

AFRICA AND LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD OF CHANGE

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Abstract

The question of African development has always tied to the problem of African leadership in the world of constant change and improvement. The permanence of the world is in its change and the plurality it gives to its inhabitant. There is totally crisis today in Africa because African leaders have not adapted to the reality of changing world. That the world has been in a constant consistent changing chain was a reality confirmed by Heraclitus/Parmenides. The world is permanently undergoing series of change and people are adapting to those changes. African is not totally left out in this state of unending changes, but the difference is the manner in which Africans have adapted this change. African adaptation has always been on white papers and based on recommendations by either United Nations or World Bank. African adaption has not really been on principles of African experiences of reality from an African perspective of the situation. Our change has been a forced change. And this has remained the reason African leadership has not measured up to the global demand of quantities and responsible leadership that will be accountable to its citizens. This paper therefore is a critical examination of the reasons why African leadership has continued to fail or make serious efforts to appraise the African position in the comity of Nations.

Keynotes: Africa, leadership, development, change, World Bank.

Introduction

We must thank the organizers of this conference for thinking it through, the idea of this wonderful discussion on the central theme of our today's event. The question of African leadership especially in the 21st century world of change has become paramount for any serious academic discussion worth its name in African especially those directly done by Africans themselves.

African leadership has not been without issues and many a times, cruel stories of injustice and violation of human rights. There is totally crisis today in Africa because African leaders have not adapted to the reality of changing world. That the world has been in a constant consistent changing chain is a reality yet to be accepted by many African leaders. That the old way of doing things must be reevaluated by the modern global practices is still not accepted by many Africans on the front roll of public life. African leaders have not adopted best global practices in many of their discussion and decisions. There is need therefore to consider the present condition of the world as African leaders strive to align themselves with the rest of the world. The real crisis on African is the crisis of leadership; but of course not leaving aside, bad followership, unaccountability spirit by many Africans.

Africa and the question of leadership quality and style

Africa as the second largest of Earth's seven continents has been straddle for years by its leaders, but it has also been blessed in some quarters by few good men who have done her proud. But these last set of men are not mainly in the public life of the continent's affairs but they are Africans.

There have been opinions about African leadership qualities and style. Since no country or nation can develop without qualities and visionary leaders, African's basic problem is the problem of leadership. Since development comes when leaders are visionary and steers the affairs of their communities towards the path of achieving those developmental options. Africa has not proven to be able to present capable leaders that will be able to align with other global best practices.

There have been two major factors hampering Africa's growth in the changing world and they are:

Scramble for Africa

In the final two decades of the 19th century European colonial powers took over virtually the whole continent of Africa, racing each other to claim territory to expand their colonial empires. This so-called Scramble for Africa marked an irreparable turning point in the history of the continent. Almost overnight, most Africans lost control of their own historical destinies. Nations and whole empires were swept aside as the political layout of the continent was reconfigured according to European dictate.

Till date, that scramble has continued in modern ways, European opinion still dominate the life and political will of our leaders. In the 21st century, Africa still demands on Europe on every ting they do. This has hampered our progress and the natural path we would tour as Africans.

Unaccountability and seat tight syndrome

Many African leaders are not accountable and have refuse to leave office except been forced out by either the military or riot by the masses. There is virtually lack of public life reasonability on the part of African leaders. Hardly will development come to a nation whose leaders are not responsibility for the day to day running of the public affair of her masses. African leaders have not accepted the changing reality that public positions are for public utility only entrusted under their care and as such owe the public an account of how they run offices.

How development comes

Since development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. (somasshekar, 2003) The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment. Development is visible and useful, not necessarily immediately, and includes an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change. (Lekachman, 1995).

But Economic growth is not the same as economic development. Development alleviates people from low standards of

living into proper employment with suitable shelter. Economic Growth does not take into account the depletion of natural resources which might lead to pollution, congestion & disease. Development, however, is concerned with sustainability which means meeting the needs of the present without compromising future needs.

Economic growth as defined by economists is an increase in the combined value of goods and services, that is, the gross domestic product produced within a state in a year. While economic development occurs from simple forms of organization and production like when originally men lived in small, self-sufficient communities, dependent on things they found in their environment. If food, fuel, or materials ran out, they would simply move on to complex modern ones. (James, 2000).

Catalogues of Africa's woes are too well known, too often rehearsed to bear recounting. But this catalogue of woes is a catalogue not of the reality of the African condition but rather of its symptoms. (Okere, 2006)

But what is the root cause? If Africa, as has often been said (Mazrui), is created, not by God but by Europe, then the way it was created continues to govern the way it is and the way it works. Africa was not only created by Europe, it has remained a creature of Europe, sustained in that received existence by its maker's providence – the abiding presence and influence of Europe.

Think of the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Cote d' Ivoire. When Fulbert Youlou of Brazaville was embattled in the coup that ended his rule, he telephoned General de Gaulle who declined to save him. His last words to de Gaulle: Mon general, je demissionne. If Mon general by just looking the other way permitted a change of personnel in Brazaville, changing the colonial map itself in Nigeria became a mission impossible even as Nigerians themselves fought for a change. Britain threw all its diplomatic and military weight to save its pet creation. Millions of Biafran lives lost in the pogroms, in the battle fields of the civil war and or children lost to starvation and Kwashiokor could not change by an iota any sacred inch of the map drawn in Berlin 1884-1885 in the absence of the Africans. (Theophilus, 2006)

All these go to show that there has been continuity in Africa for ages now – a continuity of foreign presence and power and ultimate responsibility for the fate of Africa, all accounting for the continuity of the crisis.

But why can't Africa of itself change the situation as in Asia? A catalogue of reasons or rather perhaps excuses: A dearth of intelligent and selfless leadership with no Gandhi, no Nehru, no Mao, no Giap!

Education as a way forward

For there to be an impact in the leadership style of African in the 21st global changing world. Africans and African leaders must pay attention to education. They must pay attention to philosophic education.

Why philosophy?

Philosophy, as we were told is that leaning that seeks knowledge for its own sake; Knowledge of its own self knowing. But I think philosophy is worth more than just seeking and loving knowledge for its own sake. A meaningful definition of philosophy in this 21st century must include among other things, practical knowledge about things that seek resolution of problems in our various communities. If our philosophic knowledge does not proffer solutions to world's problems, then our thinking is as good as generating more problem than not thinking at all. (Onuorah, 2015)

Response of Philosophy

It is interesting that Plato's most influential work is the Republic and the burden of the Republic is precisely philosophy laying the foundations for the well-run state in a just society. This shows one of the greatest of philosophers trying to put the services of philosophy at the disposal of society. Whatever his details, we should ourselves be able to look for what use philosophy can be in our own predicament. A fair assessment of Plato's Republic would be to say that the work is built around the idea of justice: the construction of a social edifice built on and functioning on and promoting justice among men, thereby achieving the greatest possible good of all and happiness of all. (Onuorah, 2015)

For our purposes, we may not exactly require that all practice philosophy as the quest for exhaustive knowledge and wisdom. But we need it for inculcating the spirit of inquiry and critical objective judgment, for being able to distinguish and order priorities and, above all, for learning to establish a hierarchy of values, the priority of the common good and the proper means to achieve it and finally having the moral stature and discipline to subjugate all distractions of a personal, individual nature impeding the pursuit of the common good. Philosophy with these

attributes should provide us a sort of panacea for our woes of governance: proclaiming justice as societies' foremost pillar, with lessons for the leaders and rulers so that they may learn the first lesson in good governance: the priority of the common good; and for the ruled, that they may learn that under God, they themselves are the source of all governing authority and so learn to defend their interests against the inevitable encroachments of human failure and the greed and arrogance of power, lessons for the leaders, that they may think aright and for the led that they may think at all. (Onuorah, 2015)

Science: In the great world market place of ideas and action and production, in the concerted world effort to use science to change the world, Africa is an absentee. Elsewhere Europe, America, Asia, people have long learnt that knowledge is power. Organized knowledge, by its systematic application to environment and in providing man's needs and solving his problems has revolutionized the world. In so far as Technology or applied science defines the difference between Africa and the rest of world, crisis in Africa is a crisis of Ignorance, the slowness, the inability or refusal to see that knowledge is power and scientific knowledge and technology the root of the definition of the modern. This difference is like that between raw materials and manufacture, the cooked and the raw, between development and underdevelopment. We've lazily neglected our education and within education itself we've shamelessly neglected science. But the rest of the developed world has made science and the scientific attitude part of their environment. For our part we have been content to remain rural poets, tied to our ancient proverbs. We have remained wise with words but Ignorant of numbers and nature.

Religion: As for Religion, it should be a natural remedy and cure to a spiritual crisis. But religion in our context is compromised by its own ambiguities and antagonisms for when we talk of religion in Nigeria or Africa we are talking of many different and often conflicting things. Some worship essentially the god of war, some that of politics and many that of money. Some preach the Jihad, some the cross if not a crusade but most preach prosperity now. For some Religion is business and for others a flight from reality or a flight into magic. We cannot therefore talk with one meaning of what religion stands for or what it can do for a crisis-torn society.

Conclusion

While Religion and Philosophy combine to show us the purpose and goal of life and the ideals and virtues and dispositions that propel us towards that goal of ultimate happiness, science has the distinction of providing us the practical means and the wherewithal to use to dispose our material world-environment optimally towards achieving that end. As each is allowed to exercise its influence on our society, they will together and over time help to extricate us from our present predicament. The contribution of philosophy would bring back rationality in our society and in our private and public affairs.

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