Leadership Crisis in Nigeria: The Urgent Need for Moral Education and Value Re-Orientation

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Abstract

Leadership is undoubtedly a very big challenge in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. Having a competent, effective and purposeful leadership that is capable of turning its highly chorused great potentials into real economic and political power has been quite elusive for over five decades of her independence. This is simply because of the failure to identify the essential values that sustain the various societies now constituting the modern Nigerian society and infuse such values into our social system. Hence the consequent leadership failures become inevitable. The leadership challenge in Nigeria has degenerated into a crisis situation, which is now a clog on its wheel of striving for development. The paper therefore, examines the concept of leadership, the essential qualities necessary for effective leadership and the current trends in Nigeria leadership paradigm. Secondary data were collected and analyze qualitatively using the content analysis. The paper emphasizes on the need for moral education and constant value re-orientation as the means to surmount the Nigeria's leadership challenges. It recommends among others, the urgent need for paradigm shift in our social system in order to restore a value based Nigerian society that would directly translate to value based leadership. Also, strengthening our institutions with our core values and having their operations rooted and guided by the rule of law is very imperative.

Keywords: leadership, crisis, moral, education, value- re-orientation

1. Introduction

All over the nations of the world, especially in the developed countries, effective management and utilization of available resources to better the living condition of the people has been the pre- occupation of the government. They ensure that scarce resources i.e. human and material resources are effectively and judiciously galvanized, utilized and sustained to ensure the development of their areas. But this has not been the case in most developing countries including Nigeria. Anyone who observes the current trend in Nigeria will baffle at the contradiction between the wealth of the nation, and the living conditions of most Nigerians. The rate of poverty was assumed to be more than 70 percent, unemployment rate is also high and the living condition of the populace has continued to deteriorate further. One will tend to ask so many questions on what could be responsible for this abnormal situation, (Poverty in the midst of plenty). It is indeed a perplex situation. The perplexity is that, in spite of the natural endowments and abundant human resources in Nigeria, and after over 53 years of independence, it has achieved only very little. Experts reveal that countries like Belgium and Singapore that have little or no resources compared to Nigeria, but their GDP is more than the total GDP of the entire African continent. In short, Malaysia and even South Africa who have but few of what Nigeria has, have stronger GDP. For the past five decades, successive governments in Nigeria have failed in translating Nigerian potentials and numerical strength into real economic power that could lift Nigerian out of poverty, unemployment, and misery.

There has been that consensus opinion or agreement among scholars, critics, and observers that the major reason for Nigeria's present predicament is lack of good and purposeful leadership at the helms of affairs in the country (see Asaju & Akume, 2012: 45). They argued that lack of good leadership right from independence has been the

bane of our underdevelopment. It does not take expertise much time to identify this problem and most people especially those who share late professor Chinua Achebe's school of thought believed that all other problems in Nigeria were been caused by lack of competent and effective leadership.

In this vein, Babalola (2010), dictums that leadership deficit is the root of the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. He argued that "when you see a poor country, look out for the form of governance there then you will observe leadership challenges". Similarly, former President Olusegun Obasanjo was among those who believed that leadership deficit in Nigeria had robbed it of meaningful development and has become a clog on the nation's wheel of progress. Obasanjo posits that "we have so many Nigerians, but there are not many good leaders in Nigeria" (Alechenu, 2013). From political leadership to traditional, commerce to education and down to the family level, the ideal form of leadership is nowhere to be found. Hence, in an attempt to proffer solution to the problem of poor leadership in Nigeria, Agomuo (2013) draws attention to what he called "proper preparation to certain political offices", having identified lack of preparation in all ramifications (i.e. acquisition of requisite knowledge, selfless service, energy and passion, and values) as a major challenge of good leadership and governance in Nigeria. This recommendation is not out of place because, 'proper preparation', they say, 'prevents poor performance' (PPPPP). Asaju (2012: 45) strongly advocates for a Value Re-orientation as the only means of overcoming the leadership challenges in Nigeria. He asserts that due to the high rate of moral decadence in the society, moral values have been eroded at the family and community level. These values include among others, honesty, meritocracy, communalism, selflessness, chastity, trust, and good name, among others. The suggestion made by the above writer constitutes the drive for this paper. So, the questions are,

- How can these values be revived?
- How can they be inculcated and imbibe by Nigerians, especially those who are in or want to go into leadership positions in the country?

Using secondary data, the writer undertakes a qualitative research to answer these and many other leadership questions begging for answers? The data were sourced from official documents of the government, traditional archives, religious books, other books, journals, Newspapers and Magazines etc. The content analysis was used in analysing the data. The emphasis is on value reorientation, using moral education as a viable instrument. The analogy is that leadership crisis and many other problems that are clogs on the wheel of Nigerian progress today could be attributed to the woeful breakdown of moral values in the Nigerian society today.

2. Theoretical Framework

Moral values relates to ethics which deals with the problems of rights and wrongs. Ethical thoughts are expressed in different forms and explanations from individual level to that of social groups, and to societal level. However, a person cannot live in complete isolation. Every man is part of a society, hence, there is need for everyone to obey and practice the moral principles his society cherished. The philosophical school of thought that gave rise to the societies which existed long before the formation of what we now have as a country called Nigeria, can be explained from the idealists perspective.

Ilori (1994) sees "idealism" as one of the moral theories in his book titled "A Moral Philosophy in African Context". The term "idealist" relates to "one who accepts and lives by lofty moral 'aesthetic' and religions standards or one who is able to visualize, and advocates some plans or programmes that do not yet exist". He added that every social reformer is an "idealist" in a sense because he is supporting something that has not yet come into existence. Those who work for permanent peace or for elimination of poverty may be called idealists in this sense. Idealists tend to have considerable respect for culture and tradition. They think of the values of life as grounded in a realm beyond the individual and the social group. By implication, no one is above any value his society shared. Hence, no society exists without shared values and common culture. A society is generally defined as a self-perpetuating group of humans, broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interest, participation in characteristic relationships, shared values and common culture (Amao, 2006).

Deduced from the characteristics spelt out in the definition above, Nigeria is not yet a society in a singular sense, but a pluralistic society. The fact remains that the current expression called Nigeria today existed as kingdoms, empires, caliphates and autonomous societies. In order to discover and appropriately suggest the essential values that can hold and sustain a pluralistic society as Nigeria, we need to examine the values that have held and sustained the societies that were unified at amalgamation. The essence is to distill those values and infuse them into our modern Nigerian concept for effective leadership and followership.

3. Conceptual Review

3.1 The Concept of Leadership

The concept of leadership is one of the most frequently discussed and probably less understood in social and management science. To Onah (2007), "more has been written and less known about leadership than any other topics in the management and behavioral science".

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are various levels of leadership. Leadership transcends beyond the most desired modern political leadership to the organisational, institutional, religious, traditional and even smaller social groups such as family. In as much as political leadership remains the focus of this paper, it does not underestimates the extent of success to which the infusion of the expected leadership values and qualities at all level of leadership will be for Nigeria

3.2 Qualities of a Good Leader

Scholars and practitioners have identified some certain qualities that a leader should or must possess, which would help them to lead effectively. On this premise the paper identifies the following fundamental qualities of a leader;

i.   Honesty: A good leader must be free of deceit and must be truthful and sincere. When leaders rise above ethical divide and make honesty their watchword and a key value, influencing people becomes easier as they will willingly follow or obey.

ii.   Integrity: Many writers attribute integrity to competency and of course it is essential but it is not enough. It is about having strong moral principles. Lack of integrity destroys competence. Integrity sustains competence. A leader must not allow his personal feeling or emotions to override his integrity.

iii. Vision: To be an effective leader you must have a clear vision. That is, a leader must be aware of what is, and have the ability to think about or to plan the future with imaginative picture of what should be. Samuel (2011) expressly quotes the Holy bible (Proverbs 29:18) as saying "where there is no vision, the people perish…" It is the responsibility of the leader to catch the vision and communicate this vision to the followers and as well influence, motivate and guide others to achieve the shared vision.

iv.   Communication: This involves leaders sharing their vision with the led. Leader may have a clear knowledge of what they want to accomplish (vision), but explaining or sharing this vision to the led will make them to have a sense of belonging and they will be carried along in achieving the common goals. Communication connects the leader and the led which make the followers have a sense of belonging. Followers without a sense of belonging are as good as opponents. Effective communication involves listening as well. It is said that Abraham Lincoln's ability to listen to people was one of the reasons he was adjudged to be one of America's great presidents.

v.   Self-Confidence: This is built through experience. Leaders who lack self confidence cannot act proactively and cannot initiate or inspire confidence in their subordinates or followers (see Mohammed, 2004).

4. Discussion

4.1 Trends in Nigerian Leadership Crisis

As noted earlier, most Nigerians believed that all of Nigeria's problems can be summarized as `leadership failure. Hence, they tend to point at political leadership, specifically the president/presidency as the sole cause of all Nigeria problems and ultimately the reason why we are where we are. While acknowledging the fact that the major problem with Nigeria is squarely a failure of leadership and the unwillingness and the inability of our leaders to rise up to their responsibility, and coupled with the challenge of personal exemplary leadership style, which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Mohammed, 2004); this paper situates Nigeria problems in the woeful shortfall of moral values in modern Nigerian society which culminated into deficit of value based leadership. It is arguable that a corrupt or bad society cannot produce honest and transparent leaders. Both current and future leaders are products of Nigerian society which was ranked 130 in 2010 and was pushed back to number 139 out of the 176 countries surveyed in 2012 by Transparency International corruption perception index.

Corruption strives where institutions are weak. Corruption strives where moral values are eroded by greed, sharp practices and unbridle crave for luxuries and grandeur. Until the problem of leadership in Nigeria is unpacked, trite formulations are scrutinized objectively, and honest analysis are carried out, it would be difficult for an efficient and productive value enhancing institutions to flourish in Nigeria. This informs the writer's quest to take a holistic look at where the issue lies and how well the nation can surmounts its leadership challenges. It is fixable only if we are really ready to fix it.

Agomuo (2013) pointed out that most of our public office holders are people who are not capable of running their own homes, but have manipulated their ways into high leadership positions through the already corrupt electoral process. Some others lament the accidental emergence of political leaders who are unprepared. Oftentimes, unwilling individuals are forced on the nation citing the instance of what happened in 2010.

There is no doubt that the selection process is marred with malpractices. Yet, the political institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Judiciary and Political Parties are either weak or corrupt, or both. In most matured and democratic climes, leaders are chosen on the basis of ethical and nationalistic (patriotic) pedigree. They must be made to pass through a rudiment of transparent selection process. They must have climbed the conventional and political or bureaucratic ladder which is deemed to have equipped them with the wealth of experience, qualities and competence required of a leader. In such democratic settings, election management body and the judiciary are meant to superintend over the process of producing the best political leaders.

The paper laments that critics are either quick to forget or ignorantly ignore the fact that no institution runs itself. It is the human element that manages the institution. Of course, every Nigerian is desirous of transparent and corrupt-free institutions, managed by value based leadership. The nation desires a transformational leadership with shared purpose and vision. Not transformational leadership fashioned in the precede sharing of excess crude oil and federation account earnings, rent seeking and crony capitalism, as asserted by a former Minister of State for Finance, Remi Babalola. This transformational leadership should also transcend to other stake holders (i.e. the bureaucrats, Legislature, judiciary, private sector, politicians and the electorate). Are there any change in our approaches and dispositions? Are we still holding to our core values? For instance, when politicians give N200, N500, or sachets of 'salt and maggi' to the people during electioneering campaign, the electorate are quick to forget their sufferings in the last four years, and fail to think of how they would suffer in the next four years, thereby losing their values of integrity, selling their conscience cheaply and mortgaging their future lives and that of their children's children.

More so, in view of many Nigerians, a public office holder is a *failure* if he does not steal from national treasury to *favour* his primordial public interest, or his *people* while in office (Samuel, 2011). As Babalola (2010) rightly opines "as long as we keep having followership that demands patronage, handouts and favors, our search for true leadership will be long and winding". How can a society get a true leadership fix when the people celebrate failed leaders? A society where public officers who enriched themselves with pension funds (i.e money of those who have served the country with their productive years) and walk freely on our streets or use the stolen money to buy chieftaincy titles. How can such society get it right? This goes with the writers belief that a former

'*THIEF*' becomes a '*CHIEF*' by simply stealing too much money and using it to *change* the initial letter '*T*' and replaced it with letter '*C*'

It is unfortunate that the endemic and dangerous value of corruption in Nigeria has eaten deep into every facet of our lives and establishments. In the very past, religious leaders, teachers, lawyers and judges were the custodians of our core values of honesty, moral integrity and social justice. But the reverse is the case, where the so-called religious leaders (clerics) are charged with fraudulent and dubious acts. A university professor was sacked and sentenced to jail over sexual harassment of his student. Law makers collect bribes and shortchanged investigation reports. Judges are shamefully retired over age cheating and so on. Most Nigerian daily newspapers on 30/7/2013 reported the decision of the National Judicial Council to retire a Justice who falsified his date of birth, which invariably affected his retirement age. This is just a tip of an iceberg when it comes to corruption and many unethical practices in Nigerian judicial institutions.

In a society where values of integrity and honesty are rooted in the hearts and minds of its leaders, such judges must be made to face the full wrath of the law, and pay back all the salaries and emoluments he enjoyed illegally. This could serve as deterrent to others. But the culture of impunity has over taken social justice in Nigeria judicial system. The supposed salvaging institution like the educational institution is inundated with bribery and corruption. From top to bottom, the management of the educational sector and the academic environment are no exception from the scourge. Allegations of admissions racketing, trading of gratification between teachers and students for better grades and outright diversion of funds provided for running the institutions by the management abound. Like the authors of this paper, most Nigerians are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs particularly unbridle crave for materialism regardless of its moral implications on our society. This calls for urgent value regeneration by means of educations.

4.2 Moral Educations and Value Re-Orientation to the Rescue

The term "morals" and "ethics" are mostly used synonymously. "Moral" was derived from the Latin word *"moralis"* while "ethics" was from a Greek word *"ethos"*. Ilori (1994) uses both terms to mean the "custom or way of life of a particular group or society". Samuel (2011) puts forward three related definitions of morality as follows:

   i.   The principles concerning right and wrong or good or bad behavior;
   ii. The degree to which something is right or wrong, good or bad, according to designed principles;
   iii. A system of moral principles followed by a particular group of people.

Morality can be deduced to mean the science of right or wrong, good or bad, in relations to a particular society. Moral education as a Programme of study teaches the pupil or students about behaving in accordance with a certain standard of what is good, while rejecting the bad. It focuses on the values that are good and worthwhile, and also teaches individuals how to cultivate such values and manifest them in their behaviours (Okoh, 1998; Samuel, 2011). Moral educations involve the choice of material and individual's moral development to bring about moral conduct built into habit.

In general, the whole process of education involves imparting knowledge of goods and bad, right and wrong into the learners. Education in this perspective is seen as pedagogical instrument designed to enable an individual acquire highest intellectual, moral and aesthetic capabilities. Hence the meaningful exposure of an individual to education as a process and as an end in itself frees the mind from errors and corruption (Samuel, 2011). No wonder, some experts argue that the quality of education in any society is an indication of its future development potential. Education at all levels, as Soludo (2013) posits, "Whether as a consumption or production of good, is a key pivot of developments". This is because there can hardly be any transformation in the economic, social-cultural or political system without a functional value based educational system.

Any society who pays lip service to its education is doom to fail. Few Third world countries had recognized education as the most veritable instrument for transformation and attitudinal change, and as a result invested heavily in the educational system. Singapore was a Third World country, had no enough natural resource, hence their investment in educating the people have lifted them from that undesirable sociological nomenclature to become model for African and other Third world leaders. They invested heavily in human development which is vital for economic development. Venezuela and Brazil are developing countries like Nigeria. They recognized the fact that it is only education that is capable of lifting them from backwardness to high level of development. They therefore, earmarked proceeds from their oil wells for their educational sector. Venezuela now records over 70% literacy rate; Ghana is 67.8%, while in Nigeria, literacy rate is 61.3% (Kyendo, 2013).

The emphasis here is the need to use moral education as a means of providing the Nigerian populace with vital information on the relevance of good character, and embracing positive value system. Value in this context

refers to the principles or standard of behavior which a particular group of people holds dear. Values are what the society care about. They are what motivate people from within. In the same vein, Danladi (2000) notes that "values are conscious and unconscious beliefs about what is good or bad, right or wrong, and so they influence orientation of individuals towards what they think and do in the society". Values may be wholly personal to the individual (subjective) and generally public or social in relation to the society (objectives). However, one's personal values are always adjudged to be good especially if they do not contradict societal values. Kaura (2009) asserts that values are formed from ones' attitude, and they form the criteria against which the worth of things, objects and action are judge. He further stated that values are stronger than attitude. Hence, ones' attitudes are in turn overtly or covertly influenced by ones' values.

Whether personal or public (society), values can be good or bad. Any society that adopts bad values pays dearly for it. The various societies that constitute modern Nigeria were sustained by such values as honesty, integrity, concern for others, fair play, social justice, patriotism, respect (for self and others), social decorum, courage, hard work and diligence. As Amao (2006) observes, these values are not different from those that dominates in successful countries all over the world. The only difference is that those values were successfully infused into their modern leadership styles and practices. It is unfortunate that these good values are rapidly and woefully eroding from modern Nigerian society, while bad values such as materialism, nepotism, greed, misinformation, impunity, brutality, lying and graft and grandeur are the order of the day. A society that adopts these bad values continues to dwindle in all leadership situations because our past, present and future leaders are products of the society. The resultant effects of negative societal values in Nigeria are the emergence of largely mischievous, incompetent and army of *un-studious* people as leaders in the country. Corruption and gross inequality has flourished and still persist in Nigeria mainly because of the inability to infuse our core values into the Nigerian concept (Amao, 2005).

Therefore an urgent need for moral values orientation and continual re-orientation are required if Nigeria must surmount the leadership crisis and some other clogs bedeviling its developmental goals and objectives.

4.3 Values Orientation Cum Value Re-Orientation

Kaura (2009) distinguishes between value orientation and value re-orientation. To him, Value orientation connotes an awareness of one's temporal, practical or circumstantial situation. It is the process of drawing one's attention to, and helping him to reflect on his societal values which at the end should result to behavioral modification. While value re-orientation on the other hand, is an act of reconsideration of value orientation that are more philosophical with acceptable ideologies that form national belief system which are workable for the individuals and national development. Value reorientation underscores the need for continuous education in the sense that any new learning add to what individual is aware of.

What Nigeria need is a value based system which would directly translate into value based citizenship from whom leaders emerged. Doing this requires conscious ethical revolution through moral (value) education and value re-orientation through the mass media, the home or family, society, religious organizations, governmental and non-governmental organisations. Okam in Kuara (2009) underscores that the institution of education is basic and fundamental to other four institutions namely: economic, political, social and religious. This is solely because education institution is the means by which individual gains the values, knowledge and skills that one need to fit well into the society and operate successfully in other institutions. It is the pivot for social and moral regeneration.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

It is quite unfortunate that Nigeria is faced with leadership crisis. The lack of moral values by the leaders could be adduced for the high rate of corruption, greed, unbridled clamor for material wealth, luxury and grandeur. This is because the modern Nigerian society has failed to infuse her core social values into the modern leadership styles and practices. As a developing country, Nigeria desires to compete favorably with other successful countries and as well become one of the 20 most developed economies of the world in the next six years. This might not be possible, unless there is a paradigm shift from the current leadership and followership paradigm to a value based society with a corresponding value based leadership. This requires a conscious and continuous reorientation of the citizenry of those societal values and norms. This should also permeate all their social, religious, economic, and political lives, using moral education as a means to that ends.

5.2 Recommendations

The current trend of leadership failures on every front is quite unfortunate. Based on the discussion so far, the paper recommends the following;

i.   There is the urgent need for a paradigm shift which will involve conscious and deliberate ethical revolution in Nigeria. It is urgently imperative to change the direction which Nigerian society is taking by clarifying those core social values that held the pre-colonial society and apply them accordingly in all ramifications and as well infuse such values in the nation's modern leadership styles.

ii.   There is the need to sanitize the selection process of our leaders by clearing the system of its current impunity. Hence, the electoral Institutions must be empowered to invoke the force of law. The punitive measures in the Electoral Act are not there for fashion. They must be invoked to sanction erring political actors to deter other stakeholders i.e. security and electoral agents and even the electorate.

iii.   Strong Institutions are undoubtedly considered to be the custodians of the societal values by placing limits to people's behavior (regardless of status or class). But where institutions are weak and corrupt as obvious in Nigeria, people, especially the '*powerfools*' tend to substitute the values and goals of the larger society with personal values and objective, thereby pursuing pecuniary interest at the expense of popular will. Therefore, strengthening empowering our institutions to their full capacity becomes imperative. These institutions must be rooted and their operations be guided by the principles of the rule of law.

iv.   The failure of the leadership in Nigeria is partly orchestrated by people at the grass root, their constituents or followers. Instead of seeking for patronage and handouts from the leadership, citizens should rise against corruption and mismanagement of resources. Citizens should demand transparency and accountability from their leaders and as well condemn and confront the current and ever widening gap between the rich and the poor.

v.   There can hardly be any possible transformation in the country's political, economic, social-cultural and religious system without functional educational system. Singapore recognized this and invested heavily in educating the people and today, it enjoys strong brand name in development as a centre of global educational excellence. Nigerian leaders should borrow a leaf from these successful countries by prioritizing education sector which is undoubtedly very essential to societal transformation. It is where political, economic, social and religious leader are groomed, be it formal or informal.

vi.   Nigeria leaders must undertake real programmes that would positively change the mindset of the citizens and create confidence in the followers. It is also not possible to change the paradigm of our society without refashioning the psychology, the thinking and mindset of the people. This is possible by adding value to the life of the citizen, by reducing poverty and by creating opportunities for sustainable progress.

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