of unemployment, wide gap between the rich and the poor, and placing low on the UNDP's "Human Development" Index. Poverty spans everywhere while the government promises zero tolerance for corruption, yet this prevails. Dependence upon oil leasing renders country vulnerable to the oil resource curse. Development experts assert that leadership, bureaucratic arrangements, and policies relating to social concerns have profound implications for national wealth. Better governance is demonstrated through leadership as a process that leads to social evolution. Leadership is the key point of efficient governance as it determines where countries, nations and other collectivity bodies have to go in order to achieve their goals and ambitions.

### **Qualities of Successful Leadership in Governance**

Strong leadership is essential in running any venture that may occur in a government agency, any state or the nation at large. Here are some indispensable traits associated with effective leadership in governance:

**Vision and Strategic Thinking:** Good leader show direction, have goal and set purpose and therefore able to communicate and inspire others through their actions and words. Strategic thinking helps them develop and implement the plans that are aimed at attaining long-term goals.

**Integrity & Ethics:** Leaders are required to do all things honestly which is characterized by a great integrity and morality. Therefore, effective leaders should practice openness and frankness as this promotes trust among employees which is key for the effective governance.

**Accountability:** For sensible leaders, there is accountability on what they decide and do. They hold each other accountable to a high level of performance, thereby strengthening the reliability and responsibility culture in the nation.

**Ability to Make Decisions:** Successful leaders are able to act quickly and think smart. These people carefully consider differing viewpoints, evaluate situations, and decide based in support or alignment with the mission and vision of the nation.

**Communication Skills:** Government leaders must be effective communicators with the ability to clearly articulate their objectives, goals, and vision for all stakeholders. Cooperation is nourished by effective communication, which results in mutual understanding.

**Adaptability:** This should make sure that it can easily adjust to new situations. Competent chief executives are open-minded and flexible so as to change their strategies when facing a new situation.

**Collaboration and Team Building:** In most cases, governance involves interaction among various parties. Consequently, leaders should be capable of forming and working with an effective team building atmosphere for productivity and inclusivity.

**Affectivity and Emotional Management:** Empathic leaders have the mind to understand other people's emotions. It fosters sound relationships, enhances conflict management and the creation of a good working environment.

**Innovation:** Good leaders encourage fresh ideas, promote new thinking, and accept new ways of doing things through their readiness for unique ideas, different instruments and techniques.

**Strategic Risk Management:** Governance entails managing uncertainties and dealing with risks. Such leaders analyze risks and take measures on how best to avoid harming their firms.

**Engaging Stakeholders:** Successful leaders participate in communication with different parties such as employees, citizens, shareholders, neighbors et cetera. Successful governance initiative hinges on forging positive relationship with stakeholders.

**Constant Learning:** Leadership entails a lifelong learning process. Adaptation to a changing environment requires a good leader to stay updated with emerging technologies, effective government practices and industry dynamics. Such traits help leaders to provide their organizations with effectiveness, productivity, and ethics.

### **Challenges in Leadership and Governance**

After over forty years of independence in Africa, their hopes and dreams are largely unrealized today. Leadership is an often raised point in the debates associated with the African initiative. The people have continued to blame, demonize, and hate the ruling class in Africa for the economic and political problems the country is facing, according to Seteolu (2004). It is characterized by a very big external debt, net capital flight, disinvestment, crumbling social infrastructure, food crisis, insecurity, extremely depreciated national currencies, unpopular, oppressive and hostile economical policies. It is also clear why gradually, Africa loses touch with the masses and most of its leaders are poorly educated. Unfortunately for most African countries, the leaders are new and they assume their responsibilities at very little or without any prior experience and training and they face the challenges of building a nation and growing it in the state that has been left by the colonial masters with barely enough assistance and moral support. Their efforts however, have resulted in only a little achievement. Lack of institutions for nurturing globally conscious leaders who will cooperate among themselves on an institutional level, as well as regionally and transnational, complicates matters. Moreover, obtaining up-to-date issues of local, national and international affairs is quite expensive in most African countries.

Obasanjo, noted that the absence of checks and balances is the primary cause of chaotic order in African governmental system. At times, some African leaders regard their countries as their own private property, and a decline in the morals and discipline mostly coupled with bad policies – undermine governance structures which ultimately erode profession standards and ethics. First, it is bad government that comes out strongly as one major challenge and reason for the various social and economic challenges in many African countries. Most people in Africa do not voluntarily step down from being leaders; they are usually ousted by people who engage in coups and assassination. Previously, being in alliance with the capitalist or communist blocs was another way of retaining power. Leadership and governance are always identified as essential points in any critical analysis African crisis. Rule is often personalized. Many governance structures in most African countries are informal and susceptible to arbitrary change without reasoned logic and empirical base found in other contexts (Hyden, 1992). Only in the back of the 1970's, did Africa began to understand about the importance of civil and political rights since of wide abuses of leaders, such as Emperor Bokassa, Idi Amin, and Mcas de Nasguem. A primary theme in African literature was the idea that the authority of the state should not be used to unreasonably interfere in the civil liberties of individuals all in the name of national unity'.

### **Evaluation of Nigeria's Governance and Leadership**

Throughout its history, Nigeria has been experiencing intermittent democracy – shifting between civilian administrations and military dictator ships. Progress was made with transition to democracy in 1999; however political violence, fraud during elections, and corruption remain significant challenges even today. Political leaders have been examined on their efficiency and honesty, especially related to grafts, economic affairs, as well as security. Oil export remains a vital source of revenue in many African countries including, Nigeria, which is one of Africa's largest economies. The country has faced various economic challenges such as declining oil prices, corrupt practices, and limited economic diversification. In spite of this endeavour that is geared towards diversification in fields such as engineering and

agribusiness, economic development has been gradual. It is important to note that corruption still exists in Nigeria. Anti-corruption agencies, such as EFCC, have come into existence but questions of political interference in these agencies and selective prosecutions are raised. They include terrorists' groups in the Niger Delta as well as those from Boko Haram operating in the eastern states while there are also farmers verses pastoralists' clashes that emanate within the middle belt of Nigeria. The government has introduced various projects, among them being the deployment of armed forces, with an objective of enhancing security.

However, this has not been an easy undertaking in establishing lasting stability. The aim of infrastructure development projects has been to improve electricity supplies, transport, and critical services. Nevertheless, this progress has been slow, and still there exist infrastructure shortfalls. There are disparities in healthcare and educational access and rural communities suffer more. There has been some improvement but additional funds are needed for quality and enhanced accessibility. Once in a while, this has resulted in contentious disputes around fair sharing of resources and development planning, further accentuating regional disparities. Elections take place in a regular manner but doubts remain on whether the elections are transparently free and fair as well as the integrity of the election bodies among other issues including fairness in political party behaviour and the impact of money on politics.

## **CONCLUSION**

This analysis on leadership in Nigeria as the foundation of the nation's governance post-independence underscores the need for new ideas that can grow leaders who will form governments that can be sustained thereafter in Nigeria. Aspiring individuals looking forward to development need to put their goals clearly while eyeing for political offices and leadership positions. Competence and it is valued in society striving for progress; politics with voting right should be extended over all social classes. Good government is a result of good leadership, and effective leadership is the root of nature of governance. Leadership is the basis for good governance and shapes the country's future path. A sophisticated terrain of possibilities and problems characterizes leadership appraisal in Nigeria. Democratization in the country has been both progressive and regressive, incorporating political, economical, and social aspects together. The struggle against corruption in governance stands as a symbol of resilience and persistence, with achievements yet doubts arising over political impact and biasness. The security concerns like the insurrections and inter-communal frictions illustrate the delicacy with which the leaders should govern that people.

Evaluation touches on social services, infrastructure development, and regional inequality showing how leadership affects everyday life of Nigerians. As this nation faces multi-dimensional challenges, there is a surge in need to inclusive leader, who takes responsibility, and has a vision. The good management required while traversing the rugged landscape of governing is not merely talk but having some sincerity about honesty, transparency and being sensitive to people's different interests. Like any other country, success of leadership in Nigeria should be geared towards enhancing the country's achievement of economic growth and prosperity, national unity as well as satisfaction of the needs of citizens of their nation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Strengthening Anti-Corruption Measures:** Strengthen the independence and effectiveness of anti-corruption bodies in order to guarantee impartial investigations and prosecutions. Increase transparency in Public Institutions and tackle corruption at its roots. Promote sound moral leadership and integrity at every level of governance.

**Improving Electoral Processes:** Reform the electoral process to ensure equity and integrity. Develop a fund on civic education for equipping citizen with information necessary for right choice making. Strengthen public confidence in an independent and impartial electoral management bodies.

**Addressing Security Challenges:** To formulate all-encompassing strategies towards dealing with security concerns such as counterterrorism and peace building initiatives. Promote close working relationship between the security agencies, intelligence bodies, and local communities by adopting a unified security strategy. Put investments on socio economic projects in unstable regions to help relieving fundamental problems.

**Economic Development and Diversification:** Push for programs that accelerate efforts towards diversifying economy by cutting dependence on oil and also promoting clean projects in areas like agriculture and technology. Create policies for attracting foreign direct investment and developing SMEs. Invest in infrastructure creation to promote economic activities. Investing in

**Healthcare and Education:** More funds should go into education and health care to reduce costs of access and improve services. Embrace policy that seeks to curb imbalances in health care and education facilities across regions. Enhance public private partnership for delivering social services. Promoting Inclusive Leadership: Promote inclusion and fairness in leadership so that no one should be excluded or have limited participation in decision making. Promote a diverse culture of equal opportunities in public services. Develop leadership training and coaching programs for the future leaders.

**Facilitating Interregional Collaboration:** Promote balanced development by facilitating communication and collaboration among different areas of operation. Design policies for different geographic regions taking into consideration their special needs and problems. Share best practice, collaborative problem solving.

**Encouraging Citizen Involvement:** Encourage citizens' involvement in civics by hosting online discussions, town meetings, community discussions and so on. Using the internet to connect citizens with their governments in order to actively engage citizens, obtain views, and contribute in policy formation. These proposals can only work if a combined effort of public officials, civil society organizations and political leaders is made.

Addressing these critical points will strengthen and empower a more efficient kind of Nigerian leadership capable of adapting and dealing with different problems and populations, as well as enabling sustainable growth and national progress for country.



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