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Leadership Crisis in Nigeria

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Abstract

As people come together to form a group, there are always goals and objectives, which forms the bases for their existence. To achieve these goals and objectives demands an efficient and dynamic leader to advance the progress of the group. This could be possible if the leader recognizes and performs that which he is expected to perform. That is why leadership is so much essential for the strength or progress of a nation that often the strength of or progress of a nation itself is sought to be judged in terms of its leadership. Nigerians are lucky to be blessed with very considerable human and material resources. The major problem the country faces has been and still is that of proper political leadership. The paper therefore will examine the leadership crisis in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria often referred to as the “*Giant of Africa*,” is larger than any country in the Western Europe (Herskovits; 1979/80:314-335). It lies along the Gulf

of Guinea in the West coast of Africa, and its size is comparable to the Four States (Texas, Michigan and South Carolina, and the District of Columbia) of the United States of America (USA) combined together. It covers an estimated area of about 373,000sq miles and is bounded on the South by a dense Coastal Swampy Forest and on the North by the Southern reaches of the Sahara desert (Luke: 1988:1). She got her independence on 1 October 1960, almost 100 years after the Lagos territory was ceded to the British Crown by King Dosummu (Arthur and Samuel; 1970:2). It became a sovereign state in 1963 after renouncing its domination states. It had an estimated population of about 34 million at the time of self-rule. Presently, the population is about 150 million. It is important to note that, Nigeria being the most populace state in Africa, out of every four Africans one is a Nigerian (Ogoloma; 1993:35).

Nigeria's societal base comprises indigenous societies ranging in scale from smallest autonomous village tribe to the largest kingdoms and empires of pre-colonial Africa. Within Nigeria, there are varieties of sects ranging from the Christian and Islamic sects, to those of African traditional religious (Ogoloma, 1993:38).

The consequences of these cultural and traditional diversities are too many nevertheless; Nigerian unity has been threatened by the absence of a strong sense of patriotism and national integration. The country is afflicted with intense local parochialism, sectionalism, tribalism and other fissiparous tendencies. This situation accounted for the civil war which took place from 1967 to Jan 12 1970. The recurrent fear of domination of the minority by the majority, regional greed and the porous foundation of the country where the main causes of the many coups and the long tenure of the military's rule in our short history as a nation (Azaiki; 2003:32)

This is what ought to be

According to Stephen Robbins, the distinction between leader and leadership is important but potentially confusing. The leader is the individual; while leadership is the function or activity the individual performs. That is why the word leader today is often used interchangeably with the word Manager to describe those individuals in an organization who have positions of formal authority, regardless of how they actually act in those jobs.

Meaning of leadership

Leadership is as old as the Human Race and in the words of Okocha (2009:12),

leadership is one of the greatest challenges of mankind, and in recent times in Nigeria, issues that pertain to leadership have been vociferously brought to the fore in our national discourse, among several other vexing topical issues in our great country. Some have said that chief, among the several debacles that have characterized our sad and sorry plight as a nation, is the question of leadership or apparent lack of leadership.

Some scholars finds that common to all definitions of leadership is the motion that leaders are individuals, by their actions, facilitate the movement of a group of people towards a common or shared goal. The definition implies that leadership is an influence process. For Cole

Leadership is the dynamic process at work in a group whereby one individual over a particular period of time, and in a particular organizational context influences the other group members to commit themselves freely to the achievement of group tasks or goals (Robbins 1997:442).

Chaturvedi (2006:170) opines that, leadership is the capacity in a person or in a group to inspire confidence and thereby regard for him or themselves to guide and govern the followers.

Leadership therefore is an instrumentality provided by a leader or group of leaders by which all other elements of national power-geography, economy, population, technology, ideology and morale can be mobilized and used most purposefully and effectively for the achievement of the goals of a nation in a given context. The work attempts to explain the causes of leadership crisis in Nigeria.

Meaning of crisis

Crisis is a time of difficulty or distress. It is derived from the Greek word "*Krisis*", which in a cooperate point of view is an intentional or accidental change in plan, line of action, design and the ability to adopt new approaches to solve the preceding confronting situations to fit in properly into the future

in avoidance of system failure or breakdown. It is therefore considered as a roundabout and stimulator of contemporary challenge in formal or informal organisations. It is a valid and preserved alternative vehicle for rapid change towards stability in organisational life (Okene; 2009; 176-177)

While crisis from the angle of clash in associated interest is the inbuilt mechanisms to strengthen, consolidate or renew social contract in line with the determining factors in a relation. Though clash of interests when not properly managed results to violence and when the dominated resist the domination of the dominance, it results in crisis (Okene; 2009; 177)

The crisis

The political crisis in Nigeria is because, Nigeria is a nation of nationalities; it is difficult for any one form the three major tribes to be generally accepted as a national leader. And it is very difficult for the opinion or suggestion from any one of the major tribes and even the minorities to be easily accepted. For example, President Goodluck Jonathan made a proposal for a six single year tenure for the president and governors, the north said that they will kill the proposal like the third year term suggested by the ex-president some few years ago(The Nation; July 30, 2011:2) In 1960-63, a proposal was made to setup iron and steel industry in the west near the source of raw materials, the East and North said if that be the case , it should be set in their various regions, this was a project set to take the country forward. We all know what the situation is today after more than thirty years.

The crisis stems from the amalgamation of the three distinct ethnic tribes in 1914 by the British colonialists due to economic expediency. It did not solve the problem of rivalry amongst the core tribes. This equally gave rise to the formation of political parties in pre and post independence Nigeria on tribal, ethnic and regional basis having different ideologies. It resulted in political mistrust amongst the major tribes and other unintended consequences like military coups and counter coups, domestic instability the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), and according to Obasanjo (2006: 25),

the proliferation of inter and intra ethnic, inter communal and inter religious conflicts in virtually all parts of the country. The nature, dimensions and intensity of these conflicts reflected severe dislocations and distortions in the Nigerian politic, the failure of traditional peace-making and conflict resolution institutions, the collapse of community

and communal values and the inability of the state and its custodians to manage grievances, contradictions, negative coalitions, the activities of ethnic entrepreneurs and political opportunism.

Characteristics of leadership

Okocha (2009:12) posited four characteristics of leadership; they are:

1. Knowledge, education and learning:

Knowledge can be acquired by education and training and also by experience. And so, to be a leader, knowledge is essential, and actually very paramount. And so, to be a leader in politics, you must be politically knowledgeable and politically experienced. To lead in a profession, you must yourself be well qualified, knowledgeable and experience in that profession; and so with other spheres of human endeavor.

2. Courage and fearlessness:

A leader must be courageous, and imbued with the resolute determination to pursue the aims and aspirations of his people by all legitimate means possible.

3. Strength of character

Leadership is sometimes a very daunting and uphill task. A good leader must therefore have the strength of character that will enable him or her to persevere, even in spite of all odds. He must be focused on the goal, and not be distracted by selfish motives, or personal interests.

Types of leaders

According to Deckor and Nnodim (2005:26-28), there are many types of leaders starting from home where the father is normally the leader. We also have political leaders, religious leaders and others. They are classified as follows:

1. Institutional leaders

These occurs where there promotions, appointments or election to a formal leadership position. His functions as a leader here is in accordance to the positions he occupies. It is in such a way that a successor takes over from him whenever he leaves office. For example, we have Divisional Police

Officers, school principals, Medical directors of local hospitals, etc. These people are generally public officers with limitations to their authority. They come and go according to the rules or regulations laid down for them. This is the type that is common in Nigeria

2. Situational leaders

These types of leaders are seen whenever there are emergencies or inadequacies in a family, organization or social institutions to rectify the anomaly. Its main task is to meet up with the challenges existing in such a situation so as to tackle them successfully. The danger here is that the leadership holds on perpetually. He assumes that continuous leadership as a way of compensating him for salvaging a situation.

3. Charismatic leaders

This type of leadership is chosen for his personal attraction which enables him to command considerable following by his people. "When leadership qualities and policies are popular, he goes into the heart of his people. The people love and adore him for whatever he says or does. They see him as a God-sent and could even worship him. He has great appeal that his followers could be ready to lay down their lives in defence of objectives championed by such leader. Examples include Jesus Christ, Obafemi Awolowo, Nehru of India, Mahatma Gandhi, John Kennedy, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran etc.

4. Traditional/Religious leaders

These groups of leaders are the custodians of culture and religion and many of them had their positions ascribed by the gods or culture on them.

Traditional leaders rule over their domain as dictated by their custom. Just as religious leaders lead their followers according to the doctrine of their religion. They command respect among followers and cannot be easily challenged or removed no matter the situation. In some quarters it is believed that only nature could cause a change probably through death (Deekor: 2005:27-28).

Models of Leadership

To Tamunomiebi (2002) models of leadership are:

- a) **Trait models:** This is the oldest model using the examples of great person. This basically is about the character of an individual including physically attributes like height, weight, appear able, skill abilities, etc.
- b) **Behavioral Models:** These are theories proposing specific aspect of behavior of leaders from non-leaders. The dissatisfaction with this trait led behavioral scientists to focus on the actual leader's behavior not on the emergence of an individual as a leader.
- c) **Contingency Models:** This is developed from the mistake of the behavioral theories which made little or no allowance for the situational factors that will influence style. Thus, if in a particular situation a leader adopted style A, what are the chances that style a will also work in a complete different situation. This theory relies on the Fielder's Model which is on effective groups depending on the leader's style.
- d) **The Hersley-Blanchard's Situational Theory of functioning:** The situational leadership theory was developed by Hersley and Blanchard in 1972. The theory is a contingency theory that focuses on follower's maturity. They defined maturity as the ability and willingness of people to the responsibility for directing their own behaviors. It has two components. Job and psychological maturity.
- e) **Path-Goal Theory:** R House developed this theory. It extracts key models from the Ohio State University Studies which says that the leader's behavior is acceptable to subordinates in so far as they view in him a source of immediate or future satisfaction. That it makes it subordinate need satisfaction contingent on effective performance. And that it provides the coaching, guidance, support, and rewards that are necessary for effective performance.

Note: The models of leadership that so much appeal to the Nigerian situation is that of trait and path-goal theories. This was evident in Tafawa Belewa, Shagari, and Yar'Adua Administrations. Equally, the Fiedler Model which is about the leader's style of interactions with groups-the stake holders, the various groups from the geo-political zones of the country. But in all the country needs dynamic leaders who can deliver the goods with political will.

Functions of leadership

Rose and Hardy (1975), after critical examination of other works came up with nine which include: viscosity; hedonic tone, senility, goal-achievement and initiative. Others are group and goal analysis, communication, establishing structure and implementing philosophy. Let us explain briefly one by one.

1. **Viscosity:** This is the degree to which members can work as a unit for a common interest. Cooperation among members can result in group cohesiveness and enables the group to function as a body. It is therefore, the duty of a group leader to promote and facilitate group cohesiveness by minimizing dissensions, conflict among members, and encourage group work and discipline among members.
2. **Hedonic Tone:** This relates to pleasantness in group atmosphere, the degree of co-operation among members, relationship among members and satisfying experiences in group, to achieve this, the leadership should enhance likeness among members and their willingness towards the group and its objectives.
3. **Goal achievement:** This measures the extent to which the group is able to attain its aims and objectives. It behooves on the leaders to assist the group define; mobilize resources to attain its goals. To do this, the leader must be efficient, skillful, insightful, and courageous and motivate members to work towards the goals.
4. **Initiating ideas and task:** A leader must be a visionary man as he sees far ahead of his contemporaries. This extraordinary vision is his ability to initiate ideas and task and not only initiate but also be in the forefront to accomplish the idea and task. A purposeful and insightful leader starts new ideas, projects discussions etc and led others in the group or community to carry out the tasks. Not only initiating task, such a task must be beneficial to the group as he critically analyze the benefits of such ideas.
5. **Group and goal Analysis:** Analysis means evaluating situations, separating them and making comments about each situation or task. The ability to see other dimensions of a task or problem that confronts a group is a duty of the group leader. Objective analysis

promotes insight into the task to be performed and makes easy the process of planning, task distribution and supervision. Critical view of group mechanism promotes better understanding of attitudes of members and the environment necessary for cohesion and goal achievement by the group.

6. **Facilitates Communication:** A leader must facilitate effective communication among members. Group decisions, achievements, problems etc must be communicated to members to sustain interest. Once a member is denied information as to the happening in the group, his interests begin to wane and disinterest creeps in. Adequate and effective communication process must be established by the leader to prevent suspicion and misunderstanding.
7. **Establishment of Structure:** Every objective no matter how difficult could be achieved if adequate and relevant structures are put in place to achieve it. Such structures could be physical or behavioral, such as congenial member interactions, group activities and extra-group relation. In this vein, duties must be specified and designed to members clarifying responsibilities and limit to avoid misperception. The understanding of group structures by members and responsibilities fosters orderliness and accountability.
8. **Implementation of Group Philosophy:** Philosophy is the foundation of every group objective which could not be easily changed, and in which goals and objective are stated. The leader, just like a company director or manager has his primary task of implementing the group philosophy. To achieve this, rules and regulations are stated and monitored and implemented. Although, personal goals sometimes conflict with the group's philosophy which portends danger. Personal goals such as visibility, contact with other people outside the group, fraud and the use of leadership position as a ladder to achieve other intrinsic goals. Such temptations should be checked and avoided by the leader.

Theoretical foundation of leadership

The origin of leadership could be traced to the days of the early man. And as one of his contributions to the modern world was when, man realized that they have to walk in groups headed by a strong leader. That is why any group, specie or horde of people who are without a leader, the tendency is

that they will become rudderless. According to Okocha (2009:13), renowned scholars of anthropology have categorized man, the human being of the Homo-sapiens specie as belonging to the 'herd group' of animals. It has been said that herd group animals, like sheep, goats, antelopes, cattle, horses, elephants, men, etc thrive best when they have a good leader, and when they are properly led.

Good and proper leadership is therefore critical and perhaps essential, for the survival and prosperity of man, and the other animals in the herd group, so as to avoid the disastrous consequences of such tragedies like stampedes, and aimless wanderings.

Causes of leadership crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria is a nation of nationalities. That is why it has not been blessed with national leaders like India for example. A leader that is acceptable to all sections of sections of the country without minding from which tribe or region he/she comes from. That is, the leaders that emerged were tribal leaders despite the fact that, all of them were united in their nationalist struggles from different angles for the freedom from colonialism. That gave rise to polarized formation of political parties on regional/tribal lines. E.g. NCNC from the east, Northern people's congress from the north and action group with a difference, because it had S.G Ikoku from the East as a member. That is why despite the nationalist struggles, tribal sentiments did not die down. That is why Nigeria's history since independence has been dominated by the question of national unity. This had been the result of parochial loyalties of the major groups to their tribes rather than to the country. This prompted Achebe (2009:30) to posit that, "since independence in 1960 till now, Nigeria have not gotten the right leadership it ought to have that has propelled other nations to greatness. That accounts for the so many ills of the country. Nigeria needs the kind of leadership that is sensitive to the problems and aspirations of Nigerians as well as show leadership examples to other black countries of the world. Nigeria therefore needs leadership that can save the country and provide selfless and inspiring leadership. Therefore, "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or the inability of its leaders to rise to the

responsibility to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership.

Hatch (1971:20) said that the division of the country in 1900 into three unequal parts on tribal basis and the subsequent amalgamation on 1 January 1914 due to economic expediency (Luke; 1989:1), the federal structure that ensued did not solve the problem of rivalry, domination and marginalization among the core tribes (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba). The unintended consequence of this artificial union out of diversity is the leadership crisis in Nigeria where none of the major tribes trust one another's intentions. Moreover they feel that their interest must be protected and in the hands of whom they trust.

Achebe was stirred in his mind as a result when he said thus:

Where are our own Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, Mao Tse-Tung, Nehru, Marshal Tito, Mandela, Nkrumah, Chissano, etc? We need our own Messiah to start developing like other nations. Leaders that will make our tap run and our hospitals to start working so that our leaders will no longer go abroad for health checkups or use that as a medium of stashing away our patrimony abroad for selfish ends instead of using our God-given resources to develop all nooks and crannies of Nigeria for the benefit of the masses. Nigeria needs a leadership and government that will create jobs for the over 80 million Nigerians living now below poverty line, a population that survives on mere \$1 per day. Leaders that will make our roads motor able and our streets lighted.

This conflict of interests between the leaders of the sub-nationality tribes over the distribution of power and resources, the nationalist sentiments, which had grown with the national independence, got eroded. The consequences of this conflict were the institutionalization of military rule in the country up till May 29th, 1999, with the attendant problem of transition of power from military to civilian and vice versa, the mistrust of the political leadership over the distribution of power and resources. This is the crux of leadership crisis in Nigeria's political history (Ogoloma; 1993; 46-47)

The following are the causes of leadership crisis in Nigeria:

1. The importance of a common language and ideology for the development of a country cannot be overestimated and underplayed. In the light of this, it has become a must for Nigeria to adopt a national ideology that can help to galvanize the heterogeneous society for a purposeful national economic, political and cultural development of the country. Its absence has prevented Nigeria from properly articulating her national interests and leadership role effectively. The only ideology it has known has been that of nationalism geared against a colonial power which helped in fighting and winning its independence and sovereignty but it is outdated as it has not helped her to effectively tackle the rigorous and at times cumbersome complicated domestic and international relations for its development. The nature of the ruling elite is such that, they are pro-west without any inclination for radicalism and assertiveness in their policies. They stand for status quoism and are sectionalists and tribalistically minded group (Ogoloma; 1993:234-235).

2. Regionalism

A region is defined as one of the areas, division or district that a country is divided into, that has its own customs, administration or its own government. Regionalism becomes a state of consciousness of and loyalty of district region with a homogeneous population. It can also be seen as a development of a political or social system based on one or more such areas, emphasizing on regionalism.

When nationalism developed, it was mostly among the Eastern and Western Nigeria (Ibos and Yorubas). As earlier as 1914, it may have already been too late for the development of a truly national movement as opposed to regionalist movement and orientation. This development actually reinforced, rather than reduced regional differences. As political parties emerged and developed, they represented the regions, rather than national interests-The NCNC (Ibos), the Action party (Yorubas), the Northern People's Congress (Hausa/Fulanis).

The concept of regionalism draws sustenance from the factors of geography, topography, religion, language, culture, economic life, customs and mores, political traditions and shared historical experiences. The factor of diversity makes the people of a particular area or region distinct from others and the

factor of disparity inculcates in their minds a sense of social and economic injustice. This does not augur well for the country as it will breed parochialism instead of national unity.

3. Religion

From newspapers today, we find out endless report of religious leaders who preach love, peace and compassion, but also fan the flame of hatred and invoke the name of God to legitimize their brutal conflict, bigotry, wickedness and inhumanity and the willful ignorance which has characterized much of its history.

The Marxist talks about religion as the opinion of the masses. We have seen how fanaticism in the religions has led to religious riots resulting in the loss of lives, property and most of the time it leads to migration of the entire economic life of the people that are affected. So, religion is another divisive agent to the development of the nation. The leadership is always affected by the utterances of the religious leaders and in the process affects the policies of the government.

4. Ethnicity

Ethnicity is characterized by a common relation to the other relevant ethnic groups. The division of the country in 1900 into three unequal parts ushered in an era of ethnic politics and chauvinism into the Nigerian society. Ethnicity has come to be recognized as something to conserve or recapture a political identity based upon race, etc. that is why ethnicity has become an important issues confronting the country. According to Nnoli (1978:5), “ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal factors which may be language, culture, or both”. It is this social formations that affect the performance and functioning of the leaders as they may be influenced in their actions and decisions due to their ethnic inclinations. The interethnic struggle for social and economic dominance also inevitably leads to nepotism and its attendant consequences, mostly hostility.

5. Tribalism

Tribalism is the twin brother of ethnicity and has been the major cause of the domestic political inability in the country immediately after independence

and until the 1990s. This is noticeable in the utterances of the leaders from the three major tribes (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Ibo), made from time to time especially when they are not in power such as using terms like ‘the marginalization of the North and their interests, the marginalization of the Igbos and their interests’, without any damper and whimper for the feelings of the minorities from where the bulk of the Federal revenue comes from. The surprising aspects of these statements and words are that, sometimes, it comes out from former heads of state, federal ministers or other high government functionaries. This is a cause for alarm.

Tribalism has been a thorn in the flesh of the country like every other African country. It has been against development of the country and the continent as a whole. Tribalism has led to ethnic politics and the issue of marginalization. In the process, this has led equally to ethnic mistrust.

Conclusion/suggestions

In conclusion, leadership crisis has been a singular issue that has kept sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists all over the world having sleepless night as to what makes an effective leadership. Why others have succeeded at one time and at another way others fail. Whether leadership is in-born, acquired or developed in the process of leadership. Nevertheless the leadership crisis in Nigeria has been as a result of ethnicity, tribalism, religious extremism, political instability and the military incursions into the Nigerian polity. These have affected the effectiveness of the leadership of the country. The attendant effects of these fissiparous tendencies in the country are under development, desire for succession, bribery, corruption, favoritism, nepotism, feudalism and other social injustice, ineffectiveness of the leadership. All these negative vices do not augur well for the country.

This prompted Anyakwe (2011:18) to say that “The missing link in Nigeria is not money, but poor quality of leadership”. And in referring to President Goodluck Jonathan, he said, “I want him to enthrone the kind of leadership that will project Nigeria well and put it aright before the comity of Nations”. This he will do by, turning governance into a right and not privilege by running a government that is exemplary for others to emulate.

In the light of the above, it is suggested that people should not put their tribes/ethnicity first before the interest of the country because the country comes first.

- * Nigerians should learn not to bother about the tribe/ethnicity of the leader. But rather focus on his ability and capacity to govern.
- * The leadership should not fail to fight fissiparous tendencies whenever and wherever they may arise with enough political will.
- * The zoning system by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which is meant to allow the minorities a say in the country as well as participate in the governance of the country should not be used for the selfishness of the leaders from the majority tribes.

Our national Leaders and other ethnic authorities are doing this to use their position of power to further their ethnic, tribal or religious interests, instead of the national cause / interests, because anything done in the name of the country has some tribal or religious undertone.

When these are adhered to, it will go a long way in moving the country forward instead of being preoccupied with parochial sentiments and interests in the name of Nigerianism.

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