

Leadership, Corruption and Development

LEADERSHIP, CORRUPTION ET DÉVELOPPEMENT

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Abstract: This paper examines corruption as one of the leadership problems in Nigeria and its attendant consequences on development. The paper noted that the inability of most organizations in Nigeria to achieve their desired objectives stem from corruption among leaders. The paper further noted that Nigeria lacks true leaders who can demonstrate leadership codes of behaviour such as moderation, abstinence from self-seeking, greed and conspicuous consumption. The paper posited that for Nigeria to attain the goal of sustainable development the political leaders must show values of integrity, honesty, sincerity, asceticism and above all they must have the fear of God and shun the temptation of conspicuous consumption, excessive accumulation of wealth which are the main causes of corruption and the bane of Nigerian development.

Key Words: Leadership; Corruption; Development; and Nigeria

Résumé: Cet article examine la corruption comme l'un des problèmes de leadership au Nigeria et ses conséquences sur le développement. Le document a remarqué que l'incapacité de la plupart des organisations au Nigeria pour atteindre leurs objectifs provenait de la corruption chez les dirigeants. Le document a en outre noté que le Nigeria n'a pas de vrais leaders qui pouvait démontrer des normes de comportement de leadership comme la modération, l'abstinence de l'égoïsme, de cupidité et de consommation ostentatoire. Le document suppose que pour que le Nigeria atteigne l'objectif du développement durable, les dirigeants politiques doivent montrer des valeurs de l'intégrité, de l'honnêteté, de la sincérité, de l'ascétisme et surtout ils doivent avoir la crainte de Dieu et éviter la tentation de la consommation ostentatoire, de l'accumulation excessive des richesses qui sont les causes principales de la corruption et du fléau de développement du Nigéria.

Mots-clés: leadership; corruption; développement; Nigéria

INTRODUCTION

The importance of leadership in an organization effort is a world-wide phenomenon. Organization of all kinds and types be it business, political, religious, humanitarian or governmental, spend a lot of time and efforts searching for men and women who will offer leadership as distinct from Leadership. Though people abound who can fill executive positions as "heads" it is not always easy to find people who can assume leadership roles.

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In Nigeria, there have been stories of failures of many public sector organizations which in the recent past have led to the privatization of many government-owned parastatals/organizations. The failure, no doubt, has been attributed to absence of political and administrative leadership that could make for success in the public sector. Thus, leadership in our discussion in this paper is viewed from two major perspectives: Political and Administrative. Politics is concerned with the authoritative allocation of values for the whole society (or a section of it), and political behaviour, that is how political office holders (civilian or military) possess and exercise power or authority over the economy and society dictates the administrative behaviour and the efficiency of the whole system. Hence, Peter Self (1977) observed that administrative system always responds to a complex of demands articulated through the political system. It therefore follows from the foregoing that the type and nature of political leadership we get begets or determines the type and nature of administrative leadership and followership we have.

Taking the foregoing into cognizance, and more importantly in a developing society, such as Nigeria where leaders are looked upon as 'role models', their actions or inactions can mould the followers positively or negative. In the remaining part of this paper the following shall be examined.

- Who are leaders?
- How do leaders differ from others?
- How does leadership value affect societal values?
- What is the Nigerian situation and which way forward?

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In this section, attempt shall be made to clarify some basic concepts such as leadership, corruption and sustainable development.

Leadership as a concept has been defined in many ways by many authors. Many of the definitions present different facets of the concept and together enrich the concept. Leadership is conceptualized as influencing individual and group behaviour toward optimal attainment of the goals of organizations.

In the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Leadership is conceptualized from psycho-socio-political perspectives as follows:

From psychological angle, leadership is construed to refer to the Interaction of two or more persons when the evaluation of one (or some) of the parties to the interaction is such that he (or they) come(s) to control and direct the action of others in the pursuit of common or compatible ends.

Sociologically, leadership is viewed in two ways:

First, as a person clearly distinguished from other in power, visibility and in a number of characteristics traits such as decisiveness, courage. Integrity and intelligence, and Secondly, as programming the social system, defining social values, initiating ideologies that legitimize social systems, and generally maintaining social structures (Tennebaum, 1968).

Politically, leadership is conceptualized as:

The solitary, dramatic personality who mobilized and Inspired masses to new goals and methods of (political Or other types of) salvation, (Seligman, 1968).

If we pull together, the foregoing conceptual strands, we can have a very coherent picture of what leadership stands for. Hence, we can conveniently define leadership as the builder of special values, definer of societal mission, the setter of societal or organizational goals, and facilitator of the attainment of such goals, (Idakwoji, 2001).

From the foregoing definitions, it is clear that leadership is more than mere or ordinary headship. Leadership, therefore, involves inspiration, breathing of life into the deep psychological layers of followers. True leaders are said to manifest an extra-ordinary power to mobilize others by touching an unconscious spiritual domain within them – a domain said to have been inhabited by larger-than-life images of gods and

demons and situations that appear to have an archaic life of their own. For a leader to merit the name of 'true leader', he must behave in a consistent fashion, must lead by example, and take personal risks, must provide clear goals and direction for others, must have a simple, captivating and well communicated message, must be unwavering in his focus, and ready to sacrifice for the sake of his people (Jack, 1996). The possession of these qualities will no doubt, give the leaders the moral courage to lead and create that mutual trust of confidence in the leadership.

CORRUPTION-CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Corruption has subjected itself to so many definitions because of the multi-dimensionality of corruption. Hence, Osborne (2001) remarked that corruption is better described rather than defined as definition may limit the concept.

According to Denis (2001), corruption has been defined in a very simple language as: "Giving something to someone with power so that he will abuse his power and act favouring the giver".

Obasi (1988), defined corruption as a behaviour which deviates from accepted norm(s) and pattern(s) of proper conduct in order to serve private or parochial interest. Such behaviour includes bribery, nepotism, misappropriation of funds, misapplication of funds, abuse of power and strategic spending. From the foregoing we can define leadership-corruption as any form of anti-established behaviour perpetrated by someone in authority with the intent to pervert roles or norms for selfish interest.

Corruption is, therefore, a phenomenon that is pervasive in all polities, but the dimension and intensity vary from one polity to another.

1. The basic needs of all people must be met in a way which provide for their needs with security and dignity.
2. There are no absolute limits to development.

In order to achieve the above policy objectives and attain the goal of sustainable development, the following conditions are necessary:

- (a) A political system that provides for effective citizen participation in decision making process – true democracy is the answer.
- (b) An economic system that is capable of generating surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustainable basis.
- (c) A social system that provides solutions to tensions arising from disharmonious development.
- (d) A production system that respects obligations to preserve the ecological base for development.
- (e) A dynamic technological system that can search continuously for new and better solutions.
- (f) An international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance.
- (g) An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

We can see from the above that sustainable development can only take place when there is a structural base instituted by dedicated and committed political leadership which is ready to chart the course of development

In Nigeria, the system is defective in all the six point items listed above, due to leadership corruption.

LEADERSHIP VALUES, CORRUPTION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

It is germane to remind ourselves of what we mean by leadership in the context of our discussion here. We earlier defined leadership as a builder of special values, a definer of societal mission, and a setter of societal goals and a facilitator for goal attainment. Leadership concept, therefore, encompasses a wide range of activities. That is why Plato as cited in Agbakoba (2003) said leadership is not for everybody but for certain persons who possess the quality of "wisdom". Hence, Plato argued:

Wisdom is needed for the best possible conduct of the affairs of the State as a whole – both in its internal and external relations... wisdom is knowledge of a rare and difficult kind, so those capable of wisdom are very few in relation to those who can perform other tasks. It appears that naturally these men are best suited to rule. When they are in control of the State, it will be well run and would be said to be product and truly wise.

Wisdom really is a rare and difficult commodity which many people do not possess. It is required for good administration and it presupposes knowledge of good and evil, and the knowledge of essence of things (Agbakoba, 2003). Today in Nigeria everyone who has corruptly enriched him/herself and has bull-dozed his/her way (corruptly too) into the leadership positions now claim to have the “wisdom” to lead and tries to legitimize his/her value system. It should be realized, therefore, that every society or state is tied willy-nilly to the individual leaderships that make it up. Thus, Plato said that the life of a polity manifest the life of the individuals that make it up. It should be noted that leadership determine the societal since a leader is a “moulder” of the societal character and also the societal “mirror”. Values, according to Tukur (1999) could be defined as the highest ethical parameters, standards and criteria through which individuals, groups and societies order their goals, determine their consciences, and judge their conducts as these pertain to fundamental aspect of life, be they in the sphere of personals or public affairs. Hence, the values which a leader holds have a substantially determining influence on his norms and ideologies, and invariably the norms and ideologies of the group or society he leads.

The quality of life exhibited by a leader is a function of his value system. And the value system of the leadership no doubt shapes the value system of the followers. That is why Cummings and Dunham (1980) using attribution theory of leadership observed that:

Whether or not leadership behaviour actually influences performance or effectiveness, it is important because people believe it does.

Mintzberg (1973) also noted that one consequence of attribution of causality of leaders and leadership is that leaders come to be symbols and that the symbolic role of leadership is more important than implied in such a description. Hence, the leader as a symbol provides a target for action when difficulties occurred, serves as a scapegoat when things go wrong.

A leader, therefore, is a “mirror” whose behaviour – good or bad – influences the behaviour of the followers and whose values also influence the values of the entire society.

According to Tukur (1999), values provide the basic measure by which the wrong and right postures or attitudes are decided in societal matters of essentially political nature. Tukur further remarked that:

Values exercise a broad influence on the conception of phenomena, orientation to authority, attitude to community formation and expansion, views of knowledge, science and technology and attitude to reform and change.

Hence, McMurry(1978) said that values have powerful influence on people’s behaviour because they:

Principally determine what one regards as right, good, ethical, worthy and unworthy. They also provide the standards and norms by which a leader guides his day-to-day behaviour, thus constituting the integral part of his conscience ...

The questions we should ask, therefore, are:

1. What value system do Nigerian leaders uphold highly?
2. How does this value system affect the orientation of the people?
3. How does it affect national development?

The relevance of leadership values to the development or under-development of a nation cannot be over-emphasized. Speaking on the Nigerian situation, Buhari (1999) observed that moral absolutes that used to be the pegs on which our society’s values, norms and mores were anchored had by designed and default of leaders been abandoned so totally that one could wonder whether it would ever be possible to revive public morality.

This rot, according to Buhari, stated when materialistic ethos seemed to have replaced all-time honoured values by the leaders. Today, almost every body, (especially among the leadership) is lying prostrate in prayer before the temple of materialisms because of the get-rich-quick mania, and this mania has seized the imagination of the rest members of the society.

The leadership that is supposed to think out solutions has failed to do so, rather it continues to perpetuate and encourage corruption and corrupt practices. That is why the so-called fight against corruption by successive regimes in Nigeria over the years has not been able to achieve the desired result. It is in realization of this that al-Rashid (as cited in Tukur (1999) emphasizing the decisive impact of leadership on the lives of the common people said:

The people in leadership positions are like a spring of water and all other administrators in the world are like the mud (over which it flows). If the spring is pure, the dirt of the mud will do no harm, but if the spring (itself) is polluted, the purity of the mud is of no advantage.

The above quotation clearly shows that a leader must be exemplary in character before he can carry the followers along. Because the leaders in Nigeria are corrupt themselves the piety of a subordinate is always seen as a threat to the leadership.

In Nigeria, leadership over the years (with exception of Murtala regime) failed to give Nigerians a taste of true patriotism that can jolt the citizens out of the slumber and despondency and put the country on the path of sustainable development.

Rather what the leadership in Nigeria has succeeded in doing is to encourage, tolerate, entrench institutionalize corruption and glorify the perpetrators. This singular attitude of the leaders, no doubt, gives wrong orientation to the followers and as such the virtues of honesty, patriotism, community service, etc. are less valued, while avarice, materialism and parochialism become national phenomenon.

That is why Dike (2001) said that government corruption has taught the Nigerian population a dangerous and wrong lesson that being honest, hardworking and law-abiding do not pay. Therefore, the fight against corruption must start from and end in the leadership. The purification of those in leadership position will form the beginning of any serious fight against corruption. For instance, the revelation of Political Bureau on the activities of those in leadership positions in Nigeria expressed some paradoxes as those saddled with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the country turn out to constitute some of the greatest dangers to the security of the country. Hence, the Bureau attributed the insecurity and chaos in the country to the outright looting, mismanagement and raping of the economy by political and bureaucratic elites who are the custodians of the nation's resources. This has resulted in the general breakdown of law and order and it portends danger for the sustainability of the nation and its development.

CORRUPTION AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT

It is worthy of note to state that no meaningful development can take place when the country and her citizens are swimming and neck-deep in the 'waters' of corruption.

Corruption undermines authority. The level of governance corruption in Nigeria has been described as endemic and epidemic as it takes place at the highest echelon of government. Those who ought to fight corruption are still the same people perpetuating it, thus corruption has become legalized (especially among the ruling class).

Corruption among the ruling class has greatly damaged the image of the Nigerian citizens and the entire society both nationally and internationally. The effects of leadership corruption in Nigeria range from impoverishing the masses and the nation to scandalizing the whole country. Hence, Guckman (1995), in Idakwoji (2003) observed that scandals associated with corruption sometimes have the effect of strengthening a value system of a society as a whole.

The World Bank Report (2006) indicated that without significant improvement in governance, Nigeria would continue to miss a lot of opportunities of support from donor/funding agencies. This report indicated that the problem of poverty in Nigeria, emanated from leadership corruption and not until there is good leadership the problem of poverty cannot be properly tackled.

A critical study of the various regimes in Nigeria since independence to date shows that almost all the leaders are guilty of corruption. Reports of various tribunals over the years have indicted them. Examples include Coker Panel (1962), ACB Panel, (1957), The Mid Western Region Panel (1967), the Murtala Regime Panel on State Governors and other Public Officers (1975), the TCPC Report (1988), and EFCC and ICPC Reports on some (though selected) public officers in Nigeria since 2003 to 2009 are cases in point.

The foregoing analysis has shown that the problem of corruption in Nigeria is leadership corruption. That is why all efforts to fight corruption have been futile. The futility arises from the hypocrisy of the leadership. The leadership will be saying one thing, and be doing another thing completely antithetical to what he preaches. Remember the Abacha WAI-C and the various financial atrocities committed by Abacha himself. A study of the activities of all political office holders in Nigeria from 1999 to date (2010) reveals that the political leadership class is only interested in establishing itself as the dominant class using their positions in the government and other instruments of the state to perpetuate corruption.

CONCLUSION/THE WAY FORWARD

This paper has examined leadership corruption in Nigeria and how it affects on national development. The paper has shown that political leadership corruption in Nigeria accounts for the failure of successive regimes in the country over the years.

Public offices over the years have been looked upon and used as, and are still being used as a means for primitive accumulation through corrupt practices. Using their positions and other instruments of the state, the political class produces policies that lead to the underdevelopment of the masses and the nation at large.

Leadership corruption has resulted in political, social and economic crises that have engulfed Nigeria over the years and has been the bane of sustainable development. The aftermath of all the above is national insecurity as no nation can develop in the wake of corruption among its top most leaders.

In order to ensure sustainable development in Nigeria, the following recommendations have been proffered.

1. Public political offices should be made less attractive by reducing the money being paid to political office holder, such offices should attract only allowances and not what is obtainable in the present dispensation.

2. The value attached to materialism by those in leadership positions must be de-emphasized. Leaders as social reformers must imbibe and respect the virtues of honesty, integrity, sincerity, and responsibility. Only responsible leadership can beget responsible followership.

3. The leaders must be ready at all times to be transparent and show high level of accountability. Leaders should live above board, avoiding any form of manipulations and cover-ups for personal aggrandizement.

4. Leaders must be ready to sacrifice on behalf of their people avoiding self indulgence to satisfy group interests. A leader is expected to bear the headache of others, hence asceticism, abstinence are essential ingredients of good leadership. Leaders must be ready to show moderation, avoiding ostentatious, conspicuous and flamboyant living.

5. Leaders must have the fear of God, remembering that whatever position they occupy, accountability must be given to God eventually. God fearing leaders are just and fair.

6. Followers should avoid unnecessary hero-worshipping of leaders who are not living decent lives; such leaders should be disdained by their followers.

7. Those in leadership positions must be seen to demonstrate and practice fairness, equity and justice. Where leadership fails to observe these values, the end-result will be despotism, oppression, tyranny and insecurity.

8. Those who do not possess the qualities required for leadership such as wisdom, asceticism, community service, transparency, honesty, sincerity and Godliness should not aspire for leadership positions, and where they do, should not be allowed to attain such positions.

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