

PHILOSOPHY, ETHICAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEADERSHIP CULTURE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Philosophy leads us to improve in ourselves as individuals, as a community and as a nation. The most important issue here is the usefulness of ethical epistemology to leadership culture in politics which is the basic ingredient of national development. Hence, philosophy is the lover of wisdom. Leaders must know how to lead as well as to manage. The current leadership situation in Nigeria is associated with chaos, corruption and conflicts. Many observers of the development and crisis in Nigeria since independence agreed that poor leadership has been a major factor for underdevelopment. Most Nigeria leaders have not been committed to the development of the society. It is the desire of epistemology that fuels our mind to know all that can be known. Good leaders should be ready to work and ready to make work available for others. The purpose of instituting government is to take care of the common good and welfare of the public. Man has noticed that his fulfillments as a social and rational being can only be found in society and not in solitary. Philosophy grants adequate training for positive leadership. There is a way to give the mantle of leadership to who respect the rule of law. The problem of good governance is a peculiar one comforting humanity in a social race of man to pursue his desire. A foundational state is built around a division of labor. Politics is a science that should be left to the expert to showcase their talent. This paper intends to figure out the lack of epistemology leadership development in Nigeria cultural orientation. This is not to say that the ingredients of leadership were totally lacking in Nigerian. This study suggested that the Nigerian mind, culture and value system need to be purified for a better and transformational leadership to be sustained which will in turn enhance the national development.

Keywords: Philosophy, Ethics, Epistemology, Development, Leadership, Culture.

Introduction

Historically, the republic of Nigeria came under colonial rule of the British United Kingdom during the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, making English its common language. On October 1, 1960, Nigeria gained its independent from the British rule. Today, Nigeria is a democratic nation with freedom of religion. Culturally, Nigeria is a multi-tribal system in which every tribe want to excel or suppress the other, so they are not on the same level playgrounds. Aphilosopher, Francis Bacon said it loud and clear that knowledge is power. It is indeed authentic and true knowledge encapsulates the power of liberation, power of development, self-discovery, innovation, creativity, power to construct, deconstruct and to reconstruct power to critically examine alternatives, to say no to articulated ones real and social needs. Thus, most people will agree that the notion is the defining element in development and it could be said that the stock of qualitative and quantitative knowledge available in society is proportional to the level and quality and progress potentials of that society. It emphasis the basic of the ideals we live by as well as the very foundation of who we are in order to rule. No one or society can operate beyond its epistemological base. If people based in myopic knowledge, their world views, will also be myopic, thus, saying that ideas are the factors that lift civilizations and create revolution. The opposite which is ignorance or lack of proper knowledge equally carries its own power but this time negative ones namely power of deform, to create, to alienate, power of enslavement, power to immobilize, demobilize and to destabilize, to be exploited, to be spoliated and to be oppressed. Nigerians is today living dangerously and tragically and there is no doubt that one of the basic source of the Nigerian predicament is lack of adequate or even the absence of knowledge to run a modern leadership polity. Otherwise, without leading as well as managing efficiently and effectively, today the organizations will face the threat of extinction.

When Plato opted for an aristocracy over a democracy, it was because he was frightened by the dangers ignorance among participants within a leadership set-up could bring to society for his leadership becomes disastrous because the people are not properly equipped by education to select the best rulers and the wisest courses. As to the people they have no understanding and only respect what their rulers are pleased to tell them". The upshot of such a leadership is tyranny or autocracy, the crowd so loves flattery; it is so hungry for honey". While one may not follow Plato to castigate leadership as a system of government, yet this observation is quite correct with respect to the informed society. This is why the lack of progress, of the leadership culture or the abuse of the same in Nigeria today, can be a great measure to be traced to both unenlightened leadership and ignorant followership. And when one talks of ignorance or lack of appropriate knowledge we do not mean to spread the prejudice which seems to see the Nigerians as incapable of elevated thought or one who has no wealth of knowledge. For indeed, Nigerian have a legacy of a rich and diversified reservoir of knowledge derived from their traditions, culture and local genius. Yet the level of appropriate knowledge and ignorance here is in

relation to the mechanics and dynamic involved in operating a modern leadership polity, which our governments in Nigeria since independence, pretend to adopt, because the people and their leadership are not well-prepared for it due to a number of reasons. Since the end of the colonial era till today, Nigeria has been struggling to practice this new system and one would dare to say here with no significant success. In Nigeria, there is a transformation going on that aims to balance “modern” governance and traditional cultural beliefs. Instead of the most commonly used authoritarian and distrustful leadership styles are change towards people-oriented leadership styles and less hierarchy enacted by leaders is favoured. Leaders in the private sector in Nigeria go beyond conducting their business; many feel responsible to address Nigeria's socio-economic challenges. Honoring the value of integrity is also considered very important. While women and youths are still struggle for recognition as leaders. It is an optimistic future perspective in which these leaders will make a difference: not only for themselves, but also in their wider environment. One of the legacies of western colonialism in Nigeria was the introduction of the western styled leadership cultural system, which some prefer to call liberal leadership. And therefore, for leadership to flourish, there is need for systematic formation of the citizens on the dynamics and ethical leadership culture in political atmosphere. However, the western-styled leadership culture as a package had its uniqueness. This paper shows that one of the significant failures to success is the lack of appropriate leadership culture and irrelevant knowledge with regard to the leadership system in the vast majority of the citizens among many of the Nigerian leaders.

The purpose here is to expose how much ignorance or inadequate knowledge had stalled or bastardized the development of the leadership spirit in Nigeria today. The leadership culture is principally based on the right of the people to public affairs, which includes the choice of the leaders; reconciling public authority with legitimate autonomy and participation of individual persons and groups. The process of establishing the institutions of the state and the exercise of these institutions, the means of establishing the apparatus of law and order economic well-being, mutual interest and good and effective common good equality and sound freedom, and more importantly the peaceful system of changing the constitutional provisions. However, all these ideas will remain a mirage without appropriate education and information. Leadership culture does not grow nor flower nor bear fruit in the soil of ignorance.

Ethical Leadership

Etymologically, leadership means the ability to guide, direct, or influence people. Oates maintain that leadership is “the act of helping, guiding and influencing people to act toward achieving a common goal”. The implication of this definition is that the essence of leadership is to influence and direct people towards achieving a commonly shared goal or objective. Leadership goes beyond political leadership to organizational, religious, traditional, institutional and even minor groups such as family, club and association. Ethic covers a range of moral dispositions, actions, values and beliefs which at the end shape and determine principles, choices and of course character. The pursuit of ethics is a

pursuit of excellence not only with regards to character but also in reference to functions, roles obligations. Ethical leadership as such describes the infusion of moral values and management of the organizations resource. It implies a choice to act responsibly towards situations and others, as well as the decision to be fair and just in one's judgment and treatment of others. Ethical leadership therefore, provides not only behavioral yardsticks for workers to emulate. Ethical motives are such that are guided for the consistent focus on responsibility towards others, fairness and accountability. Ethicality in leadership is pre-scriptive that is to say; it suggests what is morally acceptable and generally considered as acceptable behavior in the leadership of organization. According to Bello asserts: "That the concept of ethical leadership is one which identifies the sensitivity attached to be position and responsibilities of the leader and as such stresses not only on character but also values. However, ethicality can be challenging especially when overarching societal values are dominantly."

According to Demirtas and Akdogan said that organizations do not exist in a vacuum, nor do its leaders. Relationships are important and the leader's capacity for followership in various way reflect effectiveness- thus, suggesting conformity and acceptance as a basic for engaging followership. This view approaches the concept of ethical leadership from a more intrinsic perspective bothering on the underlying factors that shape the leader's decisions and interpretations of their relationships within the workplace. This paper, contributes on the basic on content and clarity on the conceptualization of ethical leadership and its role in enabling improved outcomes of quality service delivery. Leadership means initiating, directing and managing public resource, organizing people, directing subordinates to put in their best to achieve good result in a given assignment. It is about ensuring that things are done accordingly, accountability is maintained through the instruments of governance. In the realm of public affairs, leadership is seen as the range of policies public officials make and means they employ to manage the affairs of society. The need for good leadership has been emphasized as an ingredient of progress. It is essentially necessary in Nigeria. This is because of its ability to propel positive changes. A leader can be described as anybody that can influence others to perform beyond their formal authority. Leadership is the reflection of characters, which include but not limited to knowledge, vision, courage, openness accountability, determination, transparency, uprightness, motivation and patriotism put in place by office holders to lead their people and or followers so as to achieve reasonable and positive societal development. Profound changes need committed leadership exemplified in transformational policies and actions (Ukaegbu, 2010). Transformational leadership has core values of goals, visions, and the means to unite with followers to ensuring that such goals are achieved.

Knowledge and the Citizenry

Nigeria suffers a high illiteracy rate reaching from up to 60% in some areas. This means that many of her citizens have no access to formal (school) education. This situation becomes more disturbing in that, the incursion of western civilization and her economic

and political structures and models into Nigeria since the colonial era, disrupted the working of the Traditional society and her socio-political and economic organizations. Since then the people have been struggling to adapt to the new system due to a lot of constraints which may be cultural and in particular the mastery of the mechanism. The techniques, the ethics, in short the appropriate knowledge needed for the organization, direction and engineering of a modern pluralistic and democratic polity. The story of Nigeria independent has been a tale of poverty, deprivation, deception, domination and manipulation and this is traceable to the ignorance of a large percentage of the populace on the workings of the western styled leadership system. Most of the time the people are ignorant of their rights, ignorant of who their real enemies are ignorant of the source of their underdevelopment of the subtle mechanisms of exploitation and manipulation which have kept them where they are. They are ignorant of how they have been or are being selfishly and shamelessly used by the privileged elite whether civilian or military. Ignorance is said to be a disease that attacks man in his perception, in his relations and his deeds rendering him vulnerable to all sorts of influences and contrivances. Ignorance like malignant diseases prevent the host from attaining full potentialities. Ignorance keeps its victims in servitude when there are no perspectives to which the mind can begin to work. Most of the conflicts of our society in Nigeria today are a product of the failure of the people to get the right education and information, in short knowledge about the state of affairs due to cultural and political manipulations. According to Plato, he said that “the specially trained people should rule” in order to obtain development.

At every election or what one may call mockery of election, the gullible and ignorant masses are mesmerized and bam-boozed by the rhetoric and propaganda of the political classes, made to clap, cheer and applaud at any slogan or statement, even if it is directed against their well-being. In this situation they appear to behave like they do without intelligence, they are brainwashed with tribal sentiment, prejudices and rumors simply to further the interest of the political demagogues. The Nigerian voter tends to choose the political party those issues from his tribe. For the majority of the masses, party manifestoes and ideologies means makes choices according to the recommendation of their tribal and religious leaders which is not surprising given the high level of illiteracy. At the end of the day, these same masses will discover that they have counted political disaster by voting in political deed words and liabilities in places of power and trust. Given the fact that the democratic choice is one of the key- ingredients of a modern democratic culture, such culture will hardly flourish if the citizenry or followership is incapable of making informed judgment or choice. Such enlightened choice must demand appropriate and critical knowledge and enlightenment. Without such enlightenment the people become manipulated and exploitable.

A democratic leadership must be an accountable leadership, but this will be the case unless we have a critical and knowledgeable citizenry who must demand their rights and keep the leaders alert and demand accountability for their actions and policies or acts of omission and commission. The election is periodic opportunities given to the citizenry to reward

their leaders for performance. Thus, J.M. Walligo, the secretary of the Uganda constitutional commission, lamenting on the negative consequences of the people said “An ignorant person is an exploited and oppressed person even when he is not aware of it. Political ignorance has made Nigerians underestimate their ability to contribute to the good leadership of their country and to do effectively say no to dictatorship and all the accompanying ill-effects. This ignorance comes from a failure to gain proper information and to fully know the rights and freedom to which everyone is entitled by the very fact of being a person and a citizenry. An ignorant person does not know the laws to protect him or where to go for redress. Ignorant of good leadership in government has assisted unscrupulous leaders to deceive the population and to carry out their evil and selfish designs on the citizens and the country. Another area where the citizens lack knowledge or insufficient knowledge is adversely affecting the social and democratic life in Nigerian today is in the area of attitudes and ethics of a modern pluralistic society. Majority of the people in Nigeria cannot distinguish a modern pluralistic society, its values and mechanics from that of a tribal and kinship society. Hence, the amount of intolerance, corruption and conflict between people's attitude, values we see in Nigeria today. A democratic society should be a pluralistic society which respects freedom of individuals and groups, pursuing their private ends, making their independent choices without coercion according to rule of law. This is almost impossible in many Nigerian societies where individuals are coerced to follow tribal and religions thinking. The result is the stagnation at all fronts in Nigerian today, politically, socially, economically, morally and democratically. However, one great advantage of knowledge is that it makes the individuals easy to control but impossible to be enslaved. Then come the tragedy of political indifferentism in which the citizens behave as if they have no stake in the democratic process either because of constant frustration from the political class or lack of positive effects from their past efforts. Hence, many appear to think that they allow a few people to think for them. However, a leader without the active participation of the citizenry is a democracy only in name and a society where the citizens are passive on lookers is a society of objects not of subjects.

Political liberty without political participation is a meaningless and empty talk. Political liberty involves the capacity of the citizens to have a say in the way and direction in which their lives are lead in the polity. It involves the capacity to say no, to oppression, no to illegality. But, these rights amount to nothing if people refuse to exercise them due to political indifferentism. Without any doubt, political indifferentism is an act of self-destruction and declaring oneself a social nonentity. It is n act of self-marginalization and self-banishment to the social fringes, and to indirectly mortgage ones basic freedoms. Political indifferentism is a self-inflicted alienation rendering oneself not only political expendable but also social inconsequential. In ancient Greece, slaves were not allowed any speaking or voting rights. They are the laboring animals and hence not considered worthy of political activity destined for elevated spirits, men of honor and freedom. Hence, to refuse political participation is to reduce oneself to the state of slaves and as we know, the lot of slaves is chains and not irons. They labor but do not control the proceeds.

There is no other way of escaping servitude in a modern state than in active vigorous participation in the political process. One of the sources of social development is that ability of the state to mobilize the stock of social knowledge, dispersed in the millions of the citizens making up the nation. In fact, the quality of leadership and democracy a nation can be measured in the capacity of state to bring the advantage of the state and governance the millions of knowledge, opinions, dispersed and possessed by the citizens.

Social Reform Mechanism

Nigeria leaders need to make positive laws and rules as well as implement them to the letter. Law is not respects of any persons. Adherence to ethical standards both in leadership and decision making must be a foundation of the country policies. According to Lewis (1991), ethics codes fulfill the following three purposes (a) encourage high standards of behavior. (b) increase public confidence and (c) assist in decision making. A true leader must be virtuous and a person to be trusted by the governed. This study was concerned with helping the leaders to exercise leadership in a respectful and selfless manner for the common good of the people in Nigeria socio-cultural dimension. Nigeria leaders need clear and comprehensive social reform to break the cycle of inefficiency in leadership. Leadership can change follower's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to improve performance. Lewis, C.W. (1991). Assert that they should encourage their follower to see with a new perspective and stimulate them to face challenges and solve problems. Virtuous leaders either in government or business are persons of honesty, integrity and trust. It is of great value and importance that leader have good moral conduct and ethical responsibility to enable them to attend to the demands, concerns, needs and problems of the citizens in the country. Leaders are not above followers or better than followers. Leaders and followers must be understood in relation to each and collectively.

Knowledge and Leadership

The bane of political leadership in modern Nigerian is that it has professed democracy in name, with no democratic credentials to back it up. They neither think nor act democratically. A big chunk of the crisis in modern Nigeria, her harvest of political instability, corruptive, endemic poverty, war, can even be traced down to the crisis of political leadership which is also a crisis of unenlightened democratic leadership. If the lack knowledge in the leadership or in a leader is catastrophic then it will not do well to anyone. It is the proverbial blind leading the blind, both of course will fall into a pit and a nation with such blind leadership will be plunged into darkness. Prof. Sam Aluko, writing in this respect said: The president must have not only brawn but must also have brain....Although he need not be an intellectual, intellectualism must be sought by him. He must seek to perform to this best and that very best must not be too pedestrian. He must have critical judgment to be able to discern the simple from the difficult, the sycophant and the palace jester from the serious and the reliable. Otherwise, he will take traitors for mentors and fakes for fact. If leadership at all levels demand certain level of vision, enlightenment and knowledge, a fortiori that of a sophisticated modern nation in a complicated world will demand a person of superior intellect and ideas and is never a task

for simplifies and the uninformed. It must clearly be said that the quality of leadership steering they affairs of must Nigeria nations for several years now do not match the demands of such position in the modern world. We have leaders who have no ideas of their own, nor understand the advice when they are given. Yet they are supposed to lead their countries through the technicalities of the democratic and economics demands of a modern nation state and the dynamic of international relation in a geopolitical world they neither control nor understand.

Majority of Nigerians leaders forced themselves to power without necessary and adequate preparations to make them able to shoulder the responsibilities with any hope of success. In other words, a leader should not begin to learn the rudiments of leadership after he had made himself the president of his country. It is funny to note that some Nigerian leaders too to university education only after they had been president for many years. Most of these leaders hijacked power, thinking t was an easy job to organize the people. But soon they found the job far beyond their intellectual ability a while at the same time lacking the humility to resign, thereby dragging their countries to the mud, to bankrupt and decay, given their painlessness, directionlessness, poor articulation of national goals and interests, or their capacity to propose authentic developmental programs for their people. All these are reflected of the negative forces of ignorance. For where ideas are in short supply, abuses, oppression, exploitation, alienation, violence, suppression and deformation will be in superabundance. Even the more theoretical knowledge with-at the moral courage to use this knowledge is not enough.

The Way Forward: Political Conscientization and Formation

So far, we have shown that effective knowledge and enlightenment are desiderate both of the leadership and followership, in order to build and nurture a sound democratic culture in Nigeria. We have equally seen how ignorance like a malignant disease prevents the host from attaining full potentialities. To promote self-actualization and self-development, there is need to be free from ignorance. Individual personal dignity and natural socio-economics progress are not compatible with ignorance. This brings us to the idea of political education formal Education according to Jacque Maritain is to guide man in the evolving dynamism through which he shapes himself as a human person armed with knowledge, strength of judgment and moral virtues while at the same time conveying to him the spiritual heritage of the nation and the moral civilization in which he is involved and preserving in this way the century aid achievement of generation. To buttress the dynamic dimension of education Nwagwu N.A. (1993) sees it as the progress by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge and skills in its cultural milieu in order to foster continuously the welfare of mankind and ensure its survival in the face of changes, triggered off by men and nature. The above observation goes to buttress the fact that if we want to improve our knowledge, if we want to adopt to changing circumstances and attain personal cultural and social improvement, education is indispensable. Thus, the aim of education for Aristotle is to produce men and women who have the right type of intelligence and ability as well as the right type of

character. It offers knowledge and skills for the purpose of facilitating the recipient's active participation in all aspects of life which is tailored to learning to know, to do, to be together and to live together. Hence, it is envisaged that a sound education process whether formal or informal should be able to deliver to the citizens qualitative and rich knowledge which must reflect the present state of knowledge about human affairs, our world and human cultural achievements in general.

Urgent Need for Moral Education and Value Re-orientation

Leadership is undoubtedly a very big challenge in African and Nigeria in particular. Having a competent, effective and purposeful leadership that is capable of turning its highly cherished 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 value that sustains the various societies now constituting the modern Nigeria society and confuse such value 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. Ethics codes provide guidelines for the professional conduct and behavior for managers and employees. The meaning of ethics can be understood after its definition is clearly stated. Omeregbe J. (1993) defines ethics as "the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions: or as the branch of philosophy which studies the norm of human behavior. It helps human beings to decide what is right and good or wrong and bad in any given situation. Fulmer, R.M (2004) sees ethical leaders as "people who maintain unequivocal commitment to honesty, truth and ethics in every facet of behavior". Freeman and Stewart define ethical leadership as simply a matter of leaders having good character and the right values or being a person of strong character".

Recommendations

From the collective perspective, this paper recommends that leaders can inspire those around them to behave ethically. By setting an example and giving the ethical behavior, others will observe and act similarly. In this way, an ethical leader can positively influence many others, presenting them with a set of actions that can be adopted for the greater good. Truly, Nigeria needs sound ethical leadership that is rooted in respect, services, justice, honesty and country. The country needs people who are educated, sincere and honest both in administration and leadership styles. Leaders are needed to amend the wrong. Culture values and beliefs affect the practice of leadership development, which relates to the values, beliefs, hopes, and fears of human existence. In Nigeria, culture is a phenomenon that surrounds the people as well as the nation's heritage. Political instability and lack of proper accountability in the country have severely impeded the ability of successive governments to implement economic policies for the common good of the people. Good leadership denotes not only the leader's competence and capacity, but also his or her moral character. Once ethics is taken away from leadership, leadership ceases to exist. What we have without ethics in leadership are treasury looters, nepotistic and greedy individuals. Leaders without moral character use their position and privilege to embezzle public funds, instigate ethics and religious crises to their advantage, encourage

and also institute systemic corruption.

Conclusion

From our discussion so far, it has been exposed that lack of ethics in leadership is inimical to the development of any nation. Ethical leadership is imperative for several reasons- primary of which includes its impact on workplace relationships and the development of heavily and positive support systems through exemplary behavior and actions. This is integral for sustained focus, including the deliberate choice of responsibility towards the organization based on fair, just and transparent identified ethical values, as necessary for emphasizing on the organizations goals and interest over the biased. Ethical leadership means that individuals behave according to a set of principles and values that are recognized by the majority as a sound basis for the common good. These include integrity, respect, trust, fairness, transparent and honesty. Ethical leadership must be a conscious decision. To be conscious means to be awake mindful. To give consciously means to be open to perceiving the world around and within us, to understand our circumstance, and to decide how to respond to them in ways that honor our needs, values and goals. Why it is essential to be an ethical leader, there are many good reasons to be an ethical leader.

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